

The Schrödinger Guide

Cybersecurity Sales
and Marketing

Written by Steve King



New Rules: Cybersecurity Marketing

**Identify your niche and sell to a specific group.
The more specific, the easier it is to connect.**

In cybersecurity, no one believes that one product, service or company can solve everything –stay away from that claim – never say 100% in any context – find what you are good at and build your brand story around that –if that means your target market is only 10% of buyers, then wrap your mind around the idea of owning 80% of 10% – THEN, after you have accomplished that, you can enter a new swim lane.

When we brought ACF2 to market at The Cambridge Systems Group, we had established trust through our engagement with mainframe systems programmers. That's what we did for 3 full years, working with systems programmers and early ASM2 sales at countless SHARE conferences. We learned what the influencers wanted –if we had mistakenly tried to sell to the CIO, we would not have achieved 80% of market share in 18 months –on the buyer's side, you need an engaged ally and a time and capital investment to help earn it.

"If you want to understand how a lion hunts, don't go to the zoo. Go to the jungle. "

- Jim Stengel

Lipstick and Hope

Marketers cannot create a desire for a product.

What they CAN do is take the hopes, dreams, fears, and wishes that already exist in the hearts of millions of people and focus them on how a product will impact them in those categories.

It can be easy to fall into the habit of selling the features, feeds and speeds of a product or service, but it's the benefits that make a sale. It's the difference between simply describing a product or service and explaining how it could enhance a prospect's life or business.

Seth Godin says that facts are irrelevant. What matters is what the consumer believes, and the great Leo Burnett tells us that one of the greatest dangers of marketing is not that of misleading people, but that of boring them to death.

Marketers' number one job is to create stories. Stories have the responsibility to transform a product into an event that will change people's lives, make their jobs easier, elevate their genius, promote their competency and cement their reputation for vision and judgement.

"In our factory, we make lipstick. But what we sell is hope. **"**

- Peter Nivio Zarlenga

Relying on Safe, Leads to Oblivion.

Art evelates our logical minds

No copy can be effective if it contains facts alone; it must also contain emotion, image, logic, and promise.

Facts drive readership away -facts are untrustworthy
-facts are boring -and facts are NOT the basis upon which buying decisions are made -humans are great at making impulse decisions and rationalizing them later -that's the only time facts are useful.

They validate the permission the buyer gave herself to buy.

" Because advertising and marketing is an art, the solution to each new problem or challenge should begin with a blank canvas and an open mind, not with the nervous borrowings of other people's mediocrities. That's precisely what 'trends' are -a search for something 'safe' -and why a reliance on them leads to oblivion. **"**

- George Lois

Death by Copying Competitors

"Make your marketing so useful, people would pay for it." - Jay Baer

You cannot control demand. Everything, from demand to desire already exists in all markets. Marketing taps surgically into that demand and builds brand stories that increasingly persuade people to consider a particular product.

The reason folks don't like to receive sales calls is because ... they are dying to give themselves permission to buy and they know that once engaged, they are far more likely to go with that one vendor -refusing to engage with a sales rep is the safety shield.

Great brand stories grow out of seemingly impossible accomplishments -in Cybersecurity, it needs to create an urgent problem that imminently threatens as broad a market as can be imagined and a solution that uniquely does what no one else had done before.

If you create true differentiation, e.g., a crowd-sourced attack surface vulnerability index, you can move your marketing efforts into sales qualified leads.

"In marketing, not to be different is virtually suicidal. "

- Bill Bernbach

Humans are Tribal and We're All Buyers

Market more than just a product. Market outcome.

Create a lifestyle that brings your group together -we convinced Harley Davidson to focus on the biker lifestyle -people don't buy motorcycles, people buy what motorcycles do for them -in cyber-terms, RSAC or BlackHat or DEF CON or BSides -bring together tribal members from four distinct points of view -the majority of these folks may not all be buyers, but they are definitely influencers -pick one target tribe, start building trust and then flood that zone.

We knew that the only way mPower (Morningstar) was going to attract investors in a hyper-crowded market was to use technology to appeal to the savvy, smart, successful business types who wanted to manage their defined benefit plans in the large plan sponsor markets -so we built an online trading platform and filled our communications with young, business leaders who were obviously cooler than everybody else and we called it "Where Smart Money Rules" -2 years later, they were acquired by Morningstar

It wasn't the platform. It was what the platform made investors feel like.

"Don't sell life insurance. Sell what life insurance can do. "

- Ben Feldman

Owning the Mountain Trumps Everything

People buy for function AND status.

Effective product positioning enhances and elevates the status prospects keep or earn.

When DarkTrace launched in 2013, they spent lavishly on a corporate brochure printed on heavy stock that rivaled Restoration Hardware's catalog. It signaled absolute luxury, confidence and a departure from "common" network solutions.

They dubbed their product an "Immune System driven by AI". Folks that were happy to pay RH prices for commodity furniture were also happy to pay a premium for an "AI Network Detection System that sought anomalistic behavior from the established baseline". I mean, in 2013, how cool did THAT sound?

We became their first North American integration partner. When folks bought DarkTrace, they knew they were getting the top of the line. In 2021, they signed with McLaren's Indy Car Racing Team -revenue hit \$416 million in 2022. It was easy to sell.

"People don't just buy your products that they can see; they buy your attitude that they can sense. "

- Roxanne Emmerich

Create a Love Affair

Customers have to love you more than they hate change. And they REALLY hate change.

Steve Jobs fought internal push back, extreme media criticism and borderline humiliation when he announced his retail strategy and revealed the cost. Apple paid \$8-\$10 million to open each one. This disturbed the majority of his shareholders and many tried to launch a class action suit.

Since then, his 463 Apple stores have crowned Jobs as the most successful brick-and-mortar retailer in the world with sales of \$5,546 per square foot. Tiffany, at #2, doesn't come close. With the average size of the Apple store at 11,447 square feet, they earn \$2.5 Billion per month.

But it was the hat tip to tribal status that brought customers in –Jobs knew that if he built a modern, luxury store for every customer, they would line up to get in – and they did.

" There isn't any significant difference between the various brands of whiskey, or cigarettes or beer. They are all about the same. And so are the cake mixes and the detergents, and the margarines. The manufacturer who dedicates its marketing to building the most sharply defined personality for his brand will get the largest share of the market at the highest profit. **"**

- David Ogilvy

Esteem & Actualization Top the Pyramid

Most of your prospects hit Titleist

Connect with your audience using the one attribute that fits their self-image –for Harley, it was freedom, for A&F, it was cool, for Morningstar it was smart, for Hoover, it was reliability, for Nike it was athletic performance.

It took us a while to convince Harley but mPower and A&F were all in. It all worked.

Remember, you're not selling shoes, vacuums, investment funds, fashion or motorcycles – you're selling a lifestyle –if its cybersecurity, prospects choose CrowdStrike or Zscaler or Palo –if its soda, prospects choose Coke or Pepsi –if its golfballs, prospects are hitting Titleist.

Fonda and Hopper rode Harleys in Easy Rider.

No matter what you're selling, success comes down to how well you meet the Maslow needs of the prospect and how well you connect with them as a person.

Does Titleist make the best golfballs?
Of course not.

Our Network Security experts laugh when folks say Zscaler is best.

“People buy for emotional, not logical reasons.”

- Zig Ziglar

There is Only One Boss: The Customer

"Exceptional customer experience is the only sustainable platform for competitive differentiation." - Kerry Bodine

Simple strategies that made Apple the greatest brand in the history of technology:

Sell emotions and outcomes, build a community around your products, show who you are making your product for, and make the purchase frictionless.

In 2001, Apple ranked No. 236 on the Fortune 500 list, behind IBM (No. 8), Hewlett-Packard (No. 19), Intel (No. 41), and Microsoft (No. 79). Ironically, when TBWA/Chiat/Day introduced the dancing silhouettes ad campaign in 2003, Jobs didn't like it, "It doesn't show the product," he said. He was right. It showed what people got from the product.

Initially using songs from indie bands, the campaign worked. So much so that in 2004, Jobs was approached by U2. The band had a song they thought was good, but needed exposure. Hence,

the Vertigo ad. It and its silhouettes rocked Apple to the top.

Apple sold tens of millions of iPods and billions more songs through iTunes. The music-infused campaign led Apple to its future iPhone and iPad dominance and today Apple trails only Walmart and Amazon on the Fortune 500 list.

"Focus on customers above all else. "

- Steve Jobs

Courage Plus Creativity Catapults Success

Be extraordinarily different

In 2022 there were 34 vendors selling XDR products. In order to get a buyer's attention, your website headline must be composed of equal ingredients of provocation, controversy and challenge. That requires courage, but in a market dominated by messages like the following, it is easier than it sounds:

"In an increasingly complex threat landscape, cyberattacks frequently evade detection. At the same time, overwhelmed security teams try to triage and identify attacks with only narrow, disjointed attack viewpoints."

First, your buyer (CISO) already knows this reality, and second, having to educate the market imposes an additional sales motion on your reps that is unnecessary. Keep your goal in perspective -you are not going for a P.O. -you are going for a discovery meeting -which means your headline must be compelling and strong.

"On the average, five times as many people read the headlines as the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar. "

- David Ogilvy

Free Beer!

Bill Bernbach said, "Rules are what the artist breaks; the memorable never emerged from a formula".

Free Beer! Now, THAT is a great headline. It's clear. It's compelling. It's provocative. It's challenging. It pulls you in to look further.

But the sub-head or H2 needs to be clear, concise, relevant and compelling as well.

**Every Saturday at Lincoln Park
between 3-6 pm -Free Admission -
Live Music Too -Bring your Dog.**

How to translate beer to
cybersecurity?

The Next XDR is Here Now!

**Replace yours with ours and get 6
months free -covers all endpoints -
runs with everything.**

Hardly anyone doesn't like beer and everyone likes free -folks that have dogs like to know they are welcome - Lincoln Park is a favored location and Live Music is a major benefit.

In cybersecurity, everyone needs what XDR does, the fact that it integrates seamlessly with everything and covers all end-points and 6 months free license is compelling. You have to look. Yet, you haven't yet explained what the product does, just the outcome -covers all endpoints -runs with everything. Plus, I guarantee that your competitors are NOT going to do this.

Brand Stories Matter

Challenge the status quo.

Trading 6 months revenue for market share is a no-brainer –I will bet your old CAC is at least half of that number –focus on CLV instead –and ongoing rewards targeted to retain high-value customers –new prospects are significantly influenced by your logo wall –IBM, General Motors and JPMorgan are worth a 6 month discount.

I am frequently amazed at how mundane and quotidian our efforts in this market have become. SEO, SEM, Social Blog, eMail, PR, Affiliates, BizDev, Apps and Widgets, TV, Homepage, Landing page, Ads, LeadGen, Campaigns and Contests –without the right positioning and messaging, it’s all for naught.

The result is mistrust between Sales and Marketing, MQLs are ignored by SDRs, and even qualified SQLs get shorted.

With 33 other vendors playing copy-cat, you can almost not miss if you challenge the status quo –start with who you are or want to be and what you want others to think – then make sure your messaging is about the outcome and not the product, and keep it simple, short and compelling.

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

- Leonardo Da Vinci

New Rules: Cybersecurity Sales

Selling is about trust.

Sales is about people connecting with other people and solving their problems or meeting their needs.

And prospects are more likely to connect with someone they trust –but three things must happen first –1) your prospect must like you –the easiest path to likability is through humility and self-deprecation –2) you must add value with no expectation of a return – humble advice can work alongside articles and white papers relevant to discussions you’ve had, and 3) you must be respected –if your knowledge of your space is incomplete, fix it now.

What you say builds credibility and confidence –your buyer can work with any sales person, but if you know your market, your buyer will want to work with you.

“Establishing trust is better than any sales technique.”

- Mike Puglia

Only 6% of Sales People Are Elite

It's simple. Don't be the average sales rep.

The average sales success rate is about 3%. 74% of salespeople fail, and 6% of salespeople are classified as “elites”. It takes an average of 8 touches to set up a meeting with a new prospect –the average sales person gives up after 2 touches –44% give up after 4 touches.

92% of all customer interactions happen over the phone, yet the average rep refuses to cold call. The average rep relies instead on email where the average response rate for cold emails is 1%. Even if your email response rate is 5%, voice-to-voice interaction creates connections not possible through email. 78% of salespeople using social media outsell their peers.

91% of customers say they'd give referrals. Only 11% of salespeople ask for referrals. Only 13% of customers believe a sales person can understand their needs. After a presentation, 63% of attendees remember stories. Only 5% remember statistics.

Focus on doing what you do best. It's the planting that yields the harvest and not the other way around.

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time. **”**

- Thomas Edison

Read. Learn. Believe.

Add value without any expectation of return.

Your actions mirror your self-perception. Your audience perception will believe anything you want them to believe if YOU believe it.

In Cybersecurity, 95% of sales people know nothing about either cybersecurity or their product's role and fit in the market. The stuff you need to know is published and available. Or, for a few bucks a month, ChatGPT will do it for you -read one new article every other night.

The key to building prospect trust is adding value with no expectation in return.

The more prospects believe you know their space and thus, their challenges and issues, the more they will trust you. When it is finally time for them to make a purchase decision, they will call you, not some other annoying sales person.

In the meantime, you will feel better about yourself as you accumulate feedback from a surprised prospect audience, and that confidence feeds on itself to create more confidence.

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process, is its own reward."

- Amelia Earhart

Grit and Optimism

Get away from bad, complaining , unlucky reps fast.

Grit is the most significant predictor of success and more important than IQ. Grit is the ability to continue pushing yourself to work hard despite seemingly insurmountable odds.

Average sales people start to fade after the first 15 “no’s” and give up entirely after being unable to reach their prospect in 20 attempts.

Every bad sales rep I know uses all of the call data to rationalize why s/he can’t sell the product or service –no market –poor design –no support –not price competitive –positioned wrong –bad reviews –web site sucks.

Grit also bestows upon the gritty, a professionally persistent attitude of optimism which in addition to impacting your working life spills over and heavily influences physical and mental health, as well as coping with everyday social life.

Bad reps never have any luck and if you have these folks in your company, distance yourself and avoid them like the plague.

You can’t help them and they won’t help you.

“I got lucky because I never gave up the search. Are you quitting too soon? Or are you willing to pursue luck with a vengeance? **”**

- Jill Konrath

The Connective Tissue

Map your targets and audit your pitch

Let's say you pitched to a Director at Company A, but for some reason, they didn't buy into your value proposition as strongly as you would have liked. As a result, the deal motion stagnates, and the account goes stale. Leave that person alone and ignore everyone within that person's organization. Any contact will roll up to your soured prospect and will work against you.

Instead, your organizational mapping should reveal several other folks to whom you can make your pitch, but this time, learn from the last time. Be brutal in your evaluation of your performance and sever any parts that worked against a positive decision. If you find nothing you would change, you're not doing it right.

Once refreshed, find those other relevant Directors or VPs and start investigating. From their LI accounts, you can learn a lot that will help you establish some connective tissue between you and your target. College, sports, volunteer organizations, companies or groups they follow, patents, etc.

"Don't expect to be motivated every day to get our there and make things happen. You wont be. Don't count on motivation. Count on discipline. "

- Jocko Willink

The Warrior Mindset

It takes many touches to frame a deal. Patience and perseverance usually triumph in the end.

When you reach your targets keep your objective front and center: you are NOT trying to make a sale or close some business. You are trying to assemble a following inside your prospect's house that will ultimately support a purchase from you.

Map your story out in advance. Know 3 things -beginning, middle, and end -keep it short and make it alluring. Making a story alluring happens in the first 10 seconds. You need to explain you discovered a breakthrough approach to [a hard problem] and you want to share it. The problem could be work-related or topic-related from your connective tissue hinges.

Once you are in and your prospect is listening, give them the elevator pitch version of your story. Don't forget to focus on outcome, not product. Your objective is to get them to convince your old prospect to change their mind.

If you can get through to 3-4 folks who will influence the purchase decision, you are well on your way to a deal.

"It's not about having the right opportunities. It's about handling the opportunities right.**"**

- Mark Hunter

You and Your Prospect Are Peers

You in fact, have the solution to your prospect's problem and you are willing to share it with her.

“Great to meet you, thanks for your time, we’re really delighted to be here and have the opportunity to present.”

That statement positions you as subservient, diminishing your status and places you in need. It in turn, positions your prospect as powerful and exclusionary. When most people feel powerful and exclusionary, this happens:

Their vision narrows and they won’t see who you are and what you offer. With narrowed vision, they will become more easily distracted, like diverting their attention to smart phones or correspondence -while you are pitching.

All because you gave up your status.

The important part here is why?

Why would you be beneath your prospect? Answer: You are a sales person -and most people have a negative impression of sales -when people think of sales, words such as sleazy, pushy, difficult, boring, manipulative, annoying, tough, aggressive, and dishonest come to mind.

“Sales are contingent upon the attitude of the salesman - not the attitude of the prospect.”

- W. Clement Stone

And You Have Equal Status

If you don't believe it, your prospect won't either.

But your prospect is a business person – smart, degreed, accomplished, a manager or Director/VP, maybe even a CEO –and really knows their stuff.

But somehow you got through and you're talking, so it's your job to dispel any negative thoughts from your prospect and yourself and the best way to do that is to convince yourself that you are here to help –in fact, only you can help because you have the best solution on the market –so, the favor is from you to your prospect and not the other way around.

You will impart some information that s/he needs, you will add lots of value by sharing what you know about your prospect's markets, maybe some competitive information that your prospect doesn't know, you will be positioned to help your prospect get the best deal possible from your company if a purchase decision is made, and you will clean up all the sticky bits along the way.

But, if you don't believe any of this, your prospect won't either.

"When you undervalue what you do, the world will undervalue who you are. "

- Oprah Winfrey

The First 90 Days

Monitor behaviors, not metrics.

If you have the “pleasure” of sales leadership, one of your challenges will be figuring out how to help, motivate, incent, manage, discipline and lead. In sales, the 80/20 rule is always in command. 80% of your sales will come from 20% of your salesforce. Often the rule slides into 90/10.

Historically, my approach to sales leadership has always been to monitor behaviors, not metrics –metrics are easily gamed, are subjective, and generally offer transactional insights into performance improvement but rarely reveal any strategic mapping.

The behavior that I look for is everything I’ve written about here plus an enthusiasm for out-reach, for learning and for long term growth. My model has been to allow 90 days during which the new rep gets acclimated with our sales playbook and the product/ services/market and begins building pipeline through direct outreach via phone –I look for 100 calls a day.

“We spend far too much time and energy on performance metrics and not nearly enough on creative.”

- Sherry Lowe

You Have Less Time Than You Think You Have

Growth and Comfort do not coexist.

Sales statistics tell us that it takes about 18 touches to connect with a lead. The average company closes about 20% of their leads, and a disciplined company can close about 30%.

The math argues that to make one sale, it requires 5x the number of touches –or in our example, 240. Now just as in football or any other sport, there are lots of ways to score, but the arena follows a fixed formula –the football field is 300 yards long, a touchdown is worth 6 points, a point-after is worth 1-2 points and a field goal is worth 3 points –all of which must happen in 4 quarters, lasting 15 minutes each –sales success requires 100-200 touches every day.

If the rep who got through the first 90 days, fails to build pipeline in the next 90, then it is time to cut ties and move on –lots of sales leaders waste endless hours counseling their troops when the activities of sales and the order of motions are not complicated –no amount of counselling will turn your poor performer around.

Is the turnover expensive? Yes. But inaction costs a whole lot more.

“Growth and comfort do not coexist.”

- Ginni Rometty

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