



Strategies for Smashing Sales

What Sales Reps Need to Know in 2022!





INTRODUCING HP INDIGO'S WORLD'S MOST PRODUCTIVE PRESS PORTFOLIO

Digital solutions engineered to
provide fast growth opportunities

PHOTO
COMMERCIAL
FLEXIBLE PACKAGING
LABELS
FOLDING CARTON



HP INDIGO DIGITAL PRESSES. REAL POSSIBILITIES, REAL GROWTH.

The future is digital. HP Indigo has fueled digital printing growth over the last 25 years, partnering for success with those who dare to go beyond. The new digital press portfolio brings a future of growth to your business, today.

To find out more contact:

Eric Zirbel
eric.zirbel@hp.com
(408) 966-0643
hp.com/go/Indigo



SCAN ME



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRPERSON

Dava Guthmiller, Noise 13

VICE CHAIRPERSON

Steve Decker, Zooka Creative

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRPERSON

Gil Caravantes, Commerce Printing Services

BOARD MEMBERS

Chris Cullen
Michael Hicks, Andresen
Jeff Jarvis, Spicers Paper
Susan Moore, Dumont Printing
Chris Shadix, AMP Printing
Steve Sprinkel, Sprinkel Media Network
Barbara Stephenson, 300FeetOut
Mardjan Taheripour, Calitho

STAFF

PRESIDENT

Ian Flynn

VICE PRESIDENT, VMA INSURANCE

David Katz

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MEMBERSHIP

Shannon Wolford

FINANCE MANAGER

Emily Gotladera

HEALTH INSURANCE ACCOUNT MANAGERS

Sue Benavente, Diedra Lovan, Deirdre Ross

COMMERCIAL INSURANCE ACCOUNT MANAGERS

Jessica Clark, Mary Fernandez, Renee Prescott

ASSOCIATION STAFF

Sonali Shah, Sr. Director of Marketing and Communications
May Suen, Program + Project Manager
Maria Salita, Accounting Specialist
RJ Cervantes, Government Affairs Specialist

MANAGING EDITOR

Sonali Shah

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Zaynab Russell

PRINTER

Dumont Printing



665 Third St, Ste 500
San Francisco, CA 94107
800-659-3363
info@vma.bz

Visual Media Alliance is non-profit trade association serving Northern California printers and design agency and other small business owners. By providing events, education, discounts, advocacy, industry promotion and insurance programs, we help our member firms become more successful and profitable.

ON THE COVER

Meet Delta Print Group's stellar executive and sales team. More on page 8.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Valued Members,

Sales continue to be a top concern for our members. As the summer winds down and fall is right around the corner, it is a great time to get out and connect with customers face-to-face.

I recently returned to the Bay Area from the Americas Print Show in Columbus, Ohio, where I had the pleasure of connecting with other Regional Print Affiliate leaders and VMA members. Closer to home, I have enjoyed visits to members in Gilroy, Sacramento, Chico, Fresno, and all over the Bay Area since mid-2021. These in-person meetings have been invaluable in learning about our members' businesses and a chance to see new machinery, processes, and projects. Member visits are always time well spent, and I learn something new every time.

How do you plan to reach out to your clients this fall? The benefits of connecting in person are numerous. It is an opportunity to create a more meaningful personal connection with your customers. It is a chance to engage with your customers in the discovery process and dive deeper into their goals and challenges. With a better understanding of your client's pain points, you have a greater opportunity to explain your company's unique value proposition.

I hope to see some of you in person at our ConnectUp event at Uptown Studios in Sacramento in October and our CrabFest in January. Don't forget our upcoming virtual events, such as the monthly SalesCircle and Collective Conversations. These events are great opportunities to make new, personal connections in the industry.

It makes sense that connections help increase sales. In this issue of *Connected*, we provide tips, case studies, and other services to help members with time-honored and creative new ways to increase sales. I hope you enjoy it!

Please reach out to me anytime at ian@vma.bz.



Sincerely,

Ian Flynn

Ian Flynn
VMA President

“

Approach each customer with the idea of helping him or her to solve a problem or achieve a goal, not of selling a product or service.

Brian Tracy (Author)

OVERVIEW OF VMA SALES SUITE

At VMA, we aim to help you manage and run your business. Many members state that finding prospects and closing sales is one of their top business concerns. Below are a number VMA member benefits that will help you find and convert new customers.



Sales Circle

Visual Media Alliance's SalesCircle is a Virtual Networking Referral Group. Members meet virtually on the third Thursday every month from 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM to discuss sales strategies, techniques, tips and tricks, and more. It's an excellent opportunity to get together and bounce ideas off your colleagues, and actual referrals are happening too! Register or learn more at vma.bz/salescircle or contact Shannon at shannon@vma.bz or 415-710-0568.



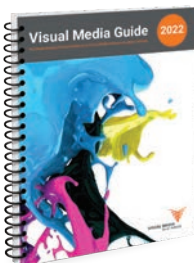
Collective Conversations

Collective Conversations is another VMA member-exclusive networking opportunity. The format is a virtual round table where members meet to discuss various top-of-mind topics monthly on Wednesdays from 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM. View more info or register for each topic by clicking on the links on the dedicated page at vma.bz/cc.



Live Networking Event: ConnectUp

ConnectUp is VMA's in-person networking events series held at locations around Northern California. Come network and mingle with like-minded professionals. Often held at our members' sites, the events include an open house tour in addition to making connections and referrals and having a fun time. See more at vma.bz/connectup.



VMGuide + VMAccess.org

Visual Media Guide is one of the most widely used directories for buyers to find quality printers and creative firms in Northern California. VMGuide is a 150-page full-color publication mailed to over 1,000 qualified buyers of print and creative services. VMAccess (vmaccess.org) is the Guide's digital version) is a fully searchable web database of local and national printing and visual media resources.

VMA members have the opportunity to list their capabilities and contact information in the Guide. Please be sure to make sure your online information is up to date. Contact Shannon Wolford at shannon@vma.bz or 415-710-0568 for questions.

Expert Consultants

VMA has vetted sales and marketing consultants to help you with your sales and marketing.

Bill Farquharson - Sales Coach

Bill Farquharson has been a friend and contributor to the Regional Print Affiliates for many years and is known to members as a sales trainer, presenter, and content creator for the industry. Bill can be reached at 781-934-7036, Bill@SalesVault.pro, or salesvault.pro. See the SalesVault section for his online training program.



Leslie Groene - Sales Strategies Expert

Leslie is a sales and business development coach. Her background is in the paper and printing industries as a sales rep and sales manager. She helps her clients focus on revenue generation and profit growth. See more at GroeneConsulting.com. You may contact Leslie at info@groeneconsulting.com or 657-464-9199.



Sonali Shah - Marketing Expert

Sonali is VMA's Marketing Director. She has an MBA in marketing and over 20 years of marketing experience with top brands, including AT&T, eBay, Dropbox, Verizon, WebMD, and many others. With expertise in B2B marketing, she knows how to get, nurture, and convert prospects. She is passionate about helping small businesses succeed. VMA members get a free ½-hour consult on marketing concerns. Contact Sonali at sonali@vma.bz.



Sales Vault

Bill Farquharson's Sales Vault is another valuable sales resource. The SalesVault helps sales reps and owners learn and execute winning sales strategies. The Vault includes live weekly workshops, open sales peer discussions, and ideas for tackling the new sales challenges. VMA gets a discounted monthly price of \$40/participant. Register for the special price at: salesvault.pro/product/vma-insider.

The average Vault Insider stays for only months before unsubscribing and the #1 reason why they quit is because their business is so strong; they don't have time for more. Bill states, "that is the best compliment ever!" See more about SalesVault at salesvault.pro.

UPCOMING EVENTS

View all of our upcoming events at main.vma.bz/networking-events. – Register today and make new connections!



SalesCircle

Monthly on Thursdays
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM • Online

Join your colleagues and fellow VMA members for connections and referrals at our virtual industry referral networking group, where we'll discuss sales and referrals tips and ideas.

Register at vma.bz/salescircle



Collective Conversations

Monthly on Wednesdays
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM • Online

Each of our virtual round table series focuses on topics relevant to your business. "Health Insurance Updates" in October, "Eco + Biz Sustainability in Alignment" in November, and "Protecting Against Cyber Crime" in January.

Register at vma.bz/cc



Sacramento Design Week

October 18-23, 2022 • Sacramento

Design Week Sacramento is a weeklong celebration of Sacramento's design community. Enjoy lectures, panels, workshops, networking events, studio tours, and more! All events are hosted by the local design community and are created to educate, empower and connect our community.

Details + Register at designweeksac.com

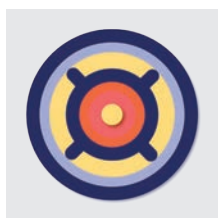


ConnectUp

Wednesday, October 19 • 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Uptown Studios • Sacramento

ConnectUp is our in-person networking event series. We'll meet to network and discuss sales and referrals while building new or forming stronger connections. Join us at Sacramento Design Week at Uptown Studios for a session on "Social Justice in Print," where three panelists will discuss recent projects.

Register at vma.bz/connectup

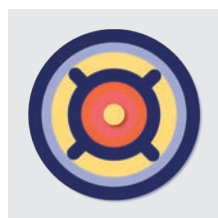


Sales Vault: Marketing Matters with Kelly Mallozzi

Weekly on Mondays
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM • Online

"Marketing is the new Sales." These words become increasingly true as reps fight to connect with hybrid workers. A general weekly conversation about marketing open to all Sales Vault Insiders. Led by Kelly Mallozzi.

Register at salesvault.pro



Sales Vault: Insider Office Hours

Weekly on Tuesdays
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM • Online

Bring one sales challenge to this open discussion group and hear solutions and ideas from your peers. Office Hours are different every week but never fail to be of benefit to all. Led by Bill Farquharson.

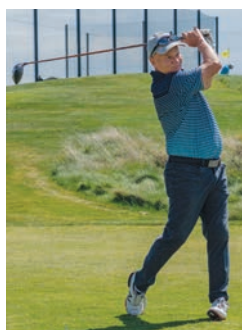
Register at salesvault.pro

VMA GOLF TOURNAMENT

VIEW PHOTOS OF PAST VMA EVENT AT [MAIN.VMA.BZ/PHOTOS](https://main.vma.bz/photos)



First place winners of the 2022 VMA Golf Tournament: (from left to right) Jeff Lo, James Villanueva, Greg Mooney, and Steve Kozel scoring a 61 at the Metropolitan Golf Links, Oakland, CA on September 21.



Congratulations to Steve Kozel who hit a hole-in-one at Hole 15.



Left: Dan Whaley with brothers Matt and Anthony Moore. Anthony Moore wins Longest Drive at the hole 11.



Right: Albert Moreno receives a Canon Ivy CLIQ2, an instant camera and printer for Closest to Pin from Rusty Davis, Canon Solutions America, one of our event sponsors.

A special thanks again to our event sponsors Bay Digital, Canon Solutions America, Fujifilm, HP, Kelly Spicers, Konica Minolta, Lowest Price Print and Volume Press, On Line Bindery, Pitney Bowes, Printers 401K, UBEO and Ray Morgan, and VMA Insurance Services.

YOU

BE A PRINT PROVIDER OF CHOICE

Want to make your shop a top choice for quality, consistency, and value-add? Opt for a press that's built for your business.

A PRESS THAT CAN HELP

MEET your customers' needs
HANDLE your monthly volume
SUPPORT your application mix
EXPAND your opportunities

POWER UP WITH CANON
INKJET INNOVATIONS
[PPS.CSA.CANON.COM/INNOVATE](https://pps.csa.canon.com/innovate)

SMART CHANGE STARTS HERE.

Canon is a registered trademark of Canon Inc. in the United States and elsewhere. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners and are hereby acknowledged.

©2022 Canon Solutions America, Inc. All rights reserved.

CAN



Multi-Color Corp. North America Wine & Spirits Wins at APS22!

We're so proud of Multi-Color Corp. North America Wine & Spirits for winning the "Best Flexography" Award for the "True Myth" wine label at Americas Print Show. Their beautiful use of delicate foil embossing wowed the judges! Great job MCC!

Americas Print Awards held at APS22 (Americas Print Show), is the annual print show for the graphic communications and printing industries produced by the Americas Printing Association Network (APAN) to honor the best in print across the United States and Canada!

View this years' winners at americasprintawards.com



Heidi Cook, Technical Service Manager, Multi-Color Corp. North America Wine & Spirits accepts the Best Flexography Award with Ian Flynn, President, Visual Media Alliance

Find Your Flavor with GatoNegro's #ShowYourPride Campaign

GatoNegro, recognized as one of the world's most powerful wine brands, is dedicated to celebrating and supporting diversity in all its forms. For PRIDE 2022, Affinity Creative Group developed GatoNegro's "Show Your Pride" campaign with deliverables including strategy, messaging, digital marketing, sweepstakes, campaign microsite, retail and on-premise activation, social media content, social media advertising, photography, and video.

Affinity is thrilled to bring GatoNegro's message of positivity, acceptance, and inclusion to the world through the #ShowYourPride omnichannel campaign! Check it out: showyourpride.gatonegro.cl



Case Makes Launches New Sustainable Product



Case Makes, an Indiana-based laminating and coating division of the Case Paper family, is launching a new fully recyclable laminated product, LuMet™ introducing themselves to the luxury packaging community. LuMet™ is a laminated

paperboard product that utilizes plastic-free transfer metalized film, making it an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional foil and film laminated products.

"We know how important sustainability is for our customers, their customers, and everyday consumers," says Simon Schaffer-Goldman, President of Case. "The launch of LuMet™ is one of Case's many sustainability initiatives that we're working on to do our part in creating a better world today and for future generations to come." See more at <https://bit.ly/3zdg9tS>.

300FeetOut Becomes a Certified Green Business



300FeetOut, an immersive brand design agency in San Francisco was already a certified woman-owned business. Now, they are proud to do their part for the community by helping to create a healthier and more livable environment by becoming a certified green business!

The Future of Digital Foil

Kelly Spicers is now the exclusive U.S. Distributor of Ecofoil Digital™ — an exciting new range of metalized foil board materials.

It's the only sustainable and commercially viable foil board range on the market and it's certified plastic free and 100% recyclable!

It's great for POS (Point of Sale) displays such as product packaging, beer, and wine labels, brochures, magazines, and more. See more at bit.ly/3uWLCOR.



JP Graphics Buys Assets of Zion Press

JP Graphics, a full-service printing company located in Santa Clara, has acquired Zion Press, a direct mail company also located in Santa Clara. JP Graphics has always worked very closely with Zion and decided to bring them onboard and merge permanently. JP Graphics can now handle all your direct mailings in-house! jp-graphics.com



Advantage ColorGraphics Purchases Bert-Co Industries



In an exciting announcement, Advantage ColorGraphics purchased Bert-Co Industries.

Bert-Co creates and manufactures folding cartons and innovative specialty packaging for luxury markets, including beauty, fancy food, distilled beverage, entertainment, home fragrance, and iconic brands. Advantage ColorGraphics is a west coast direct mail, digital marketing, commercial, and packaging printer. This acquisition brings additional packaging capabilities to Advantage ColorGraphic's existing packaging, direct mail, commercial print, and digital marketing capabilities! advantageinc.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBER



Creative Composition

For over 50 years, Creative Composition, a family-owned business has been helping companies communicate through their printing and mailing services. They are the only Northern California printer that offers a complete written guarantee. Though they have grown tremendously since 1968, one thing still holds true today; they know that it is because of their clients that they have been successful.

Mark Hendry
800-427-1955
creativecomp.com

Delta Print Group's

Secrets to Sales Success

BY REVA HARRIS

In the last two years, selling has changed dramatically, perhaps forever. It's been a test of the resilience, creativity, and perseverance of sales teams and leaders. Increased use of technology and data has created new ways to engage with prospects, whether face-to-face or virtual. And it's not just that how people interact has changed. Organizational structures have changed, and contacts are no longer in their roles. Kasey Cotulla, President and Owner of Delta Print Group, knows these challenges all too well: "The people that were buying six months ago may not be the people writing POs or establishing a relationship today. We have to be active in doing the extra work of finding out how organizations are reorganized."

Despite these new challenges, Cotulla and his team have seen sales success. Their secret? Being experts on their clients' needs and offering the ideal solution to address them.



Kasey Cotulla with his team of 200 employees at Delta Print Group lobby in front of a quote and image of late partner Jim Davis who was an inspiration to the organization.

Understanding the Client & Responding to Their Needs

Cotulla's approach to sales is guided by a key principle to understand the prospect's business: "How does the rep add value? How does the company add value?" Those are the primary questions we ask of our prospects and clients."

Delta Print Group is a collective made up of eight different brands, and its breadth of offerings is one of the company's greatest strengths. Because the company offers so many different services, sales reps have numerous ways to deliver value to several different customer segments. But to show how Delta Print Group's print services address their prospect's pain points, the sales team needs to understand each service. Technical know-how makes all the difference. Cotulla says, "You can have that relationship, and you can know your client. But if you don't know what is needed at the production level, you'll probably shortchange your client and occasionally have things go wrong."

Developing expertise on the technical side of printing enables Delta Print Group's sales reps to take a consultative approach. The average prospect isn't an expert in print. But Cotulla and his team are. They can bridge the gap between what the client needs and what Delta Print Group offers. "We've got to understand both sides of the equation," Cotulla says. It should be no surprise then that some of Delta Print Group's most successful sales reps have come from customer service and production roles. Cotulla started in the print industry as a janitor and worked his way up the ladder, so he knows the expertise you can gain from working in other parts of the business. Employees working in production and customer service are deeply engaged with clients and many of the technical aspects of print, and that's what allows them to deliver value to prospects and clients.

“Know your clients inside and out, not just the print and marketing team. Know their business. The more you understand their business, the more you can add value.” – Kasey Cotulla

Let Sales Reps Play to their Strengths

Cotulla presses his sales teams to constantly deliver value, but he doesn't pressure them to do it in a certain way. Sales reps aren't micromanaged or held to a quota that they have to log into a CRM. Instead, they file a weekly report that Cotulla describes as “more of a narrative.” He allows them to work in whichever way suits their style: “Some of them, we make fun if they cross a river or go over a bridge. And some are out in the field all the time and meeting people.” Giving his sales reps autonomy allows them to play towards their strengths.



Shannon Wolford, Director of Sales and Membership, VMA visits Kasey Cotulla at his warehouse.

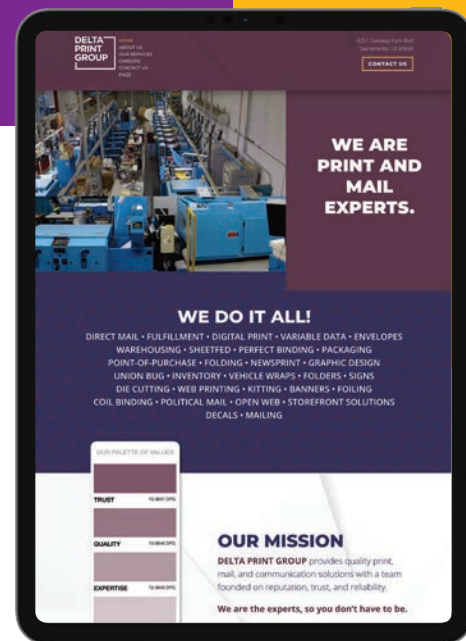
That autonomy also allows them to be creative, which is necessary for connecting with prospects in these fast-changing times. Sales reps who prefer to work in the field have had to change their approach over the last two years. To develop new relationships, they've had to find new ways to engage prospects and interact with them consistently. “It requires thoughtful, creative interaction.” To find those opportunities, “It goes back to understanding the prospect thoroughly — not just as a PO generator — but to truly understand how the client sells their products. If you have a genuine curiosity about how they run their business, then you will be more likely to add value to that client.”

Creativity and Consistency Close Deals

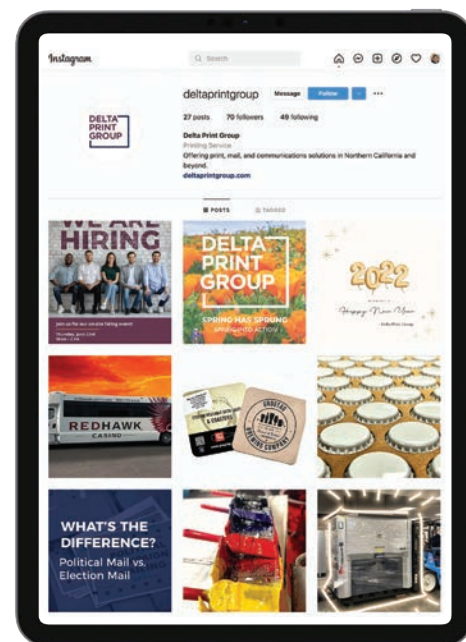
When Delta Print Group's reps engage in thoughtful, creative interactions consistently, it pays off. For example, a local grocer wanted to make better use of customer data but didn't want to offer a store card or loyalty program, which the store leadership viewed as intrusive. Delta now provides direct mail and in-store signage that allows the grocer to get its message out and stay true to its ethos around protecting customer privacy.

Delta Print Group also recently took on a new client that was unsatisfied with its previous print provider. Because of the rep's persistence, the prospect decided to give Delta Print Group a chance. “Eventually, what was a trickle of business turned into a million-dollar account because of that rep consistently being available.”

Delta Print Group may be a large print business, but Cotulla's key sales tenets — understanding the prospect and the products, finding thoughtful, creative ways to engage, and delivering value — hold true for any organization. “Know your clients inside and out, not just the print and marketing team. Know their business. The more you understand their business, the more you can add value.”



Delta Print Group's website



Delta Print Group's social media account

An Open Mind Closes Deals

BY REVA HARRIS

Jason Saldana is no stranger to good old-fashioned selling. His first post-college job was in tech sales, where he spent his days “dialing for dollars.” These days, he still does a lot of selling, though his role — he’s the CEO of Copa, a Santa Clara-based creative agency — and his tactics have changed quite a bit. But he hasn’t forgotten the age-old techniques that he learned in his first job: “Offering trust, credibility, a good price, and good service, and doing what you say you’re going to do...those are time-tested attributes that don’t change regardless of the method that you’re using.”

Those techniques are serving Copa well. As a creative agency, it’s no surprise that the company is skilled at finding innovative ways to generate revenue during sustained upheaval and uncertainty. Here’s what’s working for Saldana and his team.

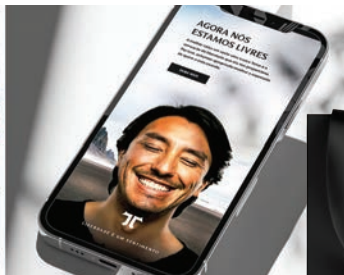
Seeing the Value in Teaming Up

Copa brings in a significant portion of its clients by partnering with consultants, such as brand strategists, marketers, and designers, that don’t have a team. Copa works with them on projects that are too big to handle on their own or outside their specialty area. Saldana takes a flexible approach to make these collaborations work. Depending on the partner’s needs,

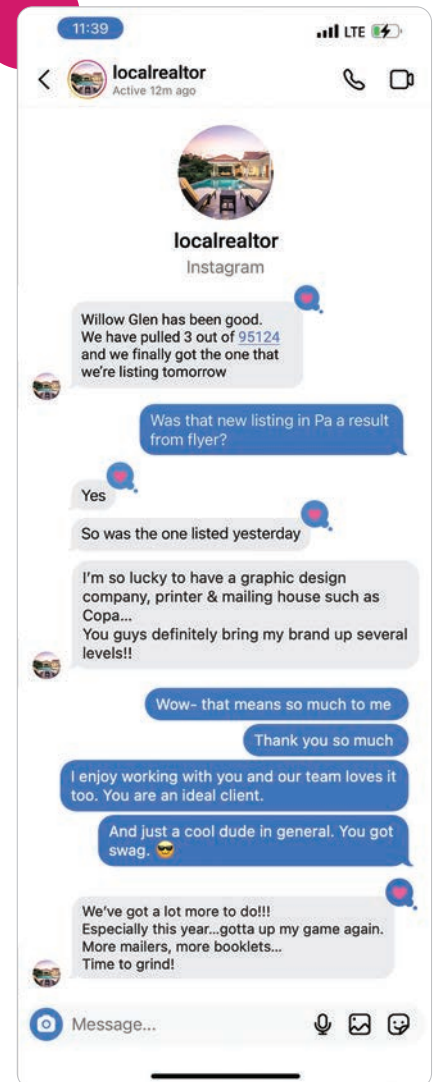
Copa will either white label their services or take a referral outright. “It’s great to be able to bring in a ton of sales with these vendor partners — you treat them well, and they’ll treat you well, too,” he says.

The key is to find partners that share similar values. Copa also collaborates with other agencies and firms, and Saldana has met like-minded partners through VMA. Moquin Press (featured in *Connected Fall 2021*), a specialty printer in Belmont, California, is a long-term partner. Moquin introduced Copa to a cannabis company that wanted to redesign its catalog, and the project evolved into much more for both companies. “We were able to upsell what the client originally wanted to purchase, from a simple 20-page booklet to a 50-page magazine with foil on the cover,” says Saldana. From there, the client wanted to redesign its packaging and website and create a mini-catalog. “It brought us more business as an agency, and it’s bringing a lot more business to Moquin.”

Saldana sees partnerships as a way to generate more revenue for everyone, not as potential competition: “My promise to my vendors is, if I work with you, I want to bring you business. If I have to spend money with them, our clients are spending more with us.”



Copa's work for international client, Torus Underwear, to produce a conceptual logo and visual identity.



Copa's interaction with a real estate client via social messaging in which a flyer design generated more business for the client.

Expanding Their Reach

When the shift to virtual sales turned traditional sales methods on their heads, Saldana saw it as an opportunity to expand his reach. Before the pandemic, he primarily sold to local clients in the Bay Area. But with virtual selling, he says, “My reach is limitless now. I think technology has actually enhanced our power to bring in more sales.” Copa now works with clients as far away as New York, Florida, and even London.

Saldana acknowledges that there’s a learning curve to using digital channels in new ways, but it’s up to the individual to adapt and find methods that work. Being willing to change pays off: “I think we close more on Zoom than in person — not because it’s through Zoom. It’s just because you can do more of them.” A 30-minute in-person meeting can quickly become a two-hour ordeal with the commute, prep time, and post-work. But with virtual selling, you can schedule multiple Zoom calls in that two-hour block. Saldana is taking advantage of the opportunity to schedule more meetings and close more deals as a result.



“If I work with you, I want to bring you business.”

Twenty20, a client referral by Moquin engaged with Copa initially to refresh their catalog, but through working with Copa ended up updating their packaging, website, social media, signs, and more which in turn also led to more business for Moquin.

Being a Helpful Resource

To engage prospects at the top of the funnel, Copa uses thought leadership to stay top of mind and build credibility. The agency creates white papers, case studies, and how-tos, which it shares via social media and email. “By providing value, this allows us to gain that credibility and trust with them, so they’re more apt to say, ‘You know what, I thought I knew what I was doing. Maybe I don’t. Let me give these guys a call.’”

Many of Copa’s clients are realtors. When the pandemic brought their typical marketing tactics (like sponsoring community events and going door-to-door) to a halt, Copa reached out to remind them that direct mail would be a great way to stay connected with their prospects. As a result, there was a significant spike in direct mail usage among realtors when overall spending on direct mail had dropped dramatically. It’s been so popular that Copa created a package that’s become one of the agency’s flagship products.

The key point here is to make it about the client. Instead of focusing on promoting what you can do, make it about what you can do that will help the client achieve their objectives.

Break Out of Your Comfort Zone

With an ever-growing list of partners, expanded reach, and a willingness to focus on helping instead of hard selling, Copa is well-positioned to continue to navigate the waves of change. The common thread in Copa’s success is an openness to try new things and lean into what works. Saldana advises small business leaders that they can find opportunities when they face their fears. “Don’t be afraid to diversify in terms of your sales, strategies, and techniques. Don’t be afraid to try something new. It’s going to be uncomfortable. But you may find out that you like it.”



Copa creates and shares white papers, case studies, and how-tos through social media and email to provide value-added resources to gain credibility as experts in the field.

How Being an Active Listener Makes for a Better Salesperson



BY SHANNON WOLFORD

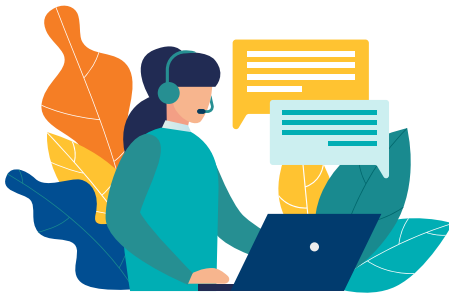
Many salespeople are outgoing and like to talk, so it might be a surprise that the art of listening is one of the most essential skills of a good salesperson.

Those who have mastered listening and focus on offering a value-added solution selling will be the most successful. After all, you need to be able to truly hear your customer's needs, problems and desires to solve for those said needs. Sounds simple right? Listening might not be as easy as it sounds — especially active listening.

How Most People Listen

Most people can listen to their customers and prospects, but few are great active listeners. The majority of salespeople will do the following when listening:

- Think about what they are going to say next
- Interrupt the conversation to make another point
- Plot out the next Netflix show to watch after work
- Check their phones or social media (please don't do this on Zoom or in person!)
- Stare intently at the customer's face and pretend to hear every word



Even if all the points above are avoided, you really need to hear to discover the underlying message of what the customer is saying, beyond just the words. For most salespeople, there is an urgency to make the sale — make their quota — and move on to the next deal. However, many problems can be associated with not being an active listener, which can hinder even the most effective salesperson.

The Problems of Selling Without Being an Active Listener

There is the famous quote, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression" (Andrew Grant). Too often, salespeople launch into their pitch first and then listen later — which might already be too late. It's important to treat each prospect as a fresh, new sale and not to pigeonhole them into one solution that might not even help the customer. When the salesperson is not an active listener, it sends a bad message that:

- The salesperson's need exceeds the customer's need
- Finding a solution to the customer's problem is not the main priority
- That customer's needs are not seen as unique, and therefore a customized solution will not be offered
- There is a lack of respect for the prospect

The poor message of the prospect not being heard can create problems even if the sale is made. The chances are good that if the customer's need wasn't heard, the proposed solution will not fit their needs and solve their problems. Repeat customers, referrals, and happy customers are crucial to sales.



How To Be an Active Listener

Think of active listening as just one step better than listening — or adding just a bit more concentration to what your prospect is saying. Like anything, practice makes perfect, so the more you rehearse active listening, the better you will be at it. Here are some tips on how to be an active listener:

- **Do your homework.** Before the meeting, research the company so you are proficient in their business and knowledgeable about the person you are meeting.
- **Maintain eye contact.** This will create a better communication connection.
- **Create open body language.** Communication is verbal and non-verbal, so positioning yourself in an "open" manner will invite better communication flow.
- **Take Notes.** Not only does this show the prospect that the conversation is important to you, but it will also help you focus and not forget any critical points of the conversation.
- **Let them talk.** You can learn much by letting the prospect do the talking. Most people love to talk, so let them give you clues!
- **Ask questions.** It's okay to ask questions for clarification. Still, please be careful not to interrupt the conversation and resist the urge to plug your service or product into a premature sales pitch.
- **Don't just hear the words. Hint: This one is key!** Listen to understand the prospect's underlying needs and challenges.
- **Repeat back.** At the end of the conversation, reiterate the highlights of the conversation, their challenges, and the next steps.
- **Practice this skill.** Exercise this skill with your colleagues, friends, and family to perfect it.

Barriers to Actively Listening

To ensure the best chance of success, try and remove all barriers to actively listening:

- **Mental fatigue.** Daily selling over the phone and multiple live sales calls can be mentally taxing. Set designated breaks or use meditation tools to calm the mind.
- **Environmental diversions.** Our tech-heavy world is set up for distractions and instant gratification. Concentrate on refocusing when your mind wanders. Put your phone in silence mode during any live or phone meeting.
- **Impatience.** The more people talk, the more you will learn, and the more likely it will be that you genuinely understand their needs and address them with your company's solution. Let them talk, and your opportunity to offer value-add and on-point solutions will come.

Final Thoughts

The bottom line is that active listening means that you are hearing and absorbing the challenge of your prospect.

Your clients and prospects will appreciate it when someone gives them their undivided attention for an extended time. In addition, there are so few good listeners these days that those who do listen well actively will stand out in your customers' minds.





8 SELLING TIPS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 2022!

LESLIE GROENE, BUSINESS CONSULTANT, GROENE CONSULTING

1. Merge the Old with the New

Become aware of current market trends with how people think and act. Think beyond your products/service and on customers' wants and needs. This allows customers to see the value you offer and create trust. With trust comes relationship and investment in you!

2. Become A Trusted Advisor

What decision makers today are looking for more than ever are trusted advisors. To become a trusted advisor, a rep must leave their sales baggage at the door (meaning company brochure-speak, training processes, quota pressure, and so on) and focus on a genuine desire to help the prospect solve a problem.

3. Utilize In-Person, Virtual, and Social Selling Platforms

Follow a successful "hybrid" sales and prospecting process which includes remote/virtual as well as in-person selling. Learn to utilize social selling platforms. Ask for feedback and critique.

4. Ask Good Questions and Actively Listen

One of the best sales techniques is active listening combined with asking questions that allow potential customers to realize their real needs. A few good questions may be enough to generate interest in buying.

5. Build Honest Relationships with Customers

You should truly want to help customers get the results they want. Remember that customers are less interested in the product than in the result. Your product or solution may only help solve part of their problem; help them solve the other parts, too.

6. Build Relationships the Old-Fashioned Way

Take someone out to eat. Invite them to a talk. Send them a thoughtful, handwritten note with an article in it that you cut out of the newspaper or a magazine. Ask them to be a part of something that matters to you in your community or the community they may share with you. Try to focus on building a more personal relationship than on transactional sales.

7. Seek to Understand Before Offering Solutions

Meet your clients where they are. In today's environment, it is imperative for the "modern salesperson" to develop a curious mindset and seek to understand before offering a solution.

Leslie Groene is a business consultant, sales coach, and author with a background in the paper and print industry in the positions of sales rep and sales manager. She has been featured in many Regional Print Affiliate markets as a speaker and business development trainer focusing on revenue generation and profit growth while coaching thousands of salespeople. groeneconsulting.com



315 WORDS ON BREVITY

BILL FARQUHARSON, SALES COACH, AUTHOR, PRESENTER, SALES VAULT

In one of my favorite movies, *A River Runs Through It*, Tom Skerritt homeschools his son and has him write an essay. The young man retreats to his desk and obediently creates a page-long masterpiece before dutifully returning to his father's office and handing it over. His father, who pastors the local church, makes rapid corrections, circles, and X's across the page before returning it to his son with the words, "Half as much." The son returns later, having met this task, only to find his father once again marking up the document, much to the young boy's despair, adding the words as he peers over his reading glasses, "Half again." Once more, the words used are scrutinized, and the report becomes economical and efficient. This time, when he walks into his father's office, class is dismissed, fishing rods are grabbed, and the boy runs off with his brother to pursue their growing passion. (160 words)

In the movie, *A River Runs Through It*, a homeschooled boy is asked to write an essay. The young man creates a one-page report, then returns and hands it to his father, who makes edits before handing it back along with the instructions, "Half as much." The son makes another attempt, and the father again marks up the page before sending the boy back with the instructions, "Half again." One more attempt yields an economical essay. Class is dismissed. (80 words)

A homeschooled boy is assigned to write an essay. His father/teacher instructs him to make the same points using half as many words. This continues until the boy succeeds. The lesson is one of brevity without compromising message quality. (40 words)

Most of us take too long to make our point. There is power in making economic communication choices. Appreciation, too. (20 words)

Get your message across using as few words as possible. (10 words)

This was hard to do! (5 words)

Bill Farquharson is a sales trainer and presenter for the print, signage, label, and packaging industries. He runs the Sales Vault, offering online live sales workshops, template and script downloads, sales challenge discussion groups, and archived content. VMA members get the first month free and then a discounted rate thereafter! Learn more at salesvaultinsider.com or billfarquharson.com, or 781-934-7036.

Tailored Workflow Solutions for Print Providers



LOGISTICS

- Order Fulfilment
- Bills of Lading
- Material Safety Data Sheets
- Scheduling



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Service Requests
- Asset Tracking
- Procurement Requests



FINANCE

- Expense Reports
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- Check Requests
- Purchase Orders
- Credit Approvals
- Budgeting
- Vendor Maintenance



ADMINISTRATION

- Asset Management
- Customer Service Requests
- Facility Requests
- Resource Scheduling
- Safety / Incident Tracking
- Leasehold Management
- Space Planning



SALES & MARKETING

- Order Process
- SOW Approval Process
- Non Standard Approval Process
- Proof of Delivery
- Event Management
- Product Launch
- Product Catalogue Publishing



LEGAL

- Conflict Resolutions
- Retention Policy
- Records Management
- Contracts
- New Matter / Case
- Regulation Inquiries
- Physical File Management



HUMAN RESOURCES

- New Hire On Boarding
- Performance Reviews
- Time Off Requests
- Travel Requests
- Compensation Requests
- Terminations



1.888.201.8431 | ubeo.com



665 3rd Street, Suite 500
San Francisco, CA 94107

PSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FRESNO, CA
PERMIT NO. 220

It's Open Enrollment Time

Benefits are part of what attracts a great workforce. So be sure to check with VMA Insurance Services to see how getting insurance brokered through your industry association can help your business!

OPEN ENROLLMENT ENDS DECEMBER 21

VMA Insurance Services currently writes \$30 million of premium annually and has been helping members get the best coverage since 1984.

As a member, you'll get exclusive access to:

- Get competitive rates
- Choose from HMO and PPO options
- Select from the full suite of carriers, including Kaiser, Blue Shield, and more
- Exclusive Association plans
- Mix and match to make each employee happy
- Supplemental benefits like dental, vision, and more
- Receive complimentary human resources, compliance, and benefit management portals
- Free 24/7 live HR support!

All this plus VMA's superb customer service, including a dedicated account manager who'll have your back when you need it!



**Contact Shannon Wolford at shannon@vma.bz
or 415-710-0568 for more information.**

