

CONNECTED

VISUAL MEDIA ALLIANCE

FALL 2023



SALES

Thinking Outside the Box

CONTENTS

03

Letter from the President

08

How Copa's Carving
Out an Advantage
with Innovation

10

How TGS Elevate Reaches
New Heights with Innovative
Sales Techniques

12

Your Organization's Sales
Differentiator: You!

04 VMA Insider

06 Members News

06 New Members

14 Ask the Experts



CRAB FEST²⁰₂₄

JOIN US FOR A SHELL OF A GOOD TIME AT VMA CRABFEST 2024!

- **Crab Feast:** It's a crab lover's dream come true! Enjoy all-you-can-eat crab with mouthwatering bread, pasta, fresh salads, and a wine-tasting experience.
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Contact Captain Shannon: Reach out to Shannon Wolford at
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Visual Media Alliance is non-profit trade association serving Northern California printers, packaging, label makers, 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

Sales: Thinking Outside the Box

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Valued Member,

The 2023 sales environment presents a dynamic landscape defined by rapid changes, relentless competition, and elevated customer expectations. To thrive in this evolving environment, sales professionals must adapt, continuously innovate and seek new avenues to create value for their clients while setting themselves apart from the competition. Below are some of the pivotal skills and strategies that will empower you to flourish in this new era of sales.

Leveraging Technology: In today's digital age, salespeople must meet prospects and customers on their terms. For example, have you explored adding an online storefront solution designed for seamless ordering? As another tip, don't forget to update your Visual Media Access listing regularly. Listings enriched with fresh content and accurate social media links enhance your online presence and elevate your visibility in Google search results.

Building Relationships: Building genuine connections with customers and prospects is a cornerstone of successful sales. Platforms like LinkedIn offer invaluable opportunities to engage with your network, share valuable content, and foster referrals. This year, VMA has hosted both basic and advanced LinkedIn workshops, providing members with the knowledge and tools to harness the full potential of this platform. Furthermore, our in-person networking events, including Golf, CrabFest, and ConnectUp, are essential platforms for forging meaningful connections.

Selling Solutions: In an ever-evolving marketplace, salespeople must embrace consultative selling techniques to uncover customer pain points, tailor solutions, and vividly demonstrate their value proposition. For insights and resources in this area, I encourage you to explore The Sales Vault, a valuable resource offered by one of our trusted partners.

Our latest issue of "Connected" is brimming with invaluable sales advice from industry experts. Thought leaders such as Bill Farquharson, Dave Mantel, and Shannon Wolford share their wisdom, offering strategies and tips that can up-level your approach to sales. Furthermore, our inspiring VMA members, Copa Design and TGS Elevate, contribute their real-world expertise, providing insights into acquiring and retaining customers.

I trust that you will find this issue informative and inspiring. Your feedback is important to us, please reach out anytime.



Sincerely,

Ian Flynn
VMA President

"What differentiates sellers today is their ability to bring fresh ideas."

— Jill Konrath, Sales Strategist

Elevate Your Sales Strategies with VMA's Innovative Resources

DISCOVER FRESH AVENUES FOR ENHANCING YOUR SALES APPROACH AS A VMA MEMBER:

Unlock Industry Sales Excellence with The Sales Vault

Embrace an exceptional opportunity for sales education and training tailored to printers, packaging, labelers, and agency owners. The Sales Vault is hosted by industry sales veteran Bill Farquharson, who offers 35 years of invaluable experience.



What's included: The program includes live weekly workshops, interactive sales peer discussions, and creative solutions for conquering new sales challenges. You gain access to industry best practices and become part of a dynamic sales community.

EXCLUSIVE VMA MEMBER OFFER

VMA members enjoy a reduced monthly subscription rate of just \$40/participant. Secure your spot at the special rate: salesvault.pro/product/vma-insider. Learn more at salesvault.pro.

Sample workshops like the following:

- Dealing with voicemail
- Selling through LinkedIn
- Selling when you're an introvert

The quality of training is so outstanding that the average Vault Insider membership lasts only months before professionals leave, citing that their business has become too robust. Bill Farquharson takes it as the ultimate compliment.

Personalized Sales Training with Dave Mantel, Sales Trainer

Benefit from Dave Mantel's 20+ years of expertise in leading and coaching successful sales organizations at Acme Sales Development.

Services offered: Acme Sales Development offers a comprehensive suite of services, including sales force evaluation, refined recruiting processes, sales infrastructure development, performance metrics, pipeline predictability, effective training, ongoing coaching, and sales-specific management consulting.

Achieve sustainable sales growth: Understand the intricacies of product and service purchasing and build a robust sales infrastructure from the ground up to ensure long-term growth.



Connect with Dave Mantel at 425-264-3537 or info@acmesalesdev.com. Explore more at acmesalesdev.com.

VM Guide – A Cost-Effective Advertising Solution



Tap into a cost-effective and effortless advertising avenue with the Visual Media Guide (VMGuide), a trusted directory for quality printers, packaging, label, and creative firms in Northern California. The VM Guide is a 150-page, full-color publication mailed to thousands of qualified buyers of print and creative services.

Free listing for VMA Members: VMA members get a free listing in the VMGuide. If you are already listed, we recommend that you review and update your listing with your current information and services.

Increase digital visibility: Your VMGuide listing is also featured on **VMAccess**, garnering 12,000 monthly searches nationwide. This online platform offers in-depth information about your company, including contact details, descriptions, products, services, equipment lists, and website links.

You can update your listing anytime to improve your SEO results and help drive more traffic to your website.

Get more information at visualmediaalliance.org/vmguid. Or contact Shannon at 415-710-0568 or shannon@visualmediaalliance.org.

Save the Date: Come Network at CrabFest 2024

Join us on January 26, 2024, at the Peninsula Italian Social Club in San Mateo for VMA's annual winter Dungeness crab dinner. Last year was a huge success with 135 attendees; We're gearing up to make this year even better!

An unforgettable experience: Don't miss out on a fantastic evening of socializing with old friends and making new ones. Bring your family, friends, clients, and colleagues to savor all-you-can-eat fresh crab, pasta, fine wine, live music, dancing, bocce ball, and more.

Rave reviews: Last year, Jim Frey said, "We had a wonderful time! Thanks for a great evening. We'll definitely be back next year." Expect a night filled with networking, laughter, and fun.

Explore photos: Get a glimpse of the excitement from previous events at bit.ly/3JtfQ3K.

To register, book a table, or become a sponsor, contact Shannon Wolford at shannon@visualmediaalliance.org.

Don't miss CrabFest 2024 — it will be a shell-tastic good time!



2023 VMA Annual Golf Tournament

In late September, VMA hosted our annual golf tournament at the beautiful Metropolitan Golf Links in Oakland, CA. Over 55 members and industry colleagues enjoyed the networking, playing, and the fun BBQ! See more photos at bit.ly/3rNQszg.



CANON CORNER

Inkjet Propulsion – Out of this World!

Space may be the 'Final Frontier' but "jets" allow us to explore everything of today. I'm not talking about jet engines or jetliners, but inkjet engines and the explosion of this technology in our industry. The inkjet is an incredible technology, or "rocket surgery," as I like to say.

It's mystic to think that the human hair (17 micrometers) is 8X greater than the diameter of a droplet of ink from Canon's 1200 dpi native head (2picoliter drop = 2 micrometers). For reference, a rain droplet is usually 1,000 (1 nanoliter+).

The technology is so advanced that a single 1200 DPI print head drops 330 MILLION drops per second, with multiple heads per color. Plus, the heads are water-jacketed to prevent harmonized vibration. The water jacket maintains the temperature to control the ink viscosity. There is so much in this technology to learn and, most of all, how to help drive our industry! If you have questions, reach out to me at rudavis@csa.canon.com or 916-576-1936.

Rusty Davis is a Senior Account Executive with Canon Solutions America, Inc.



MEMBER NEWS

Delta Print Group Expands with Robinson Anderson Print & Fulfillment

Delta Print Group (DPG) has broadened its print capabilities by acquiring Robinson Anderson Print & Fulfillment. Robinson Anderson is a digital print and fulfillment company specializing in in-line bound books, large format printing/routing, and direct mail and fulfillment.

This expansion equips DPG to provide an even wider array of services, including the comic book printing industry and small-batch self-publishers. This recent acquisition strengthens DPG's ability to offer clients extensive marketing options. deltaprintgroup.com



BR Printers Installs RMGT 8-Color Series Perfecting Offset Press



BR Prints recently installed the RMGT 8-color 9 Series perfecting offset press in their Cincinnati location. This addition solidifies their reputation for high-quality, full-color printing, providing us an edge in the market. Equipped with advanced technology, such as Benford LED curing for rapid drying and INSTA.COLOR makeready technology with SMART simultaneous auto plate changing, the new press ensures seamless production and smooth transitions between jobs.

With the ability to produce book and catalog quantities ranging from 50 to 50,000 copies, the new press significantly enhances capacity, allowing them to efficiently compete in the shorter-run 4-color book market. brprinters.com

Copa Design announces Copa Breeze

Copa Design announced the launch of Breeze by Copa, a low-cost, high-quality, subscription-based, unlimited graphic design service designed to take client's brand visuals to the next level.

With this service, clients can have a dedicated design team and high-quality graphic design with \$499/month plans. With the unlimited design service, clients can focus on what they do best, while Copa handles all their design needs efficiently.

Get a FREE 7-day trial to explore all the amazing benefits! Visit copabreeze.com.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



THE COLOR MILL

The Color Mill

Color Mill Design is a boutique design agency offering graphic design, branding, web development, direct mail, and printing services. They help non-profits and small businesses tell their stories and promote their missions through excellent design and take projects from concept to execution with ease.

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Mission Courier

Mission Courier serves small and large companies with attentive and detailed delivery. Their drivers are safe, and customers' packages are delivered on time and are trackable using designated pickup, route, and delivery notifications. Mission's goal is to ensure that their customers are 100% happy and satisfied.

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Platenworks specializes in all things Kluge – maintenance, repairs, and on-site operator training. With more than 35 years of experience in the trade finishing industry, they are training press operators and servicing Kluges in the US and Canada.

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How Copa's Carving Out an Advantage with Innovation

BY REVA HARRIS

As design and print services become commodified, creative agencies must think outside the box to stay relevant. Jason Saldana, chief executive officer of Copa, is always seeking ways to provide his clients with more value.

Copa has gradually expanded its offering over time. In addition to design and print solutions, the Silicon Valley-based agency recently started providing subscription-based graphic design, social media, and out-of-home paid advertising services. But that's just one way Copa's adapting to evolving client needs. To carve out a competitive advantage, Saldana's changing how the company approaches sales and service. Here's how.

Driving sales by solving problems

Saldana and Daniel Morais, Copa's chief operation officer, head up sales for the company, but they aren't the only ones generating sales. For existing customers whose projects don't come through the sales channel, Saldana encourages the design team to think of ways to solve more problems for them: "We're telling our designers to ask questions and think about other things that the client may need. So, if it's a brochure, ask how they plan to use it. Maybe an 11x17 brochure would perform stronger with a landing page, too."

To get designers in the right frame of mind, he tells them to put themselves in the client's shoes. With that perspective, they take a solution-oriented approach instead of a sales-oriented one. Many clients are receptive because the designers aren't upselling; they're offering new ideas that can help them reach their goals: "Usually, you're going to get buy-in from the customer saying, 'Yes, of course, please help me.'" To motivate the designers, when the client accepts their ideas, they receive a bonus or commission.

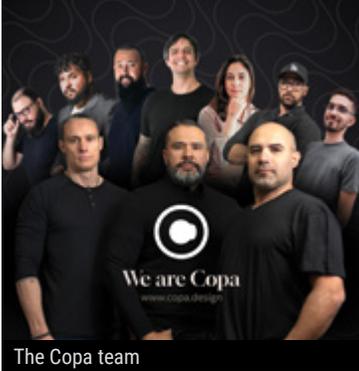
Building on a foundation of tried-and-true tactics

This approach is an extension of a tried-and-true sales tactic that has worked for Copa since it began. Relationship-building is a core tenet of Saldana's sales strategy. "When I meet somebody, I'm not after the deal; I'm after building the relationship. I want to know what they do because I want to be able to be a resource," he says.



Copa project designs for Infortal Worldwide

“We’re showcasing how important design is in business, like how good design can increase sales and valuations.”



The Copa team

Focusing on relationships helped Copa expand a one-off project into a yearlong brand management engagement. This has been a key initiative from Copa’s Chief Creative Officer, Leo Bandeira. When an e-learning company needed help creating a large PowerPoint deck, Copa didn’t just impress them with the quality of the work. Bandeira states, “Design must evoke emotions in its target market, and internally, must build stronger relationships between Copa and our client.” The client also appreciated that Copa cared about how the project performed. Saldana says he would check in to ask, “What did you think of our work? How has it helped you guys? What is your team saying? What are your clients saying? How can we help you more? How can we refine it?”

Engaging with clients, even after a project is complete, sets the stage for them to know, like, and trust Copa, something Saldana strives for in every relationship. “Once we get to know somebody, and they get to know us, they can like us. Then, from there, they’ll get to trust us.”

Making the service offering stand out

Those relationship-building skills have come in handy as Copa rolls out its latest service. Copa Breeze is a subscription-based program allowing clients unlimited graphic design services for a set fee. The program’s scope covers services that fall under standard protocols, such as flyers and ads, while custom projects like logo and brand identity aren’t included.

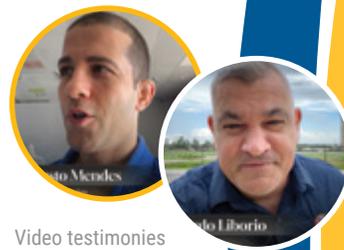
Copa Breeze is in its early stages, but the results have been promising. Saldana says, “It’s one of those services where people say, ‘I didn’t know I needed it until I had it.’ They see the cost savings and the fast turnaround that we provide. They don’t have to hire an on-staff designer. For them, it’s just a slam dunk.”

To get the word out, Copa advertises through social media, using organic content to create engagement and paid ads to generate leads. Saldana is also writing thought leadership content on LinkedIn. “We’re showcasing how important design is in business, like how good design can increase sales and valuations.”

Innovation changes your perspective

By not being afraid to change, Saldana is expanding his horizons. He recently started asking clients to record video testimonials, which he didn’t fully appreciate the value of until he started using them. “It’s always great for us to toot our own horn, but it’s even better if somebody else toots our horn as well. And it’s even better when it’s on video because you can see the person’s facial expressions.” He’s used the video testimonials in paid ads and email outreach, which has generated new leads and resurrected old ones.

It’s a reminder of the importance of being open to innovation and having a can-do attitude. “There’s a solution for every client of ours... once you figure it out, you open up new horizons, and that’s quite liberating.”



Video testimonials from Augusto Mendes and Ricardo Liborio



Custom wide-format print for Birkenstock by TGS Elevate

How TGS Elevate Reaches New Heights with Innovative Sales Techniques

BY REVA HARRIS

TGS Elevate may have a team of seven full-time employees, but it does the work of seven separate vendors for its clients. It's all part of owner Jeff Lo's goal to be the ultimate problem-solver. To achieve that goal, he's taken an out-of-the box approach to differentiation and revenue generation since he purchased the company in 2015. As a result, TGS Elevate sets itself apart as a one-stop shop. The company has expanded decades-long relationships with big-name clients, and the sales team's incentive structure keeps them fresh and motivated to build lasting relationships.

Start with a seamless customer experience

TGS Elevate's services are focused in the visual merchandising and marketing arena. There are many facets to creating an immersive, branded in-store experience, and TGS Elevate makes it easy for clients. Wide-format printing is the core of the business, and the company also provides 2D and 3D design, millwork, metal, promotional products, installations, and software development.

To bring it all together and create an elevated client experience, they pride themselves on delivering a Ritz-Carlton level of service. "With all the products and services we offer, the alternative would be to work with multiple companies. You'd have to re-communicate a change seven times. We speak all those languages and can boil the options down into a solution that solves the specific problem," says Lo.

TGS Elevate can offer competitive pricing because Lo owns a minority stake in four production companies: a millwork shop in Oregon, a prototype shop in California, and a wide format printer and metal-work facility in Minneapolis. "I did this to control my pricing and lead time, limit overhead, and be competitively priced," says Lo, "I'm not beholden to a specific machine or supply chain, or pricing models." The client gets flexibility in execution while having the convenience and ease of working with one partner.



"I'm not beholden to a specific machine or supply chain, or pricing models."

Jeff Lo, Owner of TGS Elevate

Focus on sales team morale

Lo leads the sales team at TGS Elevate, which also includes a hunter and farmer to round out the team of three. Historically, the sales team comprised independent contractors only paid on commission. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, Lo decided to add a different compensation option for those seeking more balance. Both commission-based and in-house sales staff receive incentives to stay motivated and engaged. Salaried reps receive a base salary and commissions, while all reps receive front-end incentives, or what they call “spiffs.”

A spiff is a reward for completing tasks like asking for referrals or getting a client to submit a review. Lo says, “This allows all sales reps to be compensated throughout our long sales cycle, which boosts morale and performance. We sales reps are coin operated, and to be rewarded and validated along the way makes sense,” not just when the company gets its final payment.

With this approach, Lo and the sales team have brought in new clients like Red Bull, Crate and Barrel, and expanded contracts with clients like World Market and Williams-Sonoma.



Custom Print, design, fixtures and install for Birkenstock by TGS Elevate



When you're true to your core values, you can be unconventional

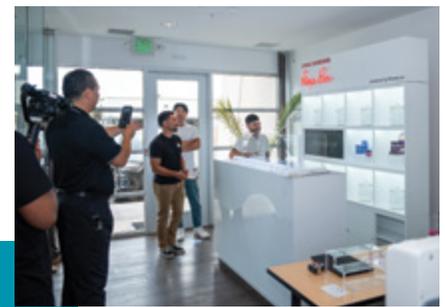
It may seem unorthodox to consider ending a client relationship instead of trying to upsell them, but that's exactly what Lo did to increase sales one hundred-fold over four years with Birkenstock. The iconic shoemaker had been a client for over a decade and only placed small orders once or twice a year. “I saw that it wasn't a fruitful relationship for us financially and in time spent. Choosing from our core value of authenticity, I asked the team, “This isn't worth our time, right?” The team agreed, so he sent an email.

“The email was clear about our boundaries and intentionality of working with clients that utilize our value. I said, ‘Hey, Birkenstock, our work with you isn't a good fit for us, so we're going to focus our time and energy on clients and projects in our wheelhouse. I had no expectations beyond them saying, ‘Okay, bye!’... But I decided to jump into the arms of the universe and see if it would catch me.”

The strategy worked: Birkenstock didn't end the relationship. They invited Lo to present more of TGS Elevate's services to the design team. As a result, the annual revenue from Birkenstock has grown one hundred times over since 2019.



Custom printed, co-branded, full vehicle wraps of AAA's Emergency Road Service (ERS) vans.



Custom displays and fixtures for Xhale Gardens

Don't let fear weigh you down

By staying true to the company's core values and thinking outside of the box, Lo has also shifted his mindset. “It's easy in sales to operate out of fear. Any human would worry about their next check and pressure themselves to close. That only gets you so far. I believe that people are ultimately motivated by two things: fear or love.” For Lo, infusing authenticity into his innovative approach to sales is his way of choosing love.

Your Organization's Sales Differentiator: You!

BY DAVE MANTEL



You have a great company. Your business success is due to the fact that it is unique or demonstratively better than your competitors in some way, big or small. This is what we in the sales development business call a "differentiator." What does that have to do with the topic of sales?

A terrific company differentiator can and should be in the way it sells. If your prospects and clients can tell immediately that something about how your salespeople treat them is different, you'll likely already know this.

A brief history of sales methodology

Before hitting on differentiation, a bit of history about the foundation for sales infrastructure is helpful:

Generally speaking, the idea of professional sales methodology came about in 1946. The concept was in a book titled "How to Sell Yourself to Others" by a true visionary named Elmer Wheeler. The book was about getting a prospect to realize the impact of not solving their problem. This was innovative thinking at the time, for sure. Today, that once revolutionary idea of "finding the pain" is almost cliché, yet still an important milestone in many sales methodologies. Since then, about six primary sales methodologies have developed between 1965 and the late 1990s and, arguably, a couple more since then.

Sales metrics for success

Along with methodology, there are metrics for sales behavior in your organization that can help ensure success for any salesperson willing to perform these metrics consistently. Performance indicators like attempts, first conversations, first meetings, proposals generated, and win/loss percentage should be clear for all involved. Add to this the selling skills needed to help constantly and predictably move sales opportunities through the sales process, and you have a structured set-up.

It's also important that the entire company understands the importance of sales as equal to capability and delivery. A broken sales team must be treated as urgently as broken production equipment.

The role of sales leadership

So, what about any of this is different, better, or even unique? You are! You, as the sales leader in your organization. If you already view yourself as the sales leader, you likely already have a strong sales organization. If you know you should be the sales leader but have yet to take the steps to firmly grab hold, you're on the right-thinking track.

There's also the chance you've delegated the complete authority of sales leadership to someone else in the company. If you choose this path, it doesn't mean responsibility for sales leadership

disappears. No matter how you're leading your sales organization right now, here are three simple steps to help you either get started or brush up on the sales leadership work you've already been doing:

STEP ONE

Accept and embrace that no matter your method and style, as the leader of your business, you are the sales leader. This alone is the beginning of your organization selling differently. Your leadership is required to ensure the execution of your vision and strategy by the sales team.

While the idea is simple, putting this into practice requires commitment and responsibility. This does not mean you need to become the sales manager, though small business executives often perform this role and may even do some selling themselves. It does mean you are the sales leader and cannot leave this vital role to anyone else in the company.



STEP TWO

Assess what you know and what you don't know about your current sales team. The following questions will help get you thinking. Here are ten questions about your sales staff, which are huge differentiators.

Take an inventory of your answers; "Yes," "No," or "I don't know."

- Do I feel there are enough opportunities for new business in the sales pipeline?
- Regarding prospecting activity, could there be call reluctance amongst my salespeople?
- Are the people on my sales staff comfortable with my expectations?
- Is the company hiring the right kind of salespeople?
- Am I tracking the correct information, and is my sales team being held accountable?
- Is my current sales team capable of carrying out my forward-looking strategies?
- Is sales leadership and sales management having a positive effect on my sales organization?
- Could there be a problem with selling skills?
- Do I have the right people in the right roles?

Assuming I have at least some right people in place, do I know what it will take to grow revenue with my current sales team?



STEP THREE

Challenge your answers. If you answered "I don't know" to more than a couple of these questions, you'll want to ask yourself how much each "I don't know" question affects revenue. If you answered yes, challenge your answers with "Am I sure?" And "How do I know?" For a "No" response, the additional yet even more important question is "Why not?"

If you've gotten this far, congratulations! You are now thinking outside the box regarding how your organization sells differently. You've taken the first steps in being the sales leader in your company.

Dave Mantel is the president of Acme Sales Development, LLC, a sales transformation specializing in all sales development and transformation areas. You can reach Dave at 425-517-0099 or dave@acmesalesdev.com.



TRY THIS APPROACH. I DARE YOU.

BILL FARQUHARSON, OWNER & SALES TRAINER, SALES VAULT

My friends at VMA asked me to “go wild” writing an article about non-traditional sales strategies. Okay, VMA.

Here are a few wild sales ideas, all unorthodox and unusual.

Idea #1: The Mailing

Send a mailing with the words “Print is Dead” on the outside envelope. Then, insert a letter that starts with, “And yet you opened this letter. That proves that print is not dead, only creative ideas on how best to engage print. Let us help you harness the power of print to drive people your way.” A mailing piece like this proves the point you are making. It’s talking about something we’ve all heard and not only faces it head-on but takes advantage of it.

Idea #2: The Ad

Create a campaign for your services (print, signage, design, etc.) with this message: “Now accepting

new customers.” Can you imagine? The sales approach, “Do you have anything I can provide an estimate on?” comes from a weak position. Channel your inner “You want me on that wall. You need me on that wall.” Jack Nicholson. Sell with confidence, and you have raised the bar to eye level.

Idea #3: The Conversation-Starter

Some salespeople have promotions at the bottom of their emails. Instead, consider trying a compelling quote: “A good vendor is as important as a good customer.” Put it in an email, and you will find it a great conversation starter. One note, you’d better have the words to back it up when someone asks, “What does that mean?”

Idea #4: The Motto

If I asked, “What do you do?” you might respond, “I sell print,” or “I’m in sales,” or “I am a graphic designer.” Yawn. When I asked one of my clients to summarize his job, he replied, “We help our

customers find their customers.” Boom. Drop the mic. That is the best description of what we do that I have ever come across.

When you think about the essence of your job as a salesperson, it starts with getting someone’s attention and continues with a strong message. My clients tell me their #1 sales challenge is connecting with people. Any one of these ideas is capable of solving that. Use all four, and you should have your own warning label.

Bill Farquharson is a sales trainer and runs the Sales Vault, an online program with live sales workshops, template and script downloads, sales challenge discussion groups, and archived content. VMA members get the first month free and a discounted rate after that! Get more creative sales ideas at [SalesVault.pro](https://www.salesvault.pro) or call Bill at 781-934-7036.



UNLOCKING SALES OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH YOUR TRADE ASSOCIATION

SHANNON WOLFORD, DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP & SALES, VISUAL MEDIA ALLIANCE

Navigating the intricate world of sales can often feel like trying to swim upstream against a relentless current. Persistent gatekeepers, unresponsive prospects, and the constant search for high-quality leads can be daunting.

However, a simple yet highly effective strategy can help you sprint past these hurdles and unlock new sales opportunities: Getting actively involved in your local trade association, such as the VMA.

Why should you consider becoming an active member of your local trade association? Let’s explore the myriad ways participation can fuel your sales success:

- 1. Networking Opportunities:** Building relationships is at the core of successful sales, and trade associations offer many events and gatherings where you can connect with potential clients and partners. Whether online events, ConnectUp meetings at member facilities, or the enjoyable CrabFest and Golf Tournament, these venues provide an ideal platform to establish valuable connections that may translate into future sales.
- 2. Market Research:** Staying informed about industry trends is essential. Your trade association can be an invaluable resource, providing access to industry reports and

publications. VMA, for instance, offers the “Performance Industry Printing Insights,” enabling you to stay ahead of the curve.

- 3. Educational Resources:** To enhance your value to customers, consider taking advantage of the educational resources offered by your association. VMA’s Print University, with over 60 free classes, can help you sharpen your skills and stay competitive.
- 4. Access to Industry Expertise:** Sales tactics and marketing strategies are ever-evolving. Your trade association connects you with experts who can offer guidance and fresh ideas. For instance, VMA’s Sales Vault, led by Bill Farquharson, continually provides new insights and strategies to boost your sales efforts.
- 5. Collaboration Opportunities:** Partnering with fellow association members on joint projects can lead to increased sales opportunities. Collaborative ventures often open doors to new clients and markets that may have been difficult to access alone.
- 6. Marketing Your Business:** Associations frequently offer platforms to showcase your business. Take advantage of opportunities to promote your new equipment, services, completed projects, and new hires through association publications and events.

- 7. Industry Awards and Recognition:** Enter your outstanding work into national award competitions hosted by the association. Celebrate your achievements on social media and in your marketing efforts, leveraging these accolades to bolster your brand’s reputation.
- 8. Ask for Referrals:** Once you’ve built rapport with your association colleagues, don’t hesitate to seek referrals. Referrals are often the most effective way to generate new sales opportunities, as they come from trusted sources within your professional network.

In conclusion, the effort you invest in your trade association participation can directly correlate with the results you achieve in your sales endeavors. By becoming more deeply involved with VMA or other relevant associations, you multiply your chances of success. Remember, there’s no such thing as too many meaningful connections in sales. Embrace the power of trade associations, and watch your sales opportunities soar.

Shannon Wolford is the Director of Membership and Sales with VMA. She is a sales professional and expert with over 25 years of experience in technology, printing, and small business. She’s passionate about helping VMA members thrive! Contact Shannon at 415-710-0568 or shannon@visualmediaalliance.org.

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