

What To Do When Salespeople Don't Use Your Sales System?

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[Blog entry](#)

Do you know that nearly 2,500 left-handed people die each year as a result of using products meant for right-handed people?

I mention this because even more technology companies kill their bottom lines every year by letting people get away with not using their companies' sales and other systems.

While systems could streamline operation and could make it more consistent, many cases people are just improvising, and redouble their efforts for nothing.

As a result, many IT companies employ more people than they really need.

But living in the 21st century for a few years now, most IT companies have implemented some kind of sales systems.

A few have got great payback on their systems, but most of them haven't. And a handful of them have lost an arm and a leg in the process.

The main reason why they've lost on systems is because they don't use them.

They've bought fancy CRM and other systems, so management can brag about how sophisticated the company is, while salespeople, being scared of those systems, keep scribbling their chicken scratch notes on index cards, the back of a fag pack and the flipside of business cards.

Is it because the systems are useless? Maybe.

Is it because the systems are complicated? Maybe.

Or is it just due to one of the old habits of old habits: They die hard.

So, sometimes old habits need some strategic culling.

Over the years of designing and building such systems for my clients, I've come across seven reasons why salespeople don't want to use systems.

Reason #1: Bad Systems

By bad systems, I mean half-baked, bug-riddled systems that keep crashing and causing salespeople to tear their hair out strand by strand.

Some signs of bad systems

- Unsteady
- Slow
- Erratic behaviour
- Difficult to use
- No or very little and hard-to-reach help
- Integration errors
- Bad naming (menus don't match standard business terms)

The cloud is a big deal nowadays. And I believe it's a good idea to move certain applications to the cloud, so all the necessary people have access to it from wherever they happen to be.

The problem is that many of these software providers are penniless start-ups, and in order to save money on development, they keep staffing lean. Well, very lean.

One CEO and an executive assistant.

The whole company is an army of outsourced people all over the third world with a gazillion different work habits of a gazillion time zones.

Now try to coordinate that baby!

Or the other disease is that the idea and the intention behind the system is good, but investors push the leadership team to put the product on the market before it is 100% complete.

So, what I suggest here is that even if you like the system on the surface, check the company that provides that system.

Based on your inspection, is this company capable to provide and support such a system?

When you check the company's website, how many people and what job functions do you see under the "Meet Our Team" tab?

Is it possible that a president and a CEO team can provide such a system?

Reason #2: Wrong Systems

Having the wrong systems is all about the client. It's all about the user of the system that's chosen the inappropriate system.

Some signs of wrong systems

- Lack of integration with commonly used tools.
- Not flexible enough to follow the client's workflow.
- Users find it too complicated to use.

Many users fall into the trap of choosing the cheapest systems.

So, imagine a lumberjack, who, in order to save money, instead of a John Deere H414¹ tree harvester head (\$100,000 plus), chooses a \$5 hacksaw.

Yes, the hacksaw can do the same job, but what sort of productivity does it allow? Not much.

The H414 costs a pretty penny, but that investment pays off in the form of productivity.

And how long do you think the lumberjack with the hacksaw can stay in business? Not too long, I reckon.

And it doesn't mean that the H414 is better than the hacksaw.

But they serve different purposes.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwwkO7m4bpY>

A friend of mine has just been hired by a high-end cabinet maker company in Florida. The company started by two Ukrainian brothers in 2001. They use MS Excel for everything... and it's all in Russian. Everything in the company that is written down is written in Russian. It's not a problem for the Russian accountant and the Russian company lawyer, but it's a problem for everyone else.

The brothers are just realising that some of the best people they need to grow the business don't speak Russian, so, no matter how painful it is, they've just hired a consultant to help them to set up a better business management system.

Yes, it will cost some money, but it that's needed to be competent and competitive, then it must be done.

Reason #3: Lack Of User Buy-In

This usually happens when team members are so mired in their own methods, which they call them systems, that they don't want to change and learn your system.

In their minds, what they are using right now is perfect and there is no need for you to interfere with their current systems.

And this is where the business owners' perspective can clash with employees' perspective. Business owners keep an eye on the business's performance, while employees usually monitor their busyness levels.

And obviously, since learning a new system would increase their busyness levels, they take the path of least resistance of not learning the new system.

Luckily, we also know that people are willing to change if that change is tied to some kind of incentive.

In most IT companies, people work either on an hourly basis or on a fixed annual salary. The hourly pay promotes incompetence and ineffectiveness and the fixed salary, after a few years, feels like an entitlement.

I believe to have both a static and a dynamic part of anyone's compensation. The static part is a fixed salary and the dynamic part is a percentage of monthly company-wide revenue.

This approach focuses both on long-term and team-wide achievements.

Think about it. What is the incentive of a near minimum-wage assistant to assist a superstar salesperson to achieve superstar performance again and again?

Nothing.

Actually, she soon starts sabotaging him due to the unfair split of the jointly earned money. Let's face it, the assistant has a significant part of the sales superstar's success. So, she might as well get a bit more than slave's wage.

Reason #4: Poor Documentation

Any system is just as good as its documentation. Without good documentation, people have no chance in hell to learn the intricacies of the system, and without certain intricacies, even the best computer can become just a glorified typewriter.

Documentation should be reviewed regularly and the system administrator should be in charge of the review. When it's time for the next review, she should coordinate with all the key people to sit down and review all the suggestions for improvement.

And since so much rides on the success of the system, management should offer full cooperation to the system administrator to update the system.

Reason #5: Lack Or Insufficient System Training

You can have the best system, but if your people can't use them, then it's dead in water.

It's like asking cannibals to use knife and fork. No matter how expensive and sophisticated the knife and the fork are, our hero will make a hell of a mess around the table using them.

The sad reality is that most companies opt for one-day crash courses, and then send their people into "battle" on a sink or swim basis.

I've had a number of clients who bought Infusionsoft 2-4 years ago, but their key people are still not proficient in its operation. They barely use the basics.

Then what was the point in buying it in the first place?

When times are getting tough, marketing and professional development are the top two items that disappear from IT companies' budgets.

I see them as the two most important items because, in any area, when skilled people do good marketing, they end up stinking rich with very happy clients.

Whatever skill development programme you run, make sure to make it mandatory for all the people who are expected to use it.

I also believe in cross-training.

Your bookkeeper doesn't have to be perfect in your project management system, but she should have a rough idea in case she has to pull some financial data on a project into the accounting system.

Know some people may argue they have no time for these training programmes, but without developing the proper skills, they can't work effectively. And if they can't work effectively, then they shouldn't work at all.

At least not at your joint.

Reason #6: No Designated Systems Administrator

If you have systems in your business, you need a system administrator who makes certain all the systems are fully operational.

Part of the system is a ticket system that people can use to report systems issues.

Yes, people could just phone the system admin person, but she's likely to be working on a previously reported problem, and if you interrupt her, that only means unnecessary delays. Hence, the ticket system.

What does such an administrator do?

She sets up new users, issues login information, monitors usage levels, makes sure users have the right skills, checks for missed pieces of data, notifies users about missed/overdue actions.

She also monitors the company's wiki that contains all the documented processes and procedures and takes recommendations from users about the improvement of processes and procedures.

Then she can coordinate meetings with the key people as to what recommendation is accepted and what is rejected.

Last but not least, she inserts all the sales letters and templates into the relevant systems.

Frederick Taylor once said that in the past systems had to conform to people, but today people have to conform to systems.

But considering that Taylor was an idiot, let's just say that systems have to conform to people.

More accurately...

Effective systems have to conform to smart people.

When effective systems and smart people work together, the end result is borderline miracle.

Reason #7: System Use Is Not Part Of The Job

Using the appropriate systems should be part of every job.

When you hire a bookkeeper, she must understand computerised accounting.

The problem is that many companies require the knowledge of specific software, but not the knowledge of the very concept the software does.

One example of this lunacy is the profession of technical writing.

I have some technical writer friends, and I know from them that technical writing courses (6-12 months) teach neither technology nor writing.

The curriculum is to learn to use specific software programmes.

So, what's the point in studying advanced mathematics and fiendishly complex science for four long and painful years to become an engineer, when any Tom, Dick and Harry can hit the easy button and become a technical writer through a six-month crash course at the local college with zero technical and a tiny bit more writing knowledge?

Students learn how to use certain software programmes (Flare, Blaze, XMetal, etc), but learn neither technology nor writing in that time.

But understanding either technology or writing doesn't seem to be a requirement.

The same goes for not using the company's systems.

If it's not mandatory, it's optional.

If it's optional, it's more convenient not to use them at all.

But if, as the business owner, you know the use of those systems is beneficial to your company, then you have the right to mandate their usage.

On Summary

This is all well and good, but let's look at why people, mainly salespeople would refuse to use the sales system even if everything is in order.

The main reason is that they know if something goes wrong with their companies, they are the first to be replaced.

Most IT companies have zero loyalty to their salespeople.

The way they are treated reminds me of a scene from the movie *Ben Hur*, when the new consul, Quintus Arrius, goes down to the belly of the galley to make an announcement to the slaves:

**"You are all condemned men! We keep you alive to serve this ship!
So, row well and live!"²**

And salespeople know this very well.

Along with the marketing people, they are the hands that feed the whole company, but they are often treated by management as necessary evil.

And just as most IT companies don't have any loyalty to salespeople, salespeople have pretty much the same level of loyalty to their companies.

So, instead of using their companies' sales systems, they use their own. They know full well that their future employability depends on their contacts, and they make sure no one can yank these hard-built contacts from them.

And no one can blame them for it.

They merely do what's best for them and their families.

What can you do as a business owner?

Provide a kick-arse work environment for your salespeople, and let them feel they are parts of the company.

But you can't mandate anything. People have to do it voluntarily. They must believe that doing what you ask them to do is good for the company, and in turn, it's good for them personally.

In the meantime, don't sell harder. Market smarter and your business will be better off for it.

[With victory on high...](#)

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX6v4W71hrE>



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Additional Knowledge Products to Build Your IT Business

Here are some knowledge products on business development for building your premium-calibre IT business. It's especially for privately held "entrepreneurial" IT companies and solo IT professionals.

These products are sort of workbooks. They explain what is what, then walk you through the "how to..." part of the process. As you read the books, you do the exercises, and by the time you finish reading, all the relevant bits and bobs are in front of you on paper applied to your own unique situation. For this reason, the materials are not long but rather dense.

I hope you find them valuable.

Winning Yellow Pages Advertising For Information Technology Companies: One piece of good news is that most people who look you up in Yellow Pages are serious buyers. Another piece of good news is that some 97% of Yellow Pages ads are like eunuchs in a harem. They are physically there but are unable to perform.

The bad news is that your Yellow Pages ads might look like your competitors' ads. But that's great recognition and you can now correct this error.

Some people say, no one uses the Yellow Pages any more. Normally not. But in case of emergency (server down or computer crash), people look up the Yellow Pages and phone the company that is best differentiated from the masses. And remember that emergency work has very very high perceived value. So, take a moment and look at your ads. [Winning Yellow Pages Advertising For Information Technology Companies](#)

Perfect IT Client Profile Development Toolkit: We all know the high financial and psychological cost of low quality clients. They pay little but demand a lot. Even when they are happy, they are reluctant to give testimonials and introduce us to their connections. So, it's pretty important to carefully cherry-pick clients and to make sure they come from the top 0.5-2% of the Perfect Client Pyramid.

Yes, these top-drawer companies are hard to "conquer", but in the long-run, they offer the highest return on your marketing investment. But before contacting them, you have to define them in your business. And this is what this knowledge product does. [Perfect IT Client Profile Development Toolkit](#)