**RedZone Podcast Episode #107: Modern Sales | Your Customers Don’t Need You Anymore – with Chris Peterson, Principal, Vector Firm**

Bill: All right, well Chris, I want to welcome you to the show today.

Chris P: Oh, thanks Bill. I appreciate it.

Bill M: So let's start out with kind of your general macro-thesis here. Do you think that the concept of a traditional salesperson, hunter, farmer, whatever we want to call it, do you think that concept is alive, dead, doing well, or on the decline? What are your current thoughts on that?

Chris P: I'd say it's on the decline. It's been on a decline probably for 12 to let's say 15 years, somewhere around there. I don't want to say it's dead because hard work makes bad technique look okay. So there are a lot of hardworking salespeople out there that are still doing the traditional methods that were taught to them and in 1985 or 2002 and they're still doing okay. A lot of the core activity is still very relevant in certain types of selling. A lot of consumer selling. So in real estate for example, or insurance, a lot of that traditional selling.

When I say insurance meaning insurance to consumers. A lot of that traditional methodology is still effective. But in business to business sales, anything that costs over $100, I always use that phrase, over $100 - and its business to business. It's changed quite a bit. The old ways of going out and pounding on as many doors as you can, throw as much mud against the wall as possible don’t exist.

Try and manipulate or charm your way past the gatekeeper to get to a decision maker. Two people that don't exist anymore, by way, there are no more gatekeepers. I mean there's a lobby and there's voicemail. There are no gatekeepers and there are no more decision makers because the decision is usually made by a committee of people nowadays with somebody that sits at the head of the table who may be in charge of that committee. But that traditional method, it's just not effective anymore.

But some people follow it so it's declining. I don't think it's dead yet because like I mentioned, somebody out there could still use a wooden racket. Roger Federer could use a wooden racket and still do pretty darn well playing tennis. He wouldn't be the best in the world, but he'd still do okay. But why do you want to use a wooden racket when you don't have to?

Bill M: I think that the concept of being talented at any sport, any profession, there is a top of the class for being a neurosurgeon. If 100 neurosurgeons graduate, there's going to be…. are you being operated on by the guys at the top of the ton, 20% or the guys at the bottom of the class? I think, just because they're a neurosurgeon doesn't make them great. Just because they show up at your front door and they're a sales rep, doesn't make them great. There's the best of the best and theirs the second rate. It's interesting, I wonder if in the past 10 to 15 years it's just exposed and made an amplified weakness in some respects. Meaning that if you couldn't prospect by picking up the phone and call people, if you weren't good on the phone, does that all of a sudden change because the technologies have shifted to LinkedIn and email and other groups within Facebook and building relationships. If you can't do it on the phone, how are you going to translate that into some other model?

Chris P: Well, I think that has something to do with it. What's really happened is and it definitely has exposed weakness. It definitely has exposed a lack of integrity and I share this with people all the time. If you have integrity and you want to sell with integrity and you work hard, then embrace this change because the manipulator who just shows up at 10:30 and goes home at 3:30, those people that used to just have a relationship here or there and just schmooze their way through and why to customers and figure out ways to close the business with very manipulative techniques. Those days are gone. They can't do that anymore. There's something out there called the Internet that has leveled the playing field for everybody. What it boils down to is this, before the Internet, when I got out of school, Bill, I was... I have a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Florida, which is back then it was a top 15 actually, one year anyway, it was top 15. We beat Georgia Tech one year.

Bill M: That's good.

Chris P: U.S. News & World Report rankings, I think it was 1991; and so we were pretty pumped. Anyway it's a really good, it's a strong engineering program, but I wanted to sell. So I took my degree and I sold copiers for two years to learn how to sell and back then essentially what would happen is you would throw as much mud against the wall as possible knowing that somebody was going to let you in the door. Because what would happen is this, we would knock on the door and a decision maker would be in the back and someone would say, "Hey, Chris from banker's here, blah, blah, blah, blah." They'd say, "Oh, I can't see a... I don't have time to see a sales person, but I’ve got to learn about this. I've got to find out what this costs. I’ve got to understand about this. Send them back here."

So I'd get a few minutes with them and then that few minutes might turn into a half an hour. Then we'd have the demonstration schedule. Today, well, first of all, I don't get a chance to walk in a door as a sales person nowadays because all of the lobbies are controlled by non-humans. But let's just say I did.

Today, the person that you want to meet with doesn't need you. All the information is at their fingertips for free on the phone. Now, it's not the best information. Salespeople can usually provide better information, but why would I want to see a salesperson when I can just go on my phone or on my PC - at my convenience when I need something and find the information I want in three minutes? Why do I want to waste my time with a salesperson?

So that's the biggest dynamic today. It's not so much that the weakness has been exposed so sales people aren't doing that well. The weakness has been exposed as kind of a result of the fact that we don't have the information anymore. It used to be that customers had to come to us for information. They don't anymore. So why will they see us? Why do they need us? I mentioned this to you before, that this isn't a bad thing for great salespeople. If you're a great salesperson, you're in great demand today. If you're an average to poor salesperson, you're obsolete. There's no need for you. So if you want to be a great salesman, you should be loving what's happening right now.

Bill M: There is a tremendous amount of complexity with both the listeners that are buying on my show, so they're the buyers. There's a tremendous amount that they're trying to navigate. There's a tremendous amount of complexity on my side of the fence with my teams and trying to educate newbies, basically 20 somethings all the way up to the 30s, just trying to convince them of the new - to help them understand.

The old people, that's a whole other story. The older folks, I'm 50, so I'm going to call anybody north of 40 old. The older folks who don't want to learn anymore, or the majority of them just kind of don't have the hunger to learn, or at least that's my perception. How do you navigate the fact that we have to simplify a message that's in a very complex environment, our buyers want to have a simplification. Yet how do you collapse both worlds for the people that you're working with?

Chris P: Yes, that's hard because it's not just a knowledge gap. I shouldn't say a gap but difference of knowledge base. But it's also a difference in culture, right? The 50 year old today and I'm 50 also and it's kind of nice being 50 because I can just call people old. It's like being in engineering. No, it's like having an engineering degree. I can call people geeks all day. Right? Because I'm making fun of myself. So it's fun. But I've been 50 for about six weeks now and I'm calling everybody old and I'm not worried about them being offended because I'm one of them. But there is a difference, right? There's a difference in the way a 27-year old perceives methodologies and systems versus a 50-year old who's been doing it for 25 years or so.
What I've seen, because that's what we do. We come into organizations, mostly system integration companies that do security and Pro AV and IT work. We help them with their sales organization and we help them get to where they need to be today to sell in today's environment. That sales organization is usually a mixture of the person who was looking at retirement and the person who is looking backwards at college and then everything in between. What I've learned is this, the folks that have been around a while, there are a few anecdotes that you can share with them - anecdotal evidence, I guess you could give a few scenarios you can share with them that make them understand, "Wow, you know what? That's true."

One of the things that I hear quite often is, Chris, I don't know. I've had these relationships forever. It's just don't get it. I've been doing the same thing for 30 years, it's worked for ever. Now, recently it's just not working. I don't know what it is". When you share these stories with them, when you share the idea of, "I used to be able to get in somewhere between 5% and 10% of the accounts that I need to go see. Now I don't get into any, so you know what, I'm just going to call my current customers." You talk about, well it's interesting how we think our customers are loyal in this industry. Do you really think they're loyal? Were they that loyal 15 years ago? No, I got them secure. I've been paying attention to them. They love me now. Well maybe not. Maybe it's just that your competition isn't calling on them because no salespeople call on other companies anymore.

We've all got our own accounts and we don't go after any new accounts. Not in the right way anyway. So with the older folks sharing the scenarios with them of what's happened in the last 10 or 15 years and letting them see it logically that, "Wow, yeah, you're right. That's why it's changed." Letting them have excuses because the fact of the matter is they've got excuses. The way that they were taught to sell was the same way people have been selling for centuries. I'm not just throwing that word out - really, centuries, and all of a sudden it's changed sometime around 2004, 2005, 2006. Then we hit a recession and it really changed. Now we've come out of the recession and it's a new ballgame. Totally new ball game. So, they do have some excuses, let them share their excuses with you, and then they will eventually say, okay now what do I need to do? Because I'm 57 years old. I don't really feel like learning a whole new process.
Here's the beauty of it. It's not that different. It's just a little different. But what it's like is changing your grip on your golf swing, one little quarter of a centimeter to the right and you're driving that ball 20 yards further. One little change instead of making 100 phone calls a day, let's make 15, but let's make them with a follow up email, stopping by, sending some blog posts, connecting with them in LinkedIn and making sure they realize that we know what we're talking about. Now, we're waiting for them to call us because we know we've provided them with the information necessary to where we look like the competent expert instead of being an overly aggressive salesperson that we were taught to be in 1991 - to where they get annoyed with us and never call us back because they don't have to today.

That's what I've learned with the older folks. With the younger ones, create your process and teach it to them. They’ll embrace it because the one thing they won't embrace - what I love about the generation Z folks and the Millennial folks – is, I love the fact that you can't get anything by them. Our generation just can't stand these people because they challenge us because it used to be, "Look, I'm older than you, you're going to listen to other way we're doing it and you do it." They don't, they challenge us. If it doesn't make sense, they're not going to do it. Well, the fact of the matter is knocking on 100 doors a day in 2019 doesn't make sense.
They're not going to do it. Trying to manipulate a customer while your mission statement is, our customers are ahead of everybody else, doesn't make sense to them. They won't do it. So come up with a system that makes sense for 2019, makes sense for the 2020s and then teach it to them. They usually will embrace that. That's what I've seen on a macro level. Bill, at your organization it might be, "Oh, that's not going to work with my sales team." But on a macro level, that's what I've seen.

Bill M: I would agree with that. I think this conversation about the older and the younger is really important. I also think what's exposing now is what people are really uncomfortable with is the speed of change. Back when the horse drawn carriages were here and the skill sets needed to maintain a horse-drawn carriage, to sell a horse-drawn carriage, to keep it steady, to keep it operational on the road - that all changed when the car was invented. All those changes and those skills had to morph over to the car. The horse traders, they were mad because their business was upset but they needed skilled labor to move over to cars. It's the same thing now, it's just that it’s happening in more industries more quickly. Those skilled changes we're seeing quite a bit is that we're from an on-premise world where there were a certain set of skills, but now you move from that into the cloud and now you're stretched between on-prem and in the cloud. Those skills are needing to stretch. So, we're filling that white space for our customers for that. I believe that the same thing is happening with selling. One of the concepts for innovation for the older folks is - can you unlearn, you've learned a whole set of ways, but what's your ability to unlearn?

I think that's a sticky point right now because, and I think also many of the 50 year olds are thinking, "Oh, I'm on the downward glide path to retirement when the reality is they're going to be working in another 40 years." What's wrong with that; but how do you sell long-term? What's your value if you're imparting wisdom? I love your concept about breaking things down into processes for the youngsters because that to try to take someone like you and I or at least I'll speak for myself, to take my knowledge and try to break it down into component parts, that is really challenging.
Chris P: Yes, it is. To put together a lesson plan, I guess you could say, or put the material together to teach it to them and then have it implemented and have it retained. That's tough. That's tough to do. This is going to sound harsh, but it's reality. A lot of those folks that couldn't get past the horse and buggy days had to find something else to do for a living. I see friends of mine and they are looking for jobs right now and we’re in a good economy, and they're looking for jobs. They've been salespeople for 30 years and they've been good salespeople for 30 years and they're not good anymore.

They don't believe that the new way is a good way. I understand your perspective because all they see is the extreme because there is an extreme. There are books that are written out there that talk about using technology. Hey, the customer doesn't come to you until the sale is 70% on the way through the sales cycle anyway. So you've got to create digital marketing to capture them. That's true. But if your customer is not coming to you, your prospect's not coming to you until a sale is 70% all the way through the cycle, that's because you're doing a poor job of selling. It's not because of that's the way it is today. It's because most people are selling poorly. That's why.

So they see things like that and messages like that. They hear messages like ‘relationships don't matter anymore’. Because, unfortunately there is so much information out there, people are trying to do anything they can to get some attention.
It's like watching a debate in politics. They're trying to do something to get attention during that debate when there's 12 other people up there on stage. It's like that with people who are throwing content out there. So they'll throw titles out there and say something like, ‘cold calling is dead’. Well, no it's not, but 1995's cold calling is dead. Or, they'll throw things out there like ‘relationships don't matter’.

What ends up happening is the 56 year old salesperson who has built a career and put three kids through college and has a beautiful house because their relationships reads that. He or she automatically thinks that the younger generation is stupid; and they think that the new way is wrong because they read that one headline. There are books written out there that talk about being so volatile with your customer.

Your customers don't want friends. They want people who are going to guide them. That's true by the way, that's true. But customers still want to be customers. Customers still want to be the person that gets the phone calls returned to right away. They don't want to be told what to do. They want it to be suggested to them. There are a lot of messages, a lot of books, a lot of philosophies out there today that are basically telling a 57 year old salesperson who's been successful forever that, ‘Wait a minute, I don't want to do that. That sounds terrible’. That doesn't work either. That new way that is so out there, it just doesn't work and the old way doesn't work so they're in a bad spot.

Bill M: It's interesting about the relationship. I was talking to my team about this. No matter how much new technology you have or how fancy it is or how quickly it moves, one thing that's not changing is relationships, at least in my experience. As you know, I have an innovation forum, I have a podcast, we have a vlog that goes out every week. Over the past two years, we've had several buyers that have come onto our managed security programs that will come to our innovation events. They thought it was great, but then you'd never hear from them saying, "Hey, would you like to talk about anything that we do related to security." They wouldn't even return our messages. But then all of a sudden they'd come to multiple events and all of a sudden they call and say, “You know what? We know exactly what you do, we want you in to do..." It was really interesting. They are very, very clear. The clarity of what they want is super, super high. What's been really stunning is that with a lot of clarity, those are the greatest to work with because they know exactly what they want. But it was funny going back and forth, back and forth with emails and communication. After that we'd have like a beachhead of a relationship because they've come to these free events for a long, long time. We have this whole context for quoting all of these multiple quotes and it's a great, great opportunity. I said, "Well, let's go meet them. Let's go talk to them. Because we haven't met the team, the relationship is only at the CIO level." So I go out with one of my team members, one of the new guys that works with me and we go out and talk to them and I said, "Well, what's driving you guys crazy?"

We know the general stuff. We knew that, "I'm generally unhappy. I don't want a managed service. We've grown and we don't want the MSP, we want a different type of relationship." I said, "We get that, but what's driving you crazy?" Then all of a sudden the real conversation begins and it's, ‘the company we're working with, they don't listen to us. They tell us what to buy, we do our own research, we find out what we want to buy, we tell them we've made a decision and then they keep pounding us. They keep pounding us. We just want the relationship – one, to agree and charge for it, one to agree and charge for it’.

We just need a trusted partner and I get that. There were like three or four stories that were related to that - of what they wanted out of the partner. They weren't transmitting back and forth with email. We didn't get it until we actually sat down; but it was towards the later end of the process, 90% into the process. Are you finding that common? Is this your experience of working with different companies?

Chris P: Yes. So the scenario you just mentioned, it really is where if I was in front of you right now I would show a gradual curve going up into the right. That's the way it used to be with the customer, you might go out and on the second call you make you might get a face to face, a 90- second meet and greet with an office manager or something, right? The next time you meet or you might make an appointment and there's little bit, little bit, little bit, little bit, you get chance to propose, maybe propose a second to do a demo, whatever. Then finally you get it. Today it's not like that at all. On that graph, it's zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero.

They need something and boom, it spikes up and it's with clarity also. If you're doing your job, if you're not doing your job, then they're not going to reach out to you until they need a third price to compare against two others. But if you're doing your job and making sure that they're aware of what you do and that you're competent and that you're an expert in the things that they need. Now I share this all the time with people. I'll put it in context of an MSP. I mean I'm going to really generalize this bill, so tell your tech folks not to beat me up too much, but someone right now, as you and I are doing this podcast, somebody in your marketplace right now, I mean it, right now this moment is sitting around a conference room table and somebody at that conference room table in the last 20 minutes has said, '"Can we just put this stuff in the cloud and have someone else manage it for us?"

If at that moment they're not thinking of you and your company, your salespeople aren't doing their jobs, that's when they call you because for the last 18 months you've sent 14 emails with content, with white papers, with articles, with case studies, whatever, with absolutely no response from them. You sent them LinkedIn messages, you put little teasers on LinkedIn, you've invited them to your events, you've stopped by when you're in a neighborhood, dropped off a nice article that was in a trade magazine with your business card. You left them a few voicemails just to let them know where they're going to go, whatever it might be. You send a private message to them on LinkedIn two or three times. You've touched them 27 times in 18 months, not one response. Then somebody in that conference room says, "Can we just put this stuff in the cloud and let someone else manage it?"

Someone in that conference room who your salesperson has been reaching out to for the last 18 months says, "Yes, I know exactly who we should talk to, this lady, boys, she's been sending me all kinds of stuff and it's really good stuff though. They seem to know what they're doing. So let me call her in here." That's how it works today. When you get brought in, they have a clear, very crisp understanding of what they need and what you do for a living. So your only job at that point is not to convince them that they have a problem that you can solve. They already know that. Your job at that point is to establish credibility with them.

Bill M: It's interesting, I think before we started the show, I mentioned to you that many of the listeners, a chunk of them are going to be entrepreneurs and some, a large variety are going to be CIOs and CISOs in the technology community. I always wondered why can't they go over to the sales or the VP of sales? Why can't they go over to the CMO, the chief marketing officer and listen to this and say, "How can I help you get our brand message out into the marketplace?" Because I think what a lot of people struggle with the volume that's needed. In the old days, it used to be if you saw, if you had... Not the old days, I like to think it's still these days, but I think volume can trump a lot of volume of getting your material out into the market, your white papers, the promotion around the videos that you send out, the podcast, the amount of calls, the amount of LinkedIn messaging. Do you think volume is still a critical component to that and having the right context around your message?

Chris P: I think that the content is more important than the volume because here's a good example, I just got a client of mine out of Saint Paul, Minnesota forward me a message and this is the owner of the company actually and he said, "Hey, this is a guy who I don't care how often he emails because he always has potentially useful content. He forwarded me an email from somebody because we were talking about that recently, about that very question you just said. He referenced this person who says, " don't know when he's going to email me. It's not all the time, but when he does, I open his email because I know he's got good content." There's just so much information that is thrown at us nowadays that you've got to establish yourself as somebody who has helpful content for their audience and I think that's more important than volume.

Bill M: How do you help people get around the trap of sending someone a vendor article isn't helpful content?

Chris P: When you say vendor article, what do you mean?

Bill M: Like if a security vendor says this is why we think our new security widget is great and here though are the speeds and feeds around this, my experience has been forwarding that to someone is not necessarily very useful because they're also receiving five or seven other messages of similar reaction from other people. So how do you put something in a value oriented light?

Chris P: Yes. So first of all, all the content that I would send, well, I shouldn't say all, but most of the content you should be thinking about the customer and what they want to read. Usually they want to understand if I've got a problem, I'm going to open that particular email or that message on LinkedIn or whatever it might be, if it's related to that common problem. But if there's a piece of content that someone's going to send out instead of phrasing it like, "Hey, read this because we're really good and this shows you how good we are. We recommend this." Well, let me back up even a step further. I like shooting information out on an ongoing basis, asking for appointments and every now and then if there's something that I can send, just, "Hey, I thought of you, I thought maybe you... I just saw this. I thought maybe I'd forward it to you."

Yes, that's okay. But most of the time I have a, by the way, I've attached an article and I think it might be, this is how we believe X, Y, Z should be implemented. Right? Why we think it's important for health care facilities like you. What that does is it lets them know that you're thinking about them and their particular vertical market and what their pains are. Secondly, you're not saying do this, "Do this, do this." It's not an advertisement. It's like, "Hey, here's something that we wrote and I think you might be interested in it." I think that's the best way to position it and let them get their own value. One of the things I learned was probably 12 or 13 years ago. I started this company nine years ago.

So yes, about 13 years ago. I was vice president of sales for manufacturer. One of the things that we were doing is we were OEM-ing a D-Link camera. I worked for a manufacturer that made millimeter wave radars, thermal imagers and it provided perimeter security. One of the things that we needed to do is, because we didn't make regular CCTV cameras. So we OEM that, we bought them for people and we had a manufacturer that everybody on the call here on the podcast has heard of come in and because they were very interested and my boss, our CEO said, "Hey, will you go to this demo? Because right now we have our technical people going there and our CTO is going to really ruin this meeting." So I went to the demo and sure enough the boss says they show the demo, right?

The boss says to our CTO and director of engineer and other people over there, "Isn't that the crispest image you've ever seen? Look how great that image is." It's like watching somebody walk in front of a bus that you know is coming, right? You want to do everything you can to pull them back. It could have been the crispest image of all time, but my CTO wasn't going to have anybody tell him how crisp an image was. He just tore this guy up and down. Right. I learned something there. When you're dealing with bold personalities, when you're dealing with people who are strong-willed, which basically is 98% of people who are making decisions on purchases. When you're dealing with your customers essentially is what I'm saying. Don't tell them how great you are, share with them what you're doing and let them come to their own conclusion. When they come to their own conclusion, they're probably going to figure out that you're doing some good stuff and they should bring you in to solve their problems.

So that article, instead of sending it out saying, "Here's how you should do it, here's what we believe." Instead phrase it differently. Actually you can say, "Here's what we believe." But not necessarily, don't throw it down their faces. Bill, I don't know if I answered your question or not.

Bill M: Well, I'm just looking right now for what you're seeing as far as the kind of the modern way to promote oneself. From the guys that are... and I hate using the word hunters, but hunters really don't need, they don't really care. I mean they don't care if they're hunting with a stick or hunting with a gun or hunting with a knife, one way or the other, they're going to come up with the meat necessary to feed the family. But then you've got, but that's like the 10% and then maybe even smaller than that. But then you've got like, which is just not reality. Teaching people how to add value, we've become very, very effective at it. But it's how does an individual write a message that's not about me, that's not about themselves?

To me, that is in the modern communication is like you said, "I was just thinking about you. Here's something that I found useful for you for these reasons." So they might not even have a chance to read the whole article, but you've taken out a sentence from it that is useful for them. Or you watched the video and you found out the one sentence, two sentences at this point in the video. Like just simple things like here's a nine minute video. I want you to watch, nobody, he's not going to want to watch a nine minute video. But if you say watch from four minutes and 32 seconds to four minutes or to five minutes and 30 seconds, because I think that's the best part of the video, that's going to get watched.

Chris P: That's going to get watched. It's also going to tell the person who you sent the email to that you really were thinking about them. That's absolutely right. Now I've got a... I say I, we have an Academy, it's a virtual sales training program, but one of the webinars that we did is called getting in the door using email. The format that I like to use is you start out with a problem, so using you as an example, "Hi Bill, we've learned a lot of managed service providers, or having trouble navigating this new world of selling, especially selling many services to CISOs. Now all of a sudden..." I would get even more greener than that, "Are having trouble getting in the door of new accounts, especially when calling on CISOs."

So you start out the message immediately with that and thinking that I barely know you, I've attached an article here that I think might help you with this specific problem and like you said, look at page two, halfway down, but starting out with the problem that particular type of customer has. By the way, if you really drill down, 85% to 95% of your customer base have the same two or three problems. So it's not like you've got a custom make every one of these emails, but you do tailor each one. You don't just send out a blast. But I like that first line being about your problems. I mean, you said you just turned 50. I just turned 50. Someone sent me an email that said, "Hey Chris, we've learned a lot of 50 year olds that travel a lot on business are struggling with maintaining their wardrobe to where they can stay stylish but not look like a 20 year old."

Guess what? I'm going to open that email. Right?

Bill M: That's true. That is absolutely.

Chris P: Because that's something I'm dealing with. So I want to look like I'm 50 but I don't want to look like I'm 75. So I want to figure out... There, I just defended more old people with that statement.

Bill M: We all need it.

Chris P: That's right. But that particular email I would keep reading because it starts out saying we know about your problems and once you open up this article, but if you keep doing, and it's not just by email. One of the things that we got, and I don't mean to keep advertising our services, but we've got a content marketing program and what we've noticed is a lot of digital marketing companies out there are great at digital marketing, but they have the same approach to a system integration company as they have to a Tapas restaurant or a running shoe company.

They are different. Your customers do not click coupons so they can buy more managed services on Thursday night between five and seven. So what we've got to do is combine that content marketing by sending it out through digital formats, but also having sales people take it out on traditional methods, putting together a PowerPoint presentations or Prezi presentations where salespeople can deliver them at association meetings and at trade shows and putting together eBooks that can be shared through social media. That also can be printed and dropped off the old fashioned way to some key customers by salespeople. That material's got to be delivered in such a hybrid way in order for everyone to really grasp it. So it's not just by email, it's several ways that contents got to get out to people.

Bill M: One of the things I've observed, and I just want to see what your thoughts are is that because I've struggled so much to find hunters and as I've actually broken the role out such that marketing now does really everything that I would've expected a salesperson to do as far as going out and finding new opportunities and reaching out via LinkedIn and doing things of that nature via content creation and such. We've further broken down the marketing group into, we call it SDR kind of someone who can follow up after events.
They're more on the phone trying to talk to people, follow up on different items that we've sent out. The account manager is really responsible for maintaining the customer relationship. The AM is really, they're farmers. They're definitely more motivated by taking care and making sure the farms that have already been plowed and cleared, they're not filling up with weeds.
So they're responsible for going and visiting the existing customers and such. Account executives are in charge of new business, but we've taken away from the AAEs, not taken away, but we've basically hedging our bait that all marketing is replacing that cold calling capability. We've been quite successful with that model but not across the board, not with all roles. I'm just curious, how do you find kind of the modern selling organization is structured? Is it follow a similar model to that or is it if found it just varies from company to company?

Chris P: What I've seen and that's right now. So in five years it's going to evolve. But right now what I see is that is there's an overlap and there's got to be an overlap. So the work that marketing is doing, marketing should be able to distribute it through certain digital formats and non-digital formats, but send their content out in that meth. This is in an ideal world, how companies will do it. That same exact material, whatever the message is, whatever the particular campaign is for the quarter, let's say, that same material is being used by salespeople to get in the door. It's the same material that your account managers are using to educate and nurture the relationships with the current customers. Maybe they're having with their top five customers, they're each having these half day lunch and learns where they're educating and it's the same message, but it's just delivered in an educational fashion to marketing.

So now you've got companies out there that... and by the way, there are presentation decks that are created for salespeople and business development people, for example, to go out to associations and present. This is done on a periodic basis where it's the same message every quarter, maybe every six months, and you're driving home that message. So I look on LinkedIn, I don't know who the heck RedZone is, but I look on LinkedIn and I keep seeing these guys come up with some pretty cool content about the same message, right? Same problem that hospitals are having. I'm just going to make up hospitals. Healthcare is having, I know that's pretty good. Then I go to an association meeting next Thursday and I see a speaker from RedZone talking or maybe RedZone introduces an expert speaker to come up and speak on their behalf.

I keep getting these emails and a sales person stops by every four weeks or so and drops off some really interesting content. The content is similar to what I saw in LinkedIn, but maybe it's in a different format. Right? I hear from one of my peers that they work with RedZone and they just did a lunch and learn on this very topic. Guess what? I'm Pretty soon I'm going to figure it out you guys know what you're doing. So I like where you're going, Bill is the fact that you are going somewhere, right? You're shifting, you're having marketing take on these activities where you're like we talked about earlier before we started recording, it's not so much a hunter anymore, it's more of a fisherman.

So you've got to put bait out there. You can't be a hunter. Hunting isn't allowed anymore. Business to business fishing is though, because you've got to put bait out there and when they are hungry, then they come to you because you put out the proper bait. That's what marketing in your organization is doing. I think that's great. What I would recommend is you have more of an overlap where your account executives are taking that content and they're still making their calls, but they're not calling them on everybody. Where maybe they had 250 prospects each in 2003, today it's 30.

Bill M: Oh yeah, that makes sense. That makes sense. But they're using the same content.
Chris P: Yes, that's right. So if you think of a pyramid, right? The bottom third of the pyramid are customers that you may take but you don't care if you get them or not; and the top third are the ones that you have to have. I like to say that top third and really a good chunk of the second third, the account executives and marketing should be working on. That bottom third salespeople shouldn't even be touching. Marketing should just be dripping information to them.

Bill M: Right. I find it fascinating. I find it, I really like this, the new world we're in, but the paying attention to context in the... What's really pushing me very hard and I'm going to change and adjust, but holy crap, just for me just forgetting and just leaving the old ways of doing things behind. That's completely the game right now because it's really about educating my own internal teams. It's completely almost like your Academy we got to talk about afterwards because I have to train, my buyers they're not going down in their expectation levels. I find that going into meetings and I'm like, "Holy crap, this guy doesn't even know how to put together an agenda." Not my buyer, but my internal team member doesn't know how to put together a proper agenda for the meeting.

Chris P: Right.

Bill M: So you can't even stay on point with like helping the customer. So I leave the meeting going, "Oh my God, I thought I had to train about the technology but now I got to go back and train." Because I can't count on a 22 year old, 24, 26 of being able to craft an agenda. I learned the hard way. I learned because I almost lost my job when I was 26 because the manager came up to me and said, "Hey, listen man, it seems like you have a great funnel, but you really, you're not getting the business closed." I had to learn, I had to be really intentional about my agenda. So anyway, that's my challenge right now. I'm wondering if I'm just an Island in the sea or if I'm like an embodiment of what you're running into with entrepreneurs and business leaders.

Chris P: No, a lot of the basics aren't there. A lot of them don't have to do it like we had to do it. Just something simple like a presentation. I'm all about progress. I shouldn't say I'm all about progress, I appreciate progress. When my peers talk about how great it used to be, how TV was better 30 years ago, I'm like, really? You had three stations? You're telling me you're going to take Simon and Simon over all the good stuff we have today? I mean, come on. Or all the movies were so much better before. Are you kidding me? These movies are fantastic nowadays. My gosh, everything. So anyway, I'm all about appreciate what we have today and stop being in this euphoric recall, how great it used to be. However, with that said, I will take the 1995 salesperson 10 out of 10 times giving a presentation over today's salesperson.

Today's sales person cannot give a presentation. They cannot develop an agenda like you said, some of the basics aren't there. So yes, you've got to figure out what it is that those incoming 25, 30 year olds don't have; and be able to teach it to them because there are things that we learned in high school, college and just being a part of life that they don't have to do any more, like spelling. I know it sounds crazy, but spelling, because it's just not taught. These things are not taught like they were taught to us. I just insulted young people now too. They can't spell, old people can't dress up.

Bill M: So I think every generation has its issues for sure. Every older generation always looks back at the younger and wishes it was different. I don't think it's any different what we're saying, I think what's happening though is that as business owners and leaders that are not retiring and they're not looking for a landing strip anytime soon. So I think innovation is about can you go fast? How can you create a culture that goes at the speed of the way in which the modern enterprise is moving. It's not like the 20 somethings, I've had great experience with my younger folks on my team. We just have to shore up the soft spots. The agenda development, it's not about the technology, it's about how do you show up and make a great first impression? From a security perspective like what I'm talking about is all right, we want to have a vibe that we've got their backs covered.

You want to show up and present like you've got their backs covered. Because that's what you're going to end up doing for people. But if you show up late or you show up without an agenda or if you show up and don't instill confidence, that to me is a really powerful challenge. I just want to make sure I've been talking to you that I'm not the only person out there that's got that challenge.

Chris P: No. If you'd figure that out, quit your job and write a book.

Bill M: Well, Chris as we get wrapped up here. What is something that pretty much has been your claim to fame? Like your super power when you're working with organizations? What is the one main thing that you're able to really deliver and really make an exponential impact with companies that allow you to? Stopped here

Chris P: I think where we've had an impact is in the focus, and we haven't even talked about that, but where it used to be, throw as much mud against the wall as possible and see what sticks. It really was true, I succeeded because of my volume and my effort and how efficient I tried to be. I had a better path of cold calling and UPS drivers had in my territory. That's what mattered. Today volume doesn't matter unless the content is really, really strong, unless there's a reason. It used to be, no matter how well you cold call or how bad you cold call, you're going to get into whatever 3% of the calls you make are going to schedule an appointment with you. Today that's not true. It's not true as far as presentations go as far as demos go.

So what we need to do and where we found a lot of success is helping our clients identify and also be comfortable with understanding where your core competences and understanding what marketplace you want to go after. So I mentioned earlier, instead of having 300 prospects, you have 30 and I mean that, I mean we really take our client's salespeople, okay, how many prospects do you have? I don't know. I just call on whoever. Okay, do you realize how much time? Let's look at how much time you're wasting. Instead of Will Smith's character in a pursuit of happiness, when he had all those strategies to where he didn't go to the bathroom, he didn't need it and drank, and he ended up making 11 cold calls more a day than his counterparts, and that translated to 55 a week or whatever it was.

That's not the case anymore. Today we need to figure out, okay, how are we going to make sure that when I go in and I give a presentation that when I leave, those folks are saying, "Wow, where is that person been? Oh my gosh, that company is way different than any other company." Because guess what? Because what I did is I focused on my presentation. I focused on a proposal, I tailored it to them and I focused on what their problems were and I made myself more valuable to them than Google, same thing with prospecting. Instead of sending mass emailing and doing 40 phone calls an hour, how about this? How about doing four emails and four phone calls in an hour and you construct those emails where you do a little research on social media to understand their interests. You look a little bit for there...

You do that for maybe 10 contacts a week and over six weeks you've done it for 60 accounts and then you do it again, right? I mean, I'm just making those numbers up, but if there's anything, to answer your question, if there's anything that we've done to help our companies go from... Really our clients, one client went from 13 to 31 million in less than three years. It had to do with their sales people tightening up what they did. Once you tighten up, then you can implement the strategies of today. Because if you don't tighten up and focus, you can't because the strategies of today take thought, takes creativity and they take time and you can't do that if you have 1000 customers you're trying to work on. So to narrow it down I would say with the exponential success that our clients have had has been when we're able to go in and help them really, really, really focus. Because when they do that then they can implement our ideas. If they don't do that, our ideas are useless.

Bill M: I love that Chris. Well I focus and I couldn't agree more than that. That is great way to end our conversation. Is there anything as we wrap up that you think we missed?

Chris P: No, Bill, that was great conversation. I think if there's anything to leave everybody with is some of the core fundamental items are still, relationships still matter. Persistence still matters. Being intelligent still matters. These are things that the core professional behaviors still matters. So don't think everything has changed. Don't all of a sudden you get a Twitter account and think you can work two and a half hours a week. You can't, you've got to really still work very, very hard. A lot of it's changed. But the core elements of being a sales professional is still the same.

Bill M: Yes, I agree. I definitely agree in the relationships we had talked about today, as you mentioned, just even the volumes and keeping the ones that you're saying, being intelligent versus just pounding and how you're communicating and which channel and respecting the fact that if you're going to be competing on a LinkedIn channel versus email channel, that's going to be different than phone calling and leaving a voicemail messages just all matters these days. I really appreciate you for your words of advice and wisdom with my audience today, Chris.

Chris P: No, thanks Bill. Thanks for having me. Take care.

Bill M: Bye, bye. So there you have it. This wraps another episode of Bill M's RedZone Podcast. To get all the relevant show notes, please go to our blog at www.redzonetech.net/podcast. Additionally, make sure you go to iTunes and leave your comments in iTunes about the show. This helps our show rankings enormously and helps support the show. Until next time, I appreciate you very much for listening. Thank you.