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Breaking thru Sales Deadlocks

Guest was Tim Sadners

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Breaking thru Sales Deadlocks

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Transcription of Interview

Joe: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 Podcast. With me today is Tim Sanders. Tim is a former Yahoo! Chief Solutions Officer and the author of four books, including his newest book, Dealstorming. He is the co-founder of the research consultancy Deeper Media, Inc. and a top-rated speaker, lecturing widely at sales rallies, company kickoffs, and conventions. Tim, I'd like to welcome you and outside of writing books could you tell us a little about what you do?*

Tim: *Well, first of all, I'm glad to be with you too Joe. Besides writing books, I do consult with Fortune 1000 companies, specifically around sales innovation and talent management, and I speak at say 50 to 60 conventions and conferences a year.*

Joe: *Wow, that's a lot of talking Tim. In our conversation before the podcast started, you mentioned that you came from the quality area.*

Tim: *I did. I went to University of Arizona Graduate School. I started there in the early 80's, and I was in the business communications area, and I settled into an internship with Hughes Aircraft, which was in Tucson. I worked in the personal development department*

that owned the quality circle project. Quality circles were these group meetings, multi-departmental meetings to figure out root causes of variation. There was a lecturer coming to the university that my professor Don Knuth knew really, really well – Ed Deming. Ed had just come back from Japan. He had finished a tour. He started at Ford Motors in '81 and by this time, he was doing several of these every year, 4-day sessions, and he had just lost his personal assistant, or I should say scared him off. Knuth thought that would be a wonderful thing for me to do for awhile, so I spent a little bit of time carrying his bags.

I got to understand at the ground floor the nature of quality management by statistical process and control, just kind of started me on a journey and I ended up at Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems a few years later when they were just launching cellular phones. I helped determine quality issues for the handset manufacturers that we work with such as O'Keefe Data and then later, Nokia.

Joe: *When I read Deming, Joiner, Scholtes and those people, it makes so much sense to me in the sales and marketing space. But quality and the thinking that took place have went so much towards manufacturing or the other way that it seems that connection was lost in the 90's in process improvement. But those guys, I read, and I get the sales and marketing aspect from them.*

Tim: Well, absolutely, because quality is just rapid problem solving. The pursuit of quality is the pursuit of the elimination of variation. That was, at least, the beginning of it. For those of you listening, you know that Deming was dispatched by General MacArthur to

Japan after World War II during the occupation because MacArthur was so frustrated, he couldn't complete a phone call or do a single radio broadcast in Japan because of their variation in manufacturing.

He grabs Deming, who is a disciple of Shewhart at AT&T Bell Labs, the Shewhart Cycle, you guys remember plan-do-check-act. Deming had turned around the census bureau using this. That's kind of the beginning, but Deming at the end of the day says quality is whatever the damn customer says it is, and it's our job to solve our problems to solve their problems.

Joe, doesn't that sound like sales? I mean, we have to solve a bunch of our little prospecting presentation closing problems just to get the right to solve the customer's problem, and quality works exactly the same way. The one thing I would say that's interesting is that the quality movement started in the heaviest, ugliest industries like manufacturing. It made its way over decades into services, into education and when I was an executive at Yahoo, as we saw Google overtake us, the quality movement hit UX, and the quality movement hit Web services, and that's the way these things always work.

Joe: *What do you mean by why things always work? Is that they hit the UX later? Could you make that connection for me a little better.*

Tim: Disruptive technologies like the end of inspection replaced by statistical process control, that was very disruptive as a way of doing things. Disruptive innovations usually

start where the pain is the greatest, and the reward is the easiest to measure. As the disruptive innovation begins to refine and become repeatable and scalable, much like a disease, it kind of seeks other things to infect. It sneaks its way around to the less painful, all the way to the almost impossible to measure results things, then that's why it kind of started and how we made stuff to how delivered services, even including education, to the more modern how we communicate and how we find things, and that's what I meant by that journey. And you see in all kinds of disruptive technologies.

For example, we see it in the sharing economy. The disruption of using distributed shared services to solve customer problems. We start in the ugliest of all industries – hospitality and taxis. You have Airbnb, and you have Uber. They started out there, and it's really easy to measure the value, and it's just starting to spread, isn't it? 10 years from now, the sharing economy will probably infect everything that we do; not just how we acquire services, but how we do simple things like find solutions or even communicate and educate each other. All disruptive technologies take that journey.

Joe: *Awesome explanation. But Tim, let me talk about Dealstorming though. Tell me what it is. Is it a sales method? What is it?*

Tim: Dealstorming is a tool that you use when you're stuck in a sales challenge. Let's say you're working on a complex sale, complex B to B sale and your deal is not contracting forward. You're stuck somewhere. Front door, middle door, figuring out the deal, convincing them you're the best one – you're stuck. When your sales process doesn't get

you unstuck, you create a team, and it's a team of skill players, and blockers, and tacklers, it might be people that you're going to deliver, and a few experts about your problem and you use rapid problem solving to set the next best play.

Dealstorming is this act of collective intelligence across departments and in some cases involving inside champions to unleash imaginative thinking when you're stuck. It can also be used Joe when you've got a sales challenge around losing a big account. I mean you've read it, half the book is about people that used Dealstorming to bring back the big account that went away.

Joe: *Reading the book, I came away with the feeling, when you have all these other methods – Sandler, Challenger, Spin, those things take the cream off the top. When they don't work, then I go to Dealstorming.*

Tim: That is correct. Dealstorming is certainly not a sales methodology for the average sale, but for the ones you can't lose, for the ones that are going to change the game, and there's only a few of them available to you usually, you Dealstorm. It's really a question of resourcing the storm against the opportunity and knowing that sometimes, your Dealstorm can just be the terrific trio – you, your manager, and one person from outside of the department who knows something about the problem and sometimes, it's a really big, hairy, difficult, game-changing deal and you put together a tribe of say 12 people; so it really just depends on the problem and in terms of how you resource.

Joe: *Is that the heart of Dealstorming is the collaboration of people; is that what makes it effective?*

Tim: Yes. The heart of Dealstorming is leading sales innovation. It's about being able to recruit people that know something about your problem by creating a cost that's bigger than money, and being able to really run smart, very tight meetings where you spend 20% of the time finding the root cause of why you're stuck, and the other percent of the time setting the next best play. I know I've said that a few times and what I mean by that is like Coach K at Duke, always, it's about the next play. It's not about the final score; it's not about the big play; it's about the next play because everyone who has closed a complex sale or brought back a big account knows it's a hundred little problems solved.

Joe: *I use the analogy there with Toyota Kata where you have this vision, this target out there and what you do is that littlest step that you can to prove that you're moving towards the target.*

Tim: Yes. In sales, they call that contracting, right? Cox Media taught me that. Contracting means that in every interaction, you're gaining some little agreement that levels you up. And as you know, I think of B to B selling as playing a video game where it's all about leveling up. Unfortunately these days, that game feels more like Halo than the one I like to play like Pong or Donkey Kong.

Joe: *Are there steps to Dealstorming? Is it a process? What is it?*

Tim: Absolutely, absolutely. Dealstorming follows 7 steps. The first thing you've got to do is qualify the storm because collaboration comes with a cost. So if you're working at say a Web services firm and you're going to create a team, and you're going to pull designers, and engineers, and a finance analyst, and a marketing person from their job to help you on your deal, you need to know that that's deal big enough to justify it and that you really got a problem.

Step number 2 is you're going to organize your team, and the secret here is to invite people who have a stake in the outcome and invite people that have expertise about your problem. Using a football analogy, think of it as the skill players, like the receivers and the quarterbacks – those are the experts, and the blockers and the tacklers. Those are the ones that actually have to deliver on your services or will be impacted by the deal being won or lost, and they're heavily engaged in your process. And by the way, you bring them in early when it's a sales challenge and not a delivery crisis; they have a completely different attitude about making the customer happy. When you organize this team, you don't invite people to come to a meeting. That sounds like getting a colonoscopy, right? You invite people to join a cause, as a teammate. That's really tricky, and I love to use competition and rivalry or the pursuit of excellence if it's part of the corporate culture as the lever. In my consulting gigs, I always ask what's the 'why' that's going to get everybody, including sales, to come to the second meeting.

I think the most important step really is step number 3, and that's the prepare step. I was

looking at your home page just today, and I love the quote, “Right chance favors the prepared mind.” The reason that prepare is such an important step is that if you create a three to four-page deal brief for everyone on your team, you’re prepping and on boarding the non-sales group into the process. You tell them the problem, you show them the influence map, you help them understand what you’ve tried to date, you give more information about the company, they can incubate, and you give each team member a specific thinking assignment before the meeting. If you’re going to have a meeting, I love to see them on Tuesday for the first one, the brief goes out Thursday, you bug them one more time on Friday, if they read it over the weekend, they’ll make connections, and they’ll unleash the creative power of incubation. When I started to use the deal brief, we literally doubled our ability to solve deal level problems.

The fourth step is the meeting or the convene step, and it’s really important the account executive runs that meeting. It’s not just a good leadership training program, but later, it’s going to give her social proof to lead the execution of delivery. The most important thing to think about for that meeting is the following ground rule. Ideas can come from anywhere, because Joe, they can. All the best ideas I’ve seen in over a hundred deals usually come from the edges of the company. People outside of sales who don’t know what they don’t know and they know these things, or they make suggestions that change the game.

The fifth step is to execute on the meeting, and I love the idea of prototyping. If you have an idea, I don’t care if it’s a formula, a pitch or an approach, I want to see a diagram of it, because a prototype is worth a thousand meetings, and we need to execute quickly with

the next best play because like a video game, you don't have much time and you got a limited number of lives.

The next step is number 6, analyze. This is really where I get back to Deming or Shewhart's roots. Plan-do-check-act. Analyze is when you figure out if you're leveling up if there's been a downside to the approach and what the next root cause problem is to solve.

The last step, number 7 is report. When you bring people on a team, respect them by closing the loop and letting them know what's going on. What makes brainstorming not work is the idea that it's a black box. You walk into a room, you give your all, they write down a hundred ideas, and you never hear about it again. Not so with this. You got to keep people engaged and by the way, if you find a sales innovation that gets you unstuck, find a cohort inside sales to try it again or two and if it looks like it works, escalate it up to senior leadership so it can become a process improvement and not take 30 months to evolve into a case study. I always say that when it comes to sales process or sales methodology, the only reason to think outside the box is to make it stronger.

Joe: *Tim, I love it. I'm a process guy. It makes sense to me. That's why I grabbed the book. But a typical sales guy, I mean, he's lucky to follow a 2-step process.*

Tim: Well, it just depends. It depends on who's leading them, who's mentoring them and it depends on what materials they have. Quite frankly Joe, it depends on their level of ambition. I will say that Dealstorming is for sales leaders and ambitious, highly ambitious,

'Gary Vaynerchuk ambitious' sales executives who want to move up in this world and they want to do bigger and bigger deals to improve their economic condition, and they want to change the culture of the company they work at. Those are the people I wrote this book for, and I think there are a lot of them out there, and I hope to motivate them to become that kind of person.

Joe: *All the Lean people listening to this podcast, I have to have them take note because here's someone using an Ishikawa diagram for cause and effect. Can you explain how you use it?*

Tim: Everybody on the podcast knows about Ishikawa and, of course, I had firsthand knowledge of this because we've used this diagram a lot on variants issues in manufacturing, but it works just the same way in sales. I created a diagram where you start at the sticking point, whatever that is, and you work backward into six different categories. And the categories say in the world of sales could be things like do we have the right people, do we have the right information, is there a market issue that's affecting the client's decision for example, did we use the right selling device for example.

You have these six categories that you setup and then obviously in a meeting when we're Dealstorming, finding the right problem is as important as looking for the solution, right? We have to prioritize the problems and know which ones are the most important and if possible, sequence them like in what order do they usually occur in this situation. So the way that Ishikawa works for sales is that we look at these six categories and everybody in

the team kind of pause. We think that we're stuck because we don't have the right reps selling, or we think that we're stuck because we didn't present the right product or service, or we think we're stuck because we don't have enough information. And then, of course, the key to Ishikawa is the waiting, right?

I always use gold, silver and bronze stars, and then red for it doesn't matter and had people kind of visually score how important that problem was to the overall sticking point. And what you find, you find it in quality, you find it in sales, is one of them is clearly the most important problem, and it's not always the one that the account executive thought was the sticking point before the meeting. Once you do that, now you understand the most important problems because again, there is no one reason your sales get stuck. It's usually a series of reasons. If you don't do this if you don't figure out the root causes and put them in order, selling just like quality management is like whack-a-mole; you hit one, and another one pops up. If you can see that from the beginning by using Ishikawa, it doesn't demoralize you and it keeps people engaged over the long haul of problem-solving.

Joe: *We see this big transformation in the role of salespeople industry, and a lot of people discount sales anymore. I mean it's kind of just until they have to rely on cold calling to get some leads because the Web isn't doing it for them. But how do you view sales and let's say the new realm and how does Dealstorming fit into it?*

Tim: I think sales is making a huge transformation from what I call pitching and closing to researching and collaborating. The old school sales leader would tell you it's a jungle out

there so be tenacious and aggressive. The new school sales leader because of how complicated sales has become would tell you it's a puzzle out there, so be curious and collaborative; I think that's the switch. With social selling and sales development rep selling like you see for the software services groups, a lot of it is not requiring extroverted personality anymore on top of everything, right? It's not Glengarry Glen Ross anymore. It's the matrix.

Sales have become intensely a problem-solving activity for the best, and we live in a world where if you sell a service of any type, and it's business to business, every year you're seeing are influencers and decision makers involved in your decision. They're doing their own research, much of which is bad. You're selling products that are becoming more and more sophisticated and interacting with other products that they could break. And we now exist in a world where we don't even sell products and services anymore, Joe. We sell change, and it's hard to sell the change in the world we live in.

I think that makes a new challenge, that requires a new DNA for sales, but I'm telling you, it's the best profession you can ever be in, in your world, because you choose your destiny, you write your paycheck, and you know exactly when you won and when you lost, and that's just awesome. I think that for everybody on the call, your ability to create a deal and get it closed determines your ability to create budgets, get resources, launch initiatives and do all the other things you need to do to be a leader in a company, regardless of the department that you're in.

Joe: *I love your explanation of it, and I'm like 100% all in with how you described that because it's not this expert role that I'm solving as a defined problem with a customer because his problem is much more complex, even within his own structure. I mean it's not like they're even probably unified within their own company on how to solve the problem.*

Tim: Right, right. Exactly. A corporate executive did a bunch of research for their newer book 'The Challenger Customer' and they've been talking about buyer dysfunction. I said there are a lot more decision makers and influencers. Well, they're coming from all different kinds of disciplines because of governance issues, because of how technology impacts multiple stakeholders in a company. When these buyers are trying to come together and determine if they need to make a change, they've all got different agendas. And if they don't make that me to we move, their decision is no go. It's really not a decision against your product; it's just a decision not to rip and replace, and you got to solve that problem. Sometimes, the problem of buyer dysfunction is harder for you to solve than the business problem your service solves in the first place. I think that's the nature of complication we have these days. But it can be solved; I've seen it and rapid problem solving, it is the competitive, sustainable advantage especially in sales. It can be your competitive advantage if you figure out the process.

Joe: *I can go on with you Tim I think all day. No wonder people have you out to speak. What's in the near future for Tim Sanders?*

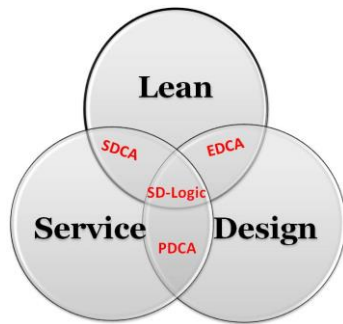
Tim: I just want to crawl across the sales conferences of the world and influence people

to aspire, to go bigger through teamwork and to create tunnels between the silos, one collaborative project at a time, and to change the world in their own way, and I'm excited about that. I did a sales conference just the other day for Skillsoft, 600 sales people and I can just see that every single one of them, they want to control their destiny more, and they want to make a bigger impact. This Dealstorming process, it can really help them move the needles. So if I'd do anything in the next few years, I want to speak at a hundred of these and really make my mark on how we go to market and win.

Joe: *That's pretty awesome. What's the best way for someone to contact you and find out more about you and the book?*

Tim: You can visit timsanders.com/dealstormingbook or just go to timsanders.com and click on the book cover. You can get with me on social media everywhere – LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook. I am @sanderssays, just like Simon says, but @sanderssays and I'm completely interactive, as you know.

Joe: *Well, I would like to thank you very much. I appreciate it. I enjoyed the book, Dealstorming and I would recommend it to people. This podcast would be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 Website. Thanks again, Tim.*



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Joe Dager is President of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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