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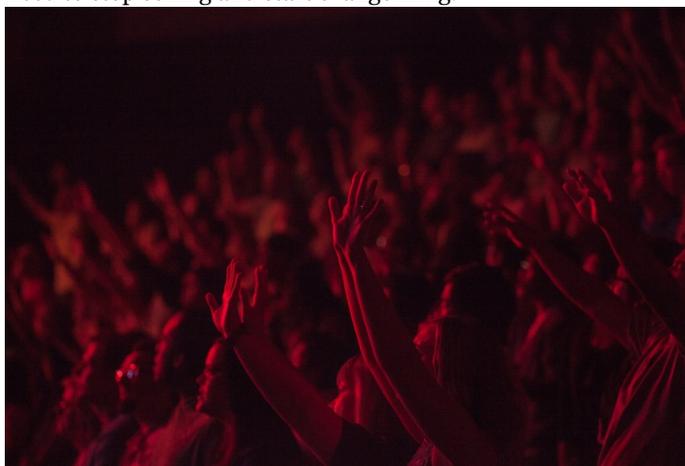
*I write about great brands and their strategies.*

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## Stop Selling; Start Evangelizing

“Sales is getting lost in the conversation,” [Tiffani Bova](#), Salesforce’s Global, Customer Growth, Sales and Innovation Evangelist, observed to me the other day. She was expressing concern over how marketers seem to be minimizing the role and importance of sales. Marketing may indeed be expanding its influence and involvement across the customer experience, but sales and salespeople can and should remain a critical element of most go-to-market strategies. To ensure this, salespeople need to stop selling and start evangelizing.



The terms “evangelist” and “evangelism” have become quite commonplace in today’s business world. A search on LinkedIn for “evangelist” produces over 30,000 people, with many holding positions outside religious professions. There are tech evangelists, corporate evangelists, solution evangelists, name-your-platform evangelists. Many of these people are fulfilling the role [Guy Kawasaki](#) introduced to the business world as Apple’s first evangelist — that is, building up support in the market for the technology and establishing it as a standard in the industry.



It's harder to find professional brand evangelists. Brand evangelists are usually understood as customers who are such fans of a brand that they try to convince others to buy it, usually through word-of-mouth, or in today's social media environment, word-of-mouth. While these are people who are usually unpaid and independent from the brand they support, there is an opportunity for a company's salespeople to adopt a formal role as evangelists for their brands. Actually, given the dynamics in today's business environment, salespeople have a *responsibility* to serve as brand evangelists. This is how they remain uniquely relevant and valuable to their organizations.

Salespeople usually have intimate knowledge of their customers. Marketers can be armed with loads of data and analytics about their target markets, but nothing is more revealing than the insights about customers gleaned from the in-person, one-on-one, often long-term or at least serial interactions that salespeople have. Salespeople are also usually extroverted socializers and excellent communicators which makes them natural relationship-builders, able to inspire trust and build goodwill among customers. And generally speaking, if you're in sales, you are motivated by results.

The problem is that these advantages often manifest themselves in salespeople who are driven only to sell — sell whatever product to whatever customer with whatever it takes. They chase after customers, push their products on them, and often seem more intent on closing a deal than actually making a customer successful. It's no wonder questions arise about the viability of the sales function — especially when today's customers are usually able to access on their own all the information they want and need about products, pricing, options, and competitors.

But if salespeople adopt an evangelizing role, their value increases dramatically. Brand evangelists convince customers to believe in a product as much as they do. They know how to present their message to make an emotional and memorable impact. They are intent on truly helping people and creating value for them. They believe their solution is the right answer for the right customer at the right time, and so they plot their efforts accordingly. They are strategic, intentional, and discriminating. Above all, they care as genuinely about their brand as they do about their customers, so if and when the conditions are right, they bring the two together in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Brand evangelism transforms every aspect of the sales process. Here are just three:

- **prospecting** — A salesperson's prospect list isn't comprised of the usual suspects. It's a carefully curated selection of potential customers who share the company's values and who have needs or circumstances that make them likely to ascribe inordinate value to the solution.
- **information exchange** — Brand evangelists don't engage in the typical "fishing expedition" conversations that most salespeople conduct to uncover a client's needs. Instead they seek to teach their clients something new, offer unique

perspectives, and provide value even before the sale.

- **metrics** — Results are measured not only by the number and size of deals closed, but also by the ultimate, long-term impact on customer success.

I believe salespeople can — and should — be the ultimate brand evangelists. What do you think?

*Denise Lee Yohn is a brand-building expert, speaker and author of [What Great Brands Do](#) and [Extraordinary Experiences](#).*

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