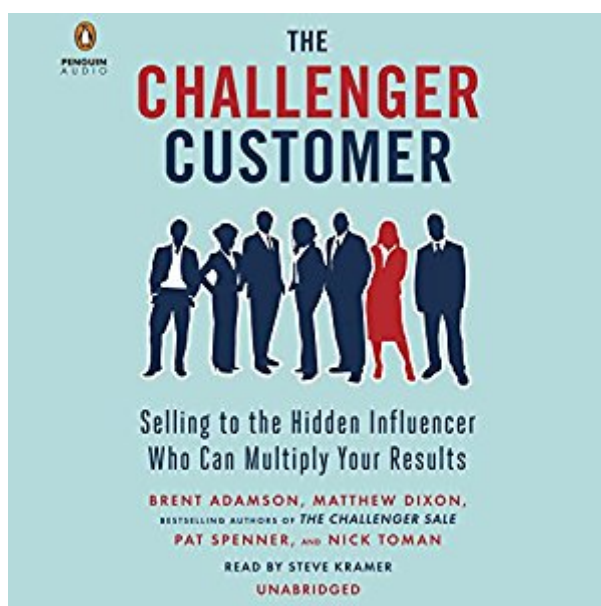


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# The Challenger Customer: Selling To The Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results



## Synopsis

Based on an exhaustive study of hundreds of sales reps and thousands of customers across multiple industries, the authors found that every potential customer contact falls into one of seven distinct profiles. While many are worth talking to, the highest performing reps concentrated their time on a specific few. Most sales reps prefer to approach customers who are open and eager to meet with them, people with clearly articulated needs that make them easy to connect to solutions. The authors call these customers Talkers. The high performers spent their time, instead, with customers who were less eager to meet, generally skeptical and difficult to manage, and much more apt to be agnostic about one supplier over another. They call these customers Mobilizers. High performers understand what their average-performing colleagues don't: in a world in which complex deals require widespread consensus across a diverse - and typically dysfunctional - set of customer stakeholders, only Mobilizers have the skill and the will to fight for large-scale, disruptive change and, ultimately, help win the deal. Challenger sellers, in other words, target Challenger customers. The authors unveil research that identifies Mobilizers and provide a roadmap for how sales and marketing teams can find them, engage them with disruptive insight, and leverage them to drive consensus across the customer organization. Once you have identified the Mobilizers among your customers, almost any rep, with the right coaching, tools, and marketing support can start a chain reaction that leads to a whole organization getting on board with even the most provocative ideas.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hi I'm Douglas Burdett, host of The Marketing Book Podcast and I'd like to tell you about the book "The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results" by Brent Adamson, Matthew Dixon, Pat Spenner and Nick Toman. OK, first off - if you're familiar with the bestselling book "The Challenger Sale," "The Challenger Customer" is from the same authors at CEB. You may know CEB as the organization that determined in B2B sales, the customer is at least 57% through their buyer's journey before they first reach out to the seller. Like The Challenger Sale, The Challenger Customer takes on and refutes a lot of conventional wisdom about what works and what doesn't work in modern B2B marketing and sales. But here's the catch - it's not just the author's opinions. They challenge the conventional wisdom with extensive research done over the last five years. It turns out only a very specific type of customer stakeholder has the credibility, persuasive skill, and will to effectively challenge their colleagues to pursue anything more ambitious than the status quo. These Challenger customers get deals to the finish line far more often than friendlier stakeholders who seem so receptive at first. In other words, Challenger sellers do best when they target Challenger customers. I work in the field of B2B marketing and sales, and the conclusions in this book had me thinking (and rethinking) all the best practices in that field. In one sense, I wish I hadn't read the book. But I'm glad I did. And, to listen to an interview with Pat Spenner about "The Challenger Customer," visit [MarketingBookPodcast.com](http://MarketingBookPodcast.com).

I work in software (in a role that supports sales), and we have a pretty complex value-based sale, selling into large enterprises. I'm not a sales guy, but I need to think like one and support our sales machine, and this book is invaluable. The first half is required reading for product people, marketing people, anyone involved in supporting the sales people. The second half is really geared to the sales part of the org and I skimmed it, but the first half of this book alone made it worth the price.

The gist of the book is as follows: #1 Challenge buyers by showing them their status quo is not good enough and is cutting into profit, wasting effort, and/or increasing risk. #2 Partner with and enable "Mobilizers" inside the buying organization to drive consensus around the problem, the solution, and vendor selection. Like The Challenger Seller, I gave this book 5 stars for the quality of the overall insights. Of the two books, this one is better (and is inclusive of the content in its predecessor). Also,

like The Challenger Seller, this one suffers from a LOT of redundancy and out of order content - a natural consequence of having too many authors without painstakingly meticulous editing. Unlike The Challenger Seller, the Challenger Customer does a much better job of justifying conclusions & recommendations by providing references to studies with decent sample sizes. Here is a more detailed summary:

Closing a complex deal requires collective consensus from, on average, 5.4 decision makers as they march through the three main stages of the buying cycle: (1) problem definition (2) supplier-independent solution identification (3) supplier selection.

On average, customers are 57 percent of the way through a typical purchase process prior to proactively reaching out to a supplier's sales rep for their direct input on whatever it is that they're doing.

Successful reps:

- a. Challenge customers' beliefs with a new and compelling insight to make money, save time, or lower risk. This insight must provide a compelling reason to take action now by explicitly laying out why the customer's current behavior is not "good enough" and is costing them time or money in ways they never realized.
- b. Leverage (online) diagnostics and pain (not ROI) calculators.
- c. Partner with buyer stakeholders, called "Mobilizers," who are able to (i) drive change and (ii) build consensus. Mobilizers can be identified because they do all of the following: (i) ask challenging, thought-provoking questions rather than just listening & agreeing, (ii) focus on the greater good of the organization rather than their personal goals, and (iii) agree to take on research or tasks.
- d. Enable Mobilizers by providing THEM with sales tools, workshops, proof points, stories, etc.
- e. Find the strategic overlap between each stakeholder's goals and then facilitate/build convergence to get to a collective yes around a single, overarching business goal/vision.
- f. Identify and convert Blockers, especially by leveraging supportive buyer stakeholders.
- g. Align the stages of the buying process with verifiers / buying signals. These are expected actions the customer must take. Examples include: commits to analysis, commits to seller demo, & states we are the preferred vendor.

There are great insights here for anyone who finds themselves needing to take ideas to others aimed at getting agreement...which is pretty much all of us! Much to learn from Adamson's work.

This book presents some interesting thoughts, along with hard data to substantiate the book's premises. Getting a view from the customer side of a sales cycle and their "care abouts" was insightful.

Never been in sales but a great read to understand psychology of change and influence. Worth your time for any professional.

Any sales organization trying to stay out in front of trends needs to read this book. Getting into the mind of the buyer is an invaluable tool to learn as a professional sales person. A very deep dive read but worth the study.

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