

## Editorial: *Learning from Marketing and Sales Practice*

A recent episode of the McKinsey Podcast, (Mahdavian, Valdivieso de Uster, 2016) which inspired our title, started from the 2nd Edition of the book “Sales Growth: Five Proven Strategies from the World’s Sales Leaders” launched this year in May, which shares valuable lessons, such as: the role of digital sales in powering growth, how to develop the right organization’s “sales DNA”, and improve channel performance, the importance of presales, how to get the most out of marketing, the entirely reshaping of the sales function with the help of technology and outsourcing. (Baumgartner, Hatami, Valdivieso de Uster, 2016) The podcast revealed *the five practices differentiating the fast-growing companies from the slow-growing companies*: finding growth before their competitors do; selling the way their customers want to buy; increasing the power of their sales engines (especially investing in sales operations, presales, and the alignment between marketing and technology); focusing on their people; leading from the top (investing in and gain commitment from the organization, and in change management and implement change from the ground up). Other McKinsey’s representatives:

- approached the topic of *business’s growth* by: concluding that a top priority for business executives today is the organic growth, hence the need of having a clear organic-growth agenda and sufficient resources for the necessary initiatives; recommending companies by beginning focusing on cost and growth, and asking themselves key questions, such as: how balanced is their portfolio, who is thinking about disruption, if they limit their horizons, use advantaged insights, and are agile enough; (Gordon, Liedtke, and Timelin, 2016)
- brought *new insights* (discoveries of fundamental consumer needs used by companies in order to create value for both the customer and the business) *for new growth*, highlighting the big competitive advantage of the companies knowing how and when to use today available research tools, showing, for example, that well-known competitive brands (such as Unilever, Philips, Amazon, and Netflix) have in common the fact that they drive growth by meeting better consumer needs, getting better answers by strongly believing both in insights, and in the whole mix of insight tools actively used. (Gordon, Grüntges, Smith, and Staack, 2016)

Also recently, the CEO of NineSigma (a global innovation company that helped pioneer the practice of open innovation) revealed how to go from insights to products customers want (starting from a research published by the Harvard Business Review which revealed that from disruptive products are coming the highest long-term returns on innovation investments), by gathering the advance insights thanks to blending *design thinking* (a customer-driven approach exemplified by the leading manufacturer of kitchen utensils OXO; the design thinking sequence involves: a strategic opportunity analysis – SOA, planning, researching, ideating) and *open innovation* (the accelerate development of groundbreaking products by tapping the scientific and technical experts’ community; the open innovation sequence involves: prototyping, testing and

feed backing) *strategies*. Marketers and technologists are put on equal footing, in the quest to create breakthroughs, by this *open design thinking* empowering them with the necessary insights. (Zynga, 2016)

Arrived at the end of this editorial it's time to go back to an approach (from exactly a year ago) of "*the secret to sales success*" (O'Shea Gorgone, 2015) by Jill Konrath (the bestselling author of "Selling to Big Companies", "SNAP Selling", and "Agile Selling") and Donal Daly (the CEO of The TAS Group and author of "Account Planning in Salesforce"), who underlined, among other aspects, that: *part of the salesperson's job is understanding the customer's pain points and creating value on the basis of insights into what's happening in the marketplace, focusing on customer alignment; as the sales manager has an emotional intelligence, it is necessary to be helped to avoid entering into the panic routine of not meeting his quota*. Which made us recall that marketing study starts with psychology study (as highlighted ten years ago by the reputed Al Ries) and if psychology is the systematic study of human behavior, then marketing is the systematic study of human behavior on the market.

**Theodor Valentin PURCĂREA**

**Editor – in – Chief**

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