

UnSelling.

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UnSelling.

The New Customer Experience

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ALISON KRAMER**

WILEY

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Chapter 1

UnSelling

When the wife of a major online company Chief Executive Officer (CEO) commits fraud at the Boston Marathon, it matters. When your latte is cold, when the head of your favorite clothing company is a racist, when a major airline sends an angry customer a reply that includes a pornographic picture, it matters. I don't want to live in a world where it doesn't.

Sales are affected. Human Resources suffers. And customers change their purchasing decisions—most long before you'd ever even considered them a prospect.

Sixty percent of all purchase decisions are now being made before you ever get a chance to share your pitch.¹ For too long in business, it's been buy or good-bye, and we've focused all our energy on the moment of the sale. Counting our sales numbers as successes and then sending customers on with too little support and products we simply shipped without care or concern for the next step. All our eyes and attention have been on our sales funnel, ignoring those outside it—both before and after the connection was all about us. We've had funnel vision for far too long, and it needs to stop.

UnSelling is about everything but the sell. We put all of our focus on the individual purchase transaction, while putting the rest of our business actions second. We've become blind to customer service, support, branding, experiences, and even product quality.

UnSelling is about the big picture: creating repeat customers, not one-time buyers; creating loyal clients that refer others, not treating people like faceless numbers;

becoming the go-to company for a product or service, before people even need it.

Businesses don't need social media, but they can be connecting with clients socially and they need to be listening. Brands have jumped too quickly into social without thinking and use the medium to push out messages, rather than take part in conversations. I don't believe that anyone goes online to talk to their hot dog or toilet paper. But when something goes wrong with a product like those or when someone has a great experience to share, the brand needs to be there to react. The best brands create amazing experiences and products and then make it easy for people to share them. Your video doesn't have to be viral, viewed by a million people; it just needs to be contagious in front of your specific market. Content, connection, engagement. It's time to separate from the pack of noise. That's *UnSelling*.

¹ <http://bit.ly/UnFunnelVision>

Chapter 2

Joshie Is Branding

We travel a lot, and we can tell you finding anything lost in a hotel is a miracle. In fact, if you yourself get lost in a hotel, you may never be found. We regularly donate phone chargers and airplane pillows to hotels. Is there some kind of underground racket for lost chargers being run out of these places? I simply refuse to be wowed by any new hotel technology as long as I am hauling furniture out of the way to find an outlet. New apps don't run on dead iPhones, you know.

When I first read the story of Joshie Hurn and his extended vacation at the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island, a beautiful spot we've visited personally, I could not stop talking about it. A child losing his favorite thing is not something to easily manage as a parent. It's kind of like if you lost your phone.¹

Joshie's stay at the hotel is one of my favorite stories of *UnSelling*. The care and concern of the hotel, and their treatment of a guest already checked out, is outstanding. I love to tell audiences that to be awesome in business you really only need to be mediocre, because let's be honest, everyone else sucks. Well, the Ritz-Carlton staff were way more than mediocre. They were incredible.

Here are Chris Hurn's own words about the experience:

Most people have experienced outstanding customer service in one form or another—an attentive server at a restaurant or a retail store employee who goes the extra mile. A thriving industry comprised of consultants dedicated to training companies how to adopt exemplary customer service has blossomed over the past couple decades. For example, The Walt Disney Company Institute will help bring some of that “Disney magic” to your business.

At my company, we've always pushed our employees to go the extra mile for clients because the ripple effects of terrific customer service extend beyond mere satisfaction and retention. Exemplary customer service distinguishes your brand, builds repeat business, combats price competition, and even improves employee morale.

Hotel chain Ritz-Carlton has a storied reputation for great customer service. Many companies mimic its training programs, and one often hears executives saying they want to be known as the “Ritz-Carlton” of their respective industry, be it a law firm, car dealership or plumbing supplier.



Recently, my family and I experienced the Ritz-Carlton signature customer service in a way that will be talked about in our family and at my company for many years to come. My wife and two children spent a few days at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island (Florida) while I was in California on business—sadly unable to make the trip with them. Upon returning, we discovered that our son's beloved stuffed giraffe, named Joshie, had gone missing. As most parents know, children can become very attached to special blankets, teddy bears and the like. My son is extremely fond of his Joshie, and was absolutely distraught when faced with the idea of going to sleep without his favorite pal. While trying to put him to bed the first night home, I decided to tell a little white lie.

“Joshie is fine,” I said. “He's just taking an extra long vacation at the resort.” My son seemed to buy it, and was finally able to fall asleep, Joshie-less for the first time in a long while.

That very night, the Ritz-Carlton called to tell us they had Joshie. Thankfully, he had been found, no worse for wear, in the laundry and was handed over to the hotel's Loss Prevention Team. I came clean to the staff about the story I told my son and asked if they would mind taking a picture of Joshie on a lounge chair by the pool to substantiate my fabricated story. The Loss Prevention Team said they'd do it, and I hung up the phone very relieved.

A couple days went by, and we received a package from the hotel. It was my son's Joshie, along with some Ritz-Carlton-branded “goodies” (a frisbee, football, etc.). Also included in the package was a binder that meticulously documented his extended stay at the Ritz.

It showed Joshie wearing shades by the pool (my original request/suggestion)...



Joshie getting a massage at the spa...



Joshie making friends with other critters...



(Stuffed and real)...²



And Joshie driving a golf cart on the beach (who knew giraffes could drive?).



My son's Joshie was even issued a Ritz-Carlton ID badge, made an honorary member of the Loss Prevention Team, and was allowed to help by taking a shift in front of the security monitors.



Needless to say, my wife and I were completely wowed by the Ritz-Carlton Loss Prevention Team. My son, on

the other hand, didn't care so much about the binder and was just happy to have his Joshie back. I'm sure he'll have a greater appreciation for it as he grows up.

It goes without saying that the Ritz-Carlton can count on my family to be repeat customers. But I'm also telling you (and everyone else who happens to read this story). This is something I've always told my staff—create an experience so amazing that someone can't help but tell others about it, and you're sure to succeed. I'd also venture to say that Aaron (of the Ritz-Carlton Loss Prevention Team) and his cohorts had a pretty good time documenting Joshie's vacation, and employee morale is a huge part of creating a great customer experience.

All this from a stuffed giraffe who got lost on vacation.

What's one word to describe this?

Source: Reproduced by permission of Chris Hurn.

Awesome, right?

What would you do if this happened to you?³ You would tell everyone! And he did. Did I mention that he also happens to blog for the *Huffington Post*? The Ritz-Carlton staff didn't know he did at the time. Being awesome only to influential people means you are just the opposite. The hotel treated this family as they would any other. He just happened to have a platform to share the story on—and he did.

One of the things I love about social media and the online world is that it's given us all a voice—no matter how many followers, we all have 140 characters on Twitter to share, the ability to start a blog, or friends and family to post stories to on Facebook. Stories about amazing, and horrific, customer service and products have always been shared. It's just that now, they can reach even further and matter more. Ninety percent of consumers today claim that

positive online reviews influenced their buying decisions, while 86 percent said buying decisions were influenced by negative online reviews. Our voices are shaping the choices of your market.⁴

If the Ritz-Carlton had focused only on the sale, then the staff's job would have been done when the Hurn family signed out of the hotel. But they didn't. They made everything about the stay exceptional, even the loss of a cherished toy. They created an experience that mattered, that was shared, and that's what branding and marketing needs to be all about.

Joshie is what *UnSelling* is all about.

- ¹ I once asked a group of parents which they would rather lose at a mall: their phone or their kid. Think about it for a minute...the child would go back to lost and found and doesn't have your calendar and all your contacts.
- ² Scott here interrupting the story to let you know that that dolphin is being inappropriate. At events and conferences, please don't be the inappropriate dolphin. And, if you're standing with a group of people and don't know who the inappropriate dolphin is, then you're the inappropriate dolphin.
- ³ Besides change your pants, of course.
- ⁴ <http://mklnd.com/1izaqmQ>.

Chapter 3

Funnel Vision

Many of us in sales and marketing came up learning the traditional sales funnel. This was how we were supposed to think about and treat other humans—as they moved, or were converted, from hot leads and prospects to customers.

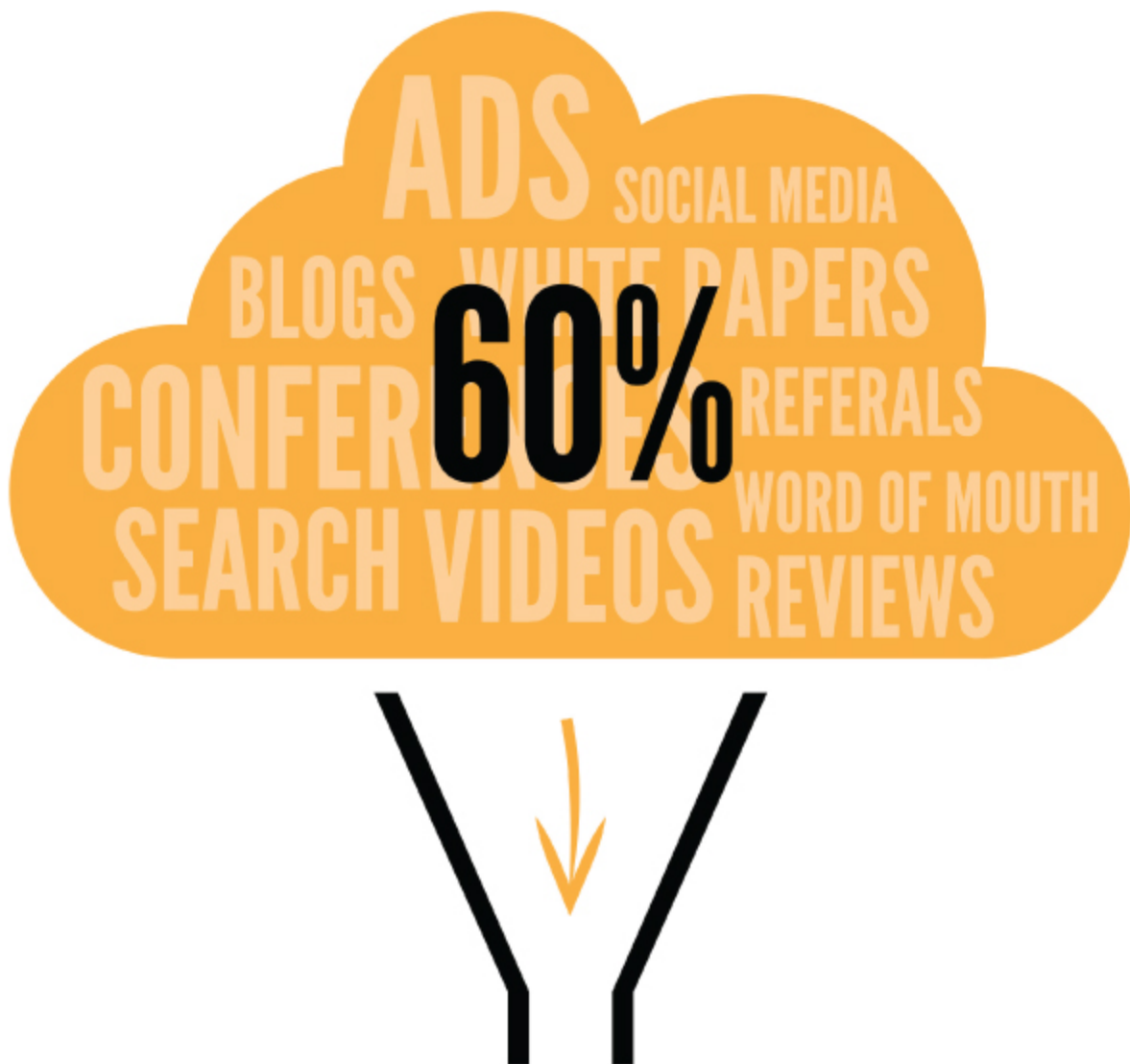


That was before social media shifted more information into the hands of our market and a negative review could spread around the world in a matter of hours.

The traditional funnel focused on sales and conversions. Once customers moved through the funnel, they were off

the radar.

Today, 60 percent of all purchase decisions are made before customers enter your funnel. Consumers come to you prepared and educated, with trusted referrals in hand before they ever hear your sales pitch. Today, we can't have funnel vision. We need to look past the funnel and into what I call the sales cloud. With 74 percent of consumers relying on social networks to guide purchase decisions,¹ it's just too big to ignore.

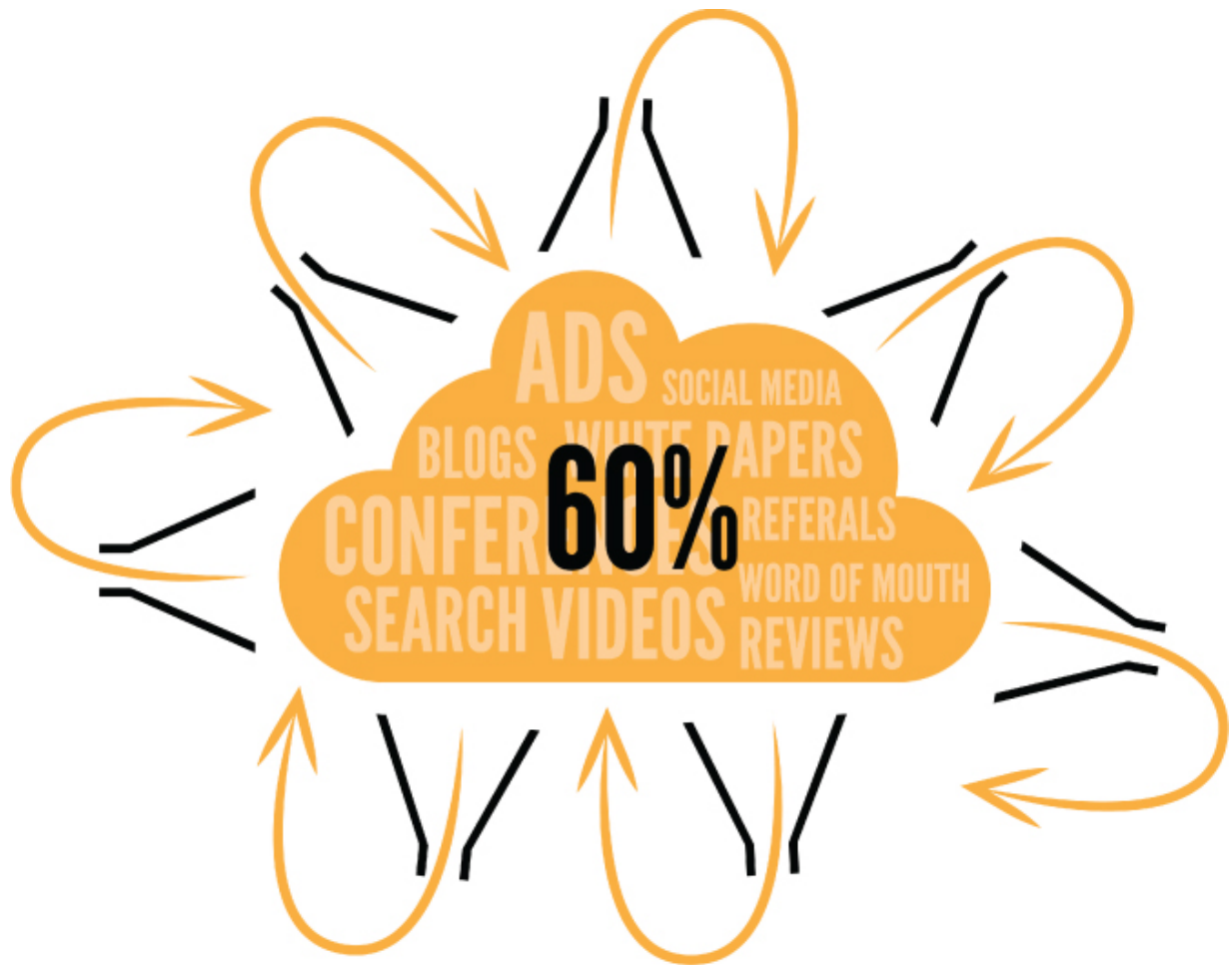


Here we see the sales cloud. It's made up of all the ways customers hear about your brand: blogs, online reviews,

trusted referrals, social media sites, your website. These are where your market may or may not be hearing about you—for better or for worse. This is where most of the purchasing decisions are made. In fact, once someone is in your traditionally viewed funnel, the goal is more about not messing it up, because they've come to you with information.



Here we see why these experiences are so important. We aren't alone as businesses; we are in competition with many other products, services, and content. In the sales cloud, people have access to a ton of information. This is why creating amazing experiences people want to share is so important—because if you aren't, someone else is. And when what's being shared about your company is negative, there is always another brand ready to make a good impression.



Your customers don't stop being important once they've bought from you. Once they move through your sales funnel—if you've been able to get them in and keep them happy during the process—they now reenter the sales cloud and join the other voices. Was their experience as a customer good enough to share? Did they leave unhappy? Making the sale isn't enough; we need to be creating shareable experiences for our customers through great products and service.

Once through the funnel, customers return to the cloud—this is almost always ignored. Current customers are treated as an entirely different pool than prospective ones. We bend over backward for new prospects, while leaving current customers to fend for themselves. How many times

have you seen special offers made to new customers of the brands you use, only to be left without the great rate or free iPad or any other special treatment new customers have been offered? Focusing outside the funnel is what *UnSelling* is all about.

One of the arguments against valuing social media referrals is that there isn't always an easily measurable line between referral and purchase. But has there ever been? In the past, when I walked into a store to make a purchase, the salesperson never wondered whether it was my sister's recommendation, a billboard, or random chance that brought me in. Now that we can measure where a click comes from, we think that this line should be direct. Studies show that consumers will consult almost a dozen sources on average before making a purchase decision.² The click that leads to the sale is only a small piece of the sales puzzle.

According to data from Forrester Research, “forty-eight percent of consumers reported that social media posts are a great way to discover new products, brands, trends, or retailers, but less than 1% of transactions could be traced back to trackable social links....These factoids come from consumer surveys, as well as the tracing of 77,000 online purchases made by American consumers over a two-week span in April. What researchers found is that consumers almost never buy something right after seeing it mentioned in a post by a friend or retailer on Facebook or other social media outlets.”³

The key term here for me is that they don't buy it “right after.” We have so much information before us now, that we may check 20 resources before making a click through to purchase decision. That doesn't mean that these influences aren't important or that they don't lead to decisions and purchases. It may have taken three ads, two sightings on a

friend's blog, and a lot of nagging from my mom to get be to buy a new pair of jeans, but each one led to the sale with equal importance.

In today's world, we need to drop our funnel vision ways and focus on *UnSelling* if we're going to remain top of mind for our market. Buy or good-bye is ineffective in a world where purchase decisions are made long before you even get a chance pitch.

¹ Source: <http://bit.ly/SproutSocialStat>

² www.thinkwithgoogle.com/collections/zero-moment-truth.html

³ Source: <http://ti.me/Q4tr2K>

Chapter 4

Remedies for Funnel Vision

1. Never, ever think of people as leads—online or offline. We do not walk around with invisible prospective numbers on our heads, and no one wants to be valued based on their possible future profit to you.
2. Create amazing products, services, and content first. If you put it out in the world, make it good. Social media sentiment is not to blame for your disappointing quarter; a bad product is.
3. Trusted referrals are the best marketing. When customers pass through your company funnel, they do not go live on some deserted island somewhere¹
4. —they go back into the mix. They share their experiences, good and bad, and those listening value these opinions ahead of any ad or campaign.

UnSelling is what happens when you understand the humanity of your market, produce a quality product, and create experiences that lead to trusted referrals. *UnSelling* means stepping back from the funnel and focusing on everything else but the sale. I once sat in a VIP lounge at a conference where business owners had paid extra for a few-hour closed session with me and my friend, John Morgan.² During the session, one person raised a hand and said, “If someone isn't ready to buy from me in the next six weeks, I don't want to talk to him. I'm not wasting my time on anyone not ready to buy.” Obviously, this ray of sunshine isn't right for social media. I can't imagine anyone with that kind of attitude being great to work with at all. With so much competition and information available to our

customers, who would want to work with someone who clearly just sees them as a number?

In marketing and business today, the word *experience* is used a lot. Customer experiences are shared and valued; companies work to create standout experiences for their customers to grow their businesses through social networks. As companies, we experience pushes and pulls as industries change and grow, affected by factors as varied as politics, economics, and new technologies. As consumers, our choices are continuously shaped by the experience we have with brands, some directly and some through the stories of others. The experience landscape is complicated, multifaceted, and ever changing. If you take one thing away from this book, I want it to be that experience matters in *UnSelling*. As consumers and companies, the choices we make and experiences we have and share make a difference.

There are some who disagree—who think that no matter how horrible the service, bad the product, or discriminatory the voices, there will always be customers. And there are those who think how we are treated doesn't really matter; people will just keep on buying, and any press is good press. This book is filled with case studies that show otherwise.

In *UnSelling* you will see how your experiences as a consumer matter and shape your choices and the choices of those around you, and you will see that your experiences as a business matter and can change industries and create growth. In *UnSelling*, good experience is good business.

To understand why experience matters we are going to look at what I call pulse and learn to see and break down the complicated relationship between you, your business and your industry, and the market around you.

¹ Unless you sell deserted islands, then never mind.

² <http://johnmichaelmorgan.com/>

Chapter 5

Pulse

The relationship between a brand and its market is complex and always changing. To succeed in the sales cloud, we need to figure out how our interactions with customers and potential customers are shaped. Understanding this relationship is the first step in *UnSelling* called the *pulse*.



In the fancy picture shown here the line represents a person experiencing a brand. This is called the *pulse line*. It moves up or down depending on how the individual is feeling about the brand.

The brand space is the background, made up of three possibilities: *vulnerable*, *static*, and *ecstatic*. The lowest, *vulnerable*, is where people are most open to competition. They may not have made a purchase decision yet, or they may just be unhappy with past interactions. As companies we work hard to move people out of this space.

In the middle we have *current static customers*. This is the space where companies have the greatest direct effect on