

## Cross-selling takes teamwork

Progressive companies understand the power of cross-selling and recognize it as a critical component for promoting both customer retention and revenue growth. What is cross-selling?

 By [John Boe](#) 3 Feb 2010



Cross-selling is nothing more than team-selling with other specialists within your company, all working in partnership on behalf of the customer's best interest. It is a proactive, ongoing sales process designed to provide your existing customers with a full range of your company's products and services. The good news is, cross-selling is one of the most profitable and least risky endeavours a company can undertake. The bad news is, if your cross-selling program is not properly administered and monitored you run the risk of losing customers and creating conflict within your sales team.

Not surprisingly, two of the key elements that make cross-selling work are trust and convenience. Your customers already possess a degree of trust in your company, and this can be converted into additional sales that are not directly related to their existing products. Some might suggest that customers are irritated by cross-selling and perceive it as an aggressive sales approach.

Interestingly enough, consumer research indicates that the reverse is actually true. Most customers prefer full spectrum of products and services and appreciate the convenience that is provided through a comprehensive cross-selling approach.

### Would you like chips with that?

While you may not have recognized it was happening, the last time you ordered from a fast food restaurant there is a good chance you experienced cross-selling. Cross-selling is a well-established and highly effective marketing practice utilized by a wide variety of industries, ranging from financial institutions to fast food restaurants. When you cross-sell related products and services to your existing customers, you are making a smart decision. Developing a systematic approach to cross-selling brings in additional revenue with relatively low expense and effort.

Marketers wrack their brains and develop expensive advertising campaigns solely designed to get prospects to focus on their offers. When you cross-sell to existing customers, you don't have to compete their attention. In addition to generating new sales, cross-selling promotes customer loyalty and as a result keeps competitors at arms length and your business on the books.

### What makes cross-selling work?

Cross-selling begins with uncovering your customer's needs and laying the groundwork for other specialists to assist you in the selling process. The best place to introduce your customer to the concept of cross-selling is during your initial needs analysis meeting. It is important that you inform your customer early in the needs analysis process that you do not work alone, but represent one aspect of a team of specialists all working to help them achieve their goals. When you cross-sell you don't claim to be the expert, you are more of a partner in the process, guiding your customer toward another qualified specialist within your company. You are responsible for setting the tone and preparing your customer for a smooth transfer to an additional specialist.

Unfortunately, many salespeople fail to do a thorough needs analysis and as a result, frequently do not identify potential products and services that fall outside of their area of expertise. Ask questions and take good notes. Ask about their goals and what concerns them. When you discover an area of potential need, be certain to ask your customer what steps they have taken, if any, to address the concern. This collaborative approach also helps you view yourself as a planning partner.

Effective cross-selling is all about guided self-discovery. Through a series of thought provoking, open-ended questions, successful salespeople assist their customers to uncover potential needs.

During the needs analysis interview, I highly recommend the use of a checklist that incorporates all of your company's products and services. Relying on your memory alone is a poor business decision, so take the time to jot down key information. The integration of customer information and behind the scenes paperwork is essential to facilitate a seamless handoff.

## **Keys to achieving cross-selling success**

When developing a cross-selling program, it is critically important that everyone in the organization buys in the philosophy and fully participates in the program. The foundation of every successful cross-selling program is rooted in a strong incentive system based on personal recognition and financial reward. Because of the complexity, there also needs to be a standardized software tracking system in place to monitor compliance and coordinate cross-selling activities between specialists. The true value of any sales program can only be measured through the customer's eyes. Steps should be taken to actively survey customer satisfaction throughout the process. Once a company links specialists, business processes, and data they make it easy for their salespeople to act on behalf of their customers.

Companies that fail to implement an effective cross-selling program actually do a disservice to their customers and in effect, leave the backdoor open to their competitors.

## **ABOUT JOHN BOE**

American John Boe presents a wide variety of motivational and sales-oriented keynotes and seminar programs for sales meetings and conventions. John is a recognized sales trainer, business motivational speaker with an impeccable track record in the meeting industry. For more information, go to [www.johnboe.com](http://www.johnboe.com). Free newsletter available on website. [View my profile and articles...](#)