

## Book Review

### *Introduction to Sales Process Improvement:*

### *Gaining More of the Right Customers*

### *at Higher Margins and Lower Costs*

### *with Lean and Six Sigma*

Michael J. Webb, Sales Performance Consultants, Inc., \$84, 182 pages, June 10, 2005,

[www.salesperformance.com](http://www.salesperformance.com).

Many companies would like to be more scientific about sales and marketing, but fear causing more problems than results. Now, a unique and path-breaking work by Michael Webb enables those companies to apply an approach that gets salespeople to pay attention, and customers to line up!

In recent years manufacturing businesses have gained productivity by excluding non-value-added activities and through analytical techniques such as Six Sigma. In this book, Webb illustrates how similar value and measurement-oriented strategies are the key to unlocking the improvement potential in sales, marketing, and servicing customers. Far from being some visionary potential, many well-known companies are applying these techniques and making millions in additional profit today.

Although manufacturing is different from sales and marketing, both can create value for customers. For example, sales and marketing can help customers solve problems and provide needed information. As it turns out, most companies haven't really thought through their sales and marketing functions in those terms. Once they do, many new possibilities open up for better ways of attracting prospects and converting them into customers. In part one, "Foundations for Better Results," Webb examines the differences

between producing products vs. customers. In part two, “How Should You Design Your Sales Process?,” he provides three “tasks” required to design a sales process, illustrating them with examples of marketing and selling techniques from a variety of industries. In part three, “The Fool-Proof Path for Improving Results,” Webb provides a brief introduction to the quality movement, applies some of its analytical tools, and presents a realistic approach to helping organizations change.

Throughout the book, Webb provides anecdotes from his personal experience as well as the experiences of clients in direct sales, sales and marketing management, and field marketing. Sometimes he offers his own techniques, such as business value mapping, which helps marketers and sellers define customer value and the best ways of communicating it. In other cases, such as sales process mapping, he modifies traditional process-oriented techniques to help them fit the sales and marketing environment better. In still other cases, such as Voice of the Customer, he describes a well-known technique, but focuses it on marketing and selling rather than accepting its traditional focus on the features and functions of products.

The reader will receive a sort of “grand tour” of a thoroughly process-oriented approach to finding, gaining, and keeping customers. Webb’s perspective raises some telling questions about how these functions are traditionally managed (Why isn’t “Voice of the Customer” the marketing department’s primary job?). However, rather than being critical or negative, Webb presents positive alternatives and illustrates their results from live experiences whenever possible. The reader will come away with new perspectives on an old subject, which will enable them to raise valuable new questions that people in his or her firm may not have asked (or answered) before.

*“Introduction to Sales Process Improvement”* shows that the work of finding, gaining, and keeping customers is productive not just for the seller, but for the buyer as well. The fundamental idea, that people’s actions (such as click throughs, opt-ins, or spending time with your salespeople) are the means of measuring whether value has been produced, is sound. The reader will how to position the proven strategies of the quality movement so they can be applied to improve marketing, selling, and servicing productivity, just as they improved manufacturing productivity. This is very good news for senior executives, who are constantly on the look out for ways of making future revenue and profitability more predictable and reliable. Further, these approaches are not rocket science or visionary potential. Companies such as Standard Register, Johnson and Johnson, GE, ServiceMaster, and many others large and small are making millions of dollars and achieving significant competitive advantages applying these techniques today.

Michael J. Webb is President of Sales Performance Consultants, Inc., a consultancy devoted to helping senior executives who are struggling to measure and improve unreliable and unmeasurable processes for finding, gaining, and keeping customers. Mr. Webb delivered the keynote address for the first two conferences held on applying Six Sigma to marketing and sales. He has helped clients such as American Express, 3M, Marriott and many others to improve their sales processes and results. He also works with certain sales training firms to integrate best selling practices into client's sales operations.

Mr. Webb’s website ([www.salesperformance.com](http://www.salesperformance.com)) contains information and resources for companies that want to improve their sales performance. You can reach him at (877) 784-6507 or [mwebb@salesperformance.com](mailto:mwebb@salesperformance.com).

