

White Paper

# Growing Sales using Adaptive Strategies

## Techniques for Sales Growth in the AV Integration Marketplace Series

Phil Hale, MBA, BACS  
President & CEO, Presentation Switchers, Inc.

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## Summary



Audio-visual (AV) integrators are constantly looking for methods to grow their businesses. This white paper introduces an innovative sales and marketing strategy that connects a customer's needs and their fear of failure with valuable solutions provided by integrators.

We begin by analyzing common requirements of a conference room or classroom from a customer's viewpoint. We explore the customer's fear associated with a project of this importance, since one's boss and peers will use this space on a daily basis. Finally, we will introduce a strategy and a frame of mind that AV integrators and their sales staff can use to meet these requirements to satisfy the customer's needs and build lasting business support relationships.

## Evaluating the Need



It really does not matter which sales methodologies to which you subscribe--Dale Carnegie, AMA, Zig Ziegler, or whomever. Each teaches the salesman to listen intently to the customer, understand the needs of the customer, and to take ownership of the problem.

In most multimedia installations, the customer, whether it be a manager, a technician, or an IT member, wants to allow multiple individuals and different multimedia sources to all share a single display. The devices are plentiful, and the signal formats are varied. To round out the requirements, the customer adds that the system needs to be easy to use so everyone will actually use the presentation space. It is okay, we trained for this. We received our InfoComm CTS™ certifications, received years of on-the-job-training (OJT), and have a myriad of solutions designed to solve these types of problems. We are confident that our design engineers will solve this complex problem like they have done so many times in the past. The proposed solution is fairly complex, often requiring the salesman and design engineer to explain the proposed solution to the customer as a team. The stakes are high for the customer. He knows very little about AV, except for his home theater or what he has researched on the web. His reputation is on the line, and his peers know about the project. He quickly becomes immobilized by the fear of failure. The decision making process slows to a crawl.

## The Problem: Consumer Risk Paralysis



For years, academics have researched why consumers procrastinate or delay key purchase decisions. Greenleaf and Lehmann (1991) studied consumer purchases over \$100 and surmised that perceived risk and difficulty selecting the best brand were the lead causes of purchasing delays. Hogarth, Michaud, and Mery (1980) found that delays in decision making were attributed to three types of uncertainty: “(a) lack of knowledge about events that could affect outcomes, (b) ambiguity concerning the consequences of actions, . . . and (c) procedural uncertainty, concerning means to handle and process the decision, e.g. what information to seek and where, . . .”

Often, IT managers, owners, or middle-level managers are “tasked” with creating a conference or training room. They have limited experience and quickly learn they are in over their heads when designing a system that will meet their design requirements. The internet becomes both a source of information and confusion. Systems integrators walk the customer through each of the customer’s concerns and slowly reduce the risk to a palpable level so a purchase decision can take place. We have all been here. It consumes precious time. So, what can we possibly do to lessen the delays associated with the risk and uncertainty and get the customer to yes quicker? Consider a strategy of offering “adaptive solutions” in every sale.

## The Solution: Adaptive Solutions

The verb “adapt” means to make suitable to or consistent with a particular situation or use. Adaptive solutions are system designs which can easily conform to change. It is also a new way of marketing one’s services. In the example above, an adaptive solution would be a design where later changes to the system would be minor and the original capital outlay would be preserved. For example, let’s say a month after the commissioning, the customer returns to you and now needs to support Apple MacBooks using DisplayPort connectors. The adaptive solution would allow the design to change quickly without replacing the original equipment and with minimal added cost.

Consider the latest trend of “bring your own device” (BYOD) concepts in conference room and classroom designs. According to a recent poll by Commercial Integrator magazine (2013) of systems integrators, 63% say they see a moderate or great demand in BYOD capabilities. This means that new presentation spaces need to support a variety of consumer and prosumer-grade multimedia devices, from tablets to

smart phones, and support these devices as new products and connector formats become available to the market.

The core elements of adaptive solutions are designs, which are modular and scalable. In the examples above, we would specify modular connector interfaces where connectors could be removed or added easily. We would design-in modular presentation switchers which automatically convert various signal types to a single common HDMI format compatible with most displays. Control systems will instruct the presentation switcher to select a source without regard for the signal type or format.



But why would we design systems like this? Simple. Because once the customer understands that their system can adapt, morph, change, and expand, the risk is reduced and the customer says “yes” quicker. Quicker decision making means more sales per year per salesperson. For the best results, the whole company needs to drink the Kool-Aid®. Building these types of systems differentiates one integrator from another, and when everyone in the company understands this differentiation, the more effective the message will become to the customer. Your sales staff might say to a customer, “We are different than other integrators. We design and install systems that can change when your needs change. And, we can make these changes quickly using your maintenance budget--not another capital outlay.”

Finally, there is another significant reason why we should consider the adaptive solution strategy. Modular and scalable designs have long system lifecycles with revenue streams extending over many years. Commercial Integrator magazine (2013) caught up with Julian Phillips, VP of the Whitlock Group, who said, “the [AV] industry needs to move away from the per-project-based transactional business model and look more holistically at their service menus, to the entire life cycle of products and services.” Integrators that differentiate themselves by using adaptive designs will win more projects with revenues streams that extend well beyond the original install date. 

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## REFERENCES

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