

# MOBILE SALES ENABLEMENT AND THE iPad – A PERFECT MARRIAGE



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**The business world has changed** remarkably over the past ten years. World markets have converged, technology advances push innovation and financial pressures change both our short and long term outlooks on success. All of these changes have transformed how we conduct business and how customers expect us to interact with them. Simply, we need to be more dynamic to keep up and stay ahead.

One of the areas this can be seen most clearly in is mobility. From a business perspective, mobility is about making our business portable and being able to dynamically interact with our market. The past several years have seen a rise in the importance of mobility, primarily driven by consumer markets. Individuals are using mobile devices in their personal lives and becoming accustomed to fast access to rich resources any time, any place. This is driving a unique change in our customer's expectations and how they want to interact with us.

To best meet our customers' needs in the market we need to adapt our overall approach by making our business more dynamic and mobile. As a result a new business discipline is emerging – Mobile Sales Enablement.

Mobile Sales Enablement, or MSE, is about understanding the new way that customers want to interact with our business to purchase products and then deploying mobile initiatives to most appropriately meet the customers' needs in the market.

Simply, MSE is about leveraging mobile to have better experiences with customers so they buy more from you. While endless academic analysis could be applied implementing MSE in a business, it really comes down to three things: **1) Understanding what is different; 2) Adapting; and 3) Executing.**

**What's Different** – To really effectively leverage mobile with customers you need to understand what has changed with your customers and how you can apply mobile to take advantage of that change. While mobile cannot be applied to all opportunities, there are some very compelling applications. For example, the world of coffee shops has introduced a much more causal selling atmosphere in the last decade. Meeting for coffee is an exceptionally common selling venue which presents a unique environmental limitation. We no longer have projectors, white boards and other props we have grown accustomed to as an aid our selling efforts. This becomes the perfect scenario to interject a rich tablet – aka the iPad – into the salesman's bag to bridge this gap. Not only can we now use visual aids again – in a very natural and impromptu fashion – but we can build some really compelling experiences as well.

**Adapting** – The really hard part to all of this is actually adapting the way we do things once we have an idea of how to use mobile. Adapting, unfortunately, has some very broad implications when it comes to MSE. Not only are multiple levels of the business impacted by mobile initiatives (IT, Governance, Finance, Marketing and Sales), but also the habits of individuals. Many times it is this combination of organizational and individual change that make mobile initiatives just a wee bit tricky to implement.

**Executing** – Once we are able to adapt, we now need to execute on MSE-based initiatives. This is the really rewarding part and how real value is generated via investments in mo-

bile. Execution has many steps, from deciding on devices, content strategies, application selection/ development, to launch and post-launch support. Based on a lot of hands-on experience and observation of real world MSE initiatives, the real critical success factor in MSE execution comes in the design phase of the program. Good design – conceptual, logical and visual – is what really drives adaption and effectiveness of MSE initiatives.

So why is the iPad such an important component in the concept of MSE? When you need a device for a sales person to use a dynamic aid, you just can't beat it. The form factor is perfect. Phones make poor selling devices because they are too small – same for the 7-inch tablets. The 4:3 screen ratio is just more functional as a sales tool than wide screen formats. While Apple does some challenging things for enterprise IT groups to cope with, their control of the iPad has made a very stable platform with a relatively low degree of variability.

More than form factor, the iPad can become an extremely effective solution selling device. For all those people who believe in the concepts of solution and consultative selling, there are some amazing things the iPad can accomplish in facilitating these selling approaches.

Using the iPad as a solution selling aid under a MSE strategy is not about just building an app or putting your existing PowerPoint files on the device. Rather, it is designing a set of experiences that a sales executive can use with the customer to help them understand the value of products and see themselves using the solutions you are offering.

We see the most effective MSE application as one that allows customers to see, and visualizes problems and solutions in a way that traditional conversations and selling aids can't. For example, think about a complex medical device or highly sophisticated IT virtualization solution. In the past, we have relied upon the storytelling skills of the sales executive to explain product and how it relates to the patient or business. Many times the consistency of this story varied, which might potentially jeopardize the customers' ability to understand.

Well-designed MSE applications can be extremely effective at explaining complex concepts to a customer. A recent trend with MSE applications has been to create self-contained selling kits for the sales team. These "sales kit" applications contain all of the content a sales executive needs to face a particular selling situation. Great care is taken in designing these selling kits to make them highly intuitive and adaptive to real world selling situations. When designed properly and used by a skilled sales executive, the results may range from an increase in sales velocity to improved closed rates.

While an application used directly by sales executives is one example of an MSE initiative, there are many other approaches. Real value will be found when you back up a bit and really look at your customers and your business. There may be some amazing ways to use mobile with your customers to drive increased revenue and overall customer loyalty. This is how business value and competitive differentiation is created. 

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