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Is it your selling — or your value proposition?

Why resilience is reshaping B2B customer value — and why suppliers need to continuously re-engineer what they promise.

> **Before asking whether your salespeople are selling well enough, ask whether your value proposition still addresses what your customers now value most.**

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THE MANAGEMENT PROBLEM

Customer priorities are changing faster than many B2B value propositions

B2B customers are operating in an environment shaped by geopolitical volatility, economic uncertainty, supply disruption, regulation and accelerating technological change. Across the research, one concern increasingly connects these pressures: **resilience**.

Customers are looking beyond efficiency and immediate financial return. They are asking how suppliers can help them withstand disruption across finances, operations, strategy, workforce and the natural systems on which they depend.

The old reflex: fix the salesperson

When growth slows, margins fall or win rates deteriorate, many organisations reach for a familiar response: train the sales force, improve negotiation, increase prospecting or strengthen account management.

> **THE ASSUMPTION HIDDEN INSIDE THAT RESPONSE**
>
> The value proposition is still relevant; the salespeople are simply failing to sell it effectively.

Our research suggests that diagnosis can start in the wrong place. A value proposition can be competently sold while addressing a customer problem that has become less important. Sales effectiveness cannot indefinitely compensate for proposition irrelevance.

Resilience changes the value conversation

DIMENSION OF SYSTEMIC VALUE	THE CUSTOMER QUESTION
Financial	Who carries the financial risk?
Continuity	Will the process keep running?
Strategic	Can we still change?
Workforce	Can our people carry it?
Planetary	Is the wider system still viable?

We call this Systemic Value: the measurable improvement a supplier enables in the customer's wider operating system across these five interconnected dimensions.

WHAT CUSTOMERS NOW DEMAND

Five signals that the value proposition has to change

As customers focus on the resilience of the wider system, they ask more from suppliers than a better product or a persuasive sales pitch. Across the research, five linked demands recur.

1. **Make it worthwhile.** Address an end-to-end problem important enough to justify the risk and effort of change.
2. **Involve everyone.** Help align the wider decision coalition created when value crosses functional boundaries.
3. **Make sure everyone benefits.** Give each stakeholder a legitimate reason to support the same system change.
4. **Show the evidence.** Co-create a decision-grade business case using the customer's own baseline, assumptions and evidence.
5. **Guarantee the results.** Extend the promise into implementation, adoption, measurement and proportionate accountability.

> **WHAT CHANGES FOR SUPPLIERS**
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> Together, the five demands move the supplier from selling an offer towards helping engineer an improvement in the customer's system.

EXECUTIVE SELF-AUDIT

Is it your selling — or your value proposition?

Before investing in sales training, test whether the proposition still answers the questions customers are asking today. Answer each question the way your customer would.

DIMENSION	ANSWER THE WAY YOUR CUSTOMER WOULD	YOUR ANSWER
Financial	Does your value proposition take financial risk away from the customer — or does the customer still carry all of it?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Continuity	Does it improve the customer's complete end-to-end process and keep that process running when things go wrong?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Strategic	Does it strengthen the customer's position and adaptability without creating unnecessary lock-in?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Workforce	Does it reduce dependence on scarce people and improve adoption, retention or wellbeing?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Planetary	Does it help the customer remain compliant and viable while measurably reducing ecological exposure?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Evidence	For every "yes" above, can you prove it with a business case built on the customer's own numbers?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Guarantee	Would you put your margin behind the value you claim?	☐ Yes ☐ No

IF MOST ANSWERS ARE "NO" — OR "WE HAVE NEVER ASKED"

Your problem may not be selling skills. Your value proposition may still be answering the questions customers asked ten years ago.

THE SUPPLIER RESPONSE

Value Engineering keeps the proposition aligned with changing customer needs

Geopolitical volatility matters because it shortens the useful life of value propositions. Customer priorities, technology, regulation and competitive criteria can move faster than traditional B2B proposition-development cycles.

In many B2B organisations, proposition ownership is fragmented: management defines it, marketing packages it, sales adapts it and delivery executes it. Nobody continuously manages the promise end to end. Value Engineering is the organisational response.



Evidence and learning flow from Value Capture back into Value Design. That return loop is the point: the proposition is repeatedly re-engineered as customer needs evolve.

Why the cycle matters now

A value proposition can expire faster than the product behind it. Robovision illustrates the mechanism: as AI cycles accelerated, customers could no longer specify future functionality against a fixed 18-month roadmap. The company shifted from defined point solutions to a reconfigurable platform that customers could adapt over time. The promise changed because the market had changed.

> **THE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATION**
>
> Do not treat proposition redesign as an occasional strategy project. Treat it as a standing organisational capability that continuously connects market evidence, selling, realised outcomes and the next promise.

THE ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

The salesperson becomes a Value Orchestrator — but the capability belongs to the organisation

AI reduces the scarcity value of information and first-pass analysis. Human contribution shifts towards diagnosis, judgement, stakeholder commitment, negotiation, adoption and accountability.

Value Engineering is an organisational capability built from three elements:

SKILLS

People who can discover, design, quantify, align, negotiate, lead change and learn.

PROCESS

A repeatable Value Engineering Cycle that connects design, selling, realisation and capture.

TOOLING

Shared templates, evidence, data, business-case methods and learning artefacts that outlast individuals.

The Value Orchestrator is the commercial role that mobilises these capabilities around the customer. No individual is expected to master every skill at expert level.

What leaders should do now

- Test the proposition before prescribing sales training.
- Pilot the Value Engineering Cycle on one proposition and one account.
- Capture realised evidence and feed it back into proposition design.
- Build Value Engineering as a team capability, not a heroic-salesperson expectation.

THE THESIS

The future of selling is not about explaining value better. It is about keeping the value proposition aligned with what customers need — and continuously designing, proving, realising and capturing that value.

Research basis and limits

This brief draws on the longitudinal Future of Selling programme and a coded study of 33 interviews across 29 organisations. The evidence is predominantly European and practitioner-led; it identifies emerging patterns rather than prevalence estimates for all B2B markets.

Systemic Value is the current research interpretation. The Value Engineering Cycle is the proposed organisational response. Regenerative Value remains an emerging hypothesis.

Read the full white paper and living research at FutureOfSelling.org