Peter E. Cohan
The Second Derivative – Great Demo!
1532 Scenic Drive
Trinidad, CA 95570
T: +1 650 631 3694
E: PCohan@SecondDerivative.com
W: https://GreatDemo.com

Why *Did* They Buy?
–
Fabulous Fuel for Sales, Presales and Customer Success

Here's a novel idea: Go visit your new customers a few months *after* they purchased your software and well after they have deployed it into production use. Ask them, "How *are* you using our software? What use cases have you implemented? What value are you receiving?"

What you learn is tremendously important!

You'll capture success stories and establish references that help you make your next sale, secure renewals, expand deployment into existing customers, and possibly open new markets.

This information is like concentrated fuel for sales engines – enabling BDRs, SDRs, sales, presales, customer success and marketing to achieve their goals more rapidly.

Very Valuable, But Very Rarely Collected

If you are in sales or presales, wouldn't it be wonderful to know – ahead of time – the goals, objectives, and Critical Business Issues faced by the new prospects you engage? Wouldn't it be delightful to understand the underlying problems that make it hard for these prospects to achieve their goals, and the specific capabilities they need to solve their problems?

Wouldn't it be fabulous to have a strong understanding of the value prospects might gain by using your offerings – well before your first conversation with these prospects takes place?

Interviewing *current* customers to collect this specific information enables customer-facing teams to address prospects more efficiently, and to secure renewals and expand sales to existing customers with greater precision. This same information helps presales and customer success teams create and deliver more compelling and more effective demonstrations.

This is the essence of reference selling – sharing how other, similar customers addressed their problems using your offerings. This information is truly like concentrated fuel for sales!

It's called "Why *did* they buy?" – simple, extremely valuable interviews with current customers to capture the use cases and value gained, enabling you to use that same information when selling to new prospects, and in upselling and expanding your offerings with existing customers.

Sadly, most companies do not actively collect and leverage "Why *did* they buy?" information today. While there is a certain amount of "tribal knowledge" gathered for a few key reference accounts, vendor teams largely have only limited personal experiences to draw upon.

Many vendors complete "win/loss" analyses every quarter – but the major focus is on "why we won the deal" or "why we lost". Both analyses focus on the mechanics of the deal-making and closing process – neither provides reference or success stories that support future sales.

The sad summary is that most companies simply do not collect this information – no formal process – and thereby lose very important opportunities. Let's change that!

What Can You Learn?

Customers that are happy with your offering may be willing to serve as references and allow formal reference stories to be promoted on your website and collateral. These are the Formal Success Stories that all marketing departments crave. And these same references provide fuel for sales, when prospects ask, "Who else is using your product that we can contact?"

But – you need to have the *conversation* in order to *identify* potential references…

When you *do* sit with your existing customers to have the "Why *did* you buy?" conversation, you'll learn what they like about your product as well as what they dislike or desire to see changed – this information is a good starting point and should be captured.

However, your objective is to uncover complete use case information. During a "Why *did* you buy?" conversation you'll likely learn two wonderfully useful sets of use case information:

1. Use cases your customer has deployed that you and they *expected* to implement.
2. Use cases your customer has created that were *unexpected* or unanticipated at the time of purchase – but were discovered and implemented by customers on their own.

Both sets of information translate into success and reference stories that help field and marketing folks sell to new prospects, expand existing footprint and address new markets.

Expected Use Cases

The first group are use cases that your customer planned to implement when they purchased your product and did indeed roll out. In collecting these use cases, you should ask:

- What use case(s) did you deploy?
- Who are the current users and how many?
- What value, in terms of time, people, or money, have you gained as a result?

We recommend using Situation Slide format to capture this information:

Job Title/Industry:	For each individual you interview…
Critical Business Issue:	What top level challenge was that individual facing? What goal or objective was at risk (and did they achieve it or are on their way)?
Problems/Reasons:	What was the pre-solution situation? What did they have in place before (or not have in place)? What were their "pain" points?
Specific Capabilities:	What capabilities, in particular, was this person looking for in a solution? And what Specific Capabilities are they now consuming from your software that provides the solution?
Delta:	What value has this person gained or loss avoided? (This is best expressed as tangible numbers in terms of time saved, people redeployed, money gained, fines avoided, etc.)
Critical Date:	Was there a date or event that drove the need to have a solution in place? Did they meet that deadline?

This information becomes the basis for reference and success stories. While a handful of Formal Success Stories may be captured and used in collateral or on websites as references, many more "Informal" Success Stories can be gathered and used for reference selling.

Informal Success Stories – Low Hanging Fruit!

For every Formal Success Story captured by a vendor there are likely *dozens* of Informal Success Stories that are awaiting harvest in your customer base. They are the low-hanging fruit – easy to capture and easy to use. [Yes, I've changed the metaphor, but just for this section…]

Informal Success Stories are the sanitized versions of the Situation Slide information described above. No customer name needs to be associated with the story – which makes them more broadly useful and easier to attain. No legal review, no executive approvals. Just the raw success story, ready for harvest – delicious!

Sales and presales teams find this information invaluable when prospecting for new customers. Presenting a prospect with success stories of how other customers in *similar* situations addressed their challenges generates real interest in learning more. Informal Success Stories enable sales and presales teams to establish credibility with their prospects to move the sales process forward faster.

[See our article, *Vision Generation Demos - The Crisp Cure for Stunningly Awful Harbor Tours* for an example of using Informal Success Stories with new prospects.]

High-performing sales reps know that prospects are *much* more interested in learning how your organization has helped other, similar customers solve their business problems, as opposed to being flogged with another interminable corporate overview or product presentation!

Customer success teams know that success stories catalyze adoption, renewals, and expansion – particularly if these success stories come from *within* the customer.

Astute marketing professionals and product managers know that these success stories are the single most important asset of their go-to-market materials. Great marketing teams produce templates of high-probability use cases supported by these success stories to equip the field.

Sales, presales, customer success, and enablement personnel take these same use cases and success stories and integrate them into specific sales process steps and sales motions (e.g., Vision Generation Demos and Discovery discussion prompters).

Unexpected Use Cases – High Octane!

How many times have you visited a customer and found that they are using your software in ways that are truly terrific and wholly unique? When you see these use cases, don't you get excited to see the novel ways customers are using your software's capabilities? (You should!)

What does this information represent?

These new use cases and success stories enable you to expand your footprint into existing customers, entrench current users more deeply and engage new users – while providing additional and unanticipated value to drive renewals. These use cases are often the vehicles to enter new markets or address new players in existing markets.

These unexpected use cases are truly *remarkable* opportunities – they are high octane fuel!

But like an internal combustion engine, gasoline doesn't magically flow into your car's fuel tank on its own – you need to have the "Why *did* you buy?" conversation with the customer.

Fill the Tank!

We strongly recommend that companies organize to collect both the expected and the novel use cases and success stories and disseminate them to the field – this is a perfect use of sales enablement tools.

[Note: Why do customers attend users' group meetings? Three reasons, typically:

1. The free bar, of course (at face-to-face meetings).
2. To see the product road map (and contribute to it).
3. To learn how *other* customers are successfully using the vendor's software – and to learn about *new* use cases – these are often the most important reasons!]

Identify which group or groups should engage customers in these conversations and establish regular cadences based on how long it takes for your specific products to begin to deliver value.

Who Should Collect This Information?

It would be wonderful if salespeople took the initiative to collect this information. What a pleasant surprise it would be if a salesperson visited a customer and said, "I'm not here to sell you anything today; I would just like to better understand how you are using the tools you've already licensed from us!" (How delightful; how refreshing; how differentiating!)

While truly exceptional sales performers often do have these conversations, most sales staff do not. Their motivation is driven by compensation to achieve quota – which generally means moving on to the *next* prospect as fast as possible…

The most effective customer success staff often take responsibility for meeting with existing customers to collect this information. They are a natural hub for capturing, publishing and disseminating the success stories and use cases they acquire.

Sales enablement groups are also structured to gather and broadcast "Why *did* they buy?" stories. As the implementers and managers of salesforce automation and enablement systems, they can take advantage of the available tools and technologies for archiving and delivering these success stories to the field.

Finally, presales staff are particularly well-positioned to gather this information. Why? Because customers perceive them as trustworthy and credible. Presales folks are able to sit side-by-side (in a real or virtual sense) with their customers to see and discuss the use cases in action. Customers are generally delighted to share the work they have done and often welcome the opportunity to do so.

We recommend implementing a structured approach to capturing and disseminating this information – one or more of the groups above should be selected and assigned concrete objectives to meet with customers to collect "Why *did* they buy?" information. Objectives can easily be defined and progress measured to track the success of the effort.

Timing *Is* Important

When should you collect "Why *did* they buy?" information? Timing is indeed important.

Too soon after "go live" and customers may not have sufficient data for the *value* elements of the discussion. Too late and they may have forgotten the previous pains – how long it took previously (vs. now), how many people were involved, how many steps, etc. (For Great Demo! practitioners these are terrific Deltas…!)

As memories fade, trying to calculate the value associated with the change from your customers' previous state to operating with your solution in place will get harder. Account teams with regular customer "check-in" meetings or QBRs should make "Why *did* you buy?" conversations part of the plan.

Specific timing will depend on the nature of your offering – and specifically the time-to-value. Schedule "Why *did* they buy?" conversations a few months after initial Value Realization Events have taken place. Make it part of your standard post-sale process – this is an opportunity to differentiate…!

Oh – and a small note: do *not* schedule "Why *did* you buy?" conversations with your customers a few weeks before renewal is expected to take place – that's *way* too late!

It's Fuel for Your Business

Acquiring these use cases and success stories takes work, but the return on this investment is truly terrific – it is the fuel that feeds your high-performance sales engine.

Since most organizations do *not* have "Why *did* they buy?" programs in place, this is a critical opportunity to differentiate. While companies without programs are starved for field-enabling fuel, your teams will be purring smoothly (and rapidly) on all cylinders…!

So, fill the tank and be one of the successful vendors that goes back to your customers to learn how your customers are using your products today. "Why *did* they buy?" conversations provide the use cases and success stories needed to achieve quarterly quotas, dominate current markets and establish new marketplaces.

It is, after all, why you are in business!

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