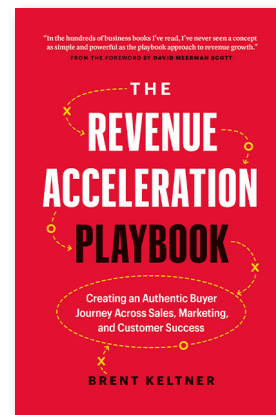


The Revenue Acceleration Playbook

Creating an Authentic Buyer Journey Across Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success

by **Brent Keltner**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Want to accelerate your sales? Stop selling and start connecting. Today's buyers are inundated with sales pitches coming at them from websites, peer reviews, social media, and email blasts. Is it any wonder they're overloaded, overwhelmed, and tuned out?

The fact is, product-centered pitching simply doesn't cut it anymore. Buyers don't want to hear about your product's features—they want to hear about how it can solve their problems or help them reach their goals. Sales and marketing expert Brent Keltner wrote *The Revenue Acceleration Playbook: Creating an Authentic Buyer Journey Across Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success* to introduce a proven, go-to-market framework that can increase personalization and authenticity across every step of the buyer journey—from initial buyer engagement and prospecting to closing new deals and expanding customer relationships, to growing target market segments.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- A proven framework to increase personalization and authenticity across the buyer journey.
- How to generate more opportunities, higher account values, and faster segment growth.
- How to build a high-growth organization.
- The revenue impact of an authentic buyer and customer journey.
- Team-based skills development.

Introduction

The authentic buyer journey starts, progresses, and ends anchored in what the buyer really values. It works for a simple reason: it keeps the buyer at the center of every interaction in a buying environment saturated with information and distractions. An authentic buyer journey will lead to improved revenue outcomes across the buyer and customer journey: more new opportunities, more won opportunities, higher account values, and deeper market segment growth.

Building an authentic buyer journey does not just happen on its own. It takes three key investments of time and attention from go-to-market and revenue leaders: Identifying clear buyer goals and targeted impacts to support the shift from product-driven to authentic buyer and customer conversations. Building the company-wide value playbook and then team-based playbooks to bring an authentic buyer journey into action. Investing in the processes, measurements, and skills development needed to sustain cross-team execution of an authentic buyer journey. The reward for these investments is higher performance and higher revenue growth.

In this book, you will learn how to accelerate your revenue growth by moving from a product-driven pitch to an authentic buyer journey at every single phase, from initial buyer engagement, through prospecting, early sales discovery, and first meetings, and on to closing new buyers, expanding buyer and customer relationships, and identifying the fastest way to grow in target market segments.

Drawing on more than twenty successful company examples, Keltner shows you, step by step, how to build an authentic buyer journey that will generate more opportunities, higher account values, and faster segment growth. An essential handbook for CEOs, revenue leaders, go-to-market team members, and everyone in between, *The Revenue Acceleration Playbook* is your guide to building a high-growth organization, from the sales floor to the executive suite.

Part 1: A Value Playbook and an Authentic Buyer and Customer Journey

Value Discovery as the Foundation

Many revenue leaders think of “buyer discovery” as a sales activity, but top-performing companies do continual discovery on buyer value across sales, marketing, and customer success. The real goal of buyer discovery is to identify a spe-

cific buyer impact—financial, organizational, or emotional—that will motivate the buyer to invest the time, internal political capital, and funding to do something new.

Good discovery goes beyond high-level questions on goals and priorities. It uses several levels of questions to help you and your buyer identify a specific impact that could motivate a purchase. You can quickly focus a buyer or customer conversation by offering a “menu” of business goals you can address together. Alternatively, you can share a short overview of your product and then pivot to the menu of goals.

The highest momentum in your buyer and customer conversations comes from connecting all buyer personas to the same goal area while offering impact statements tailored to what each persona values most.

Value Mapping and Value Confirmation

Value narratives map buyer and customer goals to your product in a consistent way, which frees up your team’s mental energy to hear and respond to each buyer in a personalized and creative way. The best product discussions are organized into short presentations, one goal area at a time. They use capability talk tracks and peer success stories to show how you can help your buyer’s goal achievement.

Don’t think of content as individual content assets. Organize it into content pathways that align with specific goals and can lead step-by-step through each phase of the buyer or customer journey toward a purchase decision. Accelerate collaboration between marketing, sales, and customer success by mapping your content and product capability to specific buyer goals and phases of the buyer journey.

If your sales and account management teams do not consistently ask buyers to confirm perceived value, they will waste a lot of time chasing unqualified deals. Don’t focus on closing before you have direct confirmation on fit. At the end of each buyer or customer upsell conversation, you need to intentionally pause and let the buyer confirm where they see value in your partnership. Only then does it make sense to take any steps toward closing.

A Value Playbook and Team-Level Playbooks

Top customer success teams use a handful of metrics to measure renewal and expansion potential. These metrics help segment customers into promoter, utilization, and detractor accounts.

You can use value narratives to engage your buyer personas

in a consistent way across marketing outreach, sales, and customer success conversations. A value narrative playbook supports an authentic buyer journey across go-to-market teams. It creates consistency in messaging buyer goals, discovery questions, product talk tracks, and client success stories.

You can use a content strategy playbook to align marketing content with buyer goal areas and buyer personas. This makes content more valuable for your buyers and more actionable for your go-to-market teams.

The best sales playbooks focus not on your product, but on the process of continually confirming and refining the buyer goals and target impacts. Deal velocity is at its highest when a buyer co-develops a specific success statement. The most successful prospecting playbooks invite buyers into an authentic, value-added conversation. They also connect buyer personas to shared goals to set up a stronger sales conversation.

Part 2: An Authentic Buyer Journey and Revenue Outcomes

Prospecting as a Trusted Advisor

Authentic prospecting campaigns tell a story about buyer goal achievement. The first touches describe a common buyer goal or challenge. Later, touches share proof you can help with that goal and then invite a conversation. Your buyers are much more likely to commit to a first call if they believe they will learn something of value about their goals and challenges. The last thing your buyers want is to sit through a product pitch.

The best prospecting playbooks treat each prospecting campaign as an opportunity for persona-message testing. Each campaign provides evidence on the areas of highest value by buyer persona. Your persona-messaging tests can focus on identifying the messages and touch-types with the highest impact by persona. Or, alternatively, you can test for the highest impact messages by buyer personas in different market segments.

Selling into Buyer-Defined Value

Asking buyers to directly confirm and define value from your product or service is key to a successful sales effort. Asking them to take specific action to secure that value is even better. Ask your team to start every sales conversation with discovery, further discovery, or confirmation on a buyer's goal and target impacts. Things change, new goals emerge, and additional buyer personas need to be engaged.

Your team's skills to run three-part meetings will develop faster if each team member creates their own cheat sheet of questions, has planned verbal transitions across all three parts, and sends follow-up emails recapping each meeting section. The best sales meetings leave five to ten minutes at the end to ask the buyer to confirm where they see the most value in a partnership and what action they plan to take next to secure that value.

The pullback to product pitching is strong throughout the sales process. To stay focused on an authentic buyer journey, revise your email templates, sales presentations, and proposals to anchor on buyer goals and committed buyer actions. You can differentiate your selling by starting each follow-up email by recapping the buyer's success statement and ending the email with the buyer's next committed actions. Most follow-up emails miss both elements.

Closing and Expanding on Value

Until your buyer has defined a specific goal and targeted impacts, pricing should be presented with a ballpark low-to-high range. This allows your team to qualify out budget-constrained buyers while also leaving flexibility to finalize the price later.

When you lead your pricing discussions with a restatement of the buyer's value and ROI case, you remind the buyer that they are investing in something they really care about and not just adding another budget expenditure. Your strategic price discounts should be linked to something of significant value to your company. Examples could include a product bundle, a high-volume purchase, a multi-year contract, early payments, or a premium customer brand.

Mutual success requires a good planning process to align your buyer, sales team, and account management or customer success team around identifying and prioritizing all of your buyer's goal areas. If you get good at executing a mutual success plan that focuses on immediate needs while not losing sight of other goals, you will close more deals and expand accounts faster.

A traditional account plan considers a buyer's goals as one of several elements to identify expansion opportunities. In an authentic account plan, by contrast, the buyer's goals anchor all other elements.

Customer Success as a Revenue Driver

Customer renewals or repeat sales are the lifeblood of any business. The rise of the subscription economy has driven

the growth of customer success teams as a third go-to-market team on equal footing with marketing and sales. When you introduce a customer to new goal areas that have delivered value for peers, it is the highest form of customer advocacy: it brings customer care and account expansion into alignment.

Your customer success team has the best vantage point on expansion opportunities. Beginning each business review call with rediscovery on key customer goals and initiatives makes identifying new expansion opportunities feel customer-centric.

Building a customer voice by segment with peer success stories in language specific to that market creates familiarity and leads to faster new buyer engagement. Peer referencing is your easiest strategy to engage new buyers in any target market segment. In each market segment, you can partner with your top customers to build your customer voice. Use your top customers' words and language to make small adjustments to help your message really land with their peers.

Part 3: Organizational Supports for an Authentic Buyer Journey

Three Revenue Teams, One Revenue Organization

Value narratives create a common story and language about buyer value across sales, marketing, and customer success departments, but for an authentic buyer journey to take hold, you need to have cross-team processes and performance measures.

Traditional department-level activity measures are important, but it is cross-team measures that build deeper collaboration to keep the buyer at the center as they transition from marketing to sales to customer success.

Prospecting velocity measures the connection between campaign leads and new opportunity generation. It is the only way your marketing team really knows which campaigns are effectively engaging buyers around their goals.

Account velocity links the initial close to expansion closes and the twelve-month value of an account. It encourages your sales and customer success teams to think broadly about customer value and goals.

Segment velocity measures the pace that current customers evangelize to segment peers. It encourages your customer success and marketing teams to partner in building a segment voice and references that engage new peer buyers.

Team-Based Skills Development

If your team is going to be successful in creating an authentic buyer journey, you need to create a team-based learning model that supports the continuous identification and sharing of top team practices. If you build playbooks to guide authentic buyer interactions, you also need to practice the plays.

If you want high levels of execution around an authentic buyer journey, you need to create opportunities for individual and team practice. It is the repetition in practicing playbooks that supports mastery.

Team-based learning that captures and shares best team practices for playbook execution is a key driver of improved performance. It allows the entire team to benefit from the practices of the top 20 percent of performers.

Individual coaching can focus on role-play, call reviews, or document reviews. Your teams will experience more successful coaching if you identify two to three consistent coaching formats and use them repetitively.

Conclusion

Are we all messaging our buyer and customer value in the same way? Would that be obvious if we each gave our short elevator pitch? How are we connecting our buyer experience across marketing, sales, and customer success? Do we have playbooks that bring an authentic buyer journey into the day-to-day work of our go-to-market teams?

Start by letting your buyer tell you what they care about most and where your product might make a difference. Using an authentic buyer journey can make selling more effective for anything—even when you're selling a complete commodity like paint!



Brent Keltner, Ph.D. is President of Wanalytics LLC and created Wanalytics' revenue acceleration and sales growth methodology. Wanalytics works with growth-stage to enterprise customers in a range of industries, including the education, human capital, SaaS, business operations, retail and marketing communications sectors. Before starting Wanalytics, Brent was a revenue leader in both early-stage and enterprise companies where he successfully scaled growth. He began his career as a Ph.D. social scientist and qualitative researcher at Stanford University and the RAND Corporation.

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