

## six buying roles



### characteristics

author:	Wind, Yoram and Webster, Frederick E.
country:	United States
period:	1972
type:	model
role:	consultant, change agent, manager and programme & project manager
activity:	analyse, design, plan, implement and reflect
topic:	marketing & sales
abstr. level:	organisation
perspective:	sociopolitical
status:	under review
module:	personal selling
comments:	1

### description:

In the early 1970's, the industrial marketing professors Frederick E. Webster and Yoram Wind, developed the 'buying centre' concept in order to structure large scale sales in complex corporate environments. In the early 1980's, Thomas Bonoma expanded their original list of five roles with the role of initiator. The concept then classified six buying roles for members of the organisation in the purchasing process. In a firm, a purchase depends on the person making the purchase decision as well as on the many employees concerned with improving the effectiveness and development of the operations who want to exert influence. A buying centre makes joint purchase decisions as an informal group. Its task consists of information acquisition, search processes, the development of choice criteria and decision making among alternatives.

The buying centre has three principal aspects:

1. *composition*: the size, hierarchical levels and functional areas involved;
2. *influence*: those individuals with the most influence in the buying process;
3. *roles*: the identification of different roles played by buying centre members.

A buying centre includes all members of the purchasing organisation who play any of six roles in the purchase process:

1. **INITIATOR** first identifies the need to buy a particular product or service to solve an organisational problem;
2. **INFLUENCER** (their) views influence the buying centre's buyers and deciders;
3. **DECIDER** ultimately approves all or any part of the entire buying decision -- whether to buy, what to buy, how to buy, and where to buy;
4. **BUYER** holds the formal authority to select the supplier and to arrange terms of condition;
5. **USER** consumes or uses the product or service;
6. **GATEKEEPER** controls information or access or both, to decision makers and influencers.

The model structured industrial buying processes that are characterized by multi- person involvement levels, extensive internal and external coordination effort, and long lead times. An individual can facilitate or assume more than one role in the purchase process and several individuals may hold the same role. The importance of the different roles varies by buy phase and organisation size.

Isolating the important player involves:

#### 1. Isolate the personal stakeholders

Those individuals who have an important personal stake in the purchase decision- making exert more influence than other members of the buying centre.

#### 2. Follow the information flow

Influential members are central to the information flow that surrounds the purchase decision. Other members direct information to them.

#### 3. Identify the experts

Expertise is an important determinant of influence in the buying centre. Those individuals who possess the most knowledge and ask the most questions of the sales person are often influential.

#### 4. Trace the connections to the top

Powerful individuals often have direct access to top management that provides a direct link to valuable information and resources and enhances the status and influence of those individuals within the buying centre.

#### 5. Understand the role of the purchasing department

The purchasing department is dominant in repetitive buying situations through its technical expertise, knowledge of the dynamics of the supplier's industry and close working relationships with individual suppliers.

### assets:



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### pros:

- The six buying roles help the sales person structure large scale sales in complex corporate environments. Successful inside selling requires planning and preparation before making first contact.

### cons:

- The concept does not include the political aspect of decision making. The sales person must consider multiple, often conflicting goals.
- The model omits the selling side. A complex transaction often requires the involvement of multiple

individuals from the selling party, e.g. mixed teams consisting of sales people and product engineers. This group of actors is called the Problem-Solving Unit (PSU).

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