

Selling Solutions

How to Use the Pain Chain to Sell Technical Solutions

“If I had one hour to save the world, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and only five minutes finding the solution.”

- Albert Einstein

As an IT service provider, it pays to take heed to this quote from Albert Einstein.

The quote illustrates an important point: before you try to solve a client's problem, it's important to take time up front to make sure you fully understand it. One way to do this is by using the Pain Chain, a sales tool that can help you map pain points throughout an organization. This eBook will explain what a Pain Chain is, how it works and how to use it as a successful sales strategy. This eBook also includes a worksheet that you can use to map out a Pain Chain for your clients. When used correctly, the Pain Chain becomes a useful tool that can help you strengthen your relationship with your clients.

You may not be saving the world, but for your clients, you're the IT hero who keeps their business running. To be a successful solutions provider and achieve long-term success, you must invest sufficient time up front to identify and understand what causes your prospect pain. By identifying the pains and pinpointing their sources, you can track the pains, find out what causes the pains and determine who it affects. Then, by mapping out a Pain Chain, you'll be better prepared to provide solutions that make your clients' IT problems go away.



Pain Chains are pictures depicting the key players and their pains, the contributing reasons for their problems, and the impacts of those pains on others in the organization.

- Keith M. Eades, author, "The New Solution Selling"

A Pain Chain is a powerful visual map introduced by Keith M. Eades in his book, *The New Solution Selling: The Revolutionary Process That is Changing the Way People Sell.*

In a sales conversation, IT service providers can use the Pain Chain to help determine the source of pain and discuss, with the right people, how to eliminate or mitigate its effects. As you go through this process with your client, you're likely to find that the undesired results are simply a symptom of a larger problem that a quick surface analysis won't uncover. You have to dig deep beneath the symptomatic problem to uncover the root problem.

By understanding these connections and where they create interdependence, you can do a better job selling your solution and demonstrating its value to your client.

This will differentiate you from your competition since you'll develop a full understanding of your clients' business and the challenges of their environment. ¹When you take the time to understand your client's needs and objectives during the sales cycle, you'll build a stronger relationship with your client. When you build this relationship, your clients will view you as a trusted advisor, rather than as a salesperson.

Now we'll examine how you can use the Pain Chain to develop a better understanding of where your clients are feeling their pain ... so you can develop a winning sales proposition.

¹Keith M. Eades, "The New Solution Selling: The Revolutionary Sales Process That is Changing the Way People Sell", McGraw-Hill (c) 2004.

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Chapter 1

A Better Way to Sell

Technical Solutions



You're in the IT business because you've studied, understand and can apply the technology.

However, this experience doesn't necessarily prepare you for selling *solutions*.

A key point to remember is that when you're selling technology, your clients don't necessarily want to know the details of how technology is solving their problems. They are interested in the results you can provide – security and stability.

Think about it this way. If you're flying from Miami to New York, you probably don't care that the Boeing 747 you are flying on has three engines: a Pratt & Whitney PW4062, Rolls-Royce RB211-524H2-T and General Electric CF6-80C2B5F. You just want to safely get from point A to point B. Your clients view IT solutions the same way. Your clients don't necessarily want to know that your RMM tool allows for advanced scripting and patch management. They just want their computers to work.

Your success as an IT service provider is measured by your ability to satisfy customer needs and communicate how your solutions add value. Remember, for your customer, that value begins with minimized down time, system and data security and proactive maintenance.

Chapter 2

What is the Pain Chain?

“Pain Chains are pictures depicting the key players and their pains, the contributing reasons for their problems, and the impacts of those pains on others in the organization...It captures the essence of this type of interdependence and helps salespeople identify and solve problems across a company or enterprise.”² IT service providers can use the Pain Chain as a blueprint for implementing the solution. By following the chain of pain throughout an organization, you can:

- Create a picture that identifies decision makers and stakeholders and links them to specific functions, processes and systems. It shows relationships and identifies their problems or concerns – the pains.
- Determine the cause of their pain and impact.
- Determine how the pain’s effect spreads through the organization and affects people beyond the original source.
- Apply the value you’re selling to each link of the chain.



QUICK TIP

When you meet with your client, try to talk to as many key players as you can to determine what pains are felt throughout the organization.

Use the three questions below as a starting point, but make sure you tailor the questions to fit your sales approach and your market.

- 1. What are your current challenges (pains) and what business processes do they impact?**
- 2. What causes this challenge? At this point, you may find out if the issue is caused by another level in the organization.**
- 3. What is the consequence of the challenge?³**



²Ibid
³Reede, Pieter, “Discover The Pain Chain,” January 11, 2010, <http://pieterreede.blogspot.com/2010/01/discover-pain-chain.html>

Chapter 3

Example: Creating a Pain Chain

for a Doctor's Office

Job Title	Pain	Reason	Our Solution
Physician	Is spending more time managing business than helping people.	Privacy, security and cash flow issues.	
Practice Manager	Privacy and security issues.	Need better systems/ security to keep information confidential.	
Medical Biller	Need better systems so they can be more efficient.	Current IT system is slow and cumbersome. HIPAA-compliant software is hard to use.	
Receptionist/ Scheduler	Current system keeps them too busy with manual processes and is unreliable.	Can't turn paperwork into electronic files, creating privacy issues.	
IT Specialist	Feels burden of trying to make the system work, when it doesn't really fit the needs of the practice.	System doesn't allow for growth; manual processes.	

Now that you know the main questions, we'll use potential answers to help you develop a Pain Chain, using a doctor's office as an example.

When you talk to a physician, you may learn about a common frustration many doctors feel:

"I became a doctor because I want to help people. Now it seems I spend less time actually seeing patients and more time managing my business."

He's worried about privacy and security issues and cash flow, which in turn become his practice manager's pain. When you ask the practice manager what causes her pain, she may say:

"We really need a better way to keep all this information confidential. And, we're having cash flow issues because the staff is so inefficient."

Meanwhile, the medical biller may be trying as hard as she can to work efficiently and keep information confidential. She has her own ideas about what's causing these inefficiencies:

"I'm doing all I can, but it's difficult to keep up when our software is so hard to use. And, the entire system slows down, and even comes to a stop when it gets overloaded. Plus, I feel like our system could come under attack because the security software is not updated on a continuous basis."

Like the medical biller, the receptionist is feeling pressured to work more efficiently. She has her own set of issues:

“There is so much to keep up with! It would be so much easier and secure if we could scan everyone’s files and file them electronically. Then, once I get caught up, our system often goes down, and I can’t even make an appointment.”

Finally, you talk to the practice’s IT specialist, who feels a huge weight on his shoulders:

“Our systems are so outdated, they can’t handle our growth. We really need a major upgrade to make our system more secure and stable.”

QUICK TIP

With the Pain Chain in your selling toolbox, you can capture new business and build new revenue streams.



Chapter 4

Pain Chain Worksheet

Create Your Own Pain Chain

Using the previous Pain Chains as examples, create your own Pain Chain. Start at the top by listing a person's job title, the pain that person feels and the reasons for his pain. Then, think about how the reasons become a pain for another person in the organization. Repeat this process for everyone in the organization as you work your way down the list. Then, determine how you can show your client the value of your IT services with your solutions. With this information in hand, you can create a Pain Chain.

Job Title	Pain	Reason	Our Solution

Conclusion

Using this information, we created a pain chain about the staff's concerns about privacy, security, and cash flow (see chart). Notice that one person's analysis of the problem is the next person's worry. The worry – or pain – flows through the organization and means different things to different people. ⁴As you went through the process above, you probably started thinking about how you can offer IT solutions to solve each level of pain. Now that you know your client's pains and the reasons for their pain, you'll be better equipped to show how your solutions address each pain.

When you're meeting with a client, using the Pain Chain can help you apply the value of your solutions to every pain throughout an organization. By taking this approach, you can determine how the pain flows through an organization and the ripple effect it creates. Using the pain chain will also make you stand out from your competition, because you'll have a better understanding of your clients' business environments. When you've reached the point where you can correctly identify their issues and provide solutions, you'll increase your opportunities for growth while becoming a true IT superhero. As you continue to address your clients' pains with expert technology, planning and assistance, your business will thrive.

⁴Mike McCormac, "Pain Chain - a great tool to understand customer value," November 9, 2010, <http://www.salestheory.com/pain-chain-a-great-tool-to-understand-customer-value>



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