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WHITE PAPER

Value Selling Maturity Model

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In tight economic times, buyers are under extra pressure to pursue only solutions with unquestionable value — and increasingly they want that value expressed quantitatively, as ROI. Showing value has always been the key to greater sales and higher prices, and the way to overcome "your price is too high." But the bar has been raised.

> *It's often no longer enough just to claim value. Now the customer has to see, believe, and care about the value.*

The answer for sellers, buyers, and decision-makers is the same: deliver solutions that provide real ROI Value which is convincingly calculated and communicated. Value comes from meeting the customer's **REAL business requirements** — which take skill and effort to discover. This model describes five value-selling maturity levels that tie directly to sales effectiveness.

Levels 1–4 · Conventional Selling on Value

Every methodology tells you to communicate your value; few tell you how to determine it. Moving from Level 1 to Level 4 yields only modestly increasing advantage — because each still leaves the burden of connecting to value on the customer.

LEVEL 1 Not Selling on Value

"What is the seller selling?"

"I'm selling this — please buy." No value is identified. Sales happen only by coincidence, when the customer obviously already needs the product or simply wants to help the seller.

LEVEL 2 **Differentiating Features** *"How is the seller's product different?"*

Concentrating on features that set the solution apart. The pitfall: assuming the features alone are what the customer needs and values. Features are the *how*; they deliver benefits only if they satisfy the customer's REAL business requirements. This takes competitor knowledge but little customer knowledge.

LEVEL 3 **Benefits** *"What benefits might a buyer want?"*

Listing every benefit the seller can think of — the more the better. But there's no assurance the customer considers them benefits, or values them. It's a passive, one-size-fits-all approach that relies on the customer to dig through the list and sell themselves; a longer list can even dilute the benefits that do matter.

LEVEL 4 **(Ostensible) ROI & Calculators** *"What's the best financial case the seller can make?"*

Indicating ROI, often via a calculator. ROI is ultimately the right measure of value — but these claims are suspect and frequently disbelieved, because sellers routinely fall into the ten common ROI pitfalls (failing to address what the customer values, cherry-picking factors that justify a predetermined answer, not quantifying intangibles). Claiming an inappropriate ROI can actively undercut a sale by raising questions about the seller's trustworthiness.

Level 5 · REAL Customer Value Selling Proposition

Where Levels 1–4 give modest gains, Level 5 can produce breakthrough results. Buyers want to do business with sellers who fully grasp their critical issues and REAL business requirements, and who back the solution with right, reliable, responsible ROI superior to the next-best alternative. Three elements set it apart:

> **1 · Identify what the customer truly values.** Focus first on what the customer needs from *their* perspective — not on what you're selling and then hunting for reasons they should want it. We use **Problem Pyramids™** to discover the customer's REAL business requirements.

> **2 · Explicitly link differentiating features to what the customer values.** Make the linkage actively — don't leave it to the customer. **ROI Value Statements™** describe how each differentiating feature satisfies a REAL business requirement, giving the buyer a believable basis to choose you over the alternatives.

3 · Determine the REAL ROI™ of providing what the customer values. Quantify both tangibles and intangibles using the customer's own figures — and in a way that avoids the ten common ROI pitfalls. Customers recognize this ROI as right, reliable, and responsible.

When, and only when, the seller understands and satisfies what the customer truly values does Selling on Value dramatically increase sales — while reducing sales effort and cost.

The Model at a Glance

Level	1 Not Selling on Value	2 Differentiating Features	3 Benefits	4 (Ostensible) ROI, Calculators	5 REAL Customer Value Selling Proposition
Consists of	Requests to buy whatever the seller is selling, without indicating value	All the features the seller thinks differentiate the product from competitors	All the potential benefits the seller can think of	Factors and figures that make the solution look good and seemingly justify buying it	Links showing how key differentiating features address what the customer values — and its believable, superior REAL ROI™
Answers the question	What is the seller selling?	How is the seller's product different?	What benefits does the seller think a buyer might want?	What is the best financial case the seller can make?	What does the customer value most, how does the solution satisfy it, and what's it worth quantitatively?
Requires	Perseverance in the face of frustration, with little reinforcement	Customer must figure out whether, and which, features do something of value for them	Customer must figure out whether, and which, benefits are of value to them	Customer's belief that the claimed ROI is trustworthy and reflects value they'll receive	Customer confirms what they value, that the solution satisfies it, and that there's REAL ROI™ using their own figures
Pros	Takes negligible seller skill or knowledge	Identifies and emphasizes the product's presumed strengths	Positive, seemingly emphasizing value	Quantified figures can be persuasive and support buying decisions	Customers buy the solution they want and truly need; sellers sell more with less cost and effort
Cons	Produces sales only when the customer obviously needs the product or wants to help the seller	Requires competitor knowledge but little knowledge of the customer's needs	Customer may not see the value; extra claimed benefits can dilute the message	May not relate to what the customer values, may omit critical factors, and may raise questions about trustworthiness	Not the conventional-wisdom approach; takes greater skill and seemingly more effort — but less total effort for higher payback in the long run

THEN → NOW

Level 5 is the whole thesis of the platform this became. **Problem Pyramids™ → ROI Value Statements™ → REAL ROI™ on the customer's own figures** is exactly what WebROI and ROI Replay operationalize today — the customer's REAL requirements, the value case in their own dollars, and proof that avoids the ten pitfalls. The 2015 model is the map; the platform is the machine.

AUTHOR

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