

We could all run out of cash here, or worse, make a terrible exit

Caroline Franczia puts on her wizarding cloak to find parallels between business departments and the different houses in the world of Harry Potter and discovers that when it comes to selling, a common language and united front will always be the most effective method.

Hermione Granger might have said it differently “we could have all died here, or worse be expelled”. When it comes to Harry Potter references, the best defence against he who must not be named – aka running out of cash- is making sure that one person, or one department (sales) is not the only department responsible for generating revenue.

“We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided” – Harry Potter

Now with a Headmaster as wise as Dumbledore, who is willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good, it is easy to keep threats at a distance. However,

it is rare to encounter a CEO who has so many years of experience that they are as sage and judicious as the Headmaster.

This is why any successful organization relies upon a group of different people with different skill sets. At Hogwarts, the Professors work hand in hand towards the same goal while carrying their individual school values with pride and integrity. When one of them goes rogue, Hogwarts as a whole is threatened. This is why each House has a role in making the school a functioning whole and the same is true for the different departments of your startup.

One person alone is not meant to manage R&D, Sales, Marketing and Customer success by themselves forever. As you scale, the Sorting Hat will commonly segment your recruits into their respective departments except for the occasional deviation, but then again, “Harry Potter was an unusual boy in many ways” – JK Rowling.

Your Sales team would commonly be associated with Gryffindor, for it takes plenty of courage to pick up the phone and be rejected day after day when looking for and chasing prospects. It takes nerve to negotiate a deal and bring it home within the quarter. This is why they are quite different from the Customer Success team who value hard work, dedication and patience. Anyone with such soft skills is in fact made for Hufflepuff.

Ravenclaws possess the traits of cleverness, wisdom, wit and intellectual ability, it is, therefore, no surprise that this is where we find the R&D people. Last but not least, Slytherins tend to be ambitious and achievement-oriented, think of them as your Marketing team, they want traffic, lots of leads, and more importantly, return on investment.

Now that we have established how independent these departments can be, it should be easy to imagine how a simple crack in their communication can become a chasm, rooting deeper and deeper as the startup scales. The issue is, when each department starts defining their own goals and strategy on their own, the communication becomes more complex, to say the least.

Generating revenue turns into a fragmented responsibility. Keeping everyone aligned, with goodwill and cultural values metamorphosizes into a challenge worthy of the Triwizard tournament, even for the most experienced.

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*“It is my belief that truth... is preferable to lies” –
Dumbledore*

To avoid spinning lies to cover for a lack of information, issues and responsibilities, I often recommend implementing a common language that will enable departments to work together without room for interpretation and allow ownership of generating revenue to be company-wide.

I have seen MEDDIC enforced mostly within the sales team, in many different ways and spelt in all kinds of manners: MEDDICC, MEDDPIC, MEDDPICC. Either way, deployed in the correct way, MEDDIC – which was initially a sales methodology created by the most successful salespeople at PTC (and later used by many companies as a reference for success, Bladelogic, BMC, Medallia, Fuze, Datadog, Sprinklr, Confluent, Databricks and more...) – should really serve as a common language for the entire organization.

Here are some examples of how MEDDIC can have cross-departmental relevance.

Metrics

When the customer success team receives a client that has been signed, any information on the situation prior to putting your solution in place will be essential to measure the benefits in KPIs and favour adoption and interest from executives.

Economic Buyer

He is the executive sponsor, the one who saw economical benefit in investing in your solution, this is why before anything goes wrong your leadership team should nurture this executive buyer. With the proper care and approach, they would become your public-facing ambassador, speaking at events such as exclusive dinners and C level meetings.

Decision Criteria

If you have been selected, your customer has chosen you because your solution fitted their requirements the best, maybe not just from a technical standpoint. Your vision, your story, your people had an impact. Keeping this

aligned after signing the deal is essential to extending and prolonging your relationship. Furthermore, R&D can benefit from getting a clear view on the strengths and weaknesses of the field.

Decision Process

While your sales were busy in following the decision process and getting the deal done, finance, legal, security and others have played their part. Especially if it's been complicated and chaotic. Putting a document that enables all departments to follow the status of the process internally and externally will give faster responses and less frustration.

Implicate the pain

No customer will give you money just because you are shiny and bright. No. You must respond to some issues rooted in their business operations by either reducing cost, increasing revenue or reducing risk.

Without a good understanding of the implications of the customer pain points, your delivery people cannot do a good job, your customer success team will be bound to failure and your renewal team will never know why ... the customer has churned.

Champion

He (or she) is the one who sold when you were not there, the one who made it happen and they should become your marketing and customer success department's best friend. They are the key to the success of adoption, the person who wants the solution to work and will help your post-sales department in doing so. And the cherry on the top, they might identify new opportunities to upsell for you.

"It is important to fight and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then can evil be kept at bay though never quite eradicated." Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Practice and practice again, whether you decide to use MEDDIC or something else as a base for a common language. The key here is to never stop using it, for old habits die hard. Revenue is the responsibility of everyone and as soon as you stop the flow between all departments, the threat is back on again. It does not matter which House the Sorting Hat puts you into, whether you are directly bringing the deals in sales, nurturing customers in customers success, finding leads and prospects in marketing or defining the future of the platform in R&D;

“Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury, and remedying it.” – Dumbledore, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Caroline Franczia is a regular columnist for Maddy Ness and the founder of Uppercut First. Experienced in working for large companies such as Oracle, Computer Associates, and BMC, Caroline also lived in Silicon Valley for four years before moving to startups (Sprinklr, Datadog, Confluent) where she witnessed on the ground the benefits of a well-thought sales strategy. These are the foundations of UF: a structure that accompanies the European startups in their sales strategy by giving them an undeniable advantage in their go-to-market.

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