

HENRIK WENØE
& JESPER LEMMICH

THE POSITIVE ACTIVIST

HOW TO
ATTRACT
& DEVELOP
LOYAL
CUSTOMERS

The Positive Activist's Manifesto:

- I understand that positive engagement yields quicker and better results than starting from a problem state.
- I understand the power of leading with a clear future desired state in mind.
- I understand that aligning our strengths will set us free to ignore our weaknesses.
- I will set the people around me free to do the right things.
- I can lead my own mind and state and therefore influence my results.
- I will give positive feedback. When this is not possible, I will ensure my feedback is constructive.
- I will always seek a win-win solution or walk away.
- I understand that it is only through engagement that I can create a valuable difference.
- I will escalate rather than give up and promote action rather than argument.
- I understand that business is more than just business.



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Henrik Wenøe & Jesper Lemmich
The Positive Activist
How To Attract & Develop Loyal Customers

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PREFACE

The Positive Activist is the third book that I have written with Henrik Wenøe. More than a decade has passed since we published *Do What You Do Best*, a book about Personal Leadership. Since then, I have had the opportunity to apply that book's ideas in real-life practice throughout all parts of the value chains in the companies where I have worked.

In Haldor Topsoe, I had the good fortune to lead research teams in R&D, global HR operations, sales teams all over Latin America, and start up local production in Brazil. At NKT Photonics, I continued working with complex sales in the role of Product Line Director, and finally – in the last year – I have taken up the role of CTO for a start-up agricultural technology company, allowing me to combine my leadership and business experience into one job.

When Henrik introduced his model, the Customer Development Strategy™, to me back in 2016, I immediately realized that there was something of real value here that had the potential to benefit business professionals all over the world. It did not take us long to decide that we wanted to co-author a book about this model. Since then, we have been through several loops of writing, testing, and re-writing, before we reached the final result, *The Positive Activist*, that you now hold in your hands.

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I know Henrik to be one of the world's leading sales and leadership trainers, who has created phenomenal results with the customers he has worked with over the years. However, there is a limit to how many companies and people Henrik and his team can reach out to. Hence the motivation to write

a book that can spread the ideas and create value for more people faster.

It has been a great pleasure helping Henrik to transform his original ideas into a format that makes them tangible and accessible to a wider audience. While this book is told in Henrik's voice and through his stories, this work has been a true partnership – a collaboration of two minds.

But this would not have been possible without the valuable feedback from all the customers and partners of Acuity World, who have been actively applying the Customer Development Strategy™ and the other tools we share in *The Positive Activist*.

In particular, we would like to thank Virpi Varjonen, Anna Marie Damgaard Kristensen, Michael Stanley Pedersen, Gitte Juel, Thomas Krarup, Jesper Brøns-Poulsen, Peter Pietras, Anders Normann, Lone Bech Christensen, and Daisy Wenøe for their comments and feedback to this book.

Finally, we would like to thank our partner and mentor, Dr. Joseph Riggio, for his groundbreaking work in developing the Satisfaction Cycle® – the underlying foundation for all the ideas and thoughts presented in *The Positive Activist*.

CHAPTER 1

WHY IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?



“As the CEO of our company, there are basically two things I want. First, I want to sustain profitable growth. Second – and this is equally important for me – I want my sales and marketing department to become better at predicting growth rates more accurately, both in terms of time frame and volume.”

This was the answer I received from the CEO of an international Danish B2B company when I asked him about his expectations for the sales training program we were about to implement for his team of global key account managers.

“On the one hand, we must live with all the risks and uncertainties that our turbulent, globalized world presents us with today. On the other hand, we need to have the best possible understanding of the near future,” he added.

Of course, this was not the first time I had discussed the concepts of growth and predictability with a client. However, the fact that this particular CEO – one of our regular clients at Acuity World – listed them as equally important made me raise an eyebrow, especially because it coincided with some of the thoughts that had recently started developing in my own mind.

Predictability is important for two reasons:

1. It ensures that the company has the capacity to deliver what the customers want, when they want it.
2. It ensures that the company's senior management team has the necessary trust from the board and the market.

Most companies and investors can live with a lower growth rate for a certain period, *if* it has been foreseen and therefore does not come as a surprise. However, if companies need to

“
There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.

– Sam Walton

lower expectations due to unanticipated changes in customer or market behavior, the stock market often reacts drastically, punishing the company by lowering its stock price.

Often, predictability is addressed through a more or less complicated customer relationship management (CRM) system, which includes managing and assessing all sales opportunities as they progress

through a multi-step pipeline and sales cycle to a successful close.

Through the years, I have repeatedly seen such CRM systems fail in two ways:

1. The system may be designed in a “perfect” way, but if the sales professionals are not trained to ask high-quality questions, thereby gaining a deep and qualified understanding of the customers, the system will not work. What typically happens in this scenario is that each sales professional feeds the system with their own projections of reality. This results in a system that contains imprecise knowledge or even guesswork – what I call “ordered garbage.”
2. In other cases, the sales professionals may have a deep and qualified understanding of their customers, but the CRM system may not be correctly designed to absorb and process this knowledge. This produces what I call “garbage results,” i.e., a large amount of unstructured and unprocessed data, which is of limited use to both sales professionals and company management.

The purpose of this book is to show how you can build a healthy and profitable business with a predictable growth rate by:

1. Collecting precise and accurate data from your customers in terms of *where* they are in the buying process and *what* it is they want to buy.
2. Sharing some fundamental principles, such as the psychological phases that a customer typically goes through during the buying process, enabling you to process customer data effectively and efficiently within a simple customer pipeline. Understanding this allows you to predict *when* and *what* the customers are going to buy from you.
3. Enabling a sustainable customer development strategy which will ensure that your customers not only remain

loyal to your business but that they also turn into what we call *positive activists*. They will continue to buy from you, *and* they will be so satisfied and excited about your products and services that they will continuously promote your business actively in their personal and professional networks.

4. Engaging your sales team through Value Communication.

How would you feel about driving your car with the windshield covered – only being able to check the road through the rear-view mirror? This would certainly not be the most optimal strategy. Nevertheless, this is how many sales directors and managers attempt to drive their business forward and lead their sales force. They are basing their leadership strategies on sales statistics which are the result of the behavior their sales professionals displayed several months or, in some cases, years before the sales figures arrived on their desks – a bit like driving a car forward while looking through the rear-view mirror.



When the customer comes first – The customer will last.

– Robert Half

With the right customer pipeline structure, fed with good data, you will know not just what you have sold in the past but – more importantly – what you can expect to sell in the future. When such a structure has been implemented and up and running for a while, you will begin to obtain very precise intelligence about customer projects – how many and what kind of projects you will need to include in your pipeline to obtain the revenue you desire. This way, it will be a lot easier for you to be proactive if you observe that you do not have enough in your pipeline to create the results you need six or twelve months later. You will not have to wait for sales figures to arrive at your desk before you act.

In addition, such a customer pipeline structure will present you with a precise image of the balance you keep between projects relating to existing customers and relating to new customers and projects – i.e., the resources and efforts you spend on acquiring new customers in relation to what you spend on the development of your existing customers. In many companies, marketing budgets are far too luxurious compared to customer development budgets. The experience I have from my own career in sales is that the better you treat your existing customers, the more loyal they will become, and the more likely it will be that they transform into *positive activists* who will market your business in their personal and professional networks, thereby directing new customers to you.

However, if you focus too much on the acquisition of new customers compared to the development of existing customers, you will often end up taking them for granted, increasing the risk that they will become dissatisfied with your company and transfer their business to one of your competitors. I will elaborate more on these personal experiences in Chapter 2.

The fact that a customer, who can be coined as a *positive activist*, represents a much higher value for your company than a *shopper* who has bought your product only once is intuitively true, just as a satisfied customer is more valuable to you than a dissatisfied customer. These conclusions are also backed by numerous studies in which modeling techniques are used to quantify the value differences. Chapter 2 will elaborate on this further.

In Chapter 3, I present you with a strategic tool – the Customer Development Strategy™ – that will enable you to maintain the right balance between *hunting* and *farming*, i.e., between resources and effort spent on attracting new customers

(*customer acquisition*) and those spent on the development of existing customers from plain *shoppers* into engaged *positive activists* (*customer development*).

Within the Customer Development Strategy™, we have subdivided *customer acquisition* and *customer development* further into four steps each, so that the model consists of a total of eight steps – starting with *awareness* (the point where the potential customer becomes aware of you for the first time) and concluding with *positive activist* as the final and most desirable level in the process.

“
**Loyal customers,
they don't just come
back, they don't
simply recommend
you, they insist that
their friends do
business with you.**
– Chip Bell

With the implementation of the Customer Development Strategy™, you and your colleagues will be able to establish a common language across the organization both locally and globally. In addition, the model's eight distinct steps will enable you to lead the sales process at the strategic level as well as tactical and operational levels, as discussed in Chapters 4–6.

This way, you will not only be highly *effective* in your work, but you will also be highly *efficient*. You will be able to make the right decisions at the right time, ensuring that your financial and human resources are being used optimally, ultimately building a healthy and profitable business with as many totally satisfied customers – *positive activists* – as possible.

Before we take the next step into the core ideas of this book, I would like to ask you to reflect on a few questions.

First: **“Why does your organization exist?”**

It is especially useful to start your journey by reflecting on

the higher purpose of your business. Do you have a cause that is more important to you than the profit you generate? As Lars Kolind, former CEO of hearing-aid company William Demant Holding, expressed it: “Do you help hearing-impaired people improve their quality of life, or do you simply sell hearing aid devices?” [1].

This may sound a bit like the classic mission statement that you will find on any company webpage these days, but it is actually a few levels deeper than that. Finding a higher cause that defines your company’s purpose will allow you and your colleagues to become part of a *movement* rather than just an organization, and it will turn your customers into *positive activists* rather than just *shoppers* and *clients*. You may even start to think about your competitors as partners, fighting for the same cause.

Once you have defined your cause, you may want to return to the more practical level and ask yourself: **“What is my competitive strategy?”**

In 1997, Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema analyzed successful companies within various industries in their now-classic book, *“The Discipline of Market Leaders – Choose Your Customers, Narrow Your Focus, Dominate Your Market.”* They found that to become a market leader, companies must have the discipline to choose between one of three fundamental strategies when building their organization [2].

1. Product Leadership
2. Operational Excellence
3. Customer Intimacy

If your competitive strategy is *product leadership*, i.e., if your product is so unique and excellent that it practically

sells itself, and you have a culture in your company that enables you to bring superior products to the market continuously, then it is probably the product itself that turns your customers into *positive activists* and not so much the way you interact with them. For example, this could describe certain high-tech brands or other highly branded goods. If *product leadership* is your fundamental strategy, you might find the Customer Development Strategy™ model presented in this book to be of limited use.

If your competitive strategy is *operational excellence*, i.e., your aim is always to be the cheapest in the market, then it is probably the low price itself that creates the *awareness, interest, and desire* to buy your product. This strategy is often applied in mature, commoditized markets where customers value low cost first and foremost. With the right marketing approach, you may be able to turn your one-time *shoppers* into regular *clients* who will come back and buy from you again and again (at least until they find a company that can offer the same product at an even lower price), but it is unlikely they will become *positive activists* because their loyalty always comes with a price tag. So again, the way you interact with the customers will be of secondary consideration. Thus, if *operational excellence* is your competitive strategy, you will most likely also find that the Customer Development Strategy™ will be of limited use to you.

Few companies can claim that they compete exclusively on either the best product (*product leadership*) or the best total cost (*operational excellence*), although these companies *do*, of course, exist, and some of them are remarkably successful. In most cases, however, the third strategy, *customer intimacy*, also comes into play.

Customer intimacy means that you offer your customers an

optimal solution that allows for the personalization and customization of products and services to meet different customers' needs. In this case, your opportunity to create *positive activists* lies in the interaction with the customers in the sense that the overall performance, which equals product + price + interaction, must add up to an optimal perceived value for the customers in order for them to want to buy from you.

If *customer intimacy* is the strategy that fits your company and that you want to follow, this book and the models presented herein will be of great value to you in your efforts to create a profitable and sustainable business.

Finally, before we start, we encourage you to spend a few moments reflecting on two final questions.

- 1. "What is it that you want to bring to the market?"**
- 2. "What is your target market?"**

You need to be clear about which products and services you are offering and who your target customers are. Many products and services may appeal to many potential customers. However, the problem is that if you try to sell everything to everyone, you may end up facing serious challenges getting through to anyone at all. In other words, if you want to be successful, you must have a razor-sharp focus.



You can close more business in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you.

– Dale Carnegie

CHAPTER 2

HUNTERS & FARMERS — CUSTOMER ATTRACTORS & CUSTOMER DEVELOPERS



 have been working with sales and marketing for more than 30 years, first as a sales professional, subsequently as a sales manager, and later as the Nordic sales and marketing manager in a Danish biotech company. In 2001, I founded Acuity World. Since 2005, I have been working full-time as the CEO and owner of Acuity World, providing personal sales and leadership training to executives, managers, and sales professionals worldwide.

Over the years, I have heard it said again and again that the number one limited resource when it comes to working with sales and customers is time. We can only spend our time once, so if we spend all of it *hunting* in the wrong places, there will be none left to follow up with the customers who actually *do* want to buy from us.

It is true that time is a limited resource and should be spent the right way, but in my experience, there is even more to it than that. I have often observed how some sales professionals – with all the best intentions – arrange meeting after meeting with customers who have no interest in buying the product offered. Such meetings are a waste of everyone’s time and energy.

“
**People will forget
what you said. They
will forget what you
did. But they will
never forget how you
made them feel.**
– Maya Angelou,
Mike Sims

In fact, I believe that it makes much more sense to say that the limiting resource for sales professionals is the *product* of time and positive energy – or at least a function of both. When time is spent the wrong way, it also has a negative effect on everyone’s energy. As a consequence, even simple tasks become more time-consuming. On the other hand, if the sales professionals know that they are spending their time the right way, creating actual value for their customers and their company, their positive energy level will be much higher, leading to both higher efficiency and more joy in their work.

Thus, it is most important to know exactly what to do in relation to each customer, based on where they are in the buying process. It is equally important that this understanding is shared by everyone in the sales organization, from the sales professional to the sales director.

When we talk about positive energy, it is important to understand that this is not the same as high energy. You can be in a positive energy state and at the same time be in a low energy mode. This is a useful position to be in when you are planning and preparing your work, and also when you want to engage with others and understand their position. When you want to energize and inspire, however, it can be very powerful to be in a positive state and high energy mode, as indicated in the figure below.

Acuity World Learning Platform

Our Personal Selling Program PSP™ is a systemic blended learning product that consists of the following elements:

Online Training Programs

To help you and your sales professionals get easy access to the knowledge and skills you need to be able to attract and develop your loyal customers, we have developed a series of online video-based training programs.

- The Customer Development Strategy – How to create *positive activists* and loyal customers.
- The Hunter Program – How to attract the right new customers for your business and move from cold calling to smart calling.
- Virtual Customer Meetings – How to engage, create trust, and sell virtually.
- Transformative Sales Meetings – How to conduct sales meetings that lead to more *positive activists* and loyal customers.
- Beyond Selling – The fundamental philosophy behind creating *positive activists* and a more sustainable business.

Live Training Programs – Virtual and Face-to-Face

PSP™ Professionals – Training programs for sales and marketing professionals

- The Customer Development Strategy – How to create positive activists and loyal customers (1-2 days).
- The Hunter Program – How to attract the right new customers for your business and move from cold calling to smart calling (1-2 days).
- Personal Selling PS™ (2-3 days).
- Personal Selling Program PSP™ (7-9 days).
- Personal Negotiation (2-5 days).
- Acuity Master Class (2 days).

PSP™ Executives – Training programs for sales leaders and managers

- PSP™ Sales Leadership (2-5 days).
- PSP™ Sales Coaching (2-5 days).
- PSP™ Funnel Leadership (2 days).

PSP™ Trainers – Training programs for internal trainers

For larger organizations who want to develop their own in-house training capacity, we offer the following certification programs

- PSP™ Facilitator Training (5 days).
- PSP™ Trainers Training (5-15 days).

Keynotes & Talks

If you want to bring the ideas from the book into your organization, you are welcome to invite us to give a keynote or a talk at your next kick-off or sales meeting

About Acuity World

Acuity World is a leading international provider of training, coaching, and consulting for leaders, sales professionals, and other professionals in both private companies and the public sector.

Our mission is to help organizations achieve sustainable performance by developing the personal and social competencies of employees. We do this especially through our leadership development programs, advance sales programs, and personal & executive coaching.

We offer courses that create lasting progress and add an extra dimension to your organization that makes all the difference. In a unique and in-depth way, our customers get effective tools that can all be brought into play immediately. We not only tell our customers what to do but also how to make it work. Our basic working methods are based on the New NLP™ System and Systemic Blended Learning, which have helped our customers create results since 2001.

If you or your company want assistance to move forward with the ideas and methods you have read about in our books, you can visit our website or contact us.

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HENRIK WENØE, B.Sc. and Graduate Diploma in Business Administration, is the CEO and Master Trainer at Acuity World ApS. Henrik has more than 30 years of experience in sales & marketing, communication, and leadership. Since 2000, he has trained leaders and sales & marketing professionals all over the world. During this same period, he co-authored several books on personal development, leadership, and communication.

Henrik is known for tailoring training for leaders, sales professionals, and employees who work with performance, leadership, communication, and sales & marketing. He focuses on the interaction between organizations and the individual to ensure optimal personal performance.

Henrik is certified by the Society of NLP™ as an NLP™ trainer and NLP™ Consultant trainer. He has been greatly inspired by the work of Dr. Joseph Riggio and his development of Soma Semantic™ Modeling and the Mythogenic Self® Process and has been granted the privilege of training professionals around the world in the use and application of the Satisfaction Cycle®.

JESPER LEMMICH, Ph.D., certified NLP™ Master Practitioner, and New NLP™ Business Coach, began his career in academia but soon after moved into the business world, combining his strong technical background with the psychological insight and understanding gained from his NLP training.

Over the past 25 years, he has held central global positions within marketing, R&D, HR, and business development in various international high-tech companies. In parallel with this career, he has co-authored several books on personal development, leadership, and communication.

THE POSITIVE ACTIVIST

Everyone wants their people to focus on their customers and what ultimately provides value to them. This is common sense since it is customers who ultimately decide whether you are profitable or not.

If you want to develop a healthy, profitable, and sustainable business, however, it is no longer enough to have satisfied customers – you must have enthusiastic and excited customers. We call these customers your Positive Activists – they cannot help but talk about you to everyone in their network.

With this book in hand, you have received a number of concrete and proven strategies that will help you structure and lead your employees in the creation of Positive Activists and loyal customers.

But the book is not just about attracting and developing loyal customers by transforming them into Positive Activists. The underlying philosophy is that you need to know how to attract and develop loyal and committed sales professionals who become Positive Activists themselves.

The way you lead your team will either support or sabotage this development. This book provides a step-by-step guide on leading your sales organization onto the path to creating Positive Activists all around you.

DISCLAIMER!

This book is not for everyone!

This book is only for you who work in companies that create true value for all stakeholders – customers, employees, owners, and the world.

In other words – this book is for those who understand that business is more than just business!



Acuity World Press