



Bridging the Profit Protection Gap: Retail Strategies Through Consulting Influence

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Executive Summary

The retail industry, particularly regarding asset protection and fraud, is undergoing rapid and significant transformations. Retail and corporate leaders navigate unique challenges and opportunities specific to this sector. They focus on integrating advanced technologies, adapting to evolving customer behaviors, and tackling the dramatically increased concerns of theft and fraud. This complex landscape requires strategic foresight, innovative solutions, and collaborative approaches.

Yet, there needs to be more clarity between the strategic needs of these high-level decision-makers and the solutions typically offered through conventional sales strategies. This gap hinders the full realization of potential business opportunities. It leaves retail leaders needing more effective tools and insights to propel their companies forward in a competitive market.

This white paper delves into the heart of this challenge, exploring the intricate role of retail and corporate leaders and the urgent need for sales strategies that resonate with their distinct perspectives and strategic goals. Traditional sales approaches, often centered around product features, must address the broader business

objectives and long-term vision guiding retail decision-making. The paper advocates for a significant paradigm shift towards a more consultative and strategic approach in sales, rooted in a profound understanding of the asset protection industry and the nuanced challenges faced by retail leadership.



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At the core of this paradigm shift is Consulting Influence, which combines the consultant approach with the act of influencing, emphasizing the role of providing expert advice that persuades and aligns with prospective client goals. Consulting Influence (CI) can effectively bridge the gap between solution provider offerings and the strategic needs of a retail

¹ spotio.com/blog/sales-statistics/

corporation's leadership. Consultants with deep industry knowledge and a keen understanding of decision-making styles and preferences focus on long-term strategic alignment over short-term tactical gains. By Consulting Influence, they can facilitate more meaningful and productive discussions, leading to successful and profitable outcomes.

This white paper offers a roadmap for solution providers to reorient their sales strategies to engage more effectively with retail and corporate leaders. It combines industry insights, deductive reasoning, and practical strategies, providing a comprehensive guide for solution providers aiming to elevate their approach and align with the high-level objectives of their retail clients. Through Consulting Influence, they can transform their interactions from transactional exchanges to strategic partnerships, fostering lasting success in the dynamic retail landscape.

Introduction

Today's retail industry stands at a critical crossroads, marked by unprecedented changes, innovations, and the complexities of omnichannel loss.

As the industry evolves with technological advancements, shifts in consumer behavior, the global economic climate, and expanding avenues of loss, the role of corporate retail leaders has become increasingly pivotal. These leaders are responsible for navigating their companies through these dynamic times, aiming to capitalize on emerging opportunities, expand market share, and effectively manage the associated risks. Yet, one of their foremost challenges is the widening gap between their strategic needs and solution providers' offerings in asset protection and fraud prevention.



The conventional sales approach in this sector, typically product-centric and focused on immediate operational benefits, must capture the strategic depth and long-term vision required by today's retail corporate leaders. These decision-makers seek more than just the immediate impact of products or services; they require solutions that

align with and advance their broader business objectives, such as enhancing customer engagement, driving digital transformation, expanding market share, neutralizing customer frictions, and mitigating threats of theft and loss that adversely affect their brand.

This approach shifts the focus from mere transactions to strategic partnerships, enabling solution providers to effectively resonate with and meet the sophisticated demands of these key decision-makers.

This introduction paves the way for an in-depth exploration of the challenges and opportunities in engaging with corporate leaders in the retail industry. It underscores the necessity for a departure from traditional sales tactics towards a more nuanced, strategic, and consulting approach, one that is adept at influencing and aligning with the high-level objectives of these influential corporate leaders.



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This paper aims to bridge this gap by highlighting the specific challenges and corporate leaders and advocating for a sales and engagement approach that transcends traditional methods. The central thesis posits that a consulting approach, enriched with deep industry experience and a mastery of influence tailored to the unique decision-making styles of retail corporate leaders, is crucial for aligning sales strategies with executive expectations and goals.

Section 1:

Understanding the Retail Pain Points

In the dynamic and ever-changing retail industry landscape, leaders face many challenges critical to their business's success and sustainability. These challenges extend beyond day-to-day operational concerns, encompassing broader strategic issues directly impacting long-term direction and viability.

² docusign.com/blog/five-stages-contract-management

Navigating Digital Transformation:

Digital transformation is paramount for retail corporate leaders. It involves integrating new technologies, from e-commerce platforms to data analytics tools, to stay competitive in a market increasingly dominated by digital channels. The complexity lies not just in adopting technology but in doing so in a way that aligns with the company's broader strategic goals and customer engagement strategies.

Consumer Behavior Shifts:

The retail industry is highly susceptible to consumer behavior and preferences changes. Corporate leaders must anticipate and respond to these shifts, which include the increasing demand for personalized shopping experiences, ethical and sustainable practices, and the seamless integration of online and offline retail channels.

Global Market Dynamics:

The global nature of the retail industry presents both opportunities and challenges, including navigating diverse market regulations, coping with supply chain complexities, and capitalizing on emerging markets. Retail and corporate leaders must develop strategies that optimize global operations while mitigating risks associated with such a vast and varied landscape.

Balancing Strategy with Complex Risk:

Retail corporate leaders face the dual challenge of implementing robust measures against escalating theft and fraud while driving forward-thinking business strategies. Balancing the need for advanced security and fraud prevention with the imperative to adapt to changing market trends and consumer behaviors is critical. They aim to create a secure, customer-centric, friction-free retail environment that reduces losses and fosters sustainable growth and competitive advantage.



Achieving Sustainable Growth:

In the context of economic fluctuations and intense competition, achieving sustainable growth is a crucial challenge. This requires a strategic approach to business expansion, investment decisions, and resource allocation, ensuring long-term profitability and market relevance.

Traditional solution provider approaches often fail to address these strategic pain points effectively. Sales pitches focusing solely on product features or short-term benefits do not resonate with retail corporate leaders, whose concerns are more holistic and long-term. To engage effectively with these leaders, consulting strategies must demonstrate a deep understanding of these pain points and articulate how their product solutions can contribute to resolving these overarching strategic challenges.

Section 2:

The Value of Experience

In the complex world of retail, where strategic decisions have far-reaching consequences, the value of industry experience in consulting and selling cannot be overstated. Experienced consultants, equipped with deep industry knowledge and a nuanced understanding of retail corporate leaders' decision-making styles, are instrumental in aligning selling strategies with the expectations of retail leadership.

Understanding Varied Leadership Styles:

Recognizing the diverse leadership styles in retail from data-driven decision-makers to those influenced by market trends and customer feedback. Tailoring the sales approach to match these styles ensures more effective communication and alignment with leaders' preferences.

Demonstrating Industry Expertise:

Consultants with specialized experience in retail asset protection, fraud management, and related fields offer significant value in selling to retail corporations. They bring a blend of expertise, credibility, customized solutions, strategic advice, industry connections, trend awareness, training capabilities, and risk management skills. This rich



Moreover, the mastery of influence, a skill essential for experienced consultants, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of these strategies. By understanding the unique decision-making styles and preferences of retail corporate leaders and effectively communicating how solutions align with their strategic objectives, consultants can bridge the gap between traditional sales approaches and the nuanced needs of modern retail leaders.

combination facilitates a more effective, informed, and strategic sales process, resonating deeply with retail corporate leadership's high-level concerns and goals.

Presenting Customized Solutions:

Leveraging their experience, consultants can offer tailored solutions that address the specific challenges and strategic objectives of each retail corporation, moving beyond generic offerings to provide bespoke, impactful strategies.

Building Long-Term Relationships:

Consultative selling in the retail sector transcends the act of closing a sale; it's about fostering long-term relationships. By deeply understanding the retail corporation's challenges and decision-making styles, consultants can position themselves as indispensable advisors. This relationship-building approach paves the way for ongoing engagement and collaboration, creating partnerships that are beneficial in the long run.



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Moreover, the skill of mastering influence plays a crucial role in this process. Experienced consultants who can skillfully influence decision-making enhance their ability to align with the leaders' strategic goals and establish a foundation of trust and credibility. This influence is not about manipulation; rather, it is about using deep industry knowledge and understanding of retail dynamics to guide and shape discussions in a way that aligns with the long-term vision and goals of the retail leaders. This ability to influence, combined with industry experience, sets the stage for more meaningful, strategic, and fruitful interactions in the retail sector.

³ spotio.com/blog/sales-statistics/

Section 3

Influencing Retail Leaders

Mastering influence in sales, particularly for companies selling products to retail leaders, involves a sophisticated combination of skills and strategies aimed at persuasively communicating the value of a product in a way that aligns with the strategic goals and decision-making styles of these leaders. This process goes beyond traditional selling techniques, requiring a deep understanding of the retail industry, the psychology of persuasion, and the ability to establish trust and credibility.



Understanding Retail Leaders' Needs and Goals:

The foundation of mastering influence in sales is a deep understanding of retail leaders' specific needs, challenges, and strategic objectives. This requires thorough research and industry insight to comprehend what drives these leaders, including

their key performance indicators, market challenges, and long-term goals.

Developing Tailored Communication Strategies:

Influential sales strategies are not one-size-fits-all but carefully tailored to the individual retail leader. This involves adapting the sales pitch to resonate with the leader's unique decision-making style, whether it's data-driven, vision-oriented, or focused on customer experience. The ability to speak the leader's language and frame the product's value proposition in terms of their specific concerns and goals is crucial.

Building Credibility and Trust:

Influence is significantly strengthened by credibility. Companies must establish themselves as knowledgeable and trustworthy in the eyes of retail leaders. This is achieved through demonstrating industry expertise, showcasing a track record of successful implementations, and providing clear, honest information about the product and its benefits.

Utilizing Persuasion Techniques:

Persuasion is a key aspect of influence. This includes using storytelling to create a narrative around the product, highlighting how it has successfully addressed similar challenges in other

contexts. Persuasion also involves understanding and appealing to decision-making's emotional and logical aspects.

Creating a Sense of Partnership:

Influential sales is about creating a sense of partnership rather than just a buyer-seller relationship. This means working collaboratively with retail leaders to understand their challenges, genuinely offering solutions in their best interest, and positioning the product as a tool for success.



Providing Value Beyond the Product:

To master influence, companies must offer value beyond the product itself. This could include industry insights, market trend analysis, and after-sales support. By offering these additional layers of value, companies can position themselves as indispensable partners to retail leaders.

Leveraging Social Proof and Testimonials:

Showcasing testimonials, case studies, and endorsements from other respected industry leaders or companies can greatly enhance influence. This social proof is a powerful tool in persuading retail leaders by demonstrating the product's effectiveness and reliability in real-world scenarios.

Continual Engagement and Feedback:

Mastering influence involves ongoing engagement and responsiveness to feedback. Keeping the lines of communication open, regularly checking in post-sale, and being receptive to feedback ensures a lasting relationship and potential for future business opportunities.

In summary, mastering influence for sales to retail leaders is about much more than just presenting a product; it's about understanding their unique needs, effectively communicating tailored solutions, building trust, and establishing a partnership that is viewed as valuable and integral to their strategic success.

Section 4:

Case Studies of Engagements

To illustrate the effectiveness of tailored consulting approaches in the retail sector, this section presents several case studies. These examples demonstrate how understanding C-suite leaders' specific challenges and decision-making styles can lead to successful engagements and tangible business outcomes.

Case Study 1: The Customer-Centric COO

Challenge: A retail company needs to replace its current antiquated rules-based transactional fraud screening with AI-driven, machine learning models that identify more fraud, creating fewer false positives, and support a frictionless customer journey.

Approach: The consultant and sales team presented a visionary digital transformation plan, highlighting its potential to revolutionize a friction-free customer experience, open new geo-market opportunities, impact fraud loss, and most importantly fit into the long-term company strategy.

Outcome: The COO was quickly convinced by the big-picture benefits and product integration into long-term company strategy. The COO approved the new fraud product, leading to a successful

digital integration that increased online sales, decreased fraud loss, and positive customer engagement sentiment.



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Case Study 2: Brand Hit from Fraud Attack

Challenge: Major brand sentiment issues when a major account takeover fraud attack compromised some of its top customers.

Approach: The sales team conducted a comprehensive analysis of the ATO attack and with consultant guidance, presented detailed findings and new authentication product recommendations to the CFO, who is known to push back with detailed and well-thought-out questions about new and improved customer login controls.

Outcome: After a careful and strategic consultant strategy review, the CFO implemented the recommended product changes, resulting in significant loss savings from more thorough

⁴ spotio.com/blog/sales-statistics/

customer-centric login validation that led to increased customer confidence post-project implementation.

Case Study 3: The Budget-Challenged CFO

Challenge: The company needed to adopt stronger virtual return controls to reduce fraud loss, but faced financial constraints.

Approach: Addressing the CFO's financial constraints, the consultant provided a data-driven business case showing the long-term losses with current returns practice combined with the financial benefits of introducing a data-driven returns authorization product, which included a complex strategy to mitigate chronic refund abusers without impacting good customers.

Outcome: The CFO, convinced by the credible evidence, approved a budget for implementing a returns abuse product, that was customer-friendly, but significantly neutralized refund abusers.

Case Study 4: The Veteran AP SVP

Challenge: The company asset protection team uses an antiquated transactional exception reporting (TER) tool that is not impactful in supporting increased internal fraud and store loss indicative of a complex omnichannel operation.

Approach: Recognizing the APSVP's preference for a careful approach, proven technologies, and

strategies, the consultant suggested implementing a new TER system to temporarily run side by side with the previous system to avoid downtime with a rip/replace method. The consultant recommended dashboard analytics for the investigations team combined with machine learning modeling of store performance to identify areas of loss quickly.

Outcome: The APSVP, was reassured by the safer approach of phasing out old technology while the AP team was trained on the new systems and technology. With AI-driven technology, the APSVP greenlit the conversion plan, reducing fraud, cash, and merchandise loss, decreasing investigative resolution time, and increasing comp store profit.

These case studies showcase the importance of aligning sales and consulting strategies with the specific decision-making styles of retail executive leaders. The consultant can facilitate impactful decisions that drive business success and strategic growth by understanding and addressing these leaders' unique challenges, preferences, and decision-making styles.

Section 5:

Align Selling with Expectations

In the context of the retail industry, aligning selling strategies with the unique challenges, preferences, decision-making styles, and overall company growth strategy of retail corporate leaders is pivotal for successful engagements. Here are some practical strategies that sales teams with consulting influence can implement to achieve this alignment.

1. Deep Industry Insight:

Strategy: Develop a comprehensive understanding of the retail and asset profit protection industry, including market trends, technological advancements, theft and fraud, and networked industry leadership.

Implementation: Regularly update knowledge through collaborative market research, industry reports, and participation in retail industry forums and conferences.

Benefit: Enables consultants to provide relevant, informed advice that resonates with the Top 100 US retail companies and their retail corporate leaders' strategic needs.

2. Customized Solution Presentation:

Strategy: Tailor selling presentations and pitches to match the company needs and specific, as well as nuanced challenges, of the company and the decision-making style of the retail corporate executive.

Implementation: Focus on visionary and transformative aspects, provide detailed data and analysis, emphasize credibility and robust evidence, align with proven methods, and present strategic plans with precise risk management.

Benefit: Increases the likelihood of the proposal resonating with the decision-making executive, leading to a higher chance of acceptance.

3. Emphasizing Strategic Alignment:

Strategy: Ensure that solutions are presented not just as products or services but as strategic profit protection tools that align with the company's current and long-term goals and vision.

Implementation: Relate features and benefits of the solution to the overarching strategic objectives of the retail company for loss mitigation and profit protection with minimal friction to the customer base.

Benefit: Demonstrates rapport and understanding of the executive's broader business challenges and priorities, fostering trust and credibility.

4. Building Long-Term Relationships:

Strategy: Focus on building long-term relationships and future business rather than just making a sale.

Implementation: Engage in continuous dialogue, provide ongoing support, and offer insights that add value beyond the immediate scope of the solution provider product or service.

Benefit: Positions the consultant as your trusted advisor, paving the way for future collaboration and repeat business.

Conclusion

The dynamic landscape of loss mitigation in the retail industry calls for a strategic and nuanced approach to sales consulting, especially when engaging with the final decision-makers among retail corporate leaders. This paper has delved into the unique challenges, decision-making styles, and impact of the consulting influence, highlighting the need for sales approaches that transcend traditional, product-centric methods. In this context, the role of experienced consultants, with profound industry knowledge and skill in tailoring strategies that meet individual company challenges, is indispensable for fostering profitable and meaningful engagements.

In the competitive and fast-paced world of retail consultants and sales teams adept at navigating this complex environment, who can present solutions aligning with these leaders' broader vision and goals, are poised to establish lasting, impactful relationships. This connection goes beyond mere business transactions; it's about creating a synergy that resonates with the individual retail leaders' core objectives and future direction.



Integrating the mastery of influence into these interactions is paramount. This skill is about persuading, understanding, aligning, and collaboratively working towards shared goals. It involves communicating in a way that demonstrates a deep appreciation of each of the leaders' challenges and ambitions and presenting

solutions that are effective in the immediate and adaptable and sustainable in the long term.

The key to success in selling to retail corporations lies in the consulting influence approach that emphasizes deep understanding, strategic alignment, and cultivating long-term partnerships. As the retail industry continues to evolve, so too must the strategies used to engage its decision-making leaders. The solutions offered mustn't be just effective in the present but remain relevant and sustainable for the future. Mastering influence in this domain means building a foundation of trust, understanding, and collaboration that can weather the ever-changing tides of the retail world, ensuring enduring success and mutual growth.

Call to Action:

As we unravel the complexities and seize the opportunities within the retail industry, it becomes increasingly clear that effectively engaging with retail corporate leaders goes beyond the realms of standard sales pitches. It requires a strategic, consulting influence and approach that is deeply anchored in industry experience and knowledge,

intricately tailored to the unique frameworks of high-level leaders.

We invite you, whether as a consultant, sales professional, or asset and profit protection industry leader, to reassess and revitalize your current strategies in light of the insights shared in this paper. Embrace the following steps to enhance your approach and more closely align with the needs and aspirations of retail corporate leaders:



Deepen Your Industry Knowledge:

Make a dedicated effort to stay current with the latest trends, challenges, and innovations in the retail asset protection sector. This profound knowledge is essential to understanding the strategic backdrop against which retail and corporate leaders operate, enabling you to propose relevant and impactful solutions and answer their direct and long-term needs.

Master the Art of Influence:

Sharpen your skills in influencing decision-making. It's about perfecting the craft of persuasive communication that resonates with the leaders' vision and strategic immediate and long-term objectives. Effective influence is about forging a connection that nurtures trust, credibility, and a mutually beneficial journey toward achieving business goals.

Focus on Strategic Alignment:

Ensure that your solutions and proposals are framed in terms of their operational benefits and how they dovetail with and propel the company's long-term strategic objectives. Demonstrating this strategic alignment shows a deeper comprehension of the retail leader's vision and a dedication to contributing to the overarching success of the prospective company.

Build and Sustain Relationships:

Approach each engagement as an opportunity to establish a lasting relationship. Look beyond the immediate transaction and focus on the value-add proposition. Becoming a trusted advisor and collaborator to retail leaders, providing continuous support, insights, and adaptable solutions that evolve with their changing needs, is a proven model of success.

The dynamic nature of the retail landscape calls for a sophisticated and nuanced approach to consultation and selling. By adopting these steps, you can transform your interactions with retail corporate leaders, positioning yourself not just as a provider of solutions, but as an indispensable and respected partner in their journey towards innovation and continual growth. Now is the time to reshape your strategies and make a meaningful impact in the retail industry.



About the Author:

John Matas is a prominent digital commerce fraud prevention and asset protection influencer, boasting a career spanning over three decades. His profound expertise in criminal

investigations, organized retail crime, retail operations, open-source intelligence, and team development has established him as a trusted authority in the field.

As the Founder and President of the boutique consulting company BLACKLIGHT, John has demonstrated an unwavering commitment and enthusiasm to advancing cyber-security threat intelligence and revenue integrity. Under his leadership, BLACKLIGHT has helped transform digital fraud's challenges into strategic advantages for organizations. His innovative and creative approach extends beyond risk mitigation, proactively leveraging these risks to enhance business resilience and security.

John's unique journey in asset protection began with his pivotal role as the Vice President of Investigations, Fraud, and Organized Retail Crime at Macy's Inc., where he spent over two decades. He was instrumental in establishing comprehensive investigative programs, strategic planning initiatives, profit protection strategies, and integrating advanced business technology. His tenure at Macy's marked a significant era in shaping industry standards in asset protection, investigations, organized retail crime, and fraud mitigation controls.

Following his tenure at Macy's, John furthered his impact as the Global Head of Risk & Fraud for Etsy Inc., managing the organization's comprehensive fraud strategy in a highly

regulated environment. John built a cohesive and energetic team and structured robust policies, processes, and tools while ensuring impactful prevention, detection, and investigation of fraud and suspicious marketplace activities.

As an active member of the Editorial Board for Loss Prevention Magazine and a regular speaker at esteemed forums like the National Retail Federation, Retail Industry Leaders Association, International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators, Merchant Risk Council, and the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, John's voice is highly sought after in the industry.

John is a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) and Certified Financial Crimes Investigator (CFCI). He is an alumnus of Kean University, where he graduated with a BA in Political Science and Criminal Justice, and is currently enhancing his skillset in Applied Machine Learning at Columbia University.

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