



Selling Disruption™ Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

Disruptive Sales Trends

Gaetano DiNardi

Mark S A Smith: Today's guest on the Selling Disruption Show is Gaetano DiNardi, who is the VP of Marketing of saleshacker.com, the company that helps you figure out how to make more sales as fast as humanly possible.

Gaetano and I met on LinkedIn.com, when he talked about the future trends in sales, I said, "Yep, I got to have this guy on the show." Then I discovered he's a working musician, background in music, knows how to sell things that are really difficult. And I knew we had to have a conversation.

Welcome, Gaetano.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yo, Mark, thanks for having me.

Mark S A Smith: I'm so glad that you're on the show.

Tell me about what's going on in the world of sales with Sales Hacker.

Gaetano DiNardi: I think this is an extremely exciting period for sales and marketing in the B2B space. There's sort of a renaissance happening with the new technology that's rolling out. In fact, we did a report this year that there are now over 750 SaaS platforms available in sales technology. And we're in this automation-crazed era, but it's removing the personalization aspect and you're getting less personalized feel and touches in your emails and stuff.

So now it's like, how do you balance all the automation that's going on along with getting back to basics. You have all this data. How do you make sense of it? You have all these systems that need to work together in perfect harmony. How do you make that happen? And that's why you're seeing the emergence of sales operations as a main department now for most modern and mature sales organizations, so that's kind of where we're at right now.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, you're exactly right. I see now a movement to chief revenue officer that combines the concept of marketing and sales together, because they do have to be joined at the hip if this is going to work well.

Gaetano DiNardi: Exactly. You're seeing more marketing operations and sales operations being aligned and sort of meshed together to form this new sort of concept of revenue operations, and it's more now about how do we break the silos down, get these teams to work together cross functionally and do the things and do the things that actually move the needle and not just do things because we're chasing the next big, shiny thing that came out. "Ooh, this new sort of sales analyzer for your conversations and all this stuff." If it makes sense to do it, then great. If you're struggling with that part of your sales process, then great. But don't just be distracted by every new, shiny thing that comes along.

Mark S A Smith: It's really easy to do today, especially, as you pointed out, 750 software as a service sales platforms out there.

What I see here is two things going on. First of all is that we're trying to systematize sales as much as humanly possible, and there is-

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: There is value to that, because we have to pull cost out everywhere we possibly can, and let's face it, sales people are expensive.

Gaetano DiNardi: Very.

Mark S A Smith: And they're worth it in the right position.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: They are worth it.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: On the other side of it, people are doing most of the sales work themselves. It used to be, if we rewound the clock 30 or 40 years ago, if you wanted to find out information about what you wanted to buy, you had to call a salesperson and they would present you with the information in their sales pitch, talking about the features, advantages and benefits. We can get all of that online today freely.

Gaetano DiNardi: Exactly. And that's why people don't really give a damn when they're on a sales demo or a presentation and the rep is trying to woo and wow this prospect by trying to flash these product features and really woo them with that.

They probably already know what this stuff is. They buyer review sites, such as G2 Crowd, Capterra, TrustRadius and all these sites, you can find out everything you need. And the real way to differentiate yourself now is brand.

Mark S A Smith: Brand story, right. That's it.

Gaetano DiNardi: This is kind of why Sales Hacker is in such an interesting position, because we started the company without the idea of building a product, building a SaaS, what are we going to take to market and sell. That wasn't the idea. The idea was let's just build an audience.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Gaetano DiNardi: Max built this company out of passion, blood, sweat and tears, really, just to give salespeople a platform to express their ideas, express their pains and have discussions about them and figure out what's working and what's not working with other sales leaders. And it's really the first of its kind of community where salespeople can share ideas with each other and learn from one another, and we've been slowly but surely building and ramping that up through the conferences, through our continued efforts with content marketing.

We get practitioners involved, so we're practitioner led. We don't let, quote, unquote, content marketers publish stuff with us just because they want to build links to their website or whatever.

There's always this sort of weird feeling when a product marketer is putting out content about their product. It's because you know-

Mark S A Smith: And they've never sold products.

Gaetano DiNardi: And they've never sold products, right.

Mark S A Smith: It's the most amazing thing.

Gaetano DiNardi: So it's weird.

Mark S A Smith: I had a conversation with one of my friends and colleagues and clients, and he pointed out that in the world of sales training, most people who do it have never sold the product that they're training you to sell.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: It's the weirdest thing.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. It's very anecdotal. The role of product marketing now is sort of flirting along the borderline of sales and marketing, because they have to position the product in a certain way, they have to do the customer research and find out what those pain points are, of course, and then they have to come up with this messaging that's going to resonate really well.

And that's all fun and good, but product marketing now is becoming very, very difficult because everybody is sort of like, "Okay, this comes from a product marketer." Think about what they're doing. They're marketing a product, right?

Mark S A Smith: Right.

Gaetano DiNardi: Whereas with me or a Sales Hacker, we're not really marketing products; we're just straight sharing information. So if we're teaching you about sales prospecting, the core thing that we're going to teach you about is the process, the actual steps involved, the learning, and it doesn't revolve around tools.

I think the biggest problem with product marketers now is they create these big pictures of problems, and then ultimately what they try to do is they position their product as the only way that your problem can be solved.

Mark S A Smith: Everybody notices that trick. Everybody does. As you pointed out, there are 750 sales platforms available. There is more than one way to solve the problem. Customers don't buy that stuff anymore. They know there are multiple answers.

They're savvy. They go to amazon.com. They read the reviews, they see the customer experiences, and from all that, then they make a decision what's best for them.

So sales is really morphing to this new place, which I really like, and it's more about clearing up the confusion. It's about providing advice to, "Oh, this is your situation, all right. Don't go that way. I suggest that you consider this instead." And it's about making sure that you're the only logical choice in the context of the customer's need.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: That's the sales magic that we go through these days.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely. I think going back to the basics is going to be a big thing in 2018, because you have all this stuff going on with automation and AI, and buyer side technology is definitely disrupting the way that sales has traditionally been done.

But the thing about AI and automation and technology is that it's kind of a magnifying glass. If you have really good processes in place as a sales organization and you introduce AI to automate stuff, it's going to work out well, because you've already the foundation.

But if you have a broken foundation or your sales process is not in perfect working order and there's a lot of leaks and gaps and problems, then what automation is going to do is expose you.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Gaetano DiNardi: And you do not want that to happen.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. If you have a process that sucks, AI is just going to make it suck worse.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: Suck faster.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah, exactly. So that's why I think like what you said before out there being all this information out there and sales really transforming toward this consultative approach, I think that's really what is going to set the difference for a sales rep out there.

Are you somebody that is going to provide the buyer with all the information that they need during the sales call, are you going to basically consult them and guide them into letting them make their own decision that's right for them, or are you going to try to be slick in some way or withhold information or try to paint yourself or your product in the light that you want them to see you in?

Mark S A Smith: The biggest amplifier of that shift is social media.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah. We had some really heated LinkedIn threads this year on classic, epic, age-old debate, social selling versus cold calling thing.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Gaetano DiNardi: One of the things that I learned is that you really have two real things to consider when it comes to this. People in sales are going to stick to what they know best. So if they're really good at cold calling and they have been trained at cold calling and that's what they're excellent in, they're not really going to even try social selling, because they don't really need to. They're successful at that and they're not going to jump on the bandwagon of social selling just because it's the thing to do.

Now, on the flip side of that, millennials specifically, I think, they are utilizing this new way of selling because maybe they're just not good at cold calling and maybe that stems from the fact that they're not being trained correctly.

So because social media is more native to millennial salespeople, they're easily more able to sort of adapt to the style. They may have a bias toward gravitating toward that, because it's a little bit easier in some ways. I think it's really hard to call people out of nowhere and try to sell something, so I think that's kind of where we're at.

Mark S A Smith: I think you're absolutely right about this. Millennials don't like cold calling 'cause cold calling sucks. It sucks to do it, it sucks to get a cold call. But don't get me wrong, if you know how to do cold calling, you can make money cold calling. But don't expect to sell a product on a first call.

Cold calling works really, really well for low consideration type of sales where the people don't have to work very hard and they can get to a yes without asking anybody else.

Gaetano DiNardi: Sure, absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: In those environments, you can cold call. Otherwise, cold calling is designed to do one thing and one thing only: start the relationship.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah, exactly. I put out really provocative posts on this and I was met with a lot of fire and fury from the sales community about this, and rightfully so. Of course, I put things out there to be a provocative sort of person, but I think that's good, because it creates conversation, and I think that's what's needed to learn.

Mark S A Smith: Here's an interesting aspect to cold calling. If you don't do cold calling well and you call in to somebody cold and you say, "Hey, it's Mark Smith from ABC Company and what's your biggest pain right now in the world of IT?" And they already know that, and they go "click", right?

Gaetano DiNardi: Right.

Mark S A Smith: The problem is now ABC Company is worse off in the mind of the person you just called. Cold calling can destroy brands.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, totally.

Mark S A Smith: In fact, I posit, and I'll probably get some hate email for this, and bring it on, bring it on, is that every company that does cold calling right now without doing it correctly is at risk of destroying their brand, because as you pointed out, it's a brand story, and most people don't associate with cold calling as part of a brand.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, totally. Not just cold calling. I think even bad sales email prospecting, anything cold, even bad advertising, I'll take it a step further, anything negative that you do as a salesperson can ultimately build up negative reputations for your company and your brand.

And what we're seeing now is shameless, absolutely shameless screenshotting, calling people out on LinkedIn, that's what you should think about if you're a sales rep. Could somebody potentially screenshot this, put it out there, and make me and my company look bad? 'Cause that's what's happening.

I'm not saying that I condone that. I don't think it's actually good to call people out and screenshot them and call them out on social media. I think that's actually a very bad thing to do, because then you sort of look petty, but-

Mark S A Smith: Doesn't matter.

Gaetano DiNardi: ... that's the reality.

Mark S A Smith: That's what people remember.

Gaetano DiNardi: That's what people remember. And they're not going to remember the great research that you did. That's not going to get screenshotted and put out on LinkedIn.

The one time when you spam them or email a competitor by ... I see this all the time, sales reps that don't do their research and they just want to automate everything and they end up sending prospecting emails to their competitors, and it's hilarious. It happens, and it's sad, actually.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, it is sad.

What you just said was important. Anything cold today must be exceptional, or don't do it.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Cold calling works when you do it right. And don't get me wrong, listener, I teach people how to cold call on a regular basis, wrote a book on it a long time ago, and yet today when I hear people, "Tell me your cold calling script", it sucks. "Don't say that. Don't do that or you're killing yourself."

Gaetano DiNardi: What are the worst things that your people are doing, novice sort of inexperienced cold callers, at least cold callers that think that they're getting to where they need to be but they're still not, what are you seeing there?

Mark S A Smith: The worst one is just calling out and looking for something from the person they're calling in to, when that person owes them nothing. They're cold calling out to get an appointment. Why should they give you any time? You've given them nothing of value.

Gaetano DiNardi: Exactly.

Mark S A Smith: Cold calling to do research when it's obvious that that research is going to in turn be used against that person in a sales environment.

Gaetano DiNardi: Right.

Mark S A Smith: Whereas the best cold calls today start with, "Hi, it's Mark Smith. The reason why I'm calling is because we're strangers and I want to start to get to know you a little better."

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: "I help companies in your industry take care of some of their biggest challenges. Now, I know you've got zero reason to have a conversation with me right now, none whatsoever. You don't even know me from anybody else. There's only way to fix it, and that's let's have a conversation. And if you're open, let's do that. If not, it's okay, you'll hear back from me another time."

Gaetano DiNardi: I agree. And that's kind of a good segue into another huge point that we made in our 14 Monster Sales Trends & Predictions article.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, let's get back to that list. Yes, I want to do that.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah, yeah. So yeah, so one of them was rethinking the role of the sales development representative as we know it. Classically, this role was thought to be very entry level, somebody who has minimal to zero experience in sales who you would just kind of throw into the pit of fire, giving them a little ramp-up period and just expect them to, God forbid I say this, spray and pray.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, right. That's what it is.

Gaetano DiNardi: It's what it is in some cases. So that's the classic sort of mindset of this role.

I think what we're going to see in 2018 is a very, very, very, very different view of this role, because the reality is that it is no longer entry level. You have to have some sort of sense of how to make use of these technologies that are at your fingertips. It's really changing from, "I just need to set up meetings so that I can fulfill my duties because I need to get the account executive set up with meetings." It's going to change to, "I want to now solve a real problem that my prospects are having."

Mark S A Smith: Right on.

Gaetano DiNardi: "And I'm going to be measured on the effectiveness of the meetings that I set up and create for my account executive counterpart." Not just, "Hey, account executive, I got you 16 meetings this month." "Wow, that's amazing." No. It's always better to have quality over quantity.

Mark S A Smith: Always.

Gaetano DiNardi: So that's where we're heading right now.

Mark S A Smith: Always better, both for the customer and for the sales reps.

What else do you see changing in the future?

Gaetano DiNardi: With regard to the SDRs, I think that there's going to be further automation with Chatbots. That was another big thing from our article, that people hate the idea of going to a website and seeing a really good ebook, a really good piece of content that they want, and they only way to get it is to cough up your precious, precious email address.

And you know what's going to happen when you give it up. You're going to get an email, hopefully not within the first 10 minutes that you downloaded that book, but you're going to get an email eventually that says, "Hey, I noticed you downloaded XYZ ebook, can we talk about your sales goals", or whatever. And that kind of sucks, because you see it coming from so far away. Just because somebody downloaded an ebook doesn't mean they're a qualified prospect.

The beauty about the Chatbots is that they're eliminating all that stuff. And then from the sales perspective, there's that time gap between when a prospect engages your content to when you reach out and all that stuff. With the Chatbots, it's all happening right there onsite. You can have that prospecting conversation, you have that qualification conversation as far as can be taken, and you reduce a lot of friction. And that's transforming sales as we know it.

Mark S A Smith: The issue is that they're asking too soon for information when somebody indicates that they're interested. And what ends up happening is that buyers are liars. We know that. Buyers will tell you what they think you want to hear to get you to do what they want.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: And so they want people to download a book, they'll give you a fake email address or they'll give you their spamhere@gmail.com. It doesn't do us any good.

Let's forget about those people. Let's focus on the folks that really are reaching out and saying, "Hey, I really want to make an informed decision. I'm going to download your ebook and I'm going to peruse it at my time." And yes, let's interact with them at the pace they want to be interacted with.

Chatbots are a great way of doing that, especially when they're well implemented. A well-implemented Chatbot is as good as a professional salesperson.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah, no question about it. No question.

Mark S A Smith: What do you see next?

Gaetano DiNardi: Another role that has been under heavy scrutinization in the sales and marketing space, not just B2B, but I think in general, is the role of the C level executive, particularly in sales and marketing, I would say even more particularly in marketing.

There's been I think a remarkable shift in the traditional sort of executive leadership role in marketing from very strategic just kind of reviewing reports, directing strategy, things of that nature, to more hands on, more growth focused, more consumer centric leadership, I think.

So I don't think that chief marketing officers are going to be called chief marketing officers for that much longer. It's going to be labeled as a head of growth, chief growth officer role.

You already see these shifts from companies like Pepsi, who have fired their CMO and replaced it with a chief growth officer role. It's no longer good enough to just advertise, and now it's all about growth across the board, and it's all tied back to revenue. And that is I think a monumental shift at the executive level, because if the executives are being held to a higher standard for growth, that means the entire organization will be, as well.

Mark S A Smith: It sure will be.

Well, I think it's interesting that we have this conversation about strategy versus tactics. And what you're seeing with some organizations, such as Pepsi, around chief growth officer coming out of the CMO, the chief marketing officer, we have to have a strategic component in an organization if we're going to stay in business.

Keep in mind, listener, that half of the Fortune 500 turns over every 10 years.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Just because they've been good at growing doesn't mean that they're good at staying in business.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. I totally agree.

Mark S A Smith: And so only 15% of the original Fortune 500 are still on the list.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Mark S A Smith: The point I want to make here is that strategy's absolutely critical to sustainable, scalable, profitable, and ultimately highly salable as your business gets acquired, as almost all businesses do eventually.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: To do this, we have to have a long-reaching, long-thinking strategist in the company, usually in the role of chief executive officer, CEO. And theoretically, if you have "chief" in your title, your vision should be three to five to seven to ten years out. And yet to do the day-to-day growth [inaudible 00:20:05] requires you to be highly tactical within the strategy that's been outlined, and that requires that you have a vision of zero to one, one to two years out.

And I think what we're seeing is a shift of a bigger separation between the strategic roles and the tactical roles, because we have to get very, very tactical fast, but we also have to keep our self on target to those longer term elements, and they're completely different brain chemistries, completely different views of Atlanta.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, my gosh, yeah. What you just said sparks so many thoughts that's in my mind.

Mark S A Smith: Woo-hoo.

Gaetano DiNardi: But I think the problem with traditional executive roles is that they have historically been sort of this orchestrator of the team.

Mark S A Smith: Right.

Gaetano DiNardi: And a lot of their time goes toward, aside from the strategic level work, the orchestration of managing a large team. Now it's up to especially CMOs. They need to prove that marketing is not just a cost center, but it's a revenue generator. And all the things that happen on the marketing side all really have to have measurable outcomes.

There's going to be a degree still of, "Yes, we feel intuitively that this will work", but if it's not supported with hard data, historical and maybe even outside data, it's going to be challenging to convince peers, the board, the CEO, to get on board with the initiatives that they want, and I think that tension between CMO and CEO will continue to diminish, the relationship will get better, as chief marketing officers get more growth driven.

Mark S A Smith: Part of the issue is that we're still stuck in the Stone Age of marketing.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: And first of all, there's fundamentally four ways that we market and sell, and people have to understand the difference between all four and apply them appropriately that's beyond this particular show, but the challenge is that people get stuck in one element and try to apply that to another market strategy and they fail on a regular basis. So you've got to get out of the four-piece marketing works everywhere, 'cause it doesn't.

You also have to get rid of this concept that there's avatars for everything. They're not. It works in some situations, it fails in others. So you cannot get stuck in one view of how to market.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: The second aspect is, my view is very simple. Marketing is about triggering relevant conversations, period, triggering relevant conversations.

Gaetano DiNardi: Nailed it.

Mark S A Smith: If it doesn't do that, it's not marketing. It's a complete and total waste of time and energy and money. That is how we measure the value of our marketing, is have we triggered relevant conversations with people who are looking forward to having a transaction with us. And then sales is facilitating that mutually profitable transaction.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: And so those two things combined with a product that creates unique value from the target market and customer service that earns loyalty, those four elements together is our customer acquisition's fear that all four have to be wired together for us to make this work.

Gaetano DiNardi: That's revenue ops in a nutshell.

Mark S A Smith: It absolutely is. Give us another one.

Gaetano DiNardi: Point number three in our article. Customer acquisition costs have increased significantly across the board in SaaS. And the reason why that's happening is because clutter. Clutter, clutter, clutter.

We mentioned earlier in the conversation that 750 new SaaS platforms. There are so many SaaS companies out there with almost not differentiation.

Mark S A Smith: Right. Fundament-

Gaetano DiNardi: Almost none.

Mark S A Smith: You're absolutely right. There is so much clutter in the market, a lot of people are doing "me, too", which gets back to the original point that I was making, is create unique value for your target market. Unique is a word.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: You started off talking about how you have to differentiate through your brand story.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: And brand story, friends, is never about your logo, it's never about the colors you use, it's not about your identity. It's the customer's affinity to you. Do they see you as part of their experience? Do they see you as part of their life? For your products and services to become part of your customer's life, they have to see you as being part of their life before they can say, "Yes". We live not just an experience economy; we live in a transformational economy.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: We buy things because we want to be more of who we are, or a little different than who we are right now.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: And that all goes back to brand story.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. Here's the other thing that's happening now, too. These GDPR regulations.

Mark S A Smith: Tell our listener what GDPR means. They may not have heard that yet.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: It's a killer. It's a business killer.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. So in short, it is a new regulation in Europe. It's probably going to be making its way to the US soon. But it's a regulation in Europe that is going to

make it harder to contact people in an unsolicited manner, which means that outbound sales and marketing is going to be a lot harder, because, for example, if somebody opts in to your email list for your content newsletter or something, that's what they want, the content, so if you start sending them things that aren't content, if there are spam complaints or whatever, you could get a fine.

Mark S A Smith: And the fine, friend, is egregious.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh.

Mark S A Smith: It's 20 million euro.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Or a substantial percentage of your profits. It's essentially designed to put companies out of business.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: It's just crazy, but that's where we are, and we have to figure out how to navigate GDPR. It's going to change radically how we do business.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes. And I'll be honest with you, Mark, I actually can't wait for it to come, because I'm getting a little tired of lazy, corner-cutting, spam in sales and marketing. So this is going to force people to do marketing automation the right way, for example.

If somebody opts in for an ebook, they can't just get bombarded with other offers. You're not going to be allowed to do things like list swapping or list buying. That is so a real thing. Companies are going to be required to segment their lists based on what the audience is interested in.

One way that companies are going to try to get around this is by going through trusted partner channels. So instead of doing outbound traditionally, what they're going to do is find trusted communities, like a Sales Hacker, for example.

Mark S A Smith: Right.

Gaetano DiNardi: And try to sell through us, or at least try to earn the trust and gain the awareness that they need for their brands to flourish through a non-biased platform such as a Sales Hacker, where if you're in marketing, maybe it's Content Marketing Institute or MarketingProfs or whatever. There's so many of them out there.

Trusted partner channels are going to be a way to dilute the pain of more difficult outbound.

Mark S A Smith: Well, you're absolutely right, Gaetano. The thing that we see here at the Selling Destruction Show is this concept of moving towards community. Building a community is step one. It's not finding a customer; it's building a community.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: Then that community is going to buy and buy safely, and it is a recurring theme on most shows. So you're absolutely in tune with what we're seeing.

Give us another one, another trend that you see coming up for the future of sales.

Gaetano DiNardi: We've covered a lot of ground. One that we touched a little bit on but we didn't really get into is stemming off of social selling but going a step deeper, the increased important of personal branding and career development to create your own sales opportunities.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Gaetano DiNardi: What do you think about that?

Mark S A Smith: I absolutely agree with that. I've heard some people bashing personal branding, and I absolutely disagree with it. Personal branding-

Gaetano DiNardi: Bashing?

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, no kidding.

Gaetano DiNardi: That's scary.

Mark S A Smith: I know. It's really crazy. I think personal branding is critical to our long-term success.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Sales professionals, we have to create marketing gravity. We have to be people of interest.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: And the way that we create being people of interest is being seen as an expert in solving some particular problem or creating history for people that want that history.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: So it's critical to illustrate personal branding, to develop your career intentionally. I don't just mean next week, next month, next year. I mean think out 10 years from now, what do you want to be known for in the world?

I'll tell you my story really quickly.

Gaetano DiNardi: Please, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: I wrote my very first book back in 1989. It's was 5,000 words, called 49 Ways to Be Your Best at Trade Show Selling. I sold 13.5 thousand copies of that silly little booklet, but that's what launched my career as an author, and I'm just now releasing the 14th book that I've written.

Gaetano DiNardi: Wow.

Mark S A Smith: You've got to create this long-term vision.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: And that little silly booklet got me introduced to Jay Conrad Levinson and Orvel Ray Wilson, and I wrote three books with Jay Levinson, Mr. Guerrilla Marketing.

Gaetano DiNardi: Wow.

Mark S A Smith: And so that's how we progress through this, right?

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: And you have to create a long tail, long term, what do I want to be known for. I wanted to be known for sales acumen, although at the time I thought I was a really crappy sales guy, although I tend to do really well in sales. And the reason why is because I was breaking all those paradigms.

Like you, it was about solving people's problems versus pitching features, advantages and benefits.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: So yes, you've got to generate a personal brand. You've got to create it in a long haul, long tail. You start it by running your first article. You bundle 10 together on a topic, it's your first book.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. That's a really eye-opening story, Mark. You followed the principles of the aggregation of marginal gains. You knew that right away it wasn't going to be a sonic boom, but over the years of sticking true and executing, look where you are now. It shows.

Mark S A Smith: Well, thank you. We have to continue to build our skill stack, as Scott Adams talks about in his book, How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. The cool thing about if you do have a pretty decent personal brand, you can cut through the clutter a lot easier, because one of the biggest problems right now is the noise of the B2B email, the phone, the ads, all this stuff, all this noise.

If you can build trust of an audience, then what you have to say is automatically going to stand out. Buyers are going to buy from people they trust and from people who can keep their attention and who they come to like.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Gaetano DiNardi: I think they just have to like you.

Mark S A Smith: They do have to like you, no doubt about that.

And I've actually rewritten this a little bit, Gaetano, and what I see is the three key things to be successful. Repetitive relevance. We have to provide relevance to our community. It has to be over and over and over and over again. The Selling Disruption Show, there's been 52 episodes released, and we're still working on selling disruption. But it's repetitive, it's relevant.

Number two, we have to create unshakable trust. Don't do anything to destroy the trust that you generate, because people cannot buy from you unless they trust you. And these days, making a snide joke or saying something that could be screen-capped and shared, that can kill. As we've seen, people have been destroying careers based on making a stupid decision 10 years ago.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: It's ridiculous, but we have to create that unshakable trust.

So friends, red Solo cups on social media is not probably a good idea.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: One of the aspects of SEO, that's like my bread and butter thing, people think of SEO as a way to grow and grow and grow your audience. Yes. But there's also an element of reputation protection ...

Gaetano DiNardi: Right on.

Mark S A Smith: ... that comes with SEO. If somebody searches your name or your brand and a bunch of bad stuff comes up, you have a problem on your hands, and the only way to really eradicate that is to create good stuff that will surface above it. And then you have to try to find the sources of where that bad stuff is coming from

and politely ask if that can be removed. But even more importantly beyond all that, you should stop doing bad things.

Gaetano DiNardi: Right on.

Mark S A Smith: So the solution to pollution is dilution.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, wow.

Mark S A Smith: If you have been polluted by bad posts, you got to put out a hell of a lot of good posts.

Gaetano DiNardi: Correct.

Mark S A Smith: That's all there is to it. Even if you have 5, 10, 15% people badmouthing you, it's okay.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: The solution to pollution is dilution.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: The third thing was expanding value, ever-expanding value. We have to bring new value. With every contact, every discussion, every article, you have to do that.

So the three things I see, repetitive relevance, unshakable trust, and expanding value.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, I love it.

You know what, Mark? One sort of unspoken element of all this, when you're done talking to somebody, you should walk away from that conversation feeling like really good, not just about whatever it was you were talking about, but the person.

When you and I had our first chat, I walked away from that conversation feeling good and uplifted.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, me, too.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah, thanks, man. That's how business should be.

Mark S A Smith: Indeed.

Gaetano DiNardi: And if it's not, then you need to figure out how to make that happen.

Mark S A Smith: Everybody should win from the conversation. Everybody should be a little better.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes. The last big thing to be aware of for 2018 is the account-based marketing and sales movement, which is basically flipping the funnel. You know that classic sort of traditional B generation funnel where you have big, broad awareness, and then engage and then you continue to nurse and engage to get them to consider your product and then you hopefully convert them and so forth.

With the account-based marketing funnel, it's the opposite. You identify a few high-value targets, and you say the more targeted approach, because it's the only way to cut through the clutter now. You have to hyper-personalize even more than you ever did in the past.

Mark S A Smith: Right on. So most listeners to this show have to do account-based marketing. They have to do target marketing to be successful. And done right, your competitors will never detect that you're even in the marketplace.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: The easiest way to figure out whether you should do account-based marketing or you should do broad marketing is very simply this. Is what you're selling low consideration? If the answer is it can be decided by one person and relatively quickly, it's a fast yes, then you should probably do broad marketing. If it's high consideration where you have multiple people involved and they have to go through a vetting process and evaluation, then target marketing is going to work much better, because you're going to be able to get your message in front of the right person at the right time versus worrying about your competitors knowing what you're doing.

Gaetano DiNardi: Oh, yeah. Agreed.

As a content marketer, one of the core marketing activities is find lists of influencers who we could collaborate with, like you., and help us amplify our message or content and all this stuff.

With account-based marketing, what you're doing instead, you're finding potential influential people within that account, and you're figuring out how to build content for them. So if it's like a VP of sales in the real estate market, you'll create VP of sales content that's relevant to real estate, and you'll run ads to get in front of them. And it's really not that much different process-wise, it's just different context-wise.

Mark S A Smith: It is contextual, 100% contextual.

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: And that gets back to where we use that formula of repetitive relevance, unshakable trust, and expanding value in target marketing. That's what makes it work.

Gaetano DiNardi: Absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: This has been such a great conversation, Gaetano. I'm so delighted to have you as a guest. How can people get a hold of you? What do you want them to do next?

Gaetano DiNardi: Yeah. You can find me on Instagram if you would like. My Instagram handle is official_gaetano, or you could just simply search me on LinkedIn, Gaetano DiNardi, and you can hit me up there.

Mark S A Smith: And we also have links to both of those on the show page at sellingdisruptionshow.com.

Thank you so much, Gaetano. It's been a delight to have a conversation. Look forward to many more in the future.

Gaetano DiNardi: Thank you very much.