

ORGANIZING MARKETING AND SALES: MASTERING CONTEMPORARY B2B CHALLENGES

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Sarah Wikner earned her PhD at Jönköping International Business School, Sweden. The thesis is about value cocreation between suppliers and customers. Her interest lies in improving marketing and sales through processes, tools, and corporate strategy. She has been part of the research group Value-In-Sight at the marketing department of Stockholm School of Economics. She now combines teaching and

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Foreword

This book is the outcome of a number of PhD-theses and other research projects. It has been under way for several years and has served as a catalyst for knowledge generation within a research team of around 12 people at the Stockholm School of Economics. The leading theme of the research has been “value creation in business-to-business operations,” or Value in Sight (VIS), as we have named our group. When we had forged out a number of texts based on our research, we had around 70 percent of the chapters of the book. We as editors then took a different stance by asking ourselves what was missing in order to make this into a holistic book on organizing marketing and sales. We identified a number of themes that were important but not covered. The exercise resulted in the following step in the remaining 30 percent of the content (chapters).

Our ambition has been to arrive at a presentation that would capture contemporary challenges and thinking around them, specifically addressing sales. This means that we rely quite a lot on empirical findings, especially regarding what firms try to achieve and what seems to be problematic in making it happen. We have also been guided by two main ideas: (1) that sales and marketing are essentially about organizing and (2) that business firms are gradually moving toward the so-called solutions business. But it seems to be a tricky journey with a lot of challenges, not least regarding sales. Sales and marketing, nevertheless, need to be aligned when looking at solutions businesses. This could be considered a third main guiding idea. These background thoughts are more or less explicitly addressed in all chapters.

It is clear that the book is based on research and should be an interesting read for scholars in the field. But as it is rather close to “real-world” illustrations and problems, we think it should appeal to people in business too. We know that many of the challenges presented are deeply sensed problems also in practice. Many years of experience in executive training has taught us that most of the challenges managers perceive are related to organizational issues and are often internally oriented. When asking sales and marketing managers about what kind of challenges are on top of their minds and, thus, the ones they would like to explore in development projects, roughly four out of five tend to be about organizational challenges: How to coordinate our sales-force? How to connect sales and R&D? and so on. One challenge out of the four organizationally oriented tends to be outward-looking, specifically addressing challenges in managing customers and/or competitors. All the rest are primarily internally oriented. This is a strong indicator to us of the topical relevance of the book.

We also think of master-courses and similar contexts as potential target audiences. Much of the content presented in the book has contributed to our courses in the SSE Master in Management Programs. Some of it has also been utilized in the school's Bachelor Programs, especially in courses addressing business-to-business marketing.

We as editors want to thank all our contributors and especially all members of the VIS group for their expertise and patience in allowing this process to take some time and also to willingly contribute and to adapt their texts step-by-step based on our criticisms. Several of the research projects underlying these texts have had financial support from the Torsten Söderberg Fund (Cederlund, Laurin, Huang, Tian, Åge) and also from the Research Foundations at the Handelsbanken (Grenblad, Jönsson, Vilgon, Wikner). We are thankful for that. Thanks also to Kalin Taylor who skillfully helped us correct the language. We also want to thank the publisher, Emerald Insight, for their acceptance of our manuscript and for their great work, including the comments by the two reviewers. We hope the reader will find this book an interesting and up-to-date read.

Stockholm, March 2018