

What if your growth depends on your ability to become a strategic ally for your customers?

The data confirms what the most agile companies have understood: customer experience is much more than a sales pitch.

In a context of normative instability and the exhaustion of traditional sales models, the question of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with major customers is becoming a strategic priority. For Dominique Côté, founder of Cosawi, the answer lies in a profound redefinition of customer engagement, rooted in active listening, organizational agility and a change in posture at the management level.

" We are no longer in a world of transactions. Successful companies are those that know how to become trusted partners ." Dominique Côté doesn't just talk about vision. With more than thirty years in the highest commercial spheres of the pharmaceutical sector, this former Chief Commercial now supports managers and organizations through [Cosawi](#), the [commercial transformation firm](#) she founded, awarded in 2023 for its ability to move the lines.

The heart of his expertise? Transform customer relations – and especially those with key accounts – into a pillar of strategic growth. And this, by attacking the root: the internal structure of organizations and the mindset of management, sales and key account teams.

Key figures on customer experience

A key differentiating factor, still poorly exploited by companies:

- 73% of people consider customer experience to be a deciding factor in their purchasing decisions, but only 49% of U.S. consumers believe that companies provide a good experience. (Source: PwC)
- 86% of shoppers are willing to pay more for a better customer experience. (Source: SuperOffice)
- A single bad experience can deter 50% of customers from buying back from a company. (Source: Korn Ferry)
- 88% of buyers expect sales reps to act as trusted advisors, and they're more likely to buy when they do. (Sources: Salesforce & HireDNA)

Why is customer engagement misunderstood?

These alarming figures underscore the urgency of a profound rethink of the way companies engage their customers. Too often, companies confuse sales presence with true customer engagement. They remain focused on their offer, their messages and their processes

emphasize, without taking into account the reality of the customer ecosystem, or its specific needs – especially when it comes to large accounts. Yet, the landscape has changed: 77% of B2B buyers do their own research before connecting with a sales rep. This figure illustrates a simple truth, the traditional sales approach no longer works. Engagement can no longer be unidirectional. It must be mutual, rooted in the client's understanding, and thought of as an ongoing dialogue. Understanding before acting, listening before proposing, this is the new commercial requirement in line with customer expectations. We are in an era where understanding and focusing on the real needs of customers must be the starting point. By focusing on helping the growth and achievement of our clients' goals is the best way to achieve our own growth, it is a win-win approach.



Distinguishing between key accounts and strategic accounts

In many industries, companies continue to segment their key customers with tools from another time. Their analysis is still based on purely quantitative criteria: purchase volume, turnover, estimated potential, market share, etc. But this one-sided reading omits fundamental dimensions. The potential for mutual growth, a shared long-term vision or the ability to innovate together are all qualitative indicators that make the difference between a major customer and a true strategic partner. Cosawi helps companies move towards this new approach, integrating bidirectional criteria and putting the voice of the customer at the heart of decisions.

This transformation also implies a complete overhaul of internal workings. As Dominique Coté, founder of Cosawi, explains: "Too often, we start with sales. Marketing is not integrated. However, strategic account management is, by nature, multidisciplinary. This is why Cosawi supports its clients in the construction of a more transversal model, where the sales, marketing and operational functions are aligned around the same objective, that of creating sustainable value with the most strategic customers.

Key accounts, catalysts for transformation

Cosawi does not "just" issue recommendations. The firm supports the concrete application, helping companies to build a clear roadmap for the transformation of the sales approach and each key account. "When a company structures this type of partnership, it refocuses on the customer's real priorities." The result is significantly higher retention and growth rates. "Some customers even see their development potential doubled, as they are no longer perceived as simple buyers, but as real partners," explains the founder.



Three pillars for a sustainable model

To enable this transformation, Cosawi relies on three methodological pillars: a center of excellence, a strong executive commitment, and account-oriented marketing management; to build a multidisciplinary team around the account manager. The centre of excellence makes it possible to structure skills management, to anchor learning, working methods and to spread a culture of strategic alignment. Marketing, on the other hand, must no longer be a simple product-driven content creator, but a key interlocutor in the customer journey, able to provide insights, analyze data, feed the strategy and personalize the multichannel approach to amplify the impact.

But none of these levers works without the real involvement of top management. "As long as the leaders do not carry this vision themselves, nothing holds," observes Dominique Coté, "This is why a large part of our activity is based on executive coaching. We help them become ambassadors of change, to change their posture, to better understand customer needs. »

The human factor, at the heart of differentiation

In the age of generative AI, automation and ever more efficient CRMs, the differentiating factor is once again becoming ... resolutely human. "Technology takes away repetitive tasks. But emotional connection, a fine understanding of needs, active listening... no machine can replace that. Dominique Côté confides. Cosawi thus supports companies in a transformation

that is neither purely technical nor simply organizational, but cultural. By helping teams adopt a position of partner, and no longer of salesperson.

Sustainable growth, not rapid growth

One question remains: does this type of transformation slow down performance? "On the contrary. It structures a more robust, more sustainable growth. Of course, this requires patience. But the returns on investment are real, with gains of up to 2 to 3 times revenue and more than 10% growth when the approach is integrated and executed (ref SAMA research). »

The message seems clear: in an age of ultra-connectivity, increasing complexity and customer loyalty that is more fragile than ever, only one constant remains — that of building strong, strategic and deeply human relationships. The real question is no longer *if* you need to transform your customer relationship, but *how* you will get started.