

Updating the Sales Playbook in the Time of COVID-19

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A FEW FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM

Introduction

True leadership is revealed and defined during times of crisis. I give you ... COVID-19! And we thought the financial crisis was bad in 2008! You don't need to be a data scientist to understand that this is an entirely different kind of crisis.

Twelve years after the Great Recession, it's a global pandemic that's thrown our economy into turmoil. This time, however, it's not happening gradually. The news is changing every day.

In 2008, to shore up confidence with clients and customers, sales leaders would travel to meet with prospects. Sales reps would take target prospects to lunch, to a ball game, or to dinner. We would hold customer round tables where business leaders would get together to exchange ideas. Eventually, things began to turn around. Confidence in the markets was restored and corporate spending returned.

What's important is that the approach to customers changed. While technologists were innovating, so were sales leaders. Sales leaders realized the same formula that propelled them through the dotcom bust was not going to work. They needed to do things differently. Sales methodologies evolved. The way to organize the field, to address customers and their needs, changed.

Sales leaders couldn't afford to have a massive sales force deployed throughout the world on a constrained budget, so the inside sales approach was born. Making your number predicated on one big deal landed at the 11th hour, 59th minute was not going to cut it anymore. "Predictability" became the buzzword each sales leader needed to articulate to their CEOs and boards. The channel went from an afterthought in many cases, to the tip of the spear.

So how are we going to make it through this downturn? With CDC-imposed travel restrictions, shuttered restaurants, empty ballfields and stadiums, and most of the United States under a stay-at-home order, how are sales professionals going to connect with their clients and share ways in which their company's technology can help businesses navigate this disruption?

The economic environment has changed and many of the methods that existed previously to navigate through this kind of crisis are simply not available this time around. Your approach to customers must change. The way you organize your sales force, cadence, methodology, field structure, selling motion, customer engagement will all need to be re-examined due to the current health crisis. And worst of all, you need to address all this *right now*, because the speed of change happening in the market will reward those who acted quickly. Those who waited to act will be punished, because they'll find themselves trying to catch competitors that took advantage.

Before COVID-19, heads of sales were focused on driving a process that would lead to predictable revenue streams and gain in market share. In many cases, today's sales leaders have never led a sales force through this kind of environment. Whether you are leading a sales force for a company the size of Google Cloud or a sales organization that was getting ready to exit the start-up phase and become a "growth company," you are now finding yourself in an entirely unprecedented situation where you need to make rapid decisions.

We interviewed thought leaders and sales industry experts to find out what they're doing to quickly process available information, determine what matters most, and make decisions with conviction.

Analysis paralysis is something you must avoid in this crisis. Focusing on the things that matter most can help maintain a sense of confidence in your team.

Just as sales leaders who survived the 2008 downturn realized that the playbook that worked for them before would not get them through the Great Recession, today's sales leaders need to understand that what has grown their revenue over the last 12 years will not get them—or your company—through this crisis.

It's time to re-write yesterday's playbook. The sales leaders we interviewed for this white paper are adjusting quickly and developing a brand-new playbook. The experts I interviewed for this document led sales teams through the last downturn and came out more successful as a result of the changes they made. They weren't afraid to make hard decisions when action was required, and time was critical.

We wish you and your teams the best of luck as you lead with confidence.

Stay well, be healthy.

ADAM CHARLSON

Managing Partner
Focus Search Partners, A Vaco Company

Meet our experts

TOM SCHODORF joined Splunk in 2009 as the Senior Vice President of Worldwide Sales when Splunk was still in fundraising mode and had a \$30M bookings run-rate. Over the course of the next five years and through an IPO in 2012, Tom grew Splunk to over \$800M in bookings and a nearly \$10B market cap. Since retiring from active duty of leading a sales organization, Tom sits on the boards of Kaseya, Outsystems, Egnyte, Rapid 7, and Tufin. He also consults with private equity firms and software technology companies.

SCOTT LOVETT has served as the Senior Vice President of Global Web and Security Sales with Akamai, since April 2018. His job is to bring the Akamai platform to market and to show potential clients just how valuable it is to their operations. He's more than up to the challenge, having spent five years at cybersecurity firm McAfee and almost 20 years at Cisco. At the time of his hiring at Akamai, tech publication, The Information, wrote that "Lovett's hiring is a big win for Akamai, which has been trying to reposition itself as a security business, rather than a web content delivery business." Scott was recently honored by "The Modern Sale" as one of the top 100 global sales leaders of 2020.

JOHN TURNER is the Chief Revenue Officer for the Security vertical at Google Cloud, formerly known as Chronicle, which was born in the Google X moonshot factory. John has 25 years of experience building world-class teams at innovative companies including Lantern, TriNet, VERITAS Software, Symantec, and Gartner. John is also a pioneer of the "Land and Expand," a high velocity software sales model.

Leadership during COVID-19

I asked our three leaders to discuss how this downturn is different from the Great Recession. I also asked them to share their wisdom, the lessons they took away from the last economic crisis, and how they're addressing the situation we are confronted with today.

How is this downturn different?

For one thing, this one happened a lot faster than 2008, which leads Schodorf to believe the market will pop out of this a little faster than the U.S. economy did following the Great Recession. This is a different kind of crisis, which should end quicker for the software market. Some good is likely to come out of this as well, like customer-facing personnel becoming more efficient in working from home, especially as their customers are heading that same direction. With outside direct sellers and their teams spending up to 180 days on the road per year, there is room for significant hard dollar cost savings that could be applied to other areas of the business. An additional dynamic to keep an eye on is the leveling of the playing field for smaller, more innovative players that adapt their sales motions quickly to take advantage of these new realities versus the big guys that traditionally put large, on-site staffs into play.

In the Great Recession, Lovett felt that everyone understood, economically, what was happening to their respective markets. Now, depending on where you are, the experience is very different as to what's happening to you, your business, and your sales force. Every employee is looking at this differently. Different members of Lovett's team are experiencing the downturn in different ways, at different points in time.

Making things about more than just the sale, in this environment, is important. How your solution can really help customers in this difficult environment helps to motivate your sales team.

This recession is different than any our experts have experienced to date. The first thing - and the most important thing - is taking care of your team. And the message you send to your team is to put your relationships first. **If you take care of your team, they will take care of the business.** If you take care of them and get them up and running, they will take care of your customers. This downturn is very different from 9/11 or 2008, where you had an isolated incident in one part of the country, or an economic downturn focused on a particular industry.

In this case, when you see people around the globe being impacted with real healthcare issues, the reality hits you that what's most important is the health and safety of you, your team, and your customers. Your actions and your talk better be real now, because it's truly life or death. Staying united as a team is critical.

What matters now?

Culture matters even more than it did before. Schodorf, of Splunk fame, focused heavily on mutual accountability and trust in the last recession. Meritocracy was rewarded and entitlement was uncovered and eliminated. Tom believes that entitlement is a disease that spreads and can crush a company fighting for its survival even in good times, much less a recession. He and his team attempted to arrest it early using a lengthy, multi-manager, multi-functional interview process with shrewd questioning techniques.

According to Lovett, people look to their leaders as the stabilizing force in an economic disruption. In the last crisis, as with this one, Lovett has simplified his messaging to his team. Involving the team in creating a task list and being intentional about the mission-critical to-dos is important in giving the team a sense of ownership and accountability in a crisis. **He drives a higher focus on the existing customers, discussing with them the solutions he and his team are selling, which would benefit them during a recessionary cycle.** What he and his team learn from existing customers is shared with the new logo sales leaders, so they better understand how to position these kinds of solutions.

In a recessionary cycle, you must acknowledge the need to re-goal. People tend to forget that this is how salespeople feed their kids, pay their mortgage, and take care of their elderly parents. So, they look at this and say, "if this economic downturn is going to impact my customers this negatively, there is no way I'll be able to obtain my goal, so I should just go start somewhere new, where I'll get a better starting point." This is obviously a risk you want to avoid, so re-tooling

the goals is very important. Acknowledge that things are going to be fundamentally different and volunteer to do the right thing when the downturn ends.

Every downturn creates leadership moments. You need to re-evaluate and do scenario planning for business impact.

When Turner looks at sales leaders, there are two different types: There is the “love to win” and the “hate to lose.” In good times, you can be a “love to win,” which means you’re always thinking about your future. There’s enthusiasm, momentum, and positive thinking. This environment, however, requires a “hate to lose” mentality from sales leaders. “Hate to lose” means you’re paranoid about missing a step in the sales cycle. This is where sales leaders are going to get flushed out. The “love to wins” are going to get surprised and miss steps in the sales process. They’re not going to do that one additional confirmation and they’re going to get surprised. So whereas momentum, enthusiasm, innovation, positive thinking would drive deals under normal circumstances, now it’s “hate to lose,” which means, detail-oriented, paranoia, double and triple checking, not missing a step in the sales process, emphasizing return on investment and exactly what dollars you’re going to displace, get rid of, or take out.

Change your sales cadence

The ability to take advantage of new sales tools and data changed Schodorf’s sales cadence during the Great Recession at Splunk. Instead of looking at results all the time, which is fairly easy, Tom focused on what was really going on in the funnel, and what activities were required to get Splunk from one point of the sales process to the next or from the top end of the funnel to the middle of it. Data really helped Tom to do that. Then all training and coaching was designed and integrated with the activities and processes measured by the data. This resulted in extreme focus around that which was most important to advance the business.

Lovett has a very aggressive sales cadence, part of the normalcy he tries to keep during an economic downturn. More personal communication during a recessionary cycle takes on an increased level of importance. Just checking on how people are doing in a personal way means a lot to your people in the field. **People handle stress differently. It’s important to have one-on-one time with each member of your sales team to ask, “how are you doing, how are you feeling?”**



It's also a great opportunity to hear about—and learn—what's going on in the market and what they're doing.

Our experts learned in the Great Recession to lead through a transition where customers were changing their purchase patterns and learning how to deal with a different economic climate. In a recessionary environment, the biggest changes are in the value proposition and enabling your team to pivot on selling and creating different value propositions.

Sales process is something Turner changed in the last downturn, and he's in the process of updating again now.

He redoubled his efforts on enablement around the sales process to make sure that the team is executing the sales process flawlessly.

He talks about getting a vision match where the solutions match the problems in the customers mind. It must be a "one, two or three" priority. If it is not, you're out. Value is not "A" thing in this environment ... it's "THE" thing. He and his team talk about business and personal value. This means you must use tangible Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). Turner runs a five-by-five process, making sure that what they're talking about is a "one, two, or three" priority and the second thing is making it a ten on the business value. Finally, you need to be aware that the decision makers in February 2020 are not necessarily today's decision makers.

Update your sales methodology

Downturns, especially sharp ones, offer an opportunity to revisit and adjust your sales processes and methodologies to new realities. Additionally, Schodorf believes these are good times to introduce changes that previously met resistance due to general apathy or risk aversion. When you have a downturn, you need to adjust quickly to what's working and what's not. Working from home almost certainly will change the way you go to market. Being at a distance from each other is changing the way we interact with each other. It also changes the way systems interact with people, in that they might be more receptive to working in the cloud for example, as well as video conferencing. So that changes everything in how we work with each other, which means your process is going to change.

During the Great Recession, the most important thing Lovett learned regarding methodology was to look through the lens of the customer, as it relates to the changes he made to the sales methodology. **A sales methodology that conveys a sense of empathy to customer targets is critical.** Customers who are dealing with a crisis tend to pull back from very aggressive sales approaches. Lovett finds that, in a downturn, customers will gravitate to a solution provider, rather than someone simply trying to sell something.

When you have downturns in the economy, you really have to focus on productivity and activity. You need to keep productivity, engagement, and activity high. All the key metrics need to be measured effectively. As an example, at our experts' organizations as well as some of their industry colleagues' companies, **teams are measuring the number of Zoom conferences that the teams are having, versus in-person meetings. That's a metric most organizations would never have used under normal circumstances,** however, in this environment, companies are measuring that level effectiveness. In a recessionary cycle, the metrics need to change, given your reality and your climate.

Sales methodology needs to be adapted in a recessionary cycle as well. In this recessionary cycle, customers are still engaged and active. Now more than ever, however, the qualification for budget and authority to spend must be taken to a whole new level. Our experts observe that people who thought they had power to make decisions will lose that power. This all has a tremendous impact on sales methodology, sales process on the front end of who the decision maker is, who has access to the budget, is the budget still going to be there, and are the budgets being cut?

For Turner, the focus is less on the forecast and more on the pipeline. He's throttling back a bit on the push for new logos from demand gen, but rather focusing on pipeline movement. Marketing has shifted in the last 30 days to focusing on moving opportunities within the pipeline. Google Cloud now has five stages. He's less focused on stage one and really focused on stages two and three. Trying to get those things into what they call "solution design." So, his forecast calls have been less focused on what the number is versus what's moving-not only this quarter, but also next quarter.



Lessons Learned from the Great Recession, Applied to the Current Environment

Run Lean

Schodorf recommends always running lean, because you never know when you're going to be hit with another downturn. You must be vigilant to never allow your company, your division, or your sales force to get fat. Staying lean puts your company and sales organization in a better position to weather downturns while reducing the negative politics associated with bloat. Assume the market could encounter a disruption at any time. This doesn't imply that you need to avoid or put off investment. You just want to avoid creating a bigger sales organization than what your business is likely to be able support.

Running lean, especially in a downturn, teaches you to make decisions faster and empower people. If you don't have three or four layers of management between you and the person that's doing the work, you have to empower them, or you can't get the work done. **Running lean speeds up the organization and that speed translates into real business benefit. Downturns are good for that.**

Most importantly, the overall strategy should not change that significantly. Lovett believes your North Star should remain the same. How you get there, however, needs to change, given the circumstances we find ourselves in.

In this current environment, you may find that leveraging your inside sales function is going to take on a greater degree of importance. Lovett found in the last downturn, as with this one, that leveraging your channel partners more effectively becomes more important. So again, adjusting the journey, but not the North Star, is critical.

Remain calm and carry on

Experience has taught our experts a lot. Their consensus is ... the more stressful the situation, the calmer you need to be. During times of crisis, let data drive your decisions.

What is the data telling you about your pipeline, your linearity, and your close rates? Your team is looking to you to see how you lead in a crisis. Your body language, your words, your intensity are all important. Work through the plan, consistently and calmly reminding your team not to panic. Work through the ups and downs, reminding your team that you have a great value proposition and a sound financial organization. Control what you can control, don't react to the noise, stay with what you can focus on and control.

Adjust and adapt

What got you here today is not going to get you to where you want to be moving forward, according to Turner. His big lesson from the Great Recession – which also applies to our current recessionary cycle—is that you have to adjust. Shiny objects won't work this time around. Land-and-expand was an innovative strategy, until this point. Now, it's going to become a necessity. **From a go-to-market perspective, discussing a trial or a pilot in this environment is going to become the new normal.** Decisions where someone could do an easy land—because there were discretionary budget dollars—is not going to fly anymore. You're going to have to bring your sales process and your TCO down to smaller decisions. This is where you redouble your efforts, like customer success. Google Cloud is pouring resources into customer success because the existing projects are also going to be the ones that get additional funding. New projects are going to be a real uphill battle.

Make investments (but test them)

During a downturn, you should still make prudent investments, but testing those investments becomes more important. Find a way to make a decision that is going to work with less money. While at Splunk, in 2009, Schodorf would test investments and new sales approaches in New Zealand. For Splunk, at that time, New Zealand was a small market with very smart, well-educated professionals with a sophisticated IT infrastructure. So, it was a good sample set without much risk. So, in a downturn, make your testing environment a little smaller.

Depending on the resources and agility of your company, you can adjust your pillars on go-to-market to more effectively compete.

Changing your channel mix and leveraging different types of technologies to have more active test points with your customers can result in taking share from the competition.

Lovett is changing and adjusting his metrics, incentives, and KPIs to align to new strategies that enable Akamai to compete more effectively in a recessionary cycle. There is a real opportunity to help customers through this and open new doors for companies like Akamai, at the same time, thus taking advantage of the crisis and the chaos it's creating.

At this moment, Turner is hiring two value management people for his team. These are people who will come into sales cycles and work with the sales team to gather the TCO data, input it, confirm that it's right, and then present a business case back to the customer. To fund the new positions while maintaining a lean staff, Turner is reallocating budget from sales redeploying that budget to create this new role.

Hire the right sales reps for today's environment

Avoid sales leaders and reps who exhibit a sense of entitlement. Schodorf is advising companies he is consulting to focus more on agility. You need sales professionals who can adapt. They need to be open to trying new things. In this situation, don't hide behind the COVID-19 pandemic. People are generally more receptive to change right now. The whole world is getting turned upside down and all the things that were sacred before are no longer. **A lot of barriers to change are getting broken down, which is presenting an opportunity for companies to reorganize and restructure in a substantial way.** The receptivity to change is something to take advantage of.

Sales executives who have leveraged collaboration tools as part of their normal way of conducting business see this as a continuation of what they do every day. Sales reps who have always operated on an in-person basis and who have never used collaboration tools will have a tougher time in this environment. Lovett is bringing in a communications expert to talk about how his company can leverage virtual technologies, like Zoom, GoToMeeting, and WebEx, to help his team continue developing the kinds of relationships they need.

Sales reps and account executives must be empathic in an environment like this to your customers' situation; at the same time, you must demonstrate value and be there to support them, because eventually we are going to come out of this on the other end.

It's about being there for the customers showing a different type of value and support.

You go through peaks and valleys with your customers through good times and bad, and you have a different type of value you can give—value proposition is incredibly important. Right now, you need to show a different type of value than the competition.

Recognize the changing sales executive profile

Company over self is important in this environment, according to Schodorf. This doesn't mean that you expect people to lay down on the tracks for the company. You want sales executives who will buy into the program and culture you're creating. Reward those who buy in. **During a downturn, you need more empathy in the leaders you hire. Don't give them a pass on accountability, but they need to be able to listen better than others.** If you have a very hard-charging person that doesn't care about people that much, they need to soften that. You need leaders who can convey your mission and connect the dots between what you are doing and how it benefits the world. You can still connect this to a nice mission that people can rally behind, regardless of your business. It doesn't have to be directly altruistic or charitable per se.

Our experts believe that if you entered the downturn with the correct profile for your sales executives and top lieutenants, then the hiring profile will not need to change. What they do, however, does indeed change. The value that they deliver must change.

You cannot approach a customer with the same business-as-usual approach. You've got to understand now what really matters through the customers' lens, not through your lens. You must advance your agenda and

keep the business moving all in the context of, can you adapt and be agile enough to make sure your offering and approach really resonate, because people do not have time to waste. Customers are on limited budgets; therefore, where customers spend money is going to be mission critical with a big impact. Customers have more appetite to do bigger things and really drive the operating costs down.

Understand the importance of sales operations

According to Schodorf, sales operations has been on a steep climb since the last recession and they'll be incredibly important during this downturn. You want to make data-informed decisions for hiring, layoffs, new areas of investment, comp-plan adjustments, and how to set territories. Sales ops has dramatically increased its importance because that is the organization that typically collects the data and interprets it. He would advise sales leaders in this environment to hire some data scientists for their sales ops organization. You must look at the right data. That's why sales ops is so important. Because they can be that bridge between how we are collecting the data, what the data is, how much it needs to be scrubbed, how accurate it is, and what decisions should be made from it.

For Lovett, sales operations gives him the insight he needs to re-goal and assure that his territories are appropriately aligned with his business. If you're going to restructure some of your territories, in an effort to go after the critical markets (which you may have an opportunity take share in during the downturn), it will be because of the help and guidance you receive from your sales operations leader. You must align and readjust your metrics and KPIs because they are changing in this kind of environment. When your close ratios are changing, sales ops is the most critical function to everything you're doing in this transition period.

Predictive analytics has taken on a new level of importance to sales leaders in this

environment. Sales operations is helping to understand where the money is being spent from an operating standpoint. They need to tell sales leaders what discretionary items should be cut immediately in a downturn. Travel, entertainment, and other discretionary spending are issues they weigh in on. Sales operations will now, more than ever, need to oversee the productivity and resources being spent on consultants and how they're being utilized. They are even tracking the number of demos sales engineers are doing and those that are being done remotely. You can't look at past close rates anymore or linearity stats. All the metrics are going to change pretty quickly.

Turner is turning his sales operations leader into his chief of staff. Where he has holes in his plan, now he is asking his sales ops leader to plug them. He's pulling together product management, product marketing, and consulting because they need to change their sales approach in how Google Cloud is delivering value to their customers. His sales ops leader is pulling everyone together to create an outcome for the team. His head of sales ops is finding the hot spots in his plan and filling them.

Adapt your transactional model

Schodorf thinks the transaction model is something companies have been trying to get through for some time, because your traditional outside sales rep is so expensive. Sales leaders have been trying to cut back on that, to the extent that they can. Even outside sales reps are staying home right now. You can do so much on a remote basis – like demos, webinars, and closing calls – with document sharing. It's become incredibly efficient compared to the 2008 recession. The inside and outside sales leader roles are becoming increasingly similar. The inside salespeople are taking the best of what the outside salespeople do and vice versa, and then you have a customer set, which is becoming more and more accommodating to inside sales. At some point, people are going to want

personal relationships though. **You will always need closers to show up in person. This recessionary cycle is not going to change that.**

Akamai is seeing an opportunity to land new customers in this time of upheaval and chaos; however, Lovett and his team are being careful regarding their attempts to expand within those new accounts during this sensitive time, so as not to be viewed as ambulance chasing. What they're really trying to do is align around the customer need that they've got now and build a trusted relationship, naturally.

The larger software providers known more for on-premise solutions than Cloud have been developing a land-and-expand strategy for several years, which has, in this new environment, become more important because at the end of the day, land, expand, consumption, usage is more important than getting someone to pay ahead of the curve.

Cloud economics makes a lot of sense. Pay for what you use, when you use it, expand when you need it, whether its infrastructure costs or SaaS.

Paying for that consumption is the world we are going to live in. This crisis is bringing that into sharp focus.



A few final words of wisdom

"Whenever there's a crisis, there's also opportunity. There are always opportunities for people who are positive, creative, adaptable, agile, and smart. People are always looking for value. If you can connect the dots to value, people will buy."

– **TOM SCHODORF**

"You have to be comfortable adjusting to an environment with a lot of variables, but your core strategy should remain paramount. What you don't want to do is shift your entire organization to a completely different model knowing that in three, six, nine, twelve months, the world could be more similar to where we were before. It's important to remain steady, be the calming force with your sales organization, and be candid. Transparency is important during these times. It's important to remind your sales organization that you and many on the team have been through this before and have come back stronger when the smoke has cleared. You do so by giving your customers and your field organization the confidence that they are in the right place, dealing with the right team, at the right time."

– **SCOTT LOVETT**

"Accept what you can't control. Putting pressure on your organization because you're feeling out of control or because you're not making your targets is exactly what you should not be doing. Be calm, collected, and confident. Deals will push and decisions will be delayed. Despite the possibility of budgets being cut or frozen, what matters is that, as the sales leader of your organization, you remain calm. Accept what you can't control."

– **JOHN TURNER**

"Communication during this time, as in prior downturns, will be critical. People are frightened, so you need to be their leader who displays a sense of calm, while acknowledging the realities of the situation. No one is recommending you assume the role of 'Baghdad Bob,' making your people feel as if there is nothing to be concerned about, but it's important to evoke a sense of calm while acknowledging the reality of the situation. The best way to do this is to stay in touch with your people in the field. Avoid the tendency to hide and not communicate. Instead, be present and listen.

"Be authentic. Asking how you can be of assistance to your customers, posed in a sincere way may not close any business today, but it will pay dividends for you as the market is getting ready to snap out of this. If customers ask for assistance, be prepared to follow-through as this will be the opportunity for you to show them who you and your organization really are. It really matters to be realistic and honest with your team. Just keep the business moving forward, and with that, focus on the things you can control versus what you can't. It'll be a rough couple of quarters, but what you can focus on is who your team is, what their value is, what you as a leader can do. Acknowledge the realities that we're dealing with and lead them through it. Authentic leadership is critical right now."

– **ADAM CHARLSON**



ABOUT FOCUS SEARCH PARTNERS

Recognized in 2019 by Forbes as one of “America’s Best Executive Recruiting Firms,” Focus Search Partners (FSP) brings clients the talent that makes an impact. As the executive search industry diversifies into auxiliary services, we focus purely on executive talent acquisition. FSP is a hybrid firm — a large boutique with \$750M in capitalization, which means access to the same resources and talent of larger firms, without the bureaucracy that can extend search timelines. FSP has more than 15 partner-level consultants vertically aligned to technology, healthcare, consumer/retail, industrial, financial services, private equity, and venture capital. With offices in nine major markets throughout North America, FSP has the quality process and delivery typically associated with a “Big 5” firm, coupled with the client-centric attention consumers of executive search have come to expect from a boutique.

ABOUT ADAM CHARLSON

Adam Charlson serves as managing partner of Focus Search Partners (FSP). Adam came to FSP as a result of the acquisition of his firm, Charlson Partners. Prior to the acquisition of Charlson Partners, Adam spent years building his firm, which successfully served some of the largest publicly traded companies in technology, as well as the most respected private equity and venture capital firms in Silicon Valley. Adam spent almost 20 years with firms like Korn/Ferry and Spencer Stuart, before founding Charlson Partners. Adam is one of the technology industry’s foremost recruiters of sales and marketing leadership. Over the course of Adam’s career, he has recruited the senior-most go-to-market leaders for such organizations as Akamai, AWS, BOX, Cisco, FICO, Infor, LogMeIn, Microsoft, Okta, Rackspace, Riverbed, SAP, Splunk, Teradata, and Workday to name a few.