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The journey that I am on began in university. During my second year, I needed to raise money so I decided to start an advertising company. I developed an orientation kit for first year students (so they could know all the things I wished I had known) and I sold advertising to retailers who wanted to reach the student market. I loved it! I realized then and there that I wanted to have a career in sales. Most people I meet in sales chose a career in sales as plan B. They started off doing something else and fell into sales. For me, it was plan A. Consequently, I set out to learn all I could about successful selling.

After university, my first job was in telesales with a technology company. I was a natural and did extremely well. From there, I went on to work for a series of consulting and enterprise software companies. My career as a salesperson culminated in a role as a Strategic Account Manager for a Silicon Valley company.

During my first year, almost everyone in sales did well. The company sold technology to Internet Service Providers and Telecommunications companies. This was during the dot com era when everyone was racing to exploit the Internet. Most of the sales team was simply scooping up low hanging fruit. Then the bottom fell out. It was the year 2000 and the Internet bubble burst. Suddenly, everyone was not doing so well. In fact, most of my colleagues, people I had regarded highly, were laid off because they could not make their quotas. In fact, most couldn't make 50% of their quota. That year, I sailed past my quota – achieving over 300% of quota. This caused me to pause and reflect. I had never been formally trained in sales and as a result I often looked at those around me as having greater knowledge. This dramatic difference in performance caused me to seek to understand why. I came to three observations:

1. I had a different philosophy. The Vice President of Worldwide Sales drove the sales team to “get the sale” – at any cost. Most of the sales team subscribed to this philosophy. I did not. I thought it was dysfunctional. I believed in building strategic relationships and would not do anything that would damage the relationship.
2. I was more prepared. I came to realize most sales people fly by the seat of their pants. They are usually gifted communicators and, as such, they can rapidly adapt to almost any situation. This ability gives them the confidence to go into sales calls less than fully prepared.
3. I was more strategic. Most of my colleagues were selling technology to technologists (i.e., Chief Information Officer, Director of Information Technology, etc.). I engaged the Chief Executive Officer and the Vice President of Marketing. I spoke to them about their strategies – not my product. I then applied the capabilities of my product to enable them to execute their strategies. This created greater value and enabled me to continue to write large deals even while my colleagues were hearing from people lower down in the totem pole that there was a freeze on spending.

By conversing with the senior business executives in business discussions to further their strategies, I realized that clients engage vendors at different levels. From this insight, I developed Whetstone's Relationship Lifecycle.

The Enterprise Lifecycle was born out of the insights that came to me when I first started Whetstone. Initially, I began as a sales coach. I quickly realized that what I was teaching was more than just sales skills. It was a philosophy and as such it needed to become part of the organization's culture. My practise then evolved into consulting. First I consulted with first stage entrepreneurs. I quickly realized that although they valued my services, they did not have the money to pay me adequately. I then moved to second-stage entrepreneurial companies. As I became more confident in Whetstone's frameworks, processes and business impact, I sequentially moved to larger and larger enterprises. This steady progression of organizational size led me to the insights around organizational maturity which ultimately led to Whetstone's Enterprise Lifecycle.

While sitting at the dinner table one evening, the idea of combining the Relationship Lifecycle with the Enterprise Lifecycle just flashed in my mind. I quickly jumped up and sketched it on my white board. Over the next few weeks, I played with the names and labels of the various stages and quadrants. I was obsessed with the model. It seemed so comprehensive and yet so simple and it gave me the ability to quickly explain why some companies grow and others stagnate and fail. As the Prosperity Predictor framework solidified, I realized that Whetstone needed to develop unique offerings that would enable companies to identify where they were in the model and give them a clear path into the Winners' Quadrant.

As I look back on Whetstone's evolution and my own personal maturation, I am extremely proud. I am passionate about business and the interactions between buyers and sellers. I am passionate about the work Whetstone does and the impact we have. I am passionate about making the world a better place by helping businesses become better. I hope Whetstone will have the opportunity to contribute to your business prosperity.

Sincerely,

WHETSTONE INC.



Adrian Davis
President & CEO