ZIOLKOWSKI MARKETING
MARKETING THAT DELIVERS RESULTS

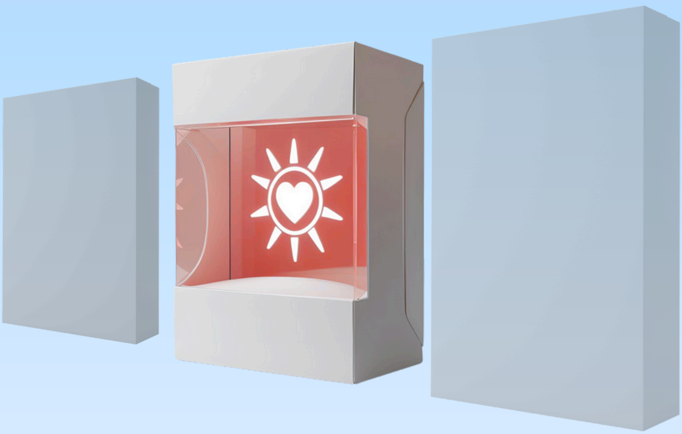
WINNING MARKETING STRATEGIES

HOW TO SELL VALUE AND NOT ONLY PRODUCTS

MANAGEMENT EDITION

STRATEGY GUIDE

"VALUE SELLING "



For CEOs and directors who want to transform marketing from a supporting function to a strategic one.

Because only products rooted in real insight build sustainable profit.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tomasz Ziolkowski

Marketing expert and business strategy consultant, MBA lecturer, creator of marketing skills development programs and practical online courses.

He has been working in marketing for over 30 years – both as marketing director in international companies (Carlsberg, Tchibo, Selena Group), as well as independent consultant supporting the development of brands and products in companies from the FMCG, B2B and digital sectors. He has worked for companies such as Orange, Nestlé, Panasonic, Lorenz, EBRD or BZ WBK/Santander.

He helps companies create marketing strategies, brands and products that really meet the needs of clients. Based on extensive on-site market research he developed growth strategies for companies in the USA, Spain and Brazil.

Since 2005, he has been training marketers, product managers, and business leaders – also within the Executive MBA programs, where he won the title of the highest scored professor.

He is the founder of the Brand Academy, creator of training programs and online courses for marketers, including: "Value Selling in Product Management".

In his projects he combines corporate experience with practical approach – without marketing pomposity, but with emphasis on specificity and effectiveness.

Privately – passionate about landscape photography and travel (visited 56 countries). More about the author and his projects: www.ziolkowskimarketing.com

VALUE THAT SELLS

INTRODUCTION

"We don't need another product. We need a reason why the customer will choose it“

During thirty years of working as a marketer and strategic advisor I observed hundreds product launches – most of them had potential, but few ended in success.

Not because of the quality. On the contrary, many were well-made, offered innovative solutions, or simply had better parameters. The problem lay elsewhere: there was no clear and accurate value strategy to answer the question: why should the customer choose our product?

I wrote this e-book because I see too often companies investing in product development without a real market strategy. Marketing departments and management boards are working under time pressure – a new variant, new line, new name... and the result? Another product in the portfolio that does not meet targets.

Meanwhile, an effective product strategy is not about greater media budget or a more creative slogan. It involves building a clear reason for purchase that:

- responds to the real need of the customer,
- is unique compared to the competition,
- and gives the company a reason to invest further in its development.

The Value Selling concept I describe in this guide is an approach that combines proven sales techniques with the realities of brand management and product development. It helps create an offering that not only sells — but also builds the company’s value.

If you feel like too much effort is going into your organization on products that do not meet sales or financial goals – this e-book will show you how to change that.

CHAPTER 1:
WHY PRODUCTS DON'T SELL

Many marketers and product managers put tremendous effort into preparing a new product: testing, developing the recipe or formula, designing the packaging, and creating communication content. And yet — just a few months after launch — sales fall short of expectations, trade partners hesitate to reorder, and the team looks for someone to blame.
This situation is not the exception. It’s the rule.

It is estimated that as many as 70–90% of new products fail in the market. Why? My initial answer to this question was simple: the product does not offer new or additional value to the consumer and does not stand out from the competition. Even an innovative product can fail if it lacks a strategy: positioning, a marketing support plan, the right distribution channel, or the right price.

Over time, however, I realized that these were only surface-level symptoms. In established companies, the real cause of failure lies deeper — in the organizational culture. In how marketing is understood, the role it plays, and its position in the decision-making hierarchy. In what sales and production say about marketing over a cup of coffee.

Who shapes this culture? Owners and general managers.
Their mindset often leads to marketing being treated merely as a tool to execute other people's ideas — most often those suggested by sales. Salespeople, noticing what moves quickly, propose launching additional variants in hopes of closing their targets faster. The result? New products are created with the goal of hitting monthly or quarterly numbers rather than delivering long-term value for the customer.

This way of thinking leads to a dangerous belief: "to grow, we must launch more products." Marketing gets pulled into a volume race where the number of launches matters more than their quality. The more failures, the greater the pressure for new releases. And each of those products has less and less time and resources for building strategy, communication, and distribution.

Companies that invest more than 5% of their revenue in marketing introduce fewer new products, but they support them with strong positioning, branding, and media. In those organizations, marketing is treated as a strategic growth driver. In companies with low marketing budgets, operational thinking often dominates, along with the belief that “a new product = growth.” The result? Portfolios cluttered with items that have no chance of breaking through, while sales priorities shift from month to month.

It’s worth remembering that the biggest dilemma for today’s consumer is not a lack of choice. It’s the excess of options that causes products without a clear value promise to go unnoticed and ignored.

That’s why Value Selling is not just a tool for the marketing department. It’s a way of thinking about products that should be embedded across the entire organization — from top management to the sales team. And it reframes the key question from: what do we sell? to: why are we selling it, and why would anyone choose it?
In the following chapters, I’ll show you how this approach can transform your work — and your company’s results.

CHAPTER 2:
WHAT IS VALUE SELLING AND WHEN DOES IT BECOME A NECESSITY

Value Selling is a strategic approach based on the assumption that the goal of a product is not just to be available, but above all to be chosen — among dozens of similar offers, especially for the first time (trial).

It’s a way of thinking that starts not with product features, but with the consumer: their real needs, desires, and cognitive limitations.

What does Value Selling involve?

- Consumers don’t compare every parameter — they respond to a strong, clear, and relevant value message that, in their perception, represents real value.
- The key step is identifying the consumer insight — the true reason for purchase.
- From there, one core benefit is chosen, which becomes the foundation for communication and marketing decisions.

This approach requires courage — giving up the temptation to “say everything.” You have to commit to one key promise.

When does Value Selling become essential?

- When you have a new innovative product and want to enter the market with a clear message,
- When you are relaunching or repositioning a brand and its products,
- When your category is saturated with many similar products,
- When consumers don’t yet know your brand,
- When the marketing budget is limited and insufficient to provide full advertising support for a new product.

How is Value Selling different from other product strategies?

Strategy	Characteristics	Potential Limitations
Feature Selling	Marketing communication focuses on generic product features — e.g.. „contains vitamin C”, „in capsules”, “white”. Often many are used at the same time.	Low differentiation power. Hard for consumers to understand the benefit. Information overload.
Benefits Selling	Communication is focused on a set of equal functional benefits — often generic ones, e.g., flexible, easy to apply.	Low recall. No clear hierarchy. Often perceived as similar to others or not credible
Selling on Price	Price is the dominant differentiator. The product either only communicates what it is and stresses universality, or highlights generic features/benefits.	Margin erosion. Lack of loyalty. Difficult to build long-term advantage.
Product Value Selling	**Focus on a single functional benefit derived from a consumer insight.**	**Requires courage to narrow the message. Demands strong strategic discipline.**
Brand Value Selling	Works for strong brands. In product communication, the brand itself is the main purchase driver. Functional benefits support but are secondary.	Hard to achieve without consistency and investment. Not enough if the product fails to deliver.

In the following chapters, I’ll show you how to move from theory to practice — and how AI, including ChatGPT, can support you along the way.

CHAPTER 3
VALUE SELLING TOOLS AND THE ROLE OF AI IN THEIR USE

When working on product strategy, tools are especially valuable when they connect marketing analysis with concrete business decisions.

Here are three key formats that support the Value Selling approach:

1. Positioning Matrix

This tool helps determine where our product stands in relation to the competition and clarifies which of the possible value promises can be the strongest. It also highlights where most products get lost in generic communication — and where to look for opportunities to achieve true differentiation.

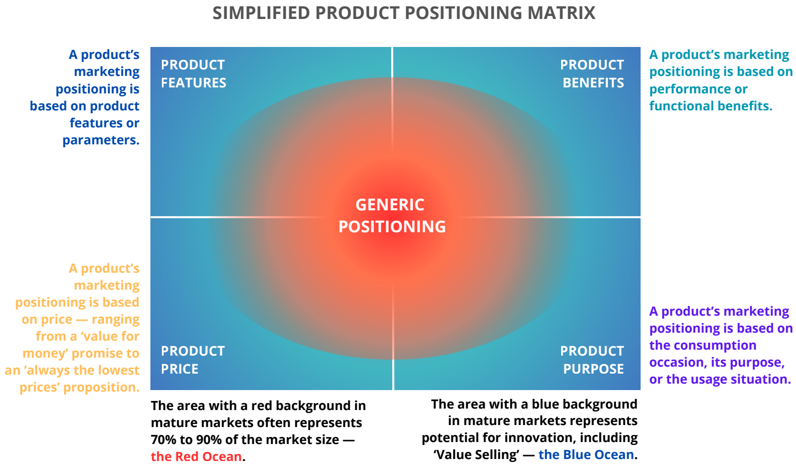
Positioning Matrix – How Products Compete for Consumer Attention.

In reality, most brands end up in the "red ocean" zone — where messages are dominated by price, product features, or generic benefits. It's a space where it's hard to stand out and easy to fall into price wars.

Value Selling, on the other hand, is about moving into the "blue ocean" zone — by uncovering genuine consumer insights, usage contexts, or unique benefits that become the reason to buy.

(Below: A simplified product positioning matrix — axes of differentiation and their impact on distinctiveness.)

Fig. 1. Product positioning matrix - typical axes of differentiation and their impact on product distinctiveness."



2. Product Positioning Card

This tool helps organize the key elements of Value Selling: from the consumer insight, through the core benefit and RTB (reason to believe), to the communication language. Thanks to this structure, the strategy becomes concrete, coherent, and easy to communicate and implement across the organization.

Fig. 2. Product Positioning Card — a tool for structuring product strategy information.

PRODUCT MARKETING POSITIONING CARD			
BRAND		PRODUCT CATEGORY	
PRODUCT NAME			
TARGET GROUP			
SALES CHANNELS			
PRICE SEGMENT / PRICE POINT			
CONSUMER INSIGHT			
VALUE PROPOSITION (what product benefit we want to communicate to our target consumers)		REASON TO BELIEVE (why a target consumer should believe in communicated benefit)	
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS (What additional benefits we want to communicate) - optional		REASON TO BELIEVE (why a target consumer should believe in additional benefits)	
KEY COMPETITORS			

The Product Positioning Card helps translate consumer insight into a concrete value proposition and communication language. It also enables marketing teams, sales teams, and agencies to speak with one voice about the product.

3. Financial Card (Product P&L)

The product's Financial Card integrates the marketing perspective with the hard realities of finance and the market.
It allows you to analyze the profitability of introducing a new value proposition and assess whether the proposed retail price aligns with the expected margin level and the product's price positioning.

This tool is often underestimated in the positioning process, even though it can prevent strategic mistakes — or, conversely, make it easier to build the case for investing in product innovation.

Fig. 3. Product Financial Card (without competitor benchmarks)

DATE		
SIMPLIFIED PRODUCT FINANCIAL CARD (Product P & L form)		
NAME OR PRODUCT CODE		
COSTS		
UNIT PRODUCT COSTS		**UNIT COST**
RAW MATERIALS	eur	10,00
PACKAGING	eur	1,00
DIRECT PRODUCTION COSTS	eur	1,00
OTHER COSTS	eur	1,00
TOTAL PRODUCT COSTS	eur	**13,00**
TRANSPORT / LOGISTICS TO POS	eur	1,00
ALL PRODUCTION AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS	eur	**14,00**
SALES PRICE (TO TRADE PARTNERS)		
		UNIT PRICE
PRICE LIST - NET PRCE (exl. VAT)	eur	**30,00**
MINIMUM SALES PRICE	eur	**28,00**
ACTUAL AVERAGE TRANSACTION PRICE	eur	-
MARGIN I	eur	**14,00**
MARGIN I	%	**50%**
TRADE PARTNERS MARKUPS		
		AVERAGE MARKUPS
AVERAGE DISTRIBUTOR'S MARKUP	%	20%
AVERAGE MARKUP OF RETAILER	%	25%
VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT)	%	23%
RECOMMENDED SHELF PRICE		**51,66**

SUMMARY

The Value Selling strategy is not just a concept — it's a set of practical tools that help structure thinking about the value proposition and translate it into real marketing activities. Here's a summary of three key tools that can help you implement Value Selling in your daily work:

1. Positioning matrix

What it does:
Helps map your product against the competition and identify which type of value can truly differentiate it in the market.
When to use:

- During market analysis,
- When choosing the direction for product positioning.

What it makes easier:

- Spotting areas dominated by generic positioning,
- Identifying niches and opportunities for differentiation (benefits, usage context, insights),
- Verifying the chosen value proposition.

Fig. 1 – Positioning Matrix

2. Product Positioning Card

What it does:
Structures the key elements of a product strategy — from consumer insight, to benefits, RTB (reason to believe), and communication.
When to use:

- In developing a new product,
- In brand or product repositioning,
- When optimizing product communication strategies across a fragmented portfolio.

What it makes easier:

- Defining a unique value proposition,
- Ensuring consistent communication across departments (marketing, sales, agencies).

Fig. 2 – Product Positioning Card

3. Product P&L Card

What it does:
Connects your marketing strategy with financial realities — costs, margins, and pricing.

When to use:
- When calculating the profitability of a new product,
- When setting minimum and recommended prices,
- For ongoing monitoring of product profitability.

What it makes easier:
- Simulating profitability at different price points,
- Building arguments for pricing and promotional activities,
- Strengthening collaboration with the controlling department and management.

Fig. 3 – Product Financial Card

IMPLEMENTING VALUE SELLING IN THE ORGANIZATION

The value of a strategy lies not in how good it looks in a presentation, but in whether it actually changes how people in the organization act.

The key challenge, therefore, is not just creating a positioning card or portfolio matrix — but embedding Value Selling as a way of thinking and a decision-making process within the team.

What should you pay attention to if you want to successfully implement this approach in your company?

1. Start with a shared language.

Many misunderstandings between marketing, sales, and the management board stem from different interpretations of key terms: what a benefit is, what an insight is, and how a product feature differs from a benefit. That's why it's worth starting the implementation with a strategic workshop, where the team builds a shared understanding of the basic concepts and frameworks.

2. Choose one pilot project.

Don't try to implement Value Selling "everywhere" at once. Instead, select one strategically important project — for example, a new product launch or a relaunch.

Run through the entire process: from analyzing competition and consumer needs, identifying insights, and selecting the key promise, all the way to briefing the agency or sales team. Treat this project as a true proof of concept.

3. Engage Key Stakeholders from the Start

If you want Value Selling to be more than just a marketing exercise, you need to involve both Sales and R&D. They will help validate insights, assess the feasibility of benefits, and ensure consistency of actions. The earlier they join the process, the greater the chance they will become ambassadors of change rather than obstacles to it.

4. Ensure Clear Results and Success KPIs

A well-implemented Value Selling strategy doesn't end with a slide deck. It should have a tangible impact on:

- how the product is communicated,
- the choice of marketing channels and activities,
- consumer and distributor behavior.

That's why it's important to define in advance what should change after implementation — for example: increased product rotation, improved brand perception metrics, or a larger share in a specific market subcategory.

5. Leverage AI to Support Implementation

Artificial intelligence can help not only in creating the strategy but also in executing it:

- Generate variations of messages tailored to different channels,
- Prepare copy versions for A/B testing,
- Refine prompts for creative or media briefs.

AI tools (such as ChatGPT) can also support internal workshops — speeding up the work, structuring notes, and creating draft content for review and approval.

6. Treat Value Selling as a Competence, Not Just a Project

The true value of Value Selling comes when it becomes a permanent part of product management — from briefing to strategy reviews.

That’s why it’s worth training your team and building a shared workflow.
This ensures that every new product initiative begins with a clear question: What is the value we are communicating — and to whom?

If you want your next product not just to appear on the shelf, but to be truly chosen by consumers, Value Selling is the right place to start.

CHAPTER 5:
VALUE SELLING AND AI AS FUTURE COMPETENCIES

In today's world of marketing and product management, predictability is increasingly rare. Shifting consumer needs, relentless pressure for efficiency, and the explosive pace of technological innovation are all accelerating the evolution of the marketer's role and required skill set.

The ability to combine strategic thinking with effective use of AI is quickly becoming one of the most valuable and future-proof competencies — not just in marketing, but across business as a whole. Value Selling aligns perfectly with this trend.

1. Value Selling as the Foundation of Strategic Thinking

In times of product overload and information clutter, the real advantage belongs to those who know how to ask the right questions:

- What truly sets our product apart?
- Who exactly are we creating value for, and what is that value?
- How can we communicate this in a way that is both clear and compelling?

Value Selling is more than a set of tools — it's a way of thinking. It enables marketers to rise above day-to-day operational tasks and become genuine business partners — professionals who can connect the customer's perspective with the sales team's priorities and the company's financial goals.

2. AI as Support, Not a Threat

Concerns about AI are natural. But the real point isn't to replace people — it's to expand their capabilities. AI tools like ChatGPT and other generative platforms can help marketers by:

- analyzing consumer data and market trends,
- generating variations of messages and creative assets,
- speeding up the development of briefs and strategic frameworks.

What once took days can now be done in hours — as long as you have a clear strategy and well-crafted prompts.

3. The Advantage of Hybrid Competencies

A marketer who can both define a strong Value Proposition and harness AI to test messages, create content, or personalize campaigns gains an outsized edge in the job market. This type of professional can move faster, think smarter, and deliver more impact — all while acting with greater strategic awareness.

This is no longer the future. It's the present — ready for those who choose to embrace it deliberately.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION – FROM PRODUCTS TO SOLUTIONS

The era when “launching more products” was the answer to every business challenge is over. Today, growth comes not from adding yet another SKU to an overcrowded shelf, but from offering solutions that deliver clear, tangible value to consumers and partners.

Value Selling is not a marketing buzzword. It is a mindset and a framework that shifts the focus from “what we sell” to “why anyone should buy it.” This change in perspective transforms the role of marketing and product management — from tactical executors to strategic growth drivers.

Companies that embrace this approach:

- build stronger, more resilient brands,
- achieve higher margins instead of relying on endless promotions,
- create products that consumers genuinely notice, choose, and repurchase.

The shift from products to solutions is not just a trend — it’s a necessity in a marketplace where attention is scarce, competition is intense, and resources are limited.

The real question every organization should ask is no longer: What product can we launch next?
It is: What problem are we solving — and what unique value are we delivering to the customer?

Do Your Products Truly Create Value — or Just Add to the Portfolio?

In many companies, marketing and product development operate under constant pressure: launch after launch, yet margins remain flat or decline.

This e-book shows you:

- how to think about products that truly stand out,
- why Value Selling goes beyond “features and benefits,”
- how to avoid the trap of generic marketing messages.

If what you’ve read in this e-book reflects the challenges you face, I’d be happy to discuss how I can help your team build stronger brands and more profitable products.— let’s talk.

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