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White Paper 3.0 – December, 1999

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The “First-to-Market” Paradox

One of the more enigmatic results of the high-tech revolution is the effect that technology has had on itself. In an industry nurtured on innovation, those seemingly automatic benefits of being “first-to-market” are no longer automatic, and this coveted leadership position has now devolved into the paradox of financing the cost of educating and developing the market with little or no guarantee of return.

In the 60’s and 70’s, the development of a new technological product from conception to market introduction was measured in years. Sales and marketing could often rely on an 18 to 24 month window in which to educate the market, establish the critical market acceptance point, and reap the rewards of leadership. It is now ironically evident that some of those early market leaders were actually building the machines of their own misfortune. Couched among the rapid development of *all* technological products was the advent of powerful CAD/CAE software tools, rapid application development programs, and 4th generation languages. These innovations, coupled with easy and rapid access to a wealth of market, product, and consumer information

drastically lowered the cycle time of a new product offering. Indeed, some companies now measure new product cycles in weeks as opposed to earlier times, when a competitor needed a year or more to emulate a leader’s success and enter the market.

Unfortunately, what has also become evident is that the *marketing cycle* has not kept pace, and this is the challenge facing today’s innovators. The ephemeral “window of opportunity” closes very quickly when competitive products are released before you can establish the market acceptance point, or in some cases before you even launch the product. Taken that the technology genie is not going back in the

bottle, the only viable solution to this paradox is to *accelerate the marketing*.

This solution is based on a far-reaching yet simple maxim, that *all areas of sales and marketing must be viewed as a science*.

Objective analysis, measurable and definable processes, and continuous system auditing must be applied to these areas that traditionally have been regarded more as “black arts.” Systematic procedures that streamline and manage all aspects of revenue generation must be implemented in order to achieve optimal results with maximum speed and efficiency. There must also be within the organization a foundation of clarity in the three critical segments of

sales and marketing ideology. The company must have a clear understanding of what their business really is, they must know exactly why customers will buy *their* product, and they must determine and abide by realistic estimations of the resources needed to successfully market and sell their new product.

Indeed, logic would suggest that if the mindset and methodologies that engendered the technological revolution are applied to the disciplines of sales and marketing, the results could be just as astonishing.

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