# How to measure the dirty deal details that seem to be neglected!Audio file

[George Bronten .m4a](https://opendim-my.sharepoint.com/personal/beth_odim_us/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/George%20Bronten%20.m4a)

# Transcript

Greg Reffner

Everybody this is Greg Reffner on the abstract podcast and we have George Bronte CEO of Membrain on with us today.

Super excited to have him on. We're going to be talking about how to measure The Dirty details that seem to be neglected inside your CRM.

I think as the founder of a CRM company, George, I think you have some unique perspectives on this so you know, please say hi and let's get this party started.

George Bronten

Yeah hi and thanks for having me good fun to be here. Yeah, founder of memory and as you as you say we say we're CRM, yes, but we are also in the enablement space so focus a lot on the how should we be selling and less on the what data to log.

Greg Reffner

Perfect well, I think that is probably more important than the data that finds its way inside the CRM and we're going to get into that here in a little bit. So as part of your description on LinkedIn you talk about CRM's, becoming graveyards of information.

And I read that and I was like that's genius, totally accurate. And it's a good segue into what we're going to be talking about today.

But let's maybe back up and maybe start with, you know why did you start membrane? Kind of? How did your sales career project begin and transition you into?

You know wanting to start a software company.

George Bronten

Yeah, sure. It all started with me running my first successful company where we actually had more people than myself in it and it was in that company where I'm I wanted to grow it. So, I started hiring sales people. And then I did not do a very good job at it, or at least I was not being successful in making them successful. And in the beginning, I was blaming others. I was blaming the recruiters. I was blaming the salespeople. It took me a while for me to really sit down and think about it and realized that I was the only common denominator, so I was the problem of course.

And when I realized that, I started to do a lot of reading on sales because I guess I've always been selling.

But I haven't studied sales. And but then I really dove into the topic of sales. Read all the books on the all the methodologies and you know everything I could get my hands on and joined a lot of networks with sales professionals, sales director, CEOs and what I learned was basically that I had a lot of faulty assumptions when it came to selling. I thought that salespeople were born. I thought they were disciplined by nature. They would go out and get and reach those numbers that I asked them to reach.

And all kinds of assumptions that I was making, and these fellow sales directors and CEO's I met with kind of all made those faulty assumptions.

And that's where I started to. As a as a tech guy or a software guy, I looked at the solutions we were using and that was the CRM.

Systems basically that I was looking at and they all sucked, but they did not help me.

Direct sort of how people should be set.

And that's how I came up with the idea of membrane that we don't. Yes, it's important to know all the contact details and the account information and all that stuff.

It's helpful, but it doesn't tell you how to sell it, and if we just assume that salespeople should not know how to sell and just log what they've done that got me.

To that situation where I was just hiring and firing. So memory was born out of the idea that we should really build a system where. Everything is focused on the how to sell, so guidance, coaching, win loss analysis. Those things that really help us understand the customers and the salespeople and focus on the…. I have a saying internally when we develop the product that we need to think about the individuals.

Like people first, because those are the ones we want to help. I think teams in the past it's been more like data first or management first reports first. Yeah, so we want to sort of turn that on its head.

Greg Reffner

OK, yeah, and that's a. It's a good segue into. I think the next thing I want to kind of talk about here a little bit. People process technology. Be cliche, everybody says it, but time and time again we see organizations’ kind of do the exact opposite where it's technology, process, people or data input process people. Why do you think that is?

George Bronten

Well, I think it's the same reason why we buy. You know ABS wheel to get 6 packs we know it won't.

It's not about the ABS feel, it's about the discipline to not eat crap food and actually exercise. I think it's the same in in selling. We think if we buy that coolest gadget, the newest technology.

That spans people and sends out thousands of emails that that'll help us sell, and we don't have to actually do the work, so I think it's a way to take shortcuts, but we know it won't work, and I think we really in if we ask ourselves, we probably know that it won't work, but still we tried to do Tech first.

Without having a process without having a strategy without, without really understanding how to coach our people, so yeah, I think it's just a laziness and in sorts.

Greg Reffner

OK, that's interesting. So, you think that we spend a lot of money on this tool, kind of knowing knowingly that we're going to be disappointed with how it performs.

That's so fascinating, because I think.

Greg Reffner

Getting into, you know, the heart of our conversation today that I really want to focus on. It's you know.

Salespeople are not born I would agree with you like it's something that is kind of a skill that's trained and the things that make successful sales reps are not inside the CRF, right?

Like knowing the vertical, the market, the revenue of the company, right? Like these are things that are not tracked inside of or, they're tracked inside the CRM, but they are typically the things that lead to a successful sale. So, when you go back to how to sell, not kind of the details.

That you bring this back to membrane, kind of. What are some of those owls that you've figured out how to sell some of those things that are trained like?

What are those things that you're thinking that we should start to try to measure and maybe influence EU by the use of technology?

Kind of, can you help me? You know, understand where you're thinking about that?

George Bronten

Well, I think from a company perspective we need to know who we're who. We can help, like who who's our ideal customer?

Uh, I think people already there, they. They go wrong sometimes because they become too reactive. They believe the so we've been in this marketing automation hype for a decade soon.

And I, I think the companies have bought into this idea. If you just put a blog out or you send out.

White papers and put them online. People are going to call you and buy your stuff like crazy. It's not that easy and it's very reactive, right? So, you have to just the basic stuff. Who do you want?

Help, what's your ideal customer fit? How will it get to them? Where do they go to learn? What are they struggling with?

You know the basic stuff and then with the armed with that know how that's when you can go out and target that segment of the market and generate an interesting discussion that is that actually brings value and interest.

In those customers, so I think it starts already in prospecting like how? How are we prospecting? Are we actually targeting the right accounts with the right message at the right time and the right people and all that good stuff?

Or are we sort of spraying and praying and hoping that people will end up in on our doorstep?

So I think the and then once you know your customer you said you don't always have the information in the CRM, that is, that helps win deals. And I think it comes down to just maybe not knowing in great detail what it is that you're helping customers to achieve, or what their actual problem is.

I mean, of course you know your product, but what will the product help your customers solve and how is that relevant for them? So getting into your customers shoes and understanding their world is really, I think, the Holy Grail of selling.

Greg Reffner

And so for someone who's new to sales though, how do I go about learning those things right? Like what are the ways in which I can be enabled to learn those?

George Bronten

Well, hopefully your company knows these things, knows your ideal customer, knows their problems inside out so they can teach you if they don't, well, I guess you then you you really have to deep dive into the topics yourself like what who is this customer you're talking to? What are they concerned about fairy tales? Talk to them or read where they are reading and see what questions they're posting on LinkedIn, etc. and just get inside their heads.

But yeah, and I think this is not an easy trade a task sometimes depending on exactly what it is you're selling. You have to do that work. There's no sort of shortcut that said of course depends on what role you have, right what, what sales role do you have? Sometimes you might be tasked with only doing a piece of the sales process and you might need to know less, but if you, if you're doing the entire sales cycle, there's usually a lot of different conversations that you need to be able to have that require business acumen, industry knowledge, product knowledge, competitive knowledge, a lot of knowledge and skills that will take some time to build.

Greg Reffner

Yeah, and organizing that in a way that makes it easy for reps to kind of fine and then consume and then kind of be able to refresh themselves on these topics over time is is always a challenge, right? It's in a Google doc over here. It's in the LMS over here and so you know.

How do we bring all that into one place and it sounds like that's kind of what, uh, what membrane is doing in a little bit of a way, right?

Is trying to bring, not necessarily the data component, but the how and the why into the reps world is that. Is that a fair state? Right?

George Bronten

Yeah, definitely you could think about it as a sort of checklist on steroids, so it gives you sort of the checklist of what you need to be doing, and it's dynamic if you set it up correctly so it actually tells you. Oh, now you're working with an automotive customer in their world, this is what's going on.

So, it needs to be very dynamic because it's going to change. And if you're talking to a CEO you want to talk about different things.

And if you're talking to a CFO or a marketing manager, so all of these things are very dynamic and the system needs to be added.

Greg Reffner

That's such a good point because, I think [Skip Miller](https://abstrakt.ai/outbound-prospecting/) wrote a book and he talks about the different languages and being able to speak Russian or French or German equated to you know C level, VP level, Director, manager level and you have to understand at a company level what's important, but also at those kind of various levels of seniority, right?

How to speak the right language and so if your economic buyer is a CFO, right? What's the language? What's the words that I use to actually write an email to this person?

Or to discuss pain points within person. So yeah, yeah, absolutely OK. So more often than not, though, CRMs don't really tell the full story I don't know as a sales Rep myself; I often find myself the one part George that I don't enjoy about my day is kind of taking my notes and inputting them into the CRM. You know, I might fill out the three or four kind of bullet points and kind of call it good to check the box if you will. That I did my job of putting notes into the system.

What do you think it is that causes some lack of interest or I don't know laziness around reps putting that information inside the CRM. Is it because they know it's probably just going to sit there and never get looked at again?

George Bronten

Yes, I think there are several things. First off time it takes time like you said and I think a second problem, which if they actually put it in and they put what sometimes happens is that they put their interpretations into the into right written form.

Which I think is very dangerous. So, if the customer says to you.

This is definitely a problem worth looking into.

Ah, and you write. This is an urgent problem. They need to solve. That's not the same thing, right? So, you can interpret what they're saying in a way that's just not right. So, I always recommend sales people to write within exclamation marks what they actually said. Don't make notes.

That were your interpretations of what they said. But write down what they actually said. 'cause that's what's interesting. If you go back to these notes in two weeks’ time, that will actually be helpful to you.

But if you go back to your interpretations and you read those out loud to the buyer, they're going to say I never. I never told you that.

Greg Reffner

Happy years, right?

George Bronten

Yeah, that's happier is in in in writing, so that's actually a good. That's something that's helped me a lot. My in in my own selling only write down what they actually said.

Greg Reffner

Ah, that's interesting. I never heard anybody say that before. Uhm, and that's interesting. It brings up such a good point because you know, body language, tone of voice, all these different things. Kind of roll into what we consider communication right. And so the way you might say, hey, Greg, this looks interesting. I'm interested or something like.

That I may interpret that as George ready to buy, he said it in an excited tone of voice.

Uh, so how do we kind of bridge that gap, right? If I'm taking what you've actually said, but then maybe I'm putting my own spin on it because I'm behind on my number for the quarter and I hear that you're interested, right? Like what's the how do we bridge that gap in terms of kind of what?

You said taking those words, but then asked actually interpreting them the correct way.

George Bronten

Ask another question. I mean, that's what salespeople sometimes don't do, right? They interpret and then they go for the stale and says, oh you mentioned you said this was interesting.

What was it specifically that you found interesting and how, how? What kinds of different types of solution do you see? You could look at because I think also when somebody said says that's interesting.

How do you know what they found was interesting? Was it actually your product that was interesting or the problem you were talking about? 'cause if it's the problem that's interesting, they probably could find 10 different ways of solving the problem, which does not include your product or solution. So you have to continue asking like what was it that was interesting to you and how would you foresee that? How could what effects could that have? How could you solve that? Who else would need to be engaged for you to sort of actually get go deeper on that et cetera, et cetera.

Greg Reffner

Kind of the second third level line of questioning, right?

George Bronten

Yeah, exactly, and the process level questions are good like what would need to happen in order to 'cause then they would have to answer in a sort of step by step like oh first I need to call Lisa because she needs to be involved. Then I have to do this and that and that and then you have sort of a process your sales process is now changed and you have to alter it based on that buyer.

Greg Reffner

I love that great point. So clarifying process. Awesome alright couple more kind of points George. Then we'll wrap this up for today so I've had the pleasure of working with many sales people in my life and some have been super successful summer. Some have been not and some of the most successful salespeople I know do not take good notes.

They don't study battlecards. They don't necessarily know how to run the best. IMO they don't prospect super hard, but they seem to win at a rate that's higher than kind of industry average or vertical average. Sometimes they're just, maybe not necessarily born, but they have maybe innate characteristics that lead themselves to being successful in. I don't want to use the word manipulation because there's a negative connotation associated to it, but convincing others to change. We'll call it.

Uhm, what do we do with those types of people when? They're kind of that A+ player, but they're kind of really bad at all the organizational components of managing deals and taking notes like what do we do with people like that?

George Bronten

Well, there's good technology out there now, right? So you can get around some of that sort of admin type work. I mean you can record calls. You can have the software actually do the note taking for you, so I think there are technologies that help. I also think we should study them because they're doing something right and we need to. And if you ask them, they probably can't say exactly what it is they are doing that causes them to win more. But if you study what they do and study their calls and what questions they ask and how they respond to push back, etc. I think there is a possibility to bottle that up so that others can become, uh, maybe not as good as them, but maybe close the gap between that performance level but I don't think it's a good idea to sort of, say, OK, you're so good you don't have to do any notetaking. You don't have to put anything into the into the CRM because there is of course added benefit for the other people in the company to have some of that data. But we can definitely make. And this goes for all salespeople. We can reduce the feeling of having to be like a data entry clerk by actually not having the talk technology work for them and not against them.

Greg Reffner

I don't know if it's using technology to kind of augment that a little bit.

George Bronten

Right, yeah, exactly. I think AUGMENT is a good word. A technology should augment the sales person, shouldn't just shouldn't put burden on them to do stuff that they would not have to do or they could use that time in a better way, but if they feel that they're guided by the system, if they feel that they can close more business by using the system etc, then then it's they want to use it.

Greg Reffner

Got it yeah? So maybe helping reps understand kind of the why behind and how it actually helps them be better at their jobs as opposed to kind of like hey you have to do this because I think a type personality, successful sales reps. They often don't like being told what to do, and so if maybe you can convince them why things are important as opposed to telling them just to do it, you might get a little bit more adoption, right? And then maybe show them hey, here's why. But here's what could actually kind of be. The benefit for you as well.

George Bronten

And I think in a way selling needs to become a bit more collaborative. This individualistic approach that we have some people that are just great performers and they become the heroes. I think if we can make that into a more collaborative environment where they can share what they're doing right, and others can learn from it.

Compensation models can mess this up because if you're only compensated by your individual performances, well of course you don't want to share your secrets. But if you're compensated because you can help others perform better and you can help the company grow even more and you're compensated for that, then it becomes maybe more interesting for you as a high performer to share what you're doing and document a bit more of that.

Greg Reffner

That's a that's an interesting idea because oftentimes like that top performer is pushed in like a sales leadership role.

Greg Reffner

George and they don't want to be right. You know they just want to go about their day. Continue to hit their number, but what if there was some kind of like middle ground where maybe they did coaching. They did some type of enablement, they helped Playbooks, something like that where you could take what was in kind of in them and give it to the rest of the team, but compensate them for that. That's an interesting idea. I've never heard that before.

Alright, well George, as someone who's been in sales for about 10 years now, I've learned a couple things today and I think there's some valuable takeaways for us. And our listeners so kind of for me, the big things were write down what was said. Don't kind of write down your interpretation of what you thought you heard, but actually write down the words that your prospects said because how you interpreted that you know, in the moment could be very different than the way you read those notes in two weeks, and kind of making that kind of general rule that we write down the words that were said as opposed to my interpretation of those words. I can imagine goes a long way in keeping things organized.

George Bronten

Yeah, can I add one point to that. I think what you can do also don't feel limited that you could only do that. You can also of course, right? You're sort of questions like this is what they said. I wonder if and then I mean you could have questions you, you'll make your assumptions, and you make your conclusions. You can write those down as questions and actually follow up with those. But don't confuse your interpretations with what was said.

Greg Reffner

I love that I love that that's such a huge point. I think everybody in sales needs to hear that and then the other one would be. I think it kind of goes without saying, but know your customer right, know the problems that they have known how to speak the language that they that they use. If they're a CFO. So don't talk, you know marketing MQL's right? You need to talk on a bottom-line growth top line growth, burn rate.

You know, depending upon what you're selling, but make sure you're using the right language based on who you're talking to, and then the other third kind of final thing is kind of the last thing we talked about George. An interesting idea that some companies might want to look at is how do you encourage top performers to kind of share, transfer their knowledge to the rest of the team in a way that they're compensated for, but also don't kind of force them to go leadership management if they don't want to be an individual contributor. How do we take what's in them and give it to the rest of the team? But make sure they're compensated for it. I know I'm going to take a couple of things away from my own personal selling career to make sure that I put into place for anybody who wants to get in touch with you or learn more about membrane. What's the best way to do so?

George Bronten

So I'm active on LinkedIn. That's the easiest way to find me, and I've got a strange last name, so it's pretty simple and follow my blog. I blog weekly on art and science of complex sales and so that's on membrane.com/blog Mt Those would be the two ways.

Greg Reffner

Perfect awesome. Well, you know here at abstract we believe selling is part science and part art, so I think there's a lot of alignment there.

You know, having read some of your content, I think our readers would enjoy a lot of it as well.

So again, George, appreciate your time today. Thank you for sharing some of your knowledge. A little bit of your story and we look forward to talking to you again in the future.