

SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

OCTOBER 2008

People
Productivity

Outsell
Competitors

Sweet Sales
Success

Got Sales?

Belinda Ellsworth
Consultant



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SALES/DREAMS

Sweet Sales Success

Make your dreams come true!



by Belinda Ellsworth

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM? Is it to have a better lifestyle? Provide more opportunities for your family? Make lots of money? Live in a big, beautiful home? Stay at home with your children? Provide financial resources for your family? Or simply receive recognition for a job well done?

Direct sales can help you fulfill these five universal dreams:

1. Financial freedom. Is your dream to make enough money to pay for your children's college education or extracurricular activities such as dance lessons or soccer equipment? Save for a great vacation? Pay off your credit cards? Start your own business? With as little as one night a week you can start to make these dreams a reality.

Unlike the traditional nine-to-five work model, in direct sales you set the goals for your financial future. You will be an independent contractor, a micro-entrepreneur with virtually no limit to how high you can go and how quickly you can get there. You create the vision for how successful you want to be, follow the steps to obtain your goal and make it happen. Your financial success

is in direct proportion to the effort you put in, and is limited only by your time and willingness to work hard. By combining your efforts with the efforts of others, financial freedom is attainable faster, with virtually no limits.

2. Flexibility of time. Is your dream to spend more time with your family? Stay at home while your children are young? Make your own work schedule?



Working as little or much as you want, when you want, and how you want?

Many families are resigned to being a two-income household, in spite of their desire to spend more time as a family. The average annual daycare cost per family is \$19,500. If you were to work full-time outside the home and earned \$15 per hour, after taxes and childcare

expenses alone you would bring home a mere \$3,900 over the course of one year. Add in the commuting, meals, and work clothes, you may have lost money while trying to make money. With direct sales you can work part-time around your existing schedule, making it the perfect match for moms who want to be financial contributors while working from home with the kids—an impossible option if you were to start a business on your own.

Maybe you're looking ahead at retirement and don't want to quit the job market entirely but still want to have the "extras" in life. Or maybe you're looking for a new challenge and want to set your own schedule. Direct sales can fit your dreams by allowing you a flexible work schedule.

3. Friendships and support systems. Is your dream to work with friends rather than strangers? Make new friends? Have a support network that wants you to be truly successful?

In today's hustle and bustle society, it can sometimes be difficult to make lasting personal connections. With email, faxes, and cell phones we don't have to be in the same country to talk with someone let alone from the same local community, and yet we crave personal relationships, seek them out

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whenever and wherever possible. The direct sales industry is unique as it is one of the few business fields that work best face-to-face. Whether from sales calls, hosting parties, team meetings, or corporate training, personal connections abound in direct sales. The lasting friendships acquired through direct sales can have a profound impact on you—friends made through direct sales encourage you to become successful. Your success is supported every step of the way.

4. Recognition and appreciation. Is your dream to be appreciated for the work you do? How about incentives and rewards such as exotic vacations, jewelry, or cash bonuses? Appreciation ranks at the top of what employees want from work. If you feel as if your hard work and efforts are going unnoticed in your current position, brace yourself for the direct sales industry's practice of enthusiastic and public recognition from the moment you start. We know money is a great incentive for some people, but when was the last time your employer praised you publicly for the job you're doing, pointed out your improving skills or even offered you an all-expense paid trip if you met your goals? If you're like most people in the typical nine-to-five shuffle, it's never happened and most likely never will. Direct sales companies like to reward their consultants with well-earned incentives such as trips, cars, jewelry, and cash. It's their way of thanking you for your hard work in sharing the company's vision and message.

Look at where you are now. Are you getting the rewards and recognition you deserve? You receive appreciation and rewards from the moment you start in direct sales.

5. Personal development and investment in your future. Is your dream to build skills in public speaking or time management? Overcome shyness when meeting new people? Gain more self-confidence? Or do you want to learn leadership skills for building an effective that delivers exceptional performance? And what about the rewards, respect, and personal growth that come with effective leadership?

With direct sales, you can learn and sharpen personal skills that can be applied in many areas of your life. With just a little application, you can learn skills that will make you a self-confident, inspiring and a successful leader. You can become the natural center of a positive, enthusiastic, well-motivated and highly successful team.

Make Your Dreams Come True

Having spent 29 years in direct sales, my dreams have changed along the way.

Age 18. My dream was to play music, hangout with my friends, and have a good time. Getting up at 7 a.m. to work part-time at a doctor's office wasn't contributing to that dream. By joining my first direct sales company, I worked just two-nights a week, making the same money and slept in daily!

Age 23. Now married and with a baby, I was working full-time but trying to find a way to stay home with my baby, contribute to our household income, and take our long-postponed honeymoon. By working three nights a week in direct sales, I could stay home during the day, make enough money to replace my full-time income, and be rewarded by the direct sales company I worked for with incredible vacations.

Age 27. My dream was to build a large dynamic sales team and help other individuals make their dreams come true. I was determined to be the youngest executive in my company. By age 29, I was the youngest sales VP with one of the largest organizations earning a six-figure income.

Age 34. Because of my positive experiences training my direct sales team, I wanted to use my leadership and speaking skills to teach women who are trying to fulfill their dreams and goals through direct sales. To make this dream a reality, I started my own company, Step into Success. In 13 years, I have trained thousands in becoming successful direct sales consultants, team leaders, and executives.

Age 45. For 25 years, I had wanted to purchase a piece of property on a lake and build my dream house, complete with separate home office and recording studio for my husband, helping him to fulfill his dream. In 2007 we built our dream house. Also, my business continues to grow, and I'm blessed to have a great team of employees, and be recognized as one of the premier speakers and trainers for the direct sales industry.

I now consult, helping new direct sales companies make their dreams come true. I continue to plan for my third child's future, and for my retirement so I can spend time in my new home with friends and family.

Having achieved so many dreams, I'm excited about what the future holds.

If you're looking for a way to make your dreams come true, look at direct sales. Whether you're looking to express your talents, make new friends, work flexible hours, build your skills, or gain financial independence, with direct sales the sky's the limit on making your dreams come true. **SSE**

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ACTION: Step into sales success.



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Dig for the Gold

Dump suspects, lock in prospects.



by Joanne S. Black

IN THE LATE 1840s, ADVENTURESOME people came to California from all over the world with the hope of prosperity. There was opportunity and the promise of gold. It seemed simple enough: find the right plot of land and begin *prospecting*. The prospectors arrived, and so began the Gold Rush.

Prospectors would spend days in the hot sun in summer, freezing cold in winter. With tin pans in hand, they sifted through silty streams and dug the land in the hope of finding that magic gold. Most found “fool’s gold.” It looked like gold and felt like gold, but it wasn’t. People were fooled all the time, and unscrupulous traders preyed off this mistake and swindled people out of their livelihood and dreams.

Are things so different today? I’m not saying we have swindlers, but many companies are promising fool’s gold.

We are all looking for real gold. We want top accounts who are great to work with, become customers for life, and make us rich. Unfortunately, we often dig in the wrong places, with the wrong tools, in a crowded marketplace.

We have advanced from a prospecting tin pan to a prospecting funnel, trying to get as many leads or prospects into our sales funnel as possible. But our funnel gets clogged with rocks, stones, weeds, and sand—until the gold (good prospects) can’t get through.

The Web 2.0 world promises to increase our prospecting productivity by delivering qualified leads to our inbox at the prospect’s time of need. But are these leads really qualified?

Prospecting includes an assortment of activities: website leads, special offers, email campaigns, direct mail, trade shows, advertising, cold calling, conferences, and referrals. The thinking is that if you throw a lot of things in the funnel, something will slide through.

One of my clients maintained four categories in his client-development database: suspects, prospects, clients, and dead. *Suspects* were names from a purchased list. He was frustrated with this list, because he would call but couldn’t reach people after nearly a

dozen calls. It became harder for him to pick up the phone. *Prospects* were people who had been referred; when he called them, he got an appointment immediately. I asked why he spent so much time trying to connect with suspects, when he didn’t even know if they needed his product. It hadn’t occurred to him to simply drop the suspects.

Many Web 2.0’ers allege that they will deliver qualified leads (prospects) to your in-box. This isn’t true. Just because someone has visited your website and downloaded an article or



white paper, doesn’t mean he is qualified. He may just be curious, expanding his knowledge, or researching a competitor. You know about his activity, but he’s still not a qualified lead or prospect. If what you are offering is free, you don’t know if he is qualified. This site visitor is still a suspect.

Companies that claim to sell you qualified leads try to enhance their credibility by stating that their lists are verified, researched, and targeted. They’re not. These are lists, not leads. Lists are lists. Leads only become qualified when we qualify them. Until they become real prospects, they are only suspects.

I just received an email that insulted my intelligence. Mr. X offers a teleseminar and claims he can show me how to get 95 percent of my clients from the Internet. If you’re selling a commodity, that strategy might appeal to you. However, most salespeople don’t want to be a commodity, are doing everything they can not to be a commodity, and yet their clients view them as a commodity. Beware of false claims. Unsubstantiated promises and false claims don’t work in our complex world of solution sales.

Consider how much time you waste going after suspects. Many so-called

leads enter the sales funnel. You spend your time sorting through these unqualified leads and categorizing them—typically into A, B, and C leads. A leads are contacted immediately; B leads are handed to a newer resource; and C leads are most likely put in the queue for email contact only. Not only are these activities a waste of valuable selling time, but who are we to decide whether a person is an A, B, or C? We don’t know anything about them: What their real needs are, when they will be ready to buy, how we can best serve them. And we haven’t qualified them.

How do we qualify leads to turn them from suspects to prospects?

Traditional criteria are: industry, company size, geography, business unit, budget authority, timeframe, and business need. We can get some of this information from the Internet, but not all. Two other criteria will bring you exactly the clients you want: 1) identifying the kind of person you want to work with and getting rid of the ones who do nothing but cause you grief; and 2) understanding the issues your leads face. You need to talk to people to get this information. And while you’re at it, you’ll probably get more critical data that will guide your sales process and guarantee that you will be many steps ahead of your competition.

I heard a VP of sales at a major technology company talk about how good he was at sorting leads and stated with pride that their close rate was 10 percent. I was appalled. Would you be satisfied with a dismal 10 percent close rate?

This VP also claimed that a 10 percent increase in qualified leads at the top of the funnel would increase the conversion rate of leads to clients by 40 percent. I don’t understand why he would waste his people’s time sorting A, B, and Cs, when if they focused on getting actual prospects into the funnel in the first place, they would increase their conversion rate by 40 percent.

When you are selling a service, you want to ensure that every person you talk to and meet is a qualified lead—a prospect. The fastest and least-expensive way to meet the people you want to meet and who want to meet you is to get a referral and personal introduction.

Are you ready to dump the suspects? What if you had only qualified prospects to contact? What a difference that would make in your business! **SSE**

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ACTION: Dump your suspects for prospects.

Job Sculpting

Retain your best talent.



by Jay Forte

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL—not in service responses, not in jobs. Customizing jobs to the talents of employees improves their engagement and performance.

In today's service age, success happens in the quality of our interaction with our customers. This can't be mandated through standard job descriptions because each service event is unique. Employees must inspire customer loyalty. The more jobs are built around their strengths, the more engaged they feel. The greater these feelings, the more connected employees are to their work and to customers, resulting in a big increase in commitment and performance.

Jobs that don't fit distract you from performance. Today, anything that distracts from performance affects success.

Customizing jobs, or *job sculpting*, means modifying standard job descriptions to take advantage of the talents, interests, and experiences of employees.

Take Four Steps

Job sculpting involves four points:

1. Know your business. Before you can sculpt (customize) jobs for your employees, you must have a clear strategic understanding of your business because you'll sculpt their jobs based on your business needs. Beyond having a strategic plan, do a strategic update monthly to address two questions: 1) What are the five most critical events, issues, or opportunities facing us today? 2) What talents, skills, and resources do we have to address these items? This will start your job-sculpting, since the goal is to match the right employee with the critical business issues, changes, or opportunities.

2. Know your employees. Know the talents, interests and values of each of your employees. Consider using Strengthsfinder 2.0 by Tom Rath and its on-line questionnaire to define each employee's talents. Spend time with each employee to get to know their interests and values. When you know your business needs and the talents, strengths, and performance resources available in your employees, you're almost ready to start job sculpting.

3. Review the standard job descrip-

tion. This describes position responsibilities and the talents needed by the person to do the job well. This information assists you in your job-sculpting and encourages you to hire the right employee—one who is a good fit for the expectations of the role.

4. Sculpt the perfect job. Review each employee's talents, values, and interests to know what engages them. Next, review your business issues, changes, and opportunities. What talents are needed to handle these and who is best matched to work on them? Match employee talents and interests to the business needs and modify each employee's job. Check to see if the task is addressed in the job description. If not, add it. This creates a new job description. The more the job descriptions are punctuated with energizing and customized responsibilities that

match employee talent areas, the more employees are pulled into performance. Their jobs are updated, reinvented and sculpted. This way, no employee feels stale or bored; performance and engagement levels soar.

The more time you spend getting to know your employees' strengths and interests, the stronger the bond is; you can also match employees' talents to business opportunities and engaging jobs. This dialogue enables you to continue sculpting their jobs to keep them excited, engaged, and connected to performance. When you customize and sculpt jobs, you attract, retain, and inspire the best performers. **SSE**

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ACTION: Sculpt jobs to your talent.

SALES/CLOSE

How to Close a Sale

Start asking the best questions.



by Duane Sparks

IF YOU CAN'T CLOSE A SALE, maybe you never really opened it in the first place!

You keep trying, and the prospect finally agrees to talk to you—for 10 minutes. So you try to tell her quickly about all the glories of your company and products. If you bury her in a data dump, she won't want to see you again.

Until you ask good questions, you don't know how to present your product.

You commit a fatal mistake when you jump directly into a product pitch because you're shooting in the dark, with no idea of the prospect's unique needs or desires. When you do that, your products and services become undifferentiated commodities that sound like the same ones dozens of other salespeople are pushing.

The only way to differentiate your offerings is first to differentiate yourself. That is, you, the salesperson, must first be seen as a unique part of the solution you're selling. Prospects will only turn into customers if they see you as a consultant with a purpose—to gain a commitment once you and the client understand how you can serve their most important needs. When you assume you already know those needs, you are leaving the cus-



tomers out of this important process.

If you have just a few minutes of a prospect's time, don't use them to talk about yourself. Use them to ask about the prospect. Establish rapport and ask the best questions to uncover the prospect's key needs and concerns, before you ever present your product.

Until you've asked the best questions, you don't know how to present your product to this prospect as anything other than a generic commodity. You can say you're selling "solutions," not "stuff," but you can't do it—until you uncover problems to solve!

Got a minute? Good. Use it to act like a sales consultant with a purpose. Ask, don't tell, and you'll discover that prospects have more time for you.

Field Application

Salespeople in the pharmaceutical industry work hard to get even a few minutes of face time with busy doctors. One sales rep felt lucky when a doctor agreed to give him five minutes. Instead of pitching products, the rep asked questions about the doctor's practice. He didn't act like a guy trying to sell something. He acted like a consultant who was genuinely interested in learning whether the doctor had any problems that he could help solve. The five-minute conversation stretched to 15 and ended with the doctor agreeing to a lunch appointment, during which the sales rep wrapped up a big sale. **SSE**

Duane Sparks is chairman of The Sales Board, and author of ACTION SELLING. Call 1-800-232-3485 or visit www.actionselling.com.

ACTION: Use the principles of Action Selling.

Identity Theft

Protect yourself and clients.



by Jim Collins

IDENTITY THEFT IS A CRIME IN which an impostor obtains key pieces of personal identifying information and uses them for their personal gain. It can start with lost or stolen wallets, pilfered mail, a data breach, computer virus, phishing, a scam, or paper documents trashed, resulting in “dumpster diving.” The crime can include check fraud, credit card fraud, financial identity theft, criminal identity theft, governmental identity theft, and identity fraud.

About 8.4 million people were victims of identity theft last year, totaling \$49.3 billion in fraudulent charges with the average victim spending at least 30 hours trying to resolve the issue. Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes—accounting for 25 percent of all credit card fraud loss each year. Though victims may not be liable for charges made on fraudulent accounts, it can be very difficult to improve credit reports. The theft of your identity can leave you with a poor credit rating and a ruined reputation, which may take years to correct.

Criminals can readily obtain your personal data without breaking into your homes. In public places, for example, criminals may engage in “shoulder surfing”—watching you from a nearby location as you punch in your telephone calling card number or credit card number—or listen in on your conversation if you give your credit-card number over the telephone. Once the predator has enough identifying information, they can take over your identity by falsely completing applications for loans and credit cards, making bank account withdrawals using your information, and other unscrupulous activities, and inflict substantial damage on your assets, credit, and reputation.

Free Credit Card Monitoring

We are bombarded by offers of credit card monitoring to reduce identity theft, but there are limitations to the protection we receive from these free offers. Identity scoring and monitoring is more effective than credit report monitoring to prevent fraudulent activity.

Notebook computers filled with con-

fidential information are stolen daily, and data breaches and criminal accesses also occur at retailers, payment processors, and other companies. Following a compromise, affected enterprises usually offer potential victims free credit report monitoring from one of three credit bureaus: Experian, Equifax or TransUnion. But if you are an ID theft victim with a stolen Social Security number that was used in concert with other data that does not belong to you, such as a different address or date of birth, you will not be alerted. Potential victims are only contacted if their exact identity including full name, date of birth, etc. was used to apply for a new mortgage, credit or other loan. Any credit monitoring report will arrive days after the criminal activity has transpired. Credit card monitoring also does not catch the non-financial use of your stolen identity and can, in fact, damage your credit rating even further.



Identity Scoring Makes a Hit

With identity scoring, you get an accurate and comprehensive picture of the person’s credit-related activity. Identity score systems tap into a broad set of consumer data that judge a person’s authenticity. Identity score components used by identity scoring companies include government and public records, corporate data, credit records and predicted behavior patterns based on empirical data.

Identity scoring takes into account more attributes that define individuals and their behavior over time.

The basic identity score components a company uses in ID scoring include name and address, Internet monitoring of personal information found online; fraud information such as that found with stolen credit cards; behavioral pattern analysis; synthetic identity information which is the information used to create a fake identity; and predictive analytics that weighs behavioral data against earlier patterns of behavior.

Identity scoring and monitoring looks for identity-theft-related fraud. Credit scores are designed to help

lenders make good credit decisions. Direct-to-consumer credit reports and monitoring evolved when consumers wanted to know their credit score.

Identity Recovery

Recovery after an identity is stolen is complex. There are many calls to make and steps to take; unfortunately for victims, identity theft is often much simpler, and quicker, than the recovery.

We aid in the identity recovery process, either by assisting victims in the resolution process or managing the process for them. We offer a four-component identity theft package that uses proprietary technology and strategic partnerships to protect against and recover from identity fraud.

If you are denied credit for no valid reason or receive new credit cards in the mail that you did not request, you may be an identity theft victim. Call each of the credit card reporting agencies and have them place a fraud alert on your file. Call to dispute each fraudulent charge.

Treat your financial and personal information with discretion and be vigilant about checking statements and accounts. When you are proactive about protecting yourself, your chances of being the next identity theft victim are reduced.

To avoid being an ID theft victim, protect personal information and avoid sharing credit card information. Resist providing your SS number. Shred documents before throwing them away. Choose PINs and passwords that can’t be easily guessed, and don’t reveal them. Change these codes frequently. Never write down PINs and passwords. Regularly check your credit report for fraudulent information. Be sure your information is not available via online directories and searchable databases. Subscribe to an identity scoring and monitoring system.

If you are a victim, take these actions: Call credit card issuers and your bank to flag or close accounts. Cancel credit cards, passwords, and PINs. Call the credit reporting agencies (Equifax 877-576-5734, Experian 888-397-3742 and TransUnion 800-080-7289) and place a fraud alert on your file. Notify police, credit bureaus, utility companies, and post office. Take action to remove criminal or civil judgments against you. **SSE**

Jim Collins is president of HR Plus. Visit www.hrplus.com or www.alliedbarton.com.

ACTION: Protect yourself your ID theft.

Play to Win

Control your profits.



by Nathan Jamail

IN SPORTS, A TEAM HAS TO play to win. The same is true in sales. However, when the competition gets tough or the marketplace rough, we see companies play defense by making “safe” decisions such as cutting costs.

Defensive owners and managers shift their focus from growth to protection. If a team only plays defense, they won’t score any points. The best they can hope for is a 0-0 tie. But in business, there are no ties—just successful teams and struggling teams. Playing “not to lose” guarantees failure.

Let’s compare the “playing not to lose” management style with “playing to win” (defense versus offense) in two common business situations.

Situation 1: Hiring Freeze

Playing not to lose—defense.

During a hiring freeze, defensive sales managers tolerate bad performance believing “a bad body is better than no body.” Removing a low-producing salesperson will open a territory that can’t be back-filled, causing additional work, stress, and decreased sales. Fifty percent is better than zero percent. But this mindset always costs the organization—and top-performing salespeople—because it sends a message that low performance is acceptable during the hiring freeze. Top performers either lower their performance or move to an organization that appreciates and requires high performance. This style also causes more work for sales managers because they must constantly follow up and baby-sit the staff.

Playing to win—offense. This mentality doesn’t tolerate bad performance and believes that “no body is always better than a bad body.” Salespeople are not overhead—they are revenue-generating expenses. You will lower the cost per salesperson by removing any bad bodies. In turn, the CFO will be pleased with the increased profitability, and the strong performers will increase sales. Now, you can justify hiring a new quality person to increase profits beyond the current rate, or worse-case scenario, maintain profits until the “control” of market returns. Either way, it is a win-win.

Situation 2: Past Success

Playing not to lose—defense. This mentality accepts a team’s past success as reason to not practice or focus on core selling skills. They assume they do everything right and start to seek outside solutions to keep sales up and control profits. Sales managers start asking for additional promotions and discounts, cutting into profits. The company and their competition battle for lower prices until one company won’t or can’t go any lower. Hoping to bring profits back, a new product or service is developed that the competition does not have. When sales managers don’t believe they can control profit internally by changing the team or strategy, the only option is to rely on outside circumstances.

Playing to win—offense. You can’t control the competition, the economy

or the marketplace, but you can control the team and its activities. Your job is to coach the team. Even the most experience salespeople need to practice five days a week to get better. The game, the rules, the opponents, and the plays all change, so they can never stop learning, adapting and growing. To control profits in an uncontrollable market, improve the things you can control in order to outperform the things you can’t.

Controlling a team’s profits requires hard work and proactive play-to-win decisions. It’s not knowledge that makes a leader great—it is the discipline and willingness to use that knowledge. **SSE**

Nathan Jamail is president of the Jamail Development Group and author of The Sales Leaders Playbook. Visit www.NathanJamail.com or call 972-377-0030.

ACTION: Have an offensive approach.

SALES/OBJECTIONS

All Customers ‘Lie’

Shoot down false objections.



by Dan Beaulieu

YOUR PROSPECTS DON’T always tell the whole truth. In fact, they sometimes even lie. It’s true—prospects often resist new products and services that can help their company because they don’t want to shake things up. So it’s up to you to cut through the BS.

An example of typical objections: *All my vendors are doing a great job and we are not looking for anyone else right now.* The giant lie: not all their vendors are doing a great job. Most companies are going to have problems.

Or this one: *We measure all of you by price because you are all alike: your quality is the same, and delivery is the same. If you can’t match our price, then you won’t be doing business here.* Quality and delivery are all the same? Whoever says this is too lazy to find the best solutions.

Here’s a beauty: *Everyone tells me they have great quality and delivery, so why should you be different?* The vendor probably isn’t lying since everyone is telling him they have superior quality and delivery. So this scenario proves only one thing: everyone lies.

How about this one: *The price from discount companies is so good we don’t care if the quality is a little inferior, it’s worth it.* Or its cousin: *The price is so good, we go*

to them when quality isn’t an issue. The buyer and his controller don’t care about quality, but I bet that somebody in their organization does, don’t you?

What can you do to shoot down these lies? Get in the door and show them how good you are. The goal is to get them used to your great service. You have to be competitive because you are buying the opportunity to show the customer what you can do. The first order is an important paid audition, and you get one shot to do right. Nothing is more damaging than working months to get an account, telling them how great you are, then screwing things up on that first order. (If this is a likely scenario at your company, don’t waste your time and dollars trying to win new customers until you know you can deliver exactly what they need.)

Assuming your performance is good, your deliveries on time every time, and your quality over 98 percent, then you need to do everything in your power to get that first order.

You have to turn in a stellar first-time performance and then repeat it over and over again. Soon you will start to see the customer’s confidence in you grow, and you’ll stand out from his mediocre stable of vendors.

While your service may not always be the lowest price, it’s the best. The customer gets what he wants, and you get the price you want. **SSE**

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ACTION: Overcome customer’s concerns.

Six Sigma Service

Start using it for six reasons.



by Ali Lakhani

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, Procrustes is a terrorist with a twisted sense of customer orientation. He invites vagarious tourists to his abode to rest on his secretly-adjustable iron bed. If the guests are too tall for his deathly divan, he amputates their legs to make them fit. If they are too short, he has them stretched until they conform to his couch. He continues to be this horrible host until he is apprehended and meted out an equitable treatment. He is made to lie down on his clanging cot and his feet and head are hacked off.

There is a profound point in this parable. Some smug businesses believe their products and services are the *raison d'être* for their customers. In their Procrustesian mindset, customers must conform to their offerings.

Six Sigma can help you attain a true customer-first paradigm by enabling process breakthroughs that stick and endure over time. The explosive growth of General Electric during Welch's tenure has in part been attributed to Six Sigma that forced the company to confront its most brutal truths—a mandatory discipline for companies aspiring to greatness.

Why Six Sigma Service?

There are six main reasons to use Six Sigma in the service sector:

1. Rising expectations: With rising expectations of customers, increasing complexity of products and processes, and increasing global competition, businesses understand their livelihood depends on the quality of the products and services they deliver. The core focus of Six Sigma is to measurably and systematically improve the quality of products and services delivered to customers by reducing every aspect of variability. To be best-in-class or world class, a company must achieve a Six Sigma level of accuracy or perfection in its processes.

2. A \$3 trillion opportunity. Service operations comprise almost 80 percent (about \$10 trillion) of the United States' \$13 trillion GDP. However, service efficiency is typically marred by non-value-added activities that drive up the

cost of services by a minimum 30 percent, translating to a \$3 trillion opportunity. Six Sigma rocks these types of environments by delivering a data-driven and action-oriented approach to problem solving, finding high leverage opportunities for change, and zoning in on the critical factors that are responsible for delays, defects, and cost overages, yielding a tremendous level of ROI for businesses.

3. More profits. Six Sigma creates greater customer value and increasing efficiencies. GE demonstrated every dollar invested in the Six Sigma initiative returned four dollars to the bottom line. Six Sigma can be used by companies of all sizes in all sectors with resounding success including: pharmaceutical (Eli Lilly), financial



services (Merrill Lynch), government (Military/Navy), retail (Home Depot), restaurants (McDonald's), healthcare (McKesson), engineering (Lockheed Martin), travel and leisure (Starwood), airlines (Air Canada), and automotive (Brunswick Corporation). Companies that implement Six Sigma execute better on every indicator—from return-on-assets and productivity increase to return-on-sales to share price increase.

4. Proven tools. How many times have you used pliers to turn nuts and bolts? They're not the tool for the job, but they are handy and available. Likewise, companies frequently turn to blind cost-cutting measures or splurge money on outdated quality measures to solve their problems, only to end up disappointed. All areas of human endeavor—business being no exception—require right tools and knowledge, without which results in an inexorable struggle with square peg solutions for round hole problems. Six Sigma tools replace old reactive habits with dynamic, quantified, and proac-

tive approaches to problems.

5. Developing better leaders. Just as beautiful music results from an ideal unison of players and instruments, business success flows from the right combination of talent and tools. Six Sigma helps build better leaders by promoting a holographic as well as a specialized mindset, which is a hallmark of great leadership. By helping tie the big picture into the small picture and recognizing and measuring the interdependence of all parts of the business, Six Sigma helps expand the talent pipeline, foster proactive behavior, and enhance collaboration. Today leadership grounded in Six Sigma will be the genuine source of advantage and the impetus for accelerated performance and business results.

6. Continuous quest. Customers change their minds often, and complexity of processes increases steadily. In a climate of change, business can't flourish without nurturing the seeds of learning and action. By embracing and instilling the sense of change in all the organizational process, infrastructure, and management systems, Six Sigma enables you to harvest the full potential of your markets and efficiencies. It enables you to keep a laser-like focus on bottlenecks and provides a systematic method to resolve constraints without letting inertia become the system constriction. Based on its action-oriented emphasis on continuous learning, Six Sigma delivers the passport to a sustainable competitive advantage.

In Greek mythology, Theseus beats his stronger adversaries by using a logical approach, efficient footwork, trap holds, and their momentum to his advantage. Through resourcefulness, he finds the means to multiply his power. Learn from Theseus. Use an approach that can help convert your fragilities (inefficiencies, weak customer loyalty, unfulfilled workforce, and reactive behaviors) into strengths (operational excellence, customer value, fulfilled employees, and proactive action).

With its systematic drive for continuous perfection, Six Sigma can help you achieve operational excellence by improving the quality of processes while improving process velocity, maximizing efficacy and attaining higher customer satisfaction. For the service sector, Six Sigma is a secret weapon (even Theseus would approve of it). **SSE**

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ACTION: Use the Six Sigma standard of service.

Catch the WAVES

Motivate young workers today.



by Ken Whiting

EMPLOYING YOUNG WORKERS always comes with challenges, especially today!

Raised while multi-tasking on the super-technology highway, they can confuse, complicate, and consternate.

Still, your younger employees are closest to the customer—the face of the company! To remain competitive and maximize profits, you need to capture, leverage, and contribute to their skills.

This is an age group, some born since 1990, whose entire lives have been enveloped in technology and communication change, as well as major cultural and societal shifts. Less attention has been given to personal responsibility, and basic work ethics. They've never heard about the importance of being on time and in uniform, giving respect to a supervisor, communicating clearly, making eye contact or job commitment significance.

So what are you to do? The WAVES guidelines provide a good strategy.

Way of Life: Improve the workplace environment. Appreciate the fact that young staff members are the way they are. It's not wrong or right—it just is. Meet them where they are. Allow some failure. Don't focus on what they've done wrong. Encourage them on what they are doing right. They can become fiercely loyal if they are taken seriously and treated with respect. First impressions mean everything. Be welcoming, provide social events, and emphasize fun. Celebrate their successes. Make a connection with their parents, families, and friends.

Attitude: They come with an attitude of independence and "what's in it for me." To motivate them, provide flexible scheduling and incentives for performance. Instant prize programs are best. Recognize positive behaviors and catch them doing something right. Promote strong performers quickly and give them more responsibility. Also, provide variety in job duties. Set goals and empower them to come up with the answers. And, check your attitude. A condescending or inconsistent attitude from leaders will send them out the door and working down the street.

Verbal, video and visual: They have watched 20,000 hours of TV by age 18

(over six hours per day). You need to use this technology in your training programs. Use their names and nicknames. Post applications and work schedules on your Web site. Don't print mounds of paper and expect it all to be read and retained. Make handbooks and memos simpler and smaller by focusing on the most important items. Create a vibrant workplace using photos and videos of employees.

Education—not just training. If training is the "how," education is the "why." They want to know the purpose, the why, behind tasks. Never assume anything, confirm their knowledge and explain the purpose behind every task. Build education into your training process, and you'll create a more committed work force of both young and older workers.

Style matters. Style is how employ-

ees look, the image of your company and how they are treated at work. They care about how they look and how they're treated. Uniforms shouldn't embarrass them, and your grooming policy should be relevant. Be prepared to justify both to your employees.

Be aware of trends in fashion, music and entertainment, and study the strategies and tactics of retailers to get youth to spend their hard-earned money.

People don't quit companies—they quit bosses. Young people can be inspired, motivated, and productive. Don't judge them through your eyes—look through theirs, and you'll have a positive impact on their lives. **SSE**

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ACTION: Motivate your younger workers.

MANAGEMENT/PROCESS

Barriers of Entry

Make it easy to do business.



by Michael Angier

THIS ARTICLE IS WRITTEN FOR people who sell things. In other words:

everyone. We all sell. We all have customers of one type or another.

If we have a job or a business, we sell; we provide a service to a customer, a coworker, a student, or a patient. We increase our value to our customer or our company by how well we deliver what we do. And it's incumbent upon each of us to provide our goods and services in a fashion that makes it an enjoyable process.

Every once in awhile I attempt to buy something only to be frustrated by a cumbersome, unclear, time-consuming or unfriendly experience. Some times I jump through all the hoops and eventually make the purchase in spite of the difficulty. Most of the time, I just go elsewhere.

And so do your customers.

We must pay close attention to how we offer, sell and deliver our product. The goal should be to lower the barrier of entry and to make it easy for people to do business with us.

Stand firmly in the shoes of your customer and go through the whole process. Is it clear or ambiguous? Is it

easy or difficult? Is it fast or slow? Does it offer different options for payment? Does it feel friendly or cold? Will the end result for the customer be dissatisfied or delight when the transaction is complete?

You might want to consider having one of your children go through a purchase of your products. If a ten-year-old can do it, then most 35-year-olds can, too.

At the very least, have a friend or someone unfamiliar with what you're selling step through the whole buying and delivery process. Try not to tell them anything. As much as possible, let them do it like you weren't there. Make a note of the questions they ask and where they hesitate. Then set it up so those questions don't need to come up and those pauses or uncertainties no longer occur.

Looking at all your processes this way will turn up things that have made it more difficult than it should be for your customers to do business with you.

People are busy today. They're distracted. They are often doing two or three things at once. If you want to increase sales and build customer loyalty, you must improve the sales and delivery process. Simplify it. Streamline it. Enhance it in any way you can.

The easier you are to do business with, the more business you will attract and keep. **SSE**

Michael Angier is the founder and CIO of Success Networks International. Visit www.SuccessNet.org.

ACTION: Process how you do business.



Want More Sales?

Give something for nothing.



by Ingunn Aursnes

TODAY'S MARKETPLACE IS about building relationships and learning how you can spend your resources wisely to attract those who are predisposed to buying your products and services. Sadly, many sales managers follow outdated mass marketing techniques. They approach everyone with their offer with the hopes of landing a few sales. They spend too much money on marketing because they're bombarding people with ads and offers—and getting mediocre results at best.

Because consumers feel buried under all the sales information hitting them daily, they don't trust companies and people who are blatantly trying to sell them something. So, if you want to compete and win, you need to give away something of value for free in order to attract long-term customers.

The focus on "give it away" is on the pre-selling, meaning that you make the prospect predisposed to your product or service. The goal is to get prospects familiar with what you have to offer. By doing so, sales will come, although not always right away. Remember that customers spend a lot of money buying from people and companies they know, like, and trust. Since many companies offer similar services or products, winners will have the best relationship, credibility, and rapport with the market. Competing on price alone is a road to bankruptcy.

Seven Suggestions

Before you decide to give something away, consider seven suggestions:

1. Define your target audience. To attract new customers, you need to focus on a target market and find new ways to reach them directly. This approach will cost you less than traditional marketing, because you'll focus only on the people who are predisposed to your product or service. No company can serve "everyone." Even large companies who market products that are seemingly for everyone (soda, sneakers, snack foods.) have a defined target market. They know that 80 percent of revenue comes from 20 percent of the customer base. You want to focus on

that 20 percent and cater to their needs. Ask yourself, "Who do we want to serve?" You can narrow your audience many different ways: age, gender, family status, interests, previous purchases, or geographic location. There's no one correct way to define your target audience. Your job is to analyze what you do and whom you could help the most, and then narrow the audience down to a defined niche.

2. Identify your target market's biggest pain. Once you identify the target market you want to serve, the next step is to figure out this group's biggest pain or need. What are the concerns of your target audience? What issues keep them up at night? What information or services or products would they pay big money for? If you're selling business to business, what is the biggest pain of your prospect's customers? You need to think like your potential customers. Get in their shoes. Do what they do regularly. You could also interview or survey them. Talk with your salespeople and find out what concerns prospects routinely mention. Take time to understand your potential customers, what motivates them and drives them to make a purchase decision. Prospects only care about what you can do for them. When they see that you can meet their needs, they will seek you out and do business with you, without you having to prod them.

3. Identify a product, service, or activity you could give away. When you decide what to give away, you need to stretch and extend yourself. What can you offer that will be of real value to your target audience? Realize that this does not mean your give-away must be expensive. It simply has to have a high perceived value to your target audience. For example, a CPA could do a free seminar on the new tax law changes and how they affect the target audience. A real estate agent could give home sellers in their target audience a how-to book or report on home staging techniques. A dentist could offer a free

teeth whitening procedure to new clients. In each example, the offering has a high perceived value to the customer but is low cost for the business. You could give away a webinar, informational DVD, report, or e-book, complementary product or service, an in-depth consultation, or an assessment.

4. Make sure that whatever you decide to give away is relevant to the target audience and addresses their pain. Don't give a "pretend" offer, such as a seminar or report, that is nothing but a sales pitch, a coupon for free or discounted products/services with fine-print restrictions and conditions, or a useless and cheaply made gizmo or gadget. Your prospects will immediately see through any tricks or deception and will avoid you as a result.

5. Let your prospects experience what you have to offer so you can prove to them that you are worthy of their trust and money. When you genuinely help



your prospects fulfill some need or eliminate some pain, you build a strong relationship with them that is based on respect and value. By keeping your focus on a customer's lifetime value, not the one-time quick sale, you grow your customer base and become profitable.

6. Have a genuine desire to help solve their problem. Your prospects and customer are smart; they don't want to be fooled. So, don't bury them in junk mail, bad offers, trick offers, or bad quality. Also, your prospects want to make their own decisions, not be chased by desperate salespeople. So if your focus is strictly on the commission or the prospect's wallet, you won't get far. You need a genuine desire to help people solve their problems.

7. Invite them to share with their network. Your prospects and customers have a circle of influence. So, give them a good reason to bring their friends and family to you. Happy customers will tell others about you, and those referrals can quickly add up and impact your bottom line.

So, be the supplier of tomorrow's customer. Focus on the long-term relationship of mutual trust, and give more than expected (more service, content, and value). Doing so will cost less than traditional marketing activities—and increase your profit dramatically. **SSE**

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ACTION: Give something of value to prospects.

Selling Intangibles

Effectively market services.



by Sheryl Batchelder

IN SOME RESPECTS, SELLING A product is easy. You have an item you can show and demonstrate to people in person, and something you can take photos of for your marketing pieces. More importantly, your prospects can use multiple senses to make a buying decision. You have many ways to make the product “real” for your prospects.

Selling services, however, is different. You don’t have an item to show people, and there’s nothing to photograph for your marketing pieces. As such, it’s often more difficult to sell a service. But *difficult* does not mean *impossible*. You simply have to be clear and creative in your marketing packages so your prospects take notice and understand what they’re buying. That’s why so many service-based companies are now using leather presentation binders, gold-embossed and natural-fiber proposal folders, and other touches that help create marketing materials that stand out.

The more high-end your services, the more people expect your marketing materials to be unique and ornate. It’s all about the presentation materials—whether it’s a pre-sale proposal package (such as an RFP) or a post-sale document folder (such as closing documents for a vacation ownership program). In these cases, your materials are not just marketing pieces—they are who you are. When you are selling a service, you’re really branding your company or the experience the service will give your prospect.

With the right marketing package, you can have your prospects saying “yes” to your service at the first hello. You want your clients to be so impressed with your marketing materials that they say, “As soon as I received your package I knew I would do business with you.” Here are three keys to making that happen:

1. Decide on the look or feel you want to convey to your prospects. Every company has an image it wants to portray. Before you can design any marketing piece, you need to be clear on that image and confident that the image is correct or marketable. Since business is constantly evolving, you’ll

have to change your image, marketing pieces, and the feeling they convey at least every three years.

2. Do your research. Since you’re selling a service, you can’t have ordinary marketing pieces or packaging. But even if you design a wonderful and creative package, your manufacturer may not be able to create it. They may ask you to compromise material, size, or quality. So, find a partner that will try something different and creative and educate you on what will and will not work. Work with them during the design phase and listen carefully to their creative and practical advice. You don’t want to find out your idea won’t work after it’s created.

3. Spend money on a prototype. When you have a marketing piece that is complex or unique, you need a prototype. Your prototype can cost a

few hundred to a few thousand dollars, but it’s money well spent. You want to eliminate all surprises and know what your final product will look and feel like. After all, your marketing piece is your company’s image and your prospect’s first experience with you—make it a good one.

Other things being equal, your prospects will go with the company with the best image—and they’ll make that decision based on the marketing items you send them. So get creative. Use the new materials and packaging options available. When it comes to selling services, a little creativity goes a long way to improving profits. **SSE**

Sheryl Batchelder specializes in bringing branding ideas to life and is president of NIS Print. Call 407-423-7575 or visit www.NISprint.com.

ACTION: Sell your services more effectively.

SALES/TRAITS

Traits of Success

Cultivate these in salespeople.



by Tom Sant

WHEN SALESPEOPLE FAIL TO sell, they cost the companies that employ them. One primary reason that salespeople fail is that they lack the necessary behavioral traits to succeed in sales.

What should you look for in a candidate for a sales position? It’s true that a “hunter” who is selling software to other businesses will need different traits than a “farmer” who is selling the same product to government agencies.

Nature or Nurture?

I’m a big believer in sales training to elevate performance. But I also believe that training someone who has no aptitude is a waste of time and money. You may need to replace members of your current team before you embark on skill development.

Look for eight core traits. In sales, eight core traits matter most—intensity, strategic thinking, persuasiveness, assertiveness, achievement-orientation, competitiveness, discernment, and values. These traits are necessary to create the complete sales professional.

Next, look at what motivates the person. What gives them the deepest sense of fulfillment from their work? Beyond meeting the basic needs, what

makes it all worthwhile? People are motivated for many different reasons, but for top-flight salespeople, it almost always comes down to just two:

- **Achievement.** They are motivated by having other people recognize their accomplishments. The symbols of success—awards, titles, plaques, memberships—matter to them. The chance to make more—a lot more—by blowing out the plan and earning huge commissions motivates them; in fact, if they’re happy with a steady paycheck, they don’t belong in sales.

- **Competitiveness.** They want to win. They derive tremendous satisfaction from winning. They hate to lose, and they love the rush they get from closing a deal.

Next, consider how the person thinks. How do they gather the information and insights they need and how do they process it? Top salespeople

have two traits:

- **Discernment.** They can separate what matters from what doesn’t. They are great at qualifying deals and focusing energy on ones most likely to produce business. They recognize those who play a role in the sales process.

- **Values.** Integrity and honesty shape their thinking. They won’t overpromise to a customer or mislead a sales manager. Their thinking processes simply won’t allow for distorting the truth or misrepresenting facts. **SSE**

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ACTION: Look for the traits of sales success.

Outsell Competitors

Gain the benchmarking edge.



by Greg Alexander

YOU MAY KNOW THAT SALES force execution can create sustainable differentiation, yet struggle to understand how. Metrics-oriented CEOs need to talk with their sales leaders about data-driven decision-making through the discipline of sales benchmarking—assessing performance over time with an eye toward leading (predictive) vs. lagging (backward-looking) indicators. Through introspection and comparison, you can highlight the areas where performance is below par and expose opportunities for growth and shareholder appreciation.

To benchmark your sales, follow five basic steps:

Step 1. Select metrics to measure.

We developed the *Formula for Sales Success: Activities x Conversion x Transaction x Talent x Time = Revenue*. You can use this formula in choosing metrics that relate closely with sales performance. These values are variables defined in business terms most relevant to a company. For example, an *Activity* can be defined as a lead, e-mail, phone call, virtual sales call, face-to-face sales call, or proposal. Sales team activity will have the most significant impact and predictive value on whether a deal is won. *Conversion* measures the ability of the sales force to make the lead into a sale, usually captured in some form of a close rate. *Transaction* captures the inherent size or a sale or a deal in monetary terms. *Talent* refers to the number of individuals who are closing the deals. And, this formula includes the constant of *Time*—the number of productive days in a selling year (about 240).

In addition to analyzing the revenue side of sales, you must also consider cost (selling expense) to achieve the intended effect—to boost margins. This can best be seen in predictive metric *Return on Sales* (profit return for each dollar of new sales generated).

Next select those metrics that best measure proficiency in each variable—those judged to be the best indicators of future performance and most likely to close gaps). When deciding which

metrics to benchmark, use the following selection criteria: relevance to your sales performance, degree to which each can be a leading indicator of sales performance, availability of the internal data and effort required to collect the data, availability of the external comparison data, conformance to strategic objectives.

Step 2. Collect data. How you gather data on the chosen metrics depends on your measurement culture and supporting systems. Most input information can be found in CRM, finance, payroll, expense reporting, HR, and sales management. Armed with internal data, you can now compare this information externally to a valid peer group. This delivers the desired sustained competitive advantage. External data should reflect both good and bad findings, should be presented in a fair and objective manner. The key is having a statistically valid, non-biased sample for comparison.

To determine if the external data points exist, you might consult these sources: *Internet search*—thousands of sites have pieces of the needed data: *trade associations, universities, benchmarking associations, and sales-specific research firms*—Sales Benchmark Index (SBI). The goal of data collection is to establish a statistically valid sample.

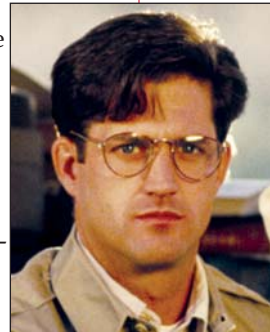
Step 3. Compare and contrast.

Identify where you are under-performing or excelling in relation to your peers and world-class organizations. Before comparing and contrasting, you must first transform the raw data by making two calculations—identifying the central location and measuring variation. These techniques are simple to use with a spreadsheet tool such as Microsoft Excel. These calculations, performed for each metric, enable you to compare your performance externally against its peers and internally against history. You can plot your score, compare high and low ends, and quantify the opportunity in terms of increased revenue or decreased cost if performance is improved. To

do this, measure revenue at current performance level and compare it to the revenue produced at the peer group's performance level.

Step 4. Focused action. Now you need to put a remedy plan in place, test it to measure its effectiveness, and tweak it to obtain the desired results. Focus on reducing the risk of missing the sales targets and improving the chances of consistently hitting them.

In establishing focused action to solve business challenges unearthed through sales benchmarking, I find seven common stages: 1) *frame the problem*—define the problem in specific terms; 2) *develop hypotheses*—list potential causes and key drivers that impact each one; 3) *gather data*—gather relevant data, information and background on the key drivers that will allow each to be proven or disproved; 4) *test hypotheses*—analyze each possible cause to determine if the data proves it is a



cause, effect, unintended variable, or irrelevant; 5) *Create solutions*—for each valid hypothesis, identify possible solutions and their implementation feasibility; 6) *develop plans*—for viable solutions, estimate all necessary tasks, investments, milestones, resource commitments, metrics and returns; and 7) *select solu-*

tions—use decision-making criteria to determine the chosen solutions.

Step 5: Have a sustained improvement plan to transition a sales benchmarking project from a one-time event to standard operating procedure. Such a plan enables you to identify areas where you have developed new or lost advantages. To develop this plan, appoint a sales benchmarking project manager responsible for ongoing administration and oversight of the process; Conduct a periodic internal review of company performance and compare it against a fresh external data source; Monitor the Focused Action implementation ensuring expected results are produced; and track benchmark metrics in the context of Statistical Process Control

The ultimate goal is sustained competitive advantage. After all, your competitors won't stand still. Sales Benchmarking must become part of your long-term strategy for success. **SSE**

Greg Alexander is CEO of Sales Benchmark Index and co-author of *Making The Number and Topgrading for Sales (Portfolio)*. Email info@salesbenchmarkindex.com, call 888-556-7338 or visit www.salesbenchmarkindex.com.

ACTION: Gain the benchmarking advantage.

Master the Phone

You will increase your sales.



by Susan RoAne

THE TELEPHONE IS AN INTRINSIC part of the fabric of business and personal life. Thus, you must mind your phone manners, and your manner of using the phone. The ability to communicate by telephone continues to be a valuable personal and professional skill.

When Intel instituted its “zero email Friday’s” in favor of “get up and talk to the person in the next cubicle,” the directive also emphasized using the phone to enhance communication.

Some people avoid the use of the phone in favor of emails or text messages—they claim phone conversations takes up too much time. Others avoid the phone because they may be shy or are uncomfortable with messages that can’t be edited. To reclaim and retain your personal touch, you need to use the phone more.

When a face-to-face meeting is impossible, have a phone conversation. It’s also two-way, and you get to hear tone, inflection and intent.

Netflix has decided that to be competitive, they must have real people answer their customer service calls. That is a powerful lesson to learn.

Managing Moments and Minutia

In an era where work goes on 24/7, “managing moments” is valued as a time-saving tip for ultimate success, and so participating in an actual conversation is often considered time-consuming or uncomfortable for five reasons: 1) Some people find they’re too busy to take time on the phone; 2) Some people don’t consider themselves “good on the phone;” 3) Some people fear rejection—they are more comfortable with written communicating where they can edit their words; 4) Some people stay away from phones because they are shy; and 5) the phone call can be intrusive—and so they would rather use email to set a “time to talk” that is mutually convenient.

There are times when sending emails or text messages makes more sense. They deliver a bit of information concisely (“the meeting was changed to 2:30 p.m.,” “the order is confirmed,” “are you in town next week?”) and in a timely manner.

While other people are managing their moments by avoiding the phone, dare to be different. Be memorable. Pick up the phone; spend a moment making small talk. Invest a few minutes in a conversation that builds a connection.

Companies that are trying to cut down on the deluge of emails in inboxes have another goal: to encourage face-to-face interaction and phone conversation because both build business.

Be A Phone Friend

After you’ve worked rooms, had face-to-face conversations and exchanged cards, follow-up is essential. It’s now a warm call to someone you know rather than being a cold call to a stranger. It’s even better to have a smile in your voice when placing or answering calls.

SALES/RECESSION

Selling in a Recession

Recession-proof your sales force.



by David Mattson

AS NEWS OF THE BATTERED ECONOMY proliferates the media and consumer confidence stagnates to historic lows, nowhere does the impact hit closer to home than in the sales industry. That’s why it is important to have an effective strategy for taking action when the economy is trending down.

In response to this recessionary trend, we have co-authored a book titled *Five Minutes with VITO*. It is critical that salespeople compress their sales cycle by going directly to the Very Important Top Officer (VITO). Our book details how to get to VITO, and what to do when you get there.

Five Key Strategies

In addition, we offer five strategies to recession-proof your sales efforts:

1. Feel your client’s pain. Let’s face it, clients are in pain. If there is no pain, there is no sale. Now is the time to thoroughly understand and feel your client’s pain, and adapt accordingly. Pain is a jigsaw puzzle that has three distinct elements; problems, reasons and impact. By putting the pieces together with your client you are able to recognize what’s happening. If you can’t solve your client’s pain, your

You can’t turn a contact made at a meeting, party or event into a connection without telephone follow-up. Always ask: “Is this a good time? If not, when would be a better time?” If Jane has only two minutes, promise brevity and deliver it.

Treat gatekeepers with courtesy—it reflects positively on you and these are the people who can open doors for you.

After you’ve chatted with the decision-maker, bridge back to the purpose of the call. You can’t control how others respond to your calls, comments and questions. But, you can be prepared, polite, pleasant and on message. The conversation is still the key to sales. **SSE**

Susan RoAne is author of Face To Face: and How To Work A Room. Visit www.susanroane.com.

ACTION: Master the phone to increase sales.

2. Address the fear factor.

Understand the psychology behind a recession’s fear factor and openly discuss it with your sales team. Engage a team approach of how to meet company goals. Share your vision of what measures need to be taken to ensure success, and ask them to be part of the solution by finding hidden opportunity, up-selling and identifying cost saving measures within the organization. Encourage a positive mindset that looks beyond public perceptions to the opportunities change affords.

3. Remain flexible. With rising fuel and operations costs, many companies have shifted to a condensed work

week. Be willing to meet clients at their location, and recognize the changing nature of the standard work week by making yourself accessible and available where and when they are.

4. Coach and train. The worst time to cut back on sales training is in a recession. Focus and highlight every area of success and discuss what was done to create it and exploit it. Highlight sales wins, reference goals and site examples of how the company or a salesperson has gone above and beyond.

5. Mobilize your sales force. All eyes need to be focused on the prize. Bring every department that supports sales into the mix. Ratchet your sales focus up a notch. Now is the time to quantify what you can do for clients because everyone is looking for ways to either save money or make more money. **SSE**

David Mattson is CEO of Sandler Training and coauthor with Anthony Parinello, CEO of VITO, of Five Minutes with VITO. Visit www.sandler.com.

ACTION: Develop a sales recession strategy.

People Productivity

Get more ROI on investments.



by Morrie Shechtman

IT'S NO SECRET THAT THE economy is limping along. And whether or not your company is feeling the pinch, the downturn is making you scrutinize your employees with a skeptical eye. The flaws and foibles you overlooked in the past are starting to feel like serious liabilities—and with a host of hungry job seekers knocking on your door, you're wondering if these less-than-perfect people are right for your company.

Don't get out the pink slips just yet. Instead of viewing employees as expendable, you should focus on getting the best return possible on the workforce you already have.

The key to long-term growth and productivity is a workforce that's familiar with your company and in sync with your business goals. Your workplace should excite and motivate your employees so they'll want to stay around. And that means creating an environment that challenges people and helps them grow not just as employees, but as people.

This theme of "self-information" means that your employees want their jobs to teach them about themselves, to provide valuable information that not only makes them more marketable, but also helps them become better spouses, better friends, better people.

Take Seven Tips

How do you foster a growth-oriented workplace, the kind to survive and thrive even in a downturned economy? I offer seven insights and tips:

1. Forget monetary incentives: focus on relationships. Even if you could muster them up right now, fat salaries and bonuses, more vacation time, and other such perks will not increase employee loyalty. All they do is create a bigger sense of entitlement. They tie people to your company in the same manner that one trains a dog to stay in the yard—until the company across the street offers a bigger, juicier bone. But creating a culture in which better relationships are valued gives employees a more profound and rewarding

reason to come to work every day. Through relationships people change and grow—essential for survival in our increasingly complex world.

2. Help your employees find their familiars. What is a *familiar*? It is an emotional pattern that holds tremendous power over our choices, our relationships, and our careers. Rooted in our families and our upbringing, the familiar is a feeling that we unconsciously reproduce, sometimes to our benefit, but often to our detriment. For instance, the eldest child of a large family might have grown up having to subrogate her needs for the needs of the younger children.

Perhaps she was told she was selfish for asking for things for herself. It is no mystery that as an adult she is frustrated at work and has trouble communicating her needs to her boss. Her familiar—the feeling that she doesn't really deserve to ask for anything—is reproduced in her work

environment, where she is unable to assert herself. Help your employees by learning about familiars and encouraging them to identify—and subsequently diminish—their own.

3. Question employees relentlessly. Create a growth-oriented workplace by asking questions like: "Did you notice what you did there?" "Why do you think you said that?" "When your position was challenged in the meeting, you didn't defend it—why do you think you backed down?" Creating a "question culture" will help employees ferret out their familiars. It will raise performance expectations throughout the company. It will train employees to think carefully about how they do their jobs and ensure that they have sound reasons for every decision they make.

4. Encourage conflict and confrontation. The purpose of the workplace is *not* to make everyone happy—it is to grow people to their maximum potential. The enormous popularity of consensus decision making/negotiation, participatory management, and self-directed work teams is a sign of the times that is val-

idating our unhealthy quest for comfort above all. Conflict and confrontation are rarely pleasant, but they are the very definition of teamwork. *They are also necessary to growth relationships.*

5. Provide honest, caring feedback. Constantly tell your employees how they are coming across, or how they are doing. Sometimes this feedback will be negative in nature. Honest feedback can be painful for both parties, but it is the backbone of a growth organization. A relationship without honest feedback is what I call a "mutual toleration society." Unconditional acceptance—in both personal and professional relationships—is a form of abandonment, robbing the other party of the most important catalysts for growth and change.

6. Practice the art of self-disclosure. Feedback cuts both ways. You want your employees to provide it to you as well. One way to do so is through self-disclosure. If you want to turn a stagnant employee relationship into a growth-oriented one—or start a new relationship out on the right foot—share your feelings first.

This is a big risk because you don't know how the other person will respond; you must be prepared to deal with any type of reaction you receive. But it's a risk worth taking because you can learn a lot from your employees. Self-disclose often and you teach by example the kind of relationships you expect to flourish in your company.

7. Form an accountability group. People fear receiving or giving feedback; they don't want to show weakness or make someone uncomfortable. But put them in the right setting and they may provide others with clear and compelling feedback. Make accountability groups where people give and receive feedback, create action plans based on that feedback, and hold group members accountable for implementing their plans. Such groups can lead individuals and organizations to transform themselves from the inside out.

Creating a work environment rich in self-discovery is an investment in the future of your company, attracting and retaining talented employees. Your employees won't leave you for greener pastures because you will be meeting needs far more important and compelling than a biweekly paycheck. **SSE**

Morrie Shechtman is president of Fifth Wave Leadership and author of *Working Without a Net*. FifthWaveLeadership.com.

ACTION: Create an environment of opportunity.



Face to Face

It's effective leadership.



by Kenneth M. Woolley

AS OUR SIXTH PRESIDENT, John Quincy Adams, said: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Whether you have a single location or hundreds across the country, you need to consider your actions, those of your team, and what the sum total says about you as a leader. The best companies and the leaders who effect change and achieve greatness don't do so from an untouchable corner office; they develop great companies people want to work for by getting out there and meeting the people behind it.

Have you inspired your employees to dream? To learn more about your industry, your company, and your customers? To do more without being directed to do so? If not, apply what President John F. Kennedy said to yourself and your employees: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

The best way to start your journey toward effective leadership is to regularly meet face-to-face with the people who work at your company—every last one of them. Ask them about themselves, their roles, and your performance. It's Face-to-Face Leadership.

When Extra Space Storage acquired Storage USA in 2005, we expanded from 174 to 632 locations and four times the number of employees. Our growth made it imperative to visit the new locations and meet the new staff. It was a daunting challenge, but the experience was so valuable and critical to our performance that I make it a priority to meet with my entire team regularly. I look forward to the questions, discussions, conversation, and face time such meetings produce.

Face-to-Face Leadership is essential. Sometimes I'll respond to an email by holding an in-person discussion for a few minutes. This allows for a personal connection unattainable by email. Where that's not possible, I travel to selected field locations and hold regular town-hall style meetings. Everyone is invited, encouraged to participate, and topics are discussed candidly.

Napoleon once said: "The first quality for a commander-in-chief is a cool head

to receive a correct impression of things. He should not allow himself to be confused by either good or bad news." Don't accept superficial cheerleading, don't revel in flattery, and don't panic about an issue that sounds critical or troublesome. Dig deeper, embrace the challenge and respond by keeping your vision at the fore. You will only benefit when all involved are honest, frank, and see that you are open, approachable, and truly invested in getting to the heart and truth of any issue.

To become a great leader, envision yourself in that role. Address a major company initiative or the performance of your division or department. Define your vision and plan to achieve it. Share your goals with your team, the steps that need to be taken, and what it means to them. Show them the way to motivation, rather than telling them

to be motivated. Welcome input and ideas. Display your highest professionalism, and see it mirrored back to you. Continue to talk and listen to your team on an ongoing basis, face-to-face.

The difference between employees who come to work each day ready to achieve and those who just come to work is leadership. A poorly-led company is a house of cards, ready to fall when the wind blows. A company instilled with meaningful, effective leadership functions like a well-oiled machine, delivering value, possessing a vision, communicating openly with employees, mapping the strategy to fulfilling goals and rewarding everyone when the company achieves. **SSE**

Kenneth M. Woolley is CEO of Extra Space Storage. Visit www.extraspace.com.

ACTION: Practice face-to-face leadership.

MARKETING/DEVELOPMENT

Beyond Salesperson

Be a business development rep.



by Ken Rogner

IN ONE REALLY SUCCESSFUL distribution company I work with, all the outside salespeople have the business card title, *Business Development Representative*. I didn't create it but I really like it!

Let's review the three words in that title and see how those words can help us achieve our goal of personal success.

Business. Know each customer's business goals. If you don't know every one of your assigned account's true business goals, you can't help to make them happen. Not every customer wants to build more, sell more, or make more money. Some may be looking for an exit strategy. Some may want to make their business smaller and more manageable. Start by asking questions that let you help in their goal-achievement. Ask about *their* goals and dreams to make sure that *you're* part of those goals and dreams.

Fit the following questions to your personal style and your industry. *Do you have any large projects or goals for this year?* Even if it doesn't relate to the products or services you currently sell, it may be something you can help with in the future. *How are recent changes affecting you and your industry? What future changes have to be made?*

These clues open the doors to their goals and make you a part of their goal-reaching team. Let them know how important their success and growth is to your company.

Development. Processes, products and services are constantly changing and you have to be tuned in to those changes. If you are going to help customers develop their business, you need to be involved in every trade organization, read every journal, and be part of every think-tank. Be aware of the latest developments. Know every one of your company's new programs and

products. This is not an easy task and it takes real focus and a lot of effort. But it's worth it. If you represent a solid company and a great line of products or services, you need to know how they can help your customer in the process of developing their goals.

Representative. If you're a real customer representative, then you put yourself in their place, and not just from an empathy standpoint. You help them in weak areas, whether that be advertising, marketing, or elsewhere. You really have to know your customers to know how and where you can best represent them, help them, and support them.

When you become a *Business Development Representative*, you add more value for your customers. Make sure they know it, understand it and take advantage of it. **SSE**

Ken Rogner is senior sales management consultant and sales educator. Call 708-205-6721 or email 3rresources@comcast.net.

ACTION: Be a Business Development Representative.

Picking Talent

Select smart for big results.



by Matt Sharrers

WE LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT people can change; but the reality is that past accomplishment is the leading indicator of future success. And while the libraries of detailed training methodologies, skill-development techniques, and innovative inspirational leadership ideas are crucial tools to developing salespeople, they can't account for why teams and individuals are successful.

If you select the right people for the right roles and let their natural talents intersect with a supportive, results driven, team-first environment, success will follow. Training, skill development, and leadership will be mostly irrelevant with the wrong team members. With the right people in the right roles—combined with training, development and inspiration—amazing things occur.

To solve the puzzle of leadership, hire right and you will be half the way there. Nothing could be truer, especially when building a winning sales team. Learn how to pick talent.

Combat disengagement. Only about 20 percent of workers are highly engaged in their jobs. If managers understood what parts of a job a candidate needs to love in order to be successful, they would approach recruiting differently. The problem is twofold: either candidates interviewing for a job don't know what they are great at, or managers can't describe what is needed to be successful in the position.

Define roles. In job interviews, tell people what they will be *doing* and the *talents* needed to achieve success. Be specific. Study each role to identify key elements each member of the team must have. Then draft, trade, and develop people around these detailed analyses. Managers often hire salespeople based on feelings, desperation, or convenience. When you combine a candidate who is unsure what they are looking for with a manager who is unsure what they are looking for, you end up with two good-intentioned people trying to solve their personal puzzle of success and fulfillment but have too many missing pieces to solve the performance puzzle at work.

Have a robust, talent-based selec-

tion. Go through an intense and thorough profile study. Look at every job function on your team and understand what high performance looks like. Know how to characterize your roles and define the qualities in a series of questions. For sales managers, you must know what talents your best salespeople possess and how often they are asked to use these talents. If you are leading a team of hunters whose primary job is to open new accounts and not service existing accounts, you need to interview around some of the key attributes of great hunters. Watch what your top 20 percent do, the traits they possess, and the frequency upon which they use them. A hunter must have an incredibly strong natural desire to persuade people, along with thick skin or resilience. If the closing rate in a traditional hunting sales job is only 15 percent, the rep will be told no 8.5 times out of 10. If the salesperson can't dust himself off to start again several times per day, he will burn out quickly and move on to a job with less rejection. The hiring manager in this role must resist the urge—regardless of how nice, cordial and intelligent the candidate is—to hire anybody who does not have the natural talents of consistent persuasion and resiliency. These two traits are two of the most important for hunters.

If the role is one of relationship building (farmers), then these candidates must demonstrate a passion for deep and long-lasting relationships, establishing themselves as trusted advisors. Farmers tend to be less driven by a desire to persuade and more on the need for predictability, acceptance, and security. While both farmers and hunters are salespeople, they are on opposite ends of the spectrum and each would become frustrated and unproductive in the other's shoes.

Interviewing. The interview is where you build your championship team. Once you define your profile, you must have a process that includes at least two interviews with two different people. Ideally, you would have

three interviews with three people, with scripted questions, focused only on talents and asked every time in every interview. Spend time in each interview looking to see if the key talents exist. Be mindful of *interview bravado* and don't confuse it with what is contained in the candidates' DNA. This takes discipline and practice. Ask questions that you know the answers to based on what your high performers would say, and look for top-of-mind responses—not eloquent stories full of nothing.

For example, if you know your hunting salesperson needs to close three sales per week and will get rejected 85 percent of the time, you need a person



with high persuasive dynamics. Someone who must persuade will do so for the sake of hearing yes, in any situation. A great question might be "Tell me a time when you persuaded somebody to do something or buy something that initially they were opposed to?" If the candidate is a highly persuasive salesperson, they will be smiling and nodding through the ques-

tion and respond with something like, "That happens all the time" or "I did it yesterday." Find out how they go about persuading and look for compatibility with your culture and what you will be selling. However, you must first validate the attribute is present as part of the natural fabric of your candidate.

Implementation. As you look to implement this formula, understand what success in your organization looks like, preferably over several people who fill the role. What are your best people doing? How often during the day are they utilizing certain attributes?

Through careful, meticulous study of the talents used to deliver results, you can build your questions. However, the real ROI will be the consistent execution of the interview process and the discipline of the hiring managers to stick to it. This is the most important repeatable input a leader has in building a world-class team. Nothing great ever happens on teams where people are "grinding it out" or "punching the clock." Select for talent—and talent alone—and you will be more than half of the way to solving the talent puzzle. **SSE**

Matt Sharrers is VP of Sales for the Northwest and Central Pacific Region at Cintas. Call 425-313-3402 or email sharrersm@cintas.com.

ACTION: Focus on hiring talent.

Build Rapport

Practice seven ways.



by Dave Kahle

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH CUSTOMERS is like lubricating gears with oil to reduce friction and make things work smoother.

So it is when two people interact. Rapport reduces the friction and makes the interaction go smoother. The best salespeople create rapport readily.

Rapport is an emotional bond or friendly relationship between people based on mutual liking, trust, and a sense that they understand each other and share concerns.

You can learn to create rapport with anyone. Here are seven proven ways:

1. Pay attention to your appearance. People will form an impression of you, based on how you look, before they even say hello. Your appearance should help you look confident and competent—whatever that means in your market. Minimumly, that means clothes clean and pressed, shoes shined and hair cut. Your attire should help you connect with the customer. For example, if you are calling on production supervisors, you ought not to wear a suit and tie, as that will separate you from them, and generate discomfort. Dress like your customer, only a little better.

2. Try a bit of disarming honesty. In routine interchanges, say something that the customer is not expecting. For example, when he says, *How are you?*, instead of the perfunctory *Fine*, try something like this: *Honestly, my day didn't get off to a good start. One of the kids was sick this morning, and I was a half hour late getting out of the house. How are you?* It's unexpected. And, it's honest, reveals something about you.

3. Use your sense of humor. If you can make most people laugh, then you are equipped with a powerful rapport-building asset. Laughing together breaks down some of the barriers between people, removes tension, and builds rapport. If you are not so gifted, stay away from humor. Telling a joke that nobody gets, or having a glib comment being seen as sarcastic or caustic is NOT a good way to build rapport.

4. Use a sincere complement. Everyone likes to be complemented. When you sincerely complement customers, you communicate that you are interested in them, you have noticed something they do that stands out, and

you care enough to say something complementary. Once, I entered a prospect's office building. The lobby was dramatic, with a two-story atrium, and a soaring piece of sculpture. I told him that the lobby inspired me. We chatted about it, and we went in his office, having achieved rapport.

5. Ask a perceptive question. A perceptive question, asked with sincerity, does everything that a complement does and more. When the complement doesn't call for any response from the customer, a question does. If done correctly, it can initiate the conversation and help customers feel that you care about them. In the previous situation, for example, I could have said, *"Was the lobby designed to inspire visitors?"*

6. Indicate a personal connection. If you have something in common with

the customer, mention it. When customers discover that you both know the same person, went to the same school, vacationed in the same place, or belong to the same club, they realize that you are alike in some ways. It's easier to do business with them.

7. Tell a short personal story. You might say: *"I had a hard time getting here on time because I had a flat tire. It took me a while to change it. Glad I made it on time."* That's short, personal, and transparent because it reveals something about you, and, it's something to which everyone can relate.

Building rapport smooths the way to more sales. **SSE**

Dave Kahle is a consultant and trainer and author of six books. Visit www.davekahle.com or call 800-331-1287 or 616-451-9377.

ACTION: Build rapport with clients and prospects.

MANAGEMENT/PASSION

Keep Passion Alive

You can do it in five top ways.



by Michelle LaBrosse

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE: stuck on the project that won't end, or wishing for more sales. Here are some ideas that have worked for me when my team is in the tight grip of fatigue.

1. Acknowledge the elephant in the room. When everyone knows the team is in the doldrums, say what everyone is thinking. Turn the groans into laughter with the simple truth. *"I know this project stinks right now, so the question is: How can we make it better?"* Pearl S. Buck wrote: *"Truth is always exciting. Speak it; life is dull without it."*

2. Remind people why we care. When your project goes on forever, it's easy to lose sight of why you began. Bring your team back to the purpose. Paint the big picture and connect people to it. It's easy to re-engage, once you remember why you need to care. Answer *"what's in it for me"* (WIIFM) for every team member. If there's not a compelling WIIFM, create one. Build in incentives—vacation days or prizes—bring some sizzle into the end game. Dorothy Parker noted: *"The two most beautiful words are 'check enclosed.'"*

3. Revisit expectations and goals. During a long project, people and plans may change. That's why your *Project or Performance Agreement* needs to be a

living document. Recharge your team by revisiting the expectations, adjusting the goals, and ensuring everyone is clear about roles and responsibilities. This step can uncover roadblocks and frustrations. Mark Twain quipped: *"Action speaks louder than words, but not nearly as often."*

4. Inspire your team. How can you inspire your team? You might bring in a creative and inspirational speaker for a brief session or start a monthly book club for the team. If you have no budget, take a break from a weekly meeting and do a team-building exercise or plan a field trip to give your team a different perspective and build some fresh thinking. John Quincy Adams said: *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."*

5. Visualize the end. Spend 10 minutes visualizing the end of the project. What will that look like? How does the success feel? What did you

achieve? How did you get there? How do you know you're there? When a team feels stuck, it's hard to see a happy ending. As the leader, help them paint it and give hope that the end will come! Muhammad Ali said: *"The man who has no imagination has no wings."*

So, when you need to boost the energy on your team, experiment with these five energizers. And, ask for ideas from your own team. A small idea can make a big difference. **SSE**

Michelle LaBrosse is Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning and author of Cheetah Negotiations and Cheetah Project Management.

ACTION: Boost the energy of your team.

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