

Goals: Know What You Want

Hope your year is starting off looking great, the people & clients I've been working with say sales are up.

I want to talk about something that many people simply leave on the "shelf" because they think they've already done all they need to on the subject. There's much more to be said about this than most are willing to admit.

Over the years, I've worked with hundreds of sales organizations and I have to tell you that one of the most persistent problems I see is the salespeople really do not know what to do. They've got forty hours a week of prime customer time, and what are they supposed to do with it?

Now flip it around, "What is the easiest thing to do?" The easiest thing for salespeople to do is simply call on the customers they know and talk about what they've always talked about. Of course, if you talk to the people you normally talk to, about the products or services that you normally talk about, you tend to get some price erosion and declining sales. Seen any of that, lately?

The first thing to do is to start with a clear set of goals that drive sales behaviors. Start with the big picture!

One of the first things I do when I work with an organization is to ask the sales manager the following questions:

- What do you want to sell?
- Who do you want to sell it to?
- What does a good order look like?

What do you want to sell?

By this, I mean specifics, not statements such as "quality" or "service." Put together a list of the specific products or services you want them to focus on selling.

Who do you want to sell it to?

Each salesperson needs to have a specific list of focus accounts (existing customers and prospects). You want to make sure that the sales team is focused in two areas; Specific accounts and The amounts of time that you want salespeople to spend on each.

For example if you put an account on the list, about how often does the salesperson need to call on the account? Once a week, a couple of times per month or once a quarter?

What does a good order look like?

Define "goodness" in terms that relate to orders: size, margin, number of items, in-stock, put-up, etc?

The bottom line on this is that if you tell salespeople what you really want, you are likely to get more of it.

Make the goals real

The second step is:

To put stuff into boxes that help them see what they need to do. All sales goals can be broken into the following box categories:

You should create a matrix for your entire group (or company-wide if that is your area of responsibility.) Then, each salesperson should get a chart that details their specific responsibilities.

Existing Customers:

*Box 1: Are we selling everything we can (of what we currently sell) to all of our existing customers?

*Box 2: Are there some extra things that we can sell to our existing customers?

New Customers:

*Box 3: Do we want some sales to come from new customers?

*Box 4: Do we want to create some new products and sell them to new customers?

How much do we want in each of these boxes?

If you have done this sort of planning effort, you can now work with your sales team to drive activities. For example, if a salesperson has 20% of their sales budget in the new customer area, they need to spend at least 20% of their time (probably more) in prospecting activities. And if there are significant sales budgets in the new product/service area, there is a need for not only prospecting but also training? Maybe some mandated presentations?

Start with a clear picture of what you want, then communicate it to your sales team. Then, take it one step further and translate the numerical goals into specific sets of activities. Remember, too, that when a sports team has problems they tend to fire the coach. A word to the wise!

JCE

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