



Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Go for the Green \$\$ - Don't Miss the Recovery

The pundits and economists are predicting we are near the bottom of one of the deepest recessions since the depression. One good thing about the bottom is that there is only one other direction: up. How well positioned are you and your sales team for taking advantage of the recovery? Some economists are predicting that it could take four to five years before we are 'back to where we were.' What does that mean to sales managers and sales teams? It means upgrading the sales team, getting creative and taking exceptional care of customers.

#1: Check Your Sales Bus:

The much quoted phrase from Jim Collins, author of 'Good to Great,' still holds true. "Get the right people on the bus in the right seats." Getting the right salespeople on the team means looking at two emotional intelligence skills necessary for success in tough, competitive environments.

Flexibility is defined as the ability to adapt to unfamiliar, unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. (Does any of this sound like the last nine months?)

The internet, global economy and Sales 2.0 have created buying environments that are fast-paced and ever changing. Alvin Toffler says it best: "The illiterate of the future are not those who can't read or write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." How adaptable is your sales team? How good is your sales manager at spotting new trends in the industry and quickly adapting strategy and tactics? The salesperson of the future must be flexible and have the ability to change course.

Impulse Control is defined as the ability to delay an impulse, drive or temptation to act.

Salespeople scoring low in this area often exhibit high levels of frustration. This is a problem in business environments where buyers have been burned, are cautious, and taking longer to make decisions. The easily frustrated salesperson may not invest the appropriate time in building relationships and trust. Low impulse control shows up in prospecting as well. If there is no immediate pay-off, the easily frustrated salesperson quits doing the activity and blames lack of results on the marketing department.

#2: Innovate and Renovate:

Sales teams poised to capture the recovery are done mourning the good 'ole days. They are creating the new days by figuring out creative ways to close business. The Denver Post recently ran an article on a group of innovative realtors. These realtors changed up the old concept of an open house. One realtor partnered with an art gallery to create a gallery in one of his listings. Another held a charity event at one of her listings. Still another threw a tailgate party at one of his properties. They all used innovative ways to drive traffic to their listing.

Take time to study other industries. Brick and mortar companies can learn a lot from the e-commerce stores in the way of innovation. Zappo's, an online shoe store, is a brilliant example of innovation. They advertise where they have a 'captured' audience: the security line at the airport. There is a Zappo's advertisement at the bottom of the gray tub where you deposit shoes that are killing your feet after a long day of business. Then you go to the website and find that they address the two biggest e-commerce objections by stating: Free shipping both ways and returns 365 days a year.

Where is a new place that you could place your marketing message? What is the unspoken objection in your business and how are you eliminating it? It's time to innovate and renovate.

#3: Send a love note to your clients: (okay, a thank you or appreciation note)

There is a great article in the May issue of Selling Power where they interview the CEO of the New Jersey Nets, Brett Yormack. He has taken an under performing franchise and turned it into one of the few that have sold 2,000 full season sponsorships three years in a row. Innovation is one of the reasons as well as exceptional care of the client. On Fan Appreciation Night, the New Jersey turnpike tolls at the stadium exit were paid for by the team for one hour. A nice way of saying thanks to the fans.

I recently experienced the extra mile with a store, The Pine Creek Clothing Company. I made a small purchase, a sweater, which was placed in a lovely canvas bag. The friendly clerk then handed me a water bottle noticing it was a hot day outside. One week later a handwritten note (yes, handwritten) arrived thanking me for my business. I have spent thousands of dollars on vehicles, sound equipment and other stuff with no note acknowledging the exchange of cash. Guess who is getting my repeat business?

Go green and capture the recovery with top salespeople, innovation and client care.

Good Selling,

Colleen Stanley
Chief Selling Officer

Your Company Uniform

Don't worry; this is not a blog post about appropriate work attire now that we are entering the summer months (there will be enough of those from the HR pros), but an attempt to get your wheels turning on your business branding. It's more important now than ever; people have an endless amount of choices and have to filter through heaps of information when choosing a new partner or vendor....and it's completely overwhelming.

I recently attended the Colorado Girls State Tennis Tournament in my hometown of Pueblo, CO, and I couldn't help but notice how incredibly difficult it was to determine which schools the players represented. The girls were predominately wearing white tank tops (no logo or embroidery) and their school colors of shorts or tennis skirt. The colors gave me a hint of which school it was, but I still wasn't sure. This got me thinking about business branding – how easy do you make it for people to identify you? Are people confused by your website, marketing materials, or when talking to multiple people in your organization? Here are three points to consider:

#1. Say it Loud.

In order to create a uniform, multiple people must be wearing the same thing in a consistent manner, which was very much lacking for the tennis teams. It felt like a tournament of individuals, in a scenario when team should be so important. The overall tournament is won as a team, regardless of where individuals end up in their particular brackets.

Are all your employees, regardless of department, on the same page as to who you are and what you do? Does the accounting department know what a conversation between a salesperson and a customer/client sounds like? It's like a choir – one person can sing a great solo, but the entire choir needs to sing in harmony in order to make a truly memorable concert. In-synch voices make a louder, longer-lasting impression. Get everyone on the same page. Say it loud.

#2. Say it Proud.

At the tennis tournament, I kept wondering why these teams weren't screaming from the rooftops that they were Blankedy Blank High School and in the second round of the state tennis championship – WHOO HOO! Right? Companies need to be proud of their accomplishments in terms of what makes them different. Conviction for your product/service is key to your branding. We teach in our sales training that people can spot lack in sincerity a mile away, and the same goes for branding. Highlight the things you do better than anyone else – don't worry about what you THINK you should be good at....be honest about who you are and watch your brand grow. Say it proud.

#3. Say it Often.

You know the great thing about a slow economic time? You have the opportunity to 'get out there' in fresh, new ways and in many more ways. Pound your brand into people's heads – then they can't help but think of you when the time is right. Your creative wheels should be a-flowin' friends!

Become an expert author and post on sites that aren't necessarily specific to your industry, but that can help the people who go to those sites. We are not computer experts at SalesLeadership (far from it, actually; and if you know us well and are reading this you're saying, "No Duh!"), but we know that the members of the Independent Computer Consultants Association can benefit from articles/webinars on 'The Art of Selling Yourself' and 'Getting Paid What You're Worth.'

A uniform is recognizable not just because it's worn by many people, but because it's worn many times by many people. When you watch Sports Center, you rarely need an explanation of who is being featured on the highlights – you know within moments the teams by their uniforms without hearing the name of the team. You've seen it so many times that it's an auto-recognizer. Their uniforms don't leave any room for interpretation or confusion. What you see is what you get. And that's good branding. Say it often.

Get all your people telling the same story, be proud of who you are and what you do, and get your message out there as much as possible – Say it loud, say it proud, and say it often.

Happy Branding,

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