

## Sales Management Challenges in 2009

The economic year is taking a grave toll on all attitudes and behaviors. Selling professionals, sales managers and business owners are having a very difficult time trying to meet goals and remain profitable. In addition, as further economic news reverberates retaining clients beckons other issues. While many believe that there is an end in site, managers have other issues- maintaining productivity! In a recent survey of over 400 sales managers we collected data for an upcoming white paper to illustrate the three prevalent issues in the coming months.

- **Morale** – Executives are having a difficult time with motivated staff. Each day the media unearths more economic dearth. With over 85% of employees listing to talk radio while commuting, the each day begins with a pall. Moreover, with over 71,000 recent layoffs negative press does not help. The economic news creates a din in the work team and morale is low to start the day. It is then incumbent on managers to play cheerleader.

The priority for managers and supervisors is to provide an environment where productivity is the main theme. Managers should be encouraged to communicate often informing employees candidly about the respective business so that media rumor does not placate employee relations. Second, the more open the communication the more relaxed the staff. Recent research illustrates that 78% of employee productivity develops from manager-employee relationships, the better the relationship the better the production.

Finally, get individuals to end the self-pity and self-talk. Negativity will manifest when there is too much discussion. Positive conversation invokes a positive environment. In addition, an active work team produces less negative conversation. When the mind is occupied there is less time to think about issues.

- **Goal Pressure** - Senior Management mandates profit desires and middle management is fighting back on lofty goals. Recent research in the field has created the notion that sales and marketing departments should work together to achieve operational success. Establishing integrated roles and developing greater market research can aid organizational growth.

Second, the main thrust on operational teams such as selling must be on client retention. 81% less investment is achieved by retaining clients than acquiring new. In addition, present prospect clients are more cautious in choices due to budgetary constraints. In this economy, it is much easier to sell new products and services to new clients. The effort simply requires the introduction of new client value.

Finally, to meet goals and objectives a lofty consideration is actually spending money on advertising and promotion. Irrational times call for irrational measures. When the competition is imploding and cautious, recessionary times are helpful. Advertising space is more negotiable as others decrease spending and this enables your firm to produce more speed and velocity as others remain in the hanger.

- Staff Retention - As staff becomes disenchanted many individuals seek refuge with competitors or simply leave the industry. Retaining key talent or acquiring new talent is difficult. Exemplars for staffing always seek talent, not just when they need them. If your firm seeks productive talent, your best farm system is with your current staff. Employees if passionate about the work offer conviction no advertisement emulates. The best message initiates from passionate and committed staff. Begin a referral program that produces a benefit to all sides. However seek those that are not only hungry but also fit within the company profile and offer needed talent. Do not make compressed choices to complete spots but discover talent that desires future growth.

For approximately, corporations large and small have endured economic hardship. To many, there is no light at the end of the tunnel. However, recessions do not last forever and an end will arrive soon. The path to diligence begins one step at a time. Frugality and fear only halt success. Desperate times call for competitive techniques that stabilize fear, maintain work and satisfy stakeholders. However, the path to a better future must begin with observation of the challenges, understanding the challenges and developing changing challenges.