

HOWTO... *make your solution sales ready*

HOWTO ... sales and marketing guides from Solutions for Sales are brief practical guides for Sales and Marketing professionals. They provide a primer for the inexperienced and a reminder for those already in the know.

Objective

We all recognise the importance of sales readiness and that it usually takes more than a brochure and a sales presentation to achieve this. The objective of this **HOWTO ... guide** is to provide an overview of what you need to consider to make a new solution sales ready.

Answer the tough questions

The objective of sales readiness is to answer in advance all the top level questions your salespeople will have, including those they will hear from customers. By equipping salespeople with the answers in advance you put them in control of the sale. Let's look at the questions that need to be answered.

What are the propositions?

The propositions need to be defined in a way salespeople can use. A usable proposition statement has three important characteristics:

1. It addresses a real customer business need
2. It states what the solution does for the customer
3. It is readily understandable

Some solutions can win with just one brilliant proposition – take the iPod, that has the simple proposition “take your entire music collection with you wherever you go”. That was enough to define a new market place. Usually you will define the top 3-5 propositions. And even the iPod has some valuable sub-propositions like “get rid of all those CDs off your shelves” and “makes it easy to find the music you want”.

How will you identify customers?

The next area to focus on is customers. Who cares enough about your propositions to want to buy them and how can you provide information that will enable your salespeople to go straight to them?

The key information salespeople need falls into four categories:

1. **Market:** which segments, industries, demographics and geographies should salespeople target?

2. **Enterprise:** key characteristics of the target enterprise such as turnover, number of employees and structure.

3. **Timing:** what events or situations trigger the need for this solution? You want your salespeople to target the right companies at the right time.

4. **People:** which job functions are likely to be important in the sale?

The more specific you can be in your sales readiness material, the more successful your salespeople will be.

How will you attract attention?

How will you get prospective customers to pay attention? The vast majority of marketing budget is spent here, yet this is just one of six key areas (the areas outlined in this **HOWTO ... guide**), that need to be addressed to achieve sales readiness. Advertising, sales campaigns, promotions, direct mail – there is no shortage of techniques available. Your challenge is to decide which techniques can attract the attention of your target market most cost-effectively.

How will you move them to action?

Everyone is busy. No company wants to spend money it could avoid spending. Action entails risk. There are many reasons not to buy your solution, so it is important to tell salespeople how they can move prospective customers to take action and buy.

Such compelling events can range from “must do’s” like the lease expiring on an office building or a new product launch, through to situations where your salespeople will need to create a compelling event by, for example, pointing out how much money is being wasted every day by not taking action. Either way, for your new solution to be sales ready you need

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to tell your salespeople the compelling events that will move their customers to buy, and where a compelling event is not obvious salespeople need tools that help create one, for example a business case discovery process.

How can you prove superiority?

If a prospective customer understands your proposition and sees the need to take action on it, then the next challenge is to prove yours is the best solution. For a salesperson there's nothing worse than persuading a customer they need something and then seeing them buy from someone else.

Your solution is not sales ready until you have a strong set of proof points that demonstrate superiority over alternatives. Not boasts, not claims, not marketing slogans, but solid proof that addresses the factors against which your customers will make their comparison.

What barriers need to be overcome?

Finally, what are the snags likely to be encountered on the journey from new solution launch to sales success? You will want to anticipate these and have plans to overcome them. Broadly speaking, barriers can arise from four main areas:

1. Salespeople. The fact that you are addressing sales readiness thoroughly will give you a head start with your

salesforce, but there is truth in the saying "if you want to sell, first sell to the salesperson". The challenge is to grab their attention and show how they will benefit from selling this solution.

2. Customers. There may be standard objections and barriers that customers will raise. Prepare salespeople for these and provide the answers that will neutralise them.

3. Competitors. Tell salespeople how this solution compares and which areas they should emphasise in order to beat the competition.

4. The market. Markets change quickly, be ready to update all this sales readiness information as the market evolves.

What now?

You may wonder why you didn't already have all this information before you started developing the new solution! Probably you had lots of it, but not in a format that is directly usable by salespeople and in any case it will have changed during the solution development phase. Why not use this **HOWTO... guide** to check the sales readiness of all your solutions, even those that have been on the market for some time? If they don't pass the sales readiness test then it's time to do something about it.

HOWTO... checklist

For your solution to be sales ready your salespeople need to know:

- 1. What propositions your solution offers to the customer**
- 2. How they can identify likely customers – where will they be found, what do they look like?**
- 3. How they can attract the attention of likely customers**
- 4. How they can spot, or create, the compelling event that will move customers to buy**
- 5. How they can prove that this solution is superior to any alternative**
- 6. What barriers they will meet and how to overcome them**

What do you think? If you have comments on this **HOWTO... sales and marketing** guide, or new ideas, questions, or requests for new guides then email us on HOWTO@solutionsforsales.com, or go to www.solutionsforsales.com