



Sales Life

from **SolutionsforSales**

Our regular feature 'Sales Life' invites senior salespeople to give their views on key sales issues.

This quarter we talk to Dave McLeod from HP.

What is your job title and what do you do?

Director Financial Services Industry EMEA, NonStop Enterprise Division, HP. My job is to ensure that local salesforces know how and where to sell NonStop solutions. If the sale requires in-depth understanding of the user community and strong industry knowledge I will be involved, selling at the highest levels.

What is the top sales challenge you and your team are currently facing?

The financial services industry is under immense pressure to cut back and conserve capital so the biggest challenge we expect to face this year is selling capital goods into an environment that is trying to avoid spending capital. The requirement to prove ROI and TCO is heavier now than it has ever been. Now, more than ever, we have to prove the value of what we sell and find ways for customers to buy using their operating budget.

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever been given?

An old Sales Director of mine told me that when you are selling mission critical systems into banks, if you can't stand in front of your audience and say "when I had this problem at my bank this is how we dealt with it" then they will never take you seriously. It doesn't matter if the way you dealt with the problem was successful, it matters that you are able to say "I've been there" as it establishes instant credibility.

Describe a memorable deal

When I joined Tandem I was given the job of selling into a large bank in Canada where a competitor dominated. I was out-gunned 20 to 1 by the competing account team and we had never been able to sell to this institution.

After considerable probing I found three people within the bank who would listen to my proposition. I was able to establish credibility and prove that I knew the business, knew how to make it work and that if anything went wrong I would

be able to fix the problem. The greatest satisfaction came from cracking the institution and winning against, what was at the time, the largest computer company on the planet.

"I am Director Financial Services Industry EMEA, NonStop Enterprise Division, HP."

What is the most important thing to learn about your industry?

To win you need to have worked in the industry and learned it as 'one of them'. If you can't do that then you've got to learn as much as you can, but understand that you don't know it all. You need to know what you know, but more importantly you should know what you don't know. You will be found out if you try and pretend you have all the answers! Being honest with your customer builds trust and establishes you as a credible working partner.

Who in your industry do you most admire?

I admire the people who have taught me things on the ground. Don Stuart, Sales Director for Tandem in Canada taught me more about selling in a week than I had ever learnt before or since. Don hired me in from a bank and spent a short, intense period of time teaching me to sell. I've been on many courses in my time and never learnt so much about how to sell, why to sell and when to sell as I did working with Don.

What is the best time of day for a meeting?

For me it is first thing in the morning. Whoever I am meeting with I want them before their day starts as I want them to pay absolute attention. I want my discussion to influence the rest of their day and not the other way around.

Which do you think is most important when winning new business; technical expertise or sales skills?

I fundamentally believe that sales skills will win you the sale. You can have the third best product but still win with sales skills or you can have the best product and not win if you don't have the sales skills.