



Ray Cassar

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 Ray Cassar, Client Business Development Director at Openreach and BT Global Services.

What is your job title and what do you do?

Client Business Development Director. I manage the sales and relationship between Openreach and BT Global Services.

How long have you been in your present role?

I've been in my current role for four months but was previously with BT for over 12 years.

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

Our sales challenge is to keep volumes up on our base products: copper and fibre, fibre-optic cabling for our Ethernet service which is our main growth area, and copper wire for telephone services. We aim to make sure that BT Global Services demand forecast is met and try to generate new ways in which to sell our existing products.

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

I worked with James Maher when he was a Sales Director with BT and he told me that to be successful you must always have a sales plan. If you know who you want to sell to, what the need is, where the growth areas are and exactly how you are going to progress the sale at each step then you are half way to winning the deal before you even start.

Describe a memorable deal

I worked on a deal with Logica to provide its call centre framework. Logica initially wanted to run the call centre platform themselves but by the end of the deal I had managed to demonstrate the benefits of a hosted solution and had influenced the whole infrastructure strategy. I worked on this deal from cradle to grave and was very proud of the hosted solution we provided.

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

The most important thing is that you must understand your customer's requirement. If you don't then you won't be able to help them. Ask yourself why they want what they want – if you can answer that question then you should be successful.

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

The most important thing is listening to your customer and I would say this is a sales skill.

What got you into sales – how did you start?

I spent 3 years as a technology analyst for BT before deciding I wanted to take my expertise and see what it meant to our customers. It was interesting for me to see how my technical knowledge translated to the 'real world'. Once I found out what the salaries were like on the sales side this confirmed my decision to make the move!

What aspect of sales do you find most challenging?

I would say the least exciting bit of the sales is the close and as such this can be a challenge. The fun bit is working with the customer to create a solution that will meet their needs. This is where I thrive as it gives me the opportunity to be creative and innovative. Once this is all decided the final agreement almost always comes down to legal Ts and Cs.

Which sales activity do you enjoy most: hunting or farming?

Working on a project that allows me to be imaginative and innovative plays to my skills – this could be for a new customer or for an existing one.

How can Marketing best serve salespeople?

As salespeople spend most of their time with customers they often have a list of individual customer requirements. The Marketing department's job is to take these 'I wants' from the salesforce, find common themes and find out what can be done to help meet these needs. Marketing must then do what they can as quickly as possible. All too often the opportunity is missed, salespeople's requests are met but the ship has already sailed.

It is often said 'if you build it they will come' but I believe telecommunications is actually the other way round – our job is to find out what our customers need and build it for them.

What is the most exciting development in your industry?

The most exciting development will be the next generation access. The ability to provide high bandwidth and high speed broadband has been proven, the next challenge will be how best to use it, for business but also for consumers. There are already 3D televisions in production for example, imagine watching the 2012 Olympics javelin event in 3D, it is now a strong possibility!