

Secrets of Success: Part 2

In the last issue of *Momentum* we shared with you various tips and ideas that we have picked up over the years while working with a variety of highly successful companies. In this second part of the article we share with you more secrets of success and how they could work for you.

Reach through to your customer's customer

Solutions for Sales' business is sales enablement, which includes Sales Guides that help salespeople to sell a product or service. One of our clients, a large telecommunications equipment provider, came up with the great idea of producing a Sales Guide not for their own salesforce, but for their customers' salesforce. Many companies are in the same position; they sell infrastructure that is used by their customers to provide services to end users. In this case the client's product was used by communications service providers to create service packages. The success of the equipment provider was intimately linked to the success of the service provider in selling more services to more customers, which in turn generates orders for equipment to provide more capacity.

In this case the telecoms equipment provider created a generic Sales Guide which was tailored to each customer by co-branding and customising certain customer-specific information. As well as being a practical tool that helps drive sales, the guide is a constant reminder of the partnership between supplier and customer and demonstrates the supplier's commitment. This is just one example of how you can reach through to your customer's customer.

Change the frame

Many of the companies we have worked with have achieved sales success by changing the frame through which their customers view their products and offerings. For example we have seen a paper manufacturer combating commoditisation of its products by changing the frame through which large printing companies view paper supplies. By introducing specialised papers for different printing processes and proving the operational improvements that are gained by using the right paper they have differentiated their product and changed paper from a homogeneous commodity to a specialised material.

Another way to change the frame is to spot a characteristic of an industry that makes it similar



to another industry, but has not yet been widely recognised. For example, one of our clients said: "let's look at a phone company as if it were a supermarket chain. After all, telcos have stock – circuits and services. They have retail outlets where consumers buy – phone shops, online and telephone sales. They experience strong competition and need to be responsive and innovative. So, how come telcos don't have inventory management systems?" They reasoned that the inventory management system is a key strategic asset of any supermarket, so if telcos are like supermarkets they must need one. So they applied this frame change and grew a multi-million dollar business from it.

At Solutions for Sales we are applying this same approach. We invite Sales and Marketing departments to look at what they do in terms of what salespeople need to sell the solution. Before we started eight years ago very few people knew what sales enablement was. Back then most salespeople had to make do with a stack of information prepared for other audiences;

maybe the brochure, a press release, datasheets, a technical white paper. If they were lucky Marketing created a Sales Presentation. Now that is changing. Increasingly we meet executives with job titles like "Head of Sales Enablement" whose job it is to look at the company's offerings through the frame of the salesperson's needs. Organisations are realising that it pays to invest in tools, materials and development activities that enable the salesforce to bring in the sales.

Find the budget, don't steal it

Do you often find yourself in a situation where your customer has not budgeted for whatever it is you are selling? Your sponsor may have a budget, but it is allocated for other things. Experience has taught us that it is a mistake to try to take a piece of the existing budget.

Your sponsor will have planned spending for the year, made a budget submission and fought to get the budget. They are likely to be strongly committed to the programmes that are funded. When a salesperson tries to "steal" some of that budget they become the enemy.

As the salesperson it is better to make it clear from the start that your project will require extra budget and that you want to work with your sponsor to find that budget. You will support your sponsor in an approach to win discretionary budget for this project. Suddenly you are a friend. You are offering to help your sponsor gain extra budget. He gets positive senior level exposure promoting a strategically important initiative and, if the budget is gained, you have helped him become more powerful. A good basis for a long term relationship.

Use process for revenue assurance

How reliable are your sales forecasts? The best companies use process to cut out the wishful thinking and improve the reliability of sales forecasts. They divide the sales cycle into stages and they identify objective criteria to judge whether a stage has been



reached. The criteria can be actions completed by the salesperson, such as "Completion of outline business case", or actions the customer has taken, such as "Visit Executive Briefing Centre", but in all cases they are objectively verifiable. Obviously, the criteria you look for must be relevant to the stage the sale is supposed to have reached. Formal notification you are on the shortlist is a good objective measure, but you may also want to create activities that both advance the sale and act as tests of the customer's serious intent – the willingness to send key technical staff to a design workshop perhaps.

Build steps like this into your sales process and it becomes a revenue assurance tool.

There is no secret to success

A quote from Dale Carnegie, puts all this in context: "Flaming enthusiasm, backed by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success"

And we would add, learning from your peers.

This article was written by Alan Willis of Solutions for Sales. For information about Solutions for Sales and further useful resources visit www.solutionsforsales.com or call +44 (0)1702 586742.

SolutionsforSales
the sales enablement company

t: +44 (0)1702 586742

e: enquiries@solutionsforsales.com

w: www.solutionsforsales.com