

GOALS: KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Over the years, I've worked with hundreds of sales organizations and I have to tell you that one of the most persistent problems I see is the salespeople really do not know what to do. They've got forty hours a week of prime customer time, and what are they **supposed** to do with it?

Now flip it around...what is the **easiest** thing to do? The easiest thing for salespeople to do is simply call on the customers they know and talk about what they've always talked about. Of course, if you talk to the people you normally talk to, about the products or services you normally talk about, you tend to get some price erosion and declining sales. Seen any of that, lately?

The first thing to do is to start with a clear set of goals that drive sales behaviors.

Start With the Big Picture

One of the first things I do when I work with an organization is to ask the sales manager the following questions:

- What do you want to sell?
- Who do you want to sell it to?
- What does a good order look like?

What do you want to sell? By this, I mean specifics—not statements such as “quality” or “service.” Put together a list of the specific products or services you want them to focus on selling.

Who do you want to sell it to? Each salesperson needs to have a specific list of focus accounts (existing customers and prospects). You want to make sure the sales team is focused in two areas; Specific Accounts and the Amounts of Time you want salespeople to spend on each. For example if you put an account on the list—about how often does the salesperson need to call on the account? Once a week, a couple of times per month or once a quarter?

What does a good order look like? Define “goodness” in terms that relate to orders: size, margin, number of items, in-stock, put-up, etc?

The bottom line on this is, if you tell salespeople what you really want, you are likely to get more of it.

Make the Goals Real

You should create a matrix for your entire group (or company-wide if that is your area of responsibility.) Then, each salesperson should get a chart which details their specific responsibilities.

The second step is to put stuff into boxes which help them see what they need to do. All sales goals can be broken into the following box categories:

EXISTING CUSTOMERS:

Box 1: Are we selling everything we can (of what we currently sell) to all of our existing customers?

Box 2: Are there some extra things we can sell to our existing customers?

NEW CUSTOMERS:

Box 3: Do we want some sales to come from new customers?

Box 4: Do we want to create some new products and sell them to new customers?

How much do we want in each of these boxes?

If you have done this sort of planning effort, you can now work with your sales team to drive activities. For example, if a salesperson has 20% of their sales budget in the new customer area, they need to spend at least 20% of their time (probably more) in prospecting activities. And, if there are significant sales budgets in the new product/service area, is there a need for not only prospecting but also training? Maybe some mandated presentations?

Start with a clear picture of what you want...then communicate it to your sales team. Then, take it one step further and translate the numerical goals into specific sets of activities. Remember, too, when a sports team has problems they tend to fire the coach. A word to the wise...