StrategicLeadership
EfficientMarketing
The Effective Selling System

Solving Prospecting Problems

Filling the pipeline with an adequate number of the right opportunities

Prospecting Problems can't be solved by:

- Talking about them
- Talking about prospecting, or
- Acting in a way that says, "Prospecting is not my job".

The job of a sales leader is results. And, results are the judge. So, prospecting, if it's interfering with our ability to drive results is our job.

Two recent situations in Coaching Clinics convinced us that we need to talk openly and honestly about the role of sales managers as it relates to guaranteeing an adequate flow of the right opportunities for their people.

In the first instance, we suggested that the sales managers, refer some of their teammates to members of *their* network by using our double letter contact approach. To say some of the people in the room were uncomfortable with this would be a gross understatement. In fact, one person said "You mean me? You want me to introduce people in my network to members of my team?" The answer is yes.

In the second situation, we were discussing with a group of people how to lift performance with a specific salesperson. Each time a member of the group identified an idea that would be helpful to this Sales Manager he pushed back. In almost every case he said, "We've already done that, it doesn't work." The sales person we were talking about is in trouble, they are in a slump, and the sales manager isn't accepting responsibility for helping them.

Core Message for Sales Managers
If you can't or won't make rain for your people, if you can't or won't help them close more business, and if your not causing revenue to grow, what is it that you're doing that's so valuable and important?
If you can't or won't help your people with the very things that matter most to them (their production and income) what is it that you're contributing to your organization?

However, if you can and will do those things, you play an important role and you're always going to be well compensated and recognized for adding that value.

Helping Your People Fill Their Pipelines
Sales Leaders should begin with the facts. Strategy without fact is folly and a lot of times when we look at peoples performance we ask the most fundamental question, which is, "What are the real numbers?" Tell me the ratios between your calls, your appointments, your proposals, and your results. A lot of people can't come up with those. Without the facts, executing a plan with confidence is nearly impossible. So, the question then is what facts do we want first?

The Facts We Need To Help Our People Succeed
We need facts about how people utilize their time. Blue time is marketing time – time on the phone, time doing things to secure face-to-face meetings. Green time is revenue-generating time. Look at facts about time. How much time is actually scheduled and utilized for creating more selling opportunities. Then look at the names of all of the people that we've surfaced and determine the net percentage of those people that are actually in our profile, the number that are "right" (we need to define what "right" means and make sure our sales teams understand the types of clients that are ideal for us). From that info, we need to determine what percentage of the "right" people an individual sales person is able to access and determine how they go about accessing them and draw some conclusions about best practices. Of the decision makers who are accessed we want to know how many agreed to see us, and when we completed a serious first meeting. In other words, they were in the profile, they were a decision maker, we were fully prepared, we asked our questions and got the answers, the decision maker agreed to give us the facts truthfully, we had an opportunity to tell our story and we reached some agreement.

We are looking at the flow from a name coming in, to qualification to access, to completing the meeting. Then we need to know the percentage of serious first meetings that result in "real" proposals and recommendations.

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"Real" means they are looked at, reviewed and considered. Look at the percentage that say yes as an average. In other words, how much revenue do we generate?

Handling Pushback (reports, reporting metrics, etc.)
Examine the reports and determine if the pushback is warranted. Sometimes, we're asking for reports and gathering information that doesn't really provide any benefit to anyone. What we really need to do instead of report is measure. We need to measure activities that actually matter to the end result. We need a discussion of real situations. We need people to feel they are getting coaching and help, not that they are filling out reports about how busy they are. Sometimes we need to sit down with people and talk about the opportunities and we need to put the opportunities in intensive care. Sometimes we need to put our people in a state of intensive care, which means we need to overwork with them until we can get them to a higher degree of performance.

Resources Needed to Address a Greater Flow of Sales Opportunities
We need to realize that we need the resources of the company behind us. We need a decision made at a fairly high level of the company that agrees the flow of opportunities is important and necessary to invest in. We need time, systems, data and information. We need a notepad in the hands of each of our sales people with the names of all of the people they have surfaced and developed. Then we need to schedule time to talk about what's really happening with those and coach them.

We need operating models to define the way that we want business done. A lot of times people won't go out and prospect because they actually don't know how to execute a sales plan. We need to talk about the way we do it.

We need to take a look at a more long-term marketing plan. We have a model at Efficient Marketing that is designed to help people think through what the opportunities are and how to pursue them. Our bias is to always have that done jointly between a salesperson and their coach.

We need to schedule time. We need to sit down with our people so they can learn what we want done. We need time to teach, coach and even time to do things with them. Our advice to sales managers is to get out of the office and get out into the field and find out what's really going on and be helpful in this regard.

We need to teach a referral process that really works. Asking people "who do you know" generally doesn't work. But, asking do you know so and so well enough to introduce us, using referrals, introductions and endorsements and the double letter approach works.

We need agreement on and execution of a plan. As an example, go through the elements of the sales action plan which targets, which people what are we going to do, ask, prepare to discuss, what will we ask clients to do, when are we going to do these things).

We need a plan and we need to execute the plan. We need consistent daily execution by both player and coach. We need to be sure marketing activities don't bread down simply because we are busy or too successful.

We need to be sure our people are smart enough and disciplined enough to continue to market even when their pipelines are full. ■

www.efficientmarketing.com
22911 sw Bland Circle
West Linn, OR 97068
PHONE: 503.722.6650 FAX: 503.742.0328