

YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

“Increasing Your Sales Leadership Skills...Is Your Team Ready To Out-Sell Your Competition in 2008?”

by Jim Pancero

Is your sales team ready for 2008? How much planning and organizing has each sales rep already completed for their entire territory...or at least their top three to five accounts?

This month's sales article talks about how to develop a simple full year organization account plan for your rep's most important customers. A critical job for you as their sales coach is to help lead them through these support planning efforts.

The majority of sales people, even the more experienced ones still tend to think and plan only one move or call ahead. Your job as their coach is to now get them thinking...and seeing their territory as a multiple stepped full year selling process.

How Consistent Are Your Customer Support Efforts?

You have two important goals this time of year as the leader of a sales team. Your first goal is to make sure each sales rep develops a realistic full year support and growth plan for their most important accounts.

Having a thought-out full year support and growth plan can help contribute to a stronger competitive advantage and differentiation in your markets. A sales rep implementing a full year's multiple stepped account plan appears to customers to be more organized and more proactive in their support efforts. An organized sales pro following a thought-out plan also tends to be perceived as being more interested and committed in their customer's business and to be more caring and professional.

An additional goal this time of year is to insure your sales team's efforts are consistent and effective. You'll most likely see a wide variance in both the completeness and quality of the planning done by each rep if they all go off to individually develop their support and growth plans.

Your job as their leader is to make sure all the developed plans are reasonable, complete and balanced. How much support and service does a customer deserve to receive? Consider organizing your top customers into a few categories based on either gross sales or profitability. Also identify how much support a customer at each major level should be receiving. How many days of technical training or how many visits from a senior manager does a customer deserve in a year if they're annually purchasing a million dollars from your company?

You need to make sure your team is maximizing their offers of support to their best accounts, but still offered so that customers at a similar sales level will also receive similar support. If you allow each individual to decide support levels for their accounts then fairly

quickly you'll notice some favored customers will be receiving twice the support for the profits they contribute while other, more profitable, accounts are being under-supported.

Suggestions To Help Lead Your Team

Meet with your team to develop your plans for your most important accounts in 2008. Start off by helping your team develop the full year support form discussed in the sales article.

Identify several sales volume or profitability levels for your larger accounts and discuss what types and how much support each level should be receiving.

Next take an inventory of the support volumes your company can actually provide. No company has unlimited resources available to support and grow their customers. It doesn't make sense for everyone to be including days of technical training for all their accounts if you don't have the technical personnel in place or available to actively work and train your customers.

Have your reps share their account plans with the rest of your team so all can learn as well as offer additional ideas and suggestions to help improve their fellow rep's account plans.

Once these plans are finalized consider summarizing all of the support requests into a single list so you can discuss your team's support requirements with the individuals responsible to insure they can and will support you to the levels your team needs.

Your job as a sales leader is not to do this critical account planning for them. They need to own their plans if you want them to actually follow them to success. Your job is to help them organize, standardize and then focus the support available from your company so your entire team maximizes their sales volumes and profitability over the full year.

We know your good as the leader of your team. Now the question for this month is...are you good enough to lead them through the development...and implementation of a plan to out-think and out sell your competition?

Jim Pancero