

# YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

## ***“You Can Always Sell More...By Being A Stronger Leader In A Weaker Economy”***

by Jim Pancero

So how's business? Are you and your sales team being impacted by the current downturn in the economy? Congratulations if you and your company are still going strong...because most aren't today. The majority of sales people are experiencing some degree of reduced sales right now.

No matter how the economy is affecting you and your team, your job as their manager/coach is to help them to always sell more. So what's it take to lead a sales team to maximize their sales? The answer is really straight-forward...work harder and smarter than your competitors so you can out-sell and out-position your competition.

But getting a sales team to accomplish these simple efforts becomes even more challenging during a tougher economy. Sales reps tend to be emotional. They work harder and get giddy with excitement when times are strong and everyone's buying. But they're also the ones who tend to be negatively affected by any down-turn in sales. When markets get tougher most sales reps also tend to get depressed, work less and become reactive in their account coverage just going through the same old motions while they wait for their market and sales to improve.

Where's the current mental state of your sales team? Are they working as hard, and as smart as they can right now? Do you think they can get better?

### **A Weak Economy Demands A Strong Leader**

A weak economy demands a strong leader. Now is the time for you as a manager/coach to increase efforts to coach and lead your team. What can you do to increase your leadership efforts during this tougher economy and more challenging sales environment?

### **The Six Steps To Improving Your Sales Team's Efforts And Performance**

Improving your sales team's efforts and performance requires you to increase the intensity and focus of your sales coaching and leadership. Consider implementing the following six steps to help your sales team “sell their way out of this tougher economy.”

#### **Step 1 - Become A “SWAT” Team**

The first step to selling your way out of this tougher economy starts with you getting your people to act and feel like they're part of a tight team of professionals. Most sales organizations are run as a collection of independent gun-fighters instead of as a cohesive “SWAT” team. Police “SWAT” teams have a philosophy of “what one learns all benefit.” The majority of sales people are independent loners and tend to do very little sharing of

selling skills or ideas with their peers. But this is the most critical time to help strengthen and improve the skills and success of all members of your team.

There's comfort in numbers. You need your people trusting and relying on each other through this challenging time by creating a "We can get through this together" team attitude. It's easier to generate a positive selling attitude and to keep everyone's energy up when team members can share their challenges with each other. You'll also notice a number of your people will work harder and will take more risks when they feel they're under the protection of their team.

Hold weekly face-to-face or telephone coaching conference meetings with your team. Talk about how you want to lead them through brainstorming, planning and training to help them "sell their way out of this tougher economy." Why not combine the IQ's of your entire team so they can all benefit from working together as a "SWAT" team of selling professionals?

## **Step 2 - Get Them Positive And Energized**

Once you have them functioning as a team then your next step is to get them to feel more positive and energized. They need to see some positives with their current environment no matter how bad sales have become. They need to feel empowered and to see and believe it is possible to increase their efforts and results. They need to see and believe there truly is light at the end of the economic tunnel. Positive and energized sales people work harder and will take more risks to initiate customer conversations.

This is the time to identify what's happening in your markets and that positive opportunities still exist. Even an "at least our sales suck less than our competition" can still be enough to help begin improving the attitude, energy and work efforts of your team.

You as their leader will be the most important contributor to any change in attitude or energy. Consider how you communicate with your team. What percentage of your communications to your team is positive vs. negative? This is a critical time to increase your affirmations and signs of support for your team. The more comfortable and trusting they are in their own skills and abilities then the harder they'll want to work in their territory. Your balance of positive to negative feedback will set the emotional energy level of your entire team. What can you do and say by focusing on the positives that'll help inject increased energy into your team?

## **Step 3 - Get Them Busy**

A major contributor to depression is inactivity. One of the ways to re-energize your team and their selling efforts is to lead them to increase their work efforts. It's impossible to stay depressed and active at the same time.

If business is slow and nobody wants to talk to you then get them doing something...anything to keep their energy up and to refocus their selling efforts. Two great areas to invest more energy and effort into is maintaining and growing your most important accounts and new business prospecting.

#### **Step 4 - Get Them Better Sales Tools**

A tougher market demands stronger and tougher sales tools. What can you do to improve your customer references? How's your website working as a sale "brochure?" Are you still using any printed materials and can they be updated or improved? Even though budgets are tight right now this is still a critical time to take steps to improve your team's selling "tool chest."

Also consider assembling some type of special pricing package or bundling of services. One of the ways to maintain your market share in a tougher market is to proactively go to market with some unique package of added values or extras to increase your value offerings for the price your customers will pay.

#### **Step 5 - Get Them Stronger Selling Skills**

A slower market is the best time to train because your team is otherwise less active than in stronger times. Helping increase the selling skills of your people is also a great way to re-energize and re-focus your team.

Sales training doesn't have to be expensive. Consider working your team through the sales article offered each month in this newsletter or an audio or video training series. The article, audio or video provides the content ideas and then you, as their manager, lead them through a discussion of how we can best implement these ideas.

#### **Step 6 - Get Them Stronger Sales Leadership**

Weaker times require stronger leadership. This is the time your people need the emotional support and strategic direction you as a coach and leader can provide. Are you doing everything you can to help your people maximize the business that's still available?

We know you're good....now the question is...are you good enough...and strong enough to lead your sales team out of this tougher economy?

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