

YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

“You Can Always Sell More...If You Can Get a Jump on Your 2008 Account Plans”

It's January...the beginning of 2008! Even if your business is on a fiscal year and this isn't the official beginning of your selling year, it's still the beginning of what your customers and prospects are going to be expecting from you over the next twelve months. How organized and structured are your selling plans and processes for this coming year?

The sad reality is the vast majority of sales people have no significant plans or processes thought out and organized for their coming year...even for their best accounts! How much of 2008 do you have planned out, organized and ready to implement?

How many moves ahead are your toughest competitors thinking? Is there any potential that out-thinking and out-planning your competitors could help increase both your competitive advantage and selling success in 2008?

Suggestions to Out-think and Out-plan Your Competition

If this is the first time you've worked on full year account planning then you might want to start off only developing detailed plans for your top three to five accounts. If that planning goes well you can always expand your planning to include more accounts later.

The first suggestion is to keep it simple. We're not talking about twenty page detailed plans for each account. We want to focus on the "big stuff" for these top customers or prospects. You can develop an effective plan for the entire year on just a single page.

Using one page per customer, draw five vertical columns on a sheet of paper. The first column on the left side of the page will be the categories of support efforts you've planned for this customer. Label the next four vertical columns "Quarters one through four." Developing a plan for each of this year's four quarters can still allow you to develop a comprehensive, multi-stepped support and selling plan for the entire year while still giving you some implementation flexibility as your year progresses.

Draw eight to ten horizontal rows down the page so you can list and organize your various account support and selling plans. Each industry has support categories that're unique to their business. But general support categories to list into these horizontal rows (one category per row) might include things like "Increasing usage of products already being purchased (from us)," "Plans to improve my profit margins," and "Social/relationship building efforts." Another horizontal row could be "New products to introduce."

Selling today involves more than just the efforts of the sales rep. So how about adding a row for "Engineering and technical support services?" What about "How to get 'Higher, wider and deeper (within the account)?"

This is a great time to utilize the expertise of the rest of your team to identify all the major support efforts your best customers should frankly already be receiving.

Once you've organized your one page account planning form you now want to organize your plans to support and grow each of your top accounts. Developing a solid plan for the year...and then actually following it can put you ahead of most competitors going after the same business.

Share your full year support plans for your top accounts with your manager and the rest of your sales team so all can benefit from the planning and creativity of your entire team. Your sales manager can also help gain the support and involvement of the rest of your company to your new level of ongoing support and selling.

Having an organized plan for your most important accounts will help you think and plan more moves ahead than either your competition or your customer. Out-thinking and out-planning your competitors can also help you become more proactive in your selling efforts. Customers tend to be more impressed and satisfied with your involvement and their relationship with your company when they see your ongoing support spread across the entire year. Look how ineffective it would be if you did significant support efforts for the first quarter...but then did nothing else for the rest of the year.

Thinking, planning and implementing an organized full year plan can provide the structure and the presence for you to increase your competitive uniqueness and market differential. So is now the time for you to start developing your plan to out-support and out-sell your competition?

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