



How to Motivate Small Business Salespeople When Times Are Tough

Invest In Achieving Sales Results Now and Win
Long Term Benefits!

by

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Most small business organizations are not changing the way they motivate those whose job it is to sell, although they should and many want to, but are flummoxed in making the investment to motivate.

Efforts to boost sales in these times via reduced prices, an added spiff, higher commission rate or trips to the beach will be short lived, if at all, and certainly could wound any future sales programs. And if it doesn't work, then what carrot do you offer?

A leading research group conducted a survey of over 15,000 salespeople, within every major industry segment and in various selling roles; in an effort to know the primary areas that salespeople would most focus on during this selling cycle.

Reflecting on previous results, survey participants sited these challenges; generating business,

negotiations, closing business, managing relationships and expanding relationships. Well excuse me (I was thinking of Steve Martin), but aren't those the same challenges during good times, or any times for that matter?

And, from that list, the top two hurdles were 1) Account Management: finding additional ways to add value, and 2) Expanding Relationships: becoming a 'trusted advisor'.

The survey doesn't reveal business size, but I have observed that many operations ignore their unique strength; the ability to establish relationships and charge for personalization. The real decision maker, the economic buyer, is not always the purchaser of your products and / or services. The economic buyer has both time and money. Closing the sale is not typically a competition of resources (unless you allow it); it is a competition of priorities. A buyer's time and money are being given to

someone, right? So, you have to manifest more value to win that competition.

At the core of my belief system is that **all achievement**, and in this case, the power to motivate salespeople to overcome tough times and deliver customer perceived value – **begins with...the right 1) mind-set, the right 2) skill-set and the right 3) action-set.**

This is exemplified in this outline of how I have successfully motivated salespeople and the components of what I would do in these times.

- ✓ **Look of Success:** An investment by the employer; bring in a personal image expert, and invest in clothing, makeup, hair, etc. Psychologists have proven time and again that if we think we look like a winner it is reflected in our behavior and everyone who comes in contact with us senses this same winning aura. Today's 'celebrity' look, worn on Saturday night or the 'same clothes I wore to buy groceries' don't get it for top performing salespeople.
- ✓ **Sales Managers Sell:** Today, Sales Managers who do not perform the same job in part (albeit a smaller book of business), as the people they manage do not have the same leadership cred as those who do. It is almost impossible to really know what it is like out

there from behind a desk. Consider providing the sales manager an assistant to make his management time more efficient and to free up time to sell.

- ✓ **Train and Prepare:** Particularly in tough times, training costs should not be cut. The harder the times, the more important is training. The success or failure of 90% of all sales calls is determined prior to the first call.
- ✓ **Over-communicate:** Contact every past, present and future customer and key vendors. Act with enthusiasm, by having an engaging, positive contact. Talk about ways to add value and becoming that trusted source. Your company will either get more business now, or be first in mind when they pull the trigger.

Years ago, United Airlines (this is not a plug) had a television commercial in which the message was about the loss of customer relationships
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ6Z8kcoi-E>.

Given the opportunity, I will win the value competition and relegate technology as a tool, as compared to any organization that may have allowed technology to replace relationships.

There are less repeat car brand buyers today compared to any time

in recent history. The result of competing models, international competition, environmental and financial concerns are creating highly individualistic buyers.

What is your organization doing to have the look and feel of a winner, **[mind-set]**, in being prepared to deliver added value **[skill-set]** and to become the trusted advisor **[action-set]**, so that your past, present and future customer continues to want you?