

Growing Revenues

ARE YOU PARTICIPATING IN THE RECESSION?

by Walker McKay

Are you participating in the recession? Or have you decided to forge ahead and keep selling no matter what other people are saying? The media and our new President have declared that our economy is sinking like the Titanic. The good news is that you don't have to go down with the ship. You have clear access to a lifeboat: you and your salespeople's personal sales activities and behaviors.

Do you have a consistent plan of prospecting activities? The economy has slowed but it has not come to a halt. People are still buying, which means that some people are still selling. If you are not among those still selling, perhaps you are waiting for the market to save you, but it won't. Only the combination of a steady mix of appropriate prospecting activities and a systematic selling process will save you in this economy.

What is the appropriate mix of activities for your business? It is probably different than it used to be. Now, people are more value conscious and are more cautious about where and with whom they spend their money. It is easy to feel busy today, playing defense with our existing customer base. True winners are building their business now, when the times are tough. They are growing their market share at their competitors' expense by doing the hard things that others are not willing to do.

Who are your company's ideal prospects and what are you and your salespeople doing to get in front of them? When your salespeople do get in front of them, what are they doing? When the prospect says, "Why should I buy from you?" what are they saying? And when they return from the call and say, "Boss, I got one!", what does that mean?

The only way to know for sure is to have a system, a repeatable, flexible, coachable model that will allow the salesperson to reliably qualify or disqualify a prospect. Your selling system should include, at a minimum, a way to really separate yourself from your competitors. And I do not mean better features and benefits. It means that your sales people have a way of building trust with your prospects quickly, getting prospects to share not only problems, but also how those problems are impacting them personally. This system should also allow your salespeople to help your prospects figure out and share how much those problems are costing them and how much they would be willing to invest to make the problem go away. It would also allow your salespeople to learn, early in the process, how the prospect will make the decision whether or not to buy from your company. How much time do we waste with prospects that are interested in getting our precious information, like pricing, only to use it to go back to their current provider and get a better deal?

What's your company's current system for selling? Really... If you asked your salespeople to tell you their system for developing real trust with their prospects early in the selling cycle, what would they say? Would their answers be consistent? If I asked them to share their system to pro actively generate true referrals, not just a list of names, what would they say? What evidence do you have to see that whatever they tell you is the truth?

As business owners, there is a lot we cannot control. Politics, the economy, our competition, even our customers are not in our control. All we do control is what we do and how we react to things. To achieve sales success in this changing economy, you must create your own market, and hire and retain the best people and give them the best set of tools for success in this "interesting" time. That is the way to build a sales team that is as solid as a nuclear submarine.

After all, who wants to participate in a recession?

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