

Innovatorstraction's Weblog

Just another WordPress.com weblog

Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions

Posted on [December 1, 2010](#) | [1 comment](#)

I recently read the book Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions by Keith Rosen. I thought the author made some good points. As I understand his approach, it seems to put the burden back on the sales rep, and his way of doing this works well with my sales management style. This is probably one of the reasons I liked the book.

The author suggests that sales managers spend their time asking questions instead of giving orders. I found this interesting, so I kept reading. He suggests that sales managers start by asking what the rep wants to accomplish in life. What are their goals? How much money would they like to make? Why? This then leads to other questions. What can the sales manager do to assist them in reaching these goals? The coaching sessions can start there and get, through multiple coaching sessions, into more and more detailed questions about what the rep needs to do in order to achieve their goals. What activities do they need to engage in or what tactics do they need to adopt in order to achieve their goals? And how can the manager help?

I believe that this is an effective coaching strategy. I was a sales rep for fifteen years and a VP of Sales for about ten years. I've seen sales management from both sides and I think this is an excellent way for a good sales manager to frame the issue. It really puts the responsibility back on the rep. This is where it should be. If the rep is ultimately not willing to step up to the hard work necessary to get the job done then they should find another line of work. If the rep is willing to step up then the manager should be supportive.

Either way the sales manager's sincere desire should be to assist and support the sales reps.

Perhaps that's why I liked the book.

Hope this helps,

Steve

Posted in [Books](#)

[1 Comment](#)

The Sales Learning Curve

Posted on [October 30, 2010](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

I recently ran across an article called The Sales Learning Curve from the Harvard Business Review that I thought had a lot of relevance for startup sales. It's from a July 2006 issue and it's written by Mark Leslie and Charles A. Holloway. They talk about the need to start with a small sales force that can figure out the sales methodology first. Only when the sales cycle is well understood should a startup ramp up a sales force.

Here is a quote from the article:

"When a company launches a new product, the temptation is to immediately ramp up sales force capacity to acquire customers as quickly as possible. Yet in our 25 years of experience with start-ups and new-product introductions, we've found that hiring a full sales force too fast just leads the company to burn through cash and fail to meet revenue expectations. Before it can sell the product efficiently, the entire organization needs to learn how customers will acquire and use it, a process we call the sales learning curve."

Here is a link to the article:

<http://www.signallake.com/innovation/SalesLearningCurve.pdf>

Hope this helps,

Steve

Posted in [Uncategorized](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

The Intelligent Entrepreneur

Posted on [October 24, 2010](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

I recently read the book The Intelligent Entrepreneur by Bill Murphy and I highly recommend it for anyone involved in a startup. The author follows three successful entrepreneurs from before they went to Harvard Business School through to today. Along the way he makes several good points. Among these is the fact that, as an entrepreneur, the business world will continually throw you curves and you will need to be able to react to them. He points out that you will need the will and persistence to see it through. In addition you will need to continually find ways to deal with obstacles, issues and challenges.

The book is written from the perspective of the entrepreneurs, who each gave generously of their time (and access to their network of associates). This allows the reader to see the decision points from where the entrepreneurs stood as they made the decision first to get an MBA and then to start their own business. It also allows the reader to see how they reacted to the challenges their businesses faced.

Any potential entrepreneur could benefit from these lessons.

Hope this helps,

Steve

Posted in [Books](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

Marketing in the Moment

Posted on [August 22, 2010](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

I wrote an earlier blog entry on useful marketing books covering different aspects of using social media for marketing. These marketing tactics have generally been referred to as Web 2.0 marketing. I'm currently reading Michael Tasner's Marketing in the Moment.

This is an excellent guide to next-generation Web, online, mobile and social marketing. The term he uses for this is Web 3.0 marketing. What I particularly like about the book is a lot of practical tactics and specific steps on how to get started. I've read a lot of marketing and sales books and this is one of the most well-written and useful. He includes specific To Do Lists at the end of each chapter and a website with resources that supplement the book.

Hope this helps,

Steve

Posted in [Books](#), [marketing](#)

Tagged [Books](#), [marketing](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

[Follow](#)

Multiple Touches

Posted on [October 31, 2009](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Even though interruption advertising is dead, there are still some things we can learn from the old model. One of them is known as “multiple touches”. In the old model the multiple touches were different ways that the same ad was shown to consumers. If the same ad was shown on TV, in magazines, on billboards or other media the message would eventually get through. I’ve applied this model to my current sales crew and it is working.

In the old days of software sales a team of two traveled to almost every meeting; a sales rep and a sales engineer. This was a time-consuming and thus costly model. It worked when software sales to the enterprise produced large up-front payments. These large up-front payments allowed software companies to pay the large expenses involved. These expenses included paying the rep six figures, paying the sales engineer somewhat less and paying travel expenses for both of them. In addition, there needed to be a large number of these teams because traveling to meet prospects in person restricts the amount of territory that one sales team can cover.

The world has changed since those days. Now we have virtual meetings enabled by technology like WebEx, GoToMeeting, Live Meeting, etc. And software is typically delivered via a subscription model which does not produce large up-front payments. Software sales organizations have had to adapt to a different model. My reps use a combination of phone, internet and SOME travel to get the job done. We spend a lot of time on the phone with prospects and using the internet to have virtual meetings. This allows one rep to cover a large (multi-state) territory. One rep can have as many as three or four meetings per day when they don’t have to waste time traveling.

I strongly encourage the use of virtual meetings for qualifying calls. It’s much easier to sell someone on the idea of spending half an hour or less on a virtual meeting to see if the product is even a good fit for them than it is to convince them to set up an in-person meeting where they will risk wasting at least an hour. Even if the item being sold is a high-ticket item, I would encourage the use of virtual meetings for qualifying meetings. Use virtual meetings to weed out the ones who are not going to buy and then travel to see the prospects who are well qualified. This is a more efficient use of resources.

In this new model even sales engineering resources can be leveraged much more effectively. One sales engineer can be involved in multiple virtual sales meetings from a single location and thus used to cover a wider territory. However, we have found that there are limits to this model. The human touch still counts. People buy from people they like, and this has not changed.

Given the lower cost of software these days we seldom travel to see just one client. What we do is use the trade shows to maximize the investment we make with our travel budget. Trade shows are places where large numbers of potential buyers gather in one place. This allows us to have multiple meetings in a single trip and get the most from our sales and marketing investment. A trade show not only allows us to meet new prospects, we can also arrange to meet current prospects for lunch or dinner while we are all in the same place.

These multiple touches are the key. Just using the phones and web alone is not enough. We’ve noticed that some deals will stall. Then we meet the people in person at a trade show and the deal is no longer stalled. We still need to do all the work on the phones and in virtual meetings to create the opportunity in the first place, but creating a real relationship with a person helps to close more of the deals.

Hope this helps

Steve

Posted in [Sales](#)

Tagged [Sales](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

Control and Momentum

Posted on [August 3, 2009](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

[Follow](#)

Use the answers to the three questions to maintain the momentum of the sales cycle and your control over it. Once the deal loses momentum it's hard to get it back. Don't let that happen. If you really have answers to the three questions then you should be able to do this. If the deal stalls ask yourself and then the prospect if something has changed. Is there still a reason to buy anything? Is there really still a reason to buy from us? Is there really still a reason to buy now? If so, then ask them to help you understand if you have really done your homework and try to figure out why the deal stalled. There is power in the answers to the three questions. The answers should allow you to help your champion and executive sponsor overcome the hurdles to getting you a purchase order. Keep in mind that every quarter there will always be competing needs which will become alternative uses for the budget dollars you are after. You will need to maintain control and momentum in order to become the budget item that wins out over these other competing budget items.

There is a good book which goes in detail into how to maintain control and momentum. It's called The Maverick Selling Method: Simplifying the Complex Sale by Brian Burns.

Hope this helps,

Steve

Posted in [Books](#), [Sales](#)

[Leave a comment](#)

Tagged [Books](#), [Sales](#), [three questions](#)

The Multiplier Effect

Posted on [July 9, 2009](#) | [3 comments](#)

The following post is an excerpt from a sales training webinar which I created and hosted a few months ago. In a recent post I mentioned that there is a multiplier effect which comes from placing content on the web that leads back to your website. This post is to expand on that point.

If you are not online, you do not exist. When my family moved to St. Louis in 1980, my mom looked in the Yellow Pages for a plumber. For her, if the plumber was not in the phone book he did not exist. And if he had a bigger ad in the Yellow Pages, that was better. Internet search has become our version of the Yellow Pages. When we know what we want we use a search engine like Google to find the right vendor.

As a vendor, there are two things you need to do in order to get qualified leads:

1. Have a website (and preferably one which is optimized for the search engines).
2. Drive traffic to your website.

I'm not a Search Engine Optimization expert. There is an entire industry devoted to SEO so I will not try to cover that here. This post is about driving traffic to your website. This, of course, assumes that you HAVE a website. Remember, if you're not online you do not exist.

The way to drive traffic to your website is to place content on the web which will lead potential prospects back to your website. This content will be found and indexed by the search engines so that anyone searching for what you do is more likely to find some of it and that will lead them back to you and/or your website.

Stuart Mease is a great example of this. Who is Stuart Mease? I'm glad you asked. Stuart Mease is an economic developer in Roanoke, Virginia. His job is to attract businesses and jobs to Roanoke. Roanoke is geographically isolated. You have to really work at it to get there. It's not like Chicago or Atlanta or Dallas. You will not be connecting through Roanoke to get someplace else. Knowing that Roanoke is geographically isolated, Stuart realized that he had to harness the power of internet search to promote Roanoke as a place to locate a new facility.

So Stuart uses (among other things) blogging, micro-blogging, social media, video and other creative ideas to place content on the web. Each additional bit of content placed out there on the web has a multiplier effect. This is similar to the progression of the number of connections between nodes of a network. As the number of nodes increases the number of connections increases geometrically. As the number of nodes in a network goes from 2 to 4 to 6 to 8 the number of connections goes from 1 to 6 to 30 to

[Follow](#)

56. Stuart gets results for Roanoke by casting a wide net of nuggets for searchers to stumble over and that all lead back to the Roanoke website. All of this stuff gets indexed by the search engines and all of the links and traffic and blog posts combine to raise Stuart's rankings in the search results. All of this raises the visibility of Roanoke on the internet. Without it, Roanoke would not exist.

And he produces results. I recently went to type in [stuart mease](#) as a search term. I got as far as [stuart mea](#) and the Google interface offered to complete the term [stuart mease](#) and informed me that there were over 25,000 results for the search term [stuart mease](#) and if I was specific enough to search for [stuart mease roanoke](#) I still got over 10,000 results.

Stuart Mease is one person with no staff. He accomplishes this feat by using blogging, tweeting and keeping up with other social media and websites. As the number of blog posts, tweets, YouTube videos, etc. goes up, the number of potential links and therefore results goes up exponentially. This is the multiplier effect.

All of us who are in sales can learn from Stuart's example. If one person in Roanoke can create this much visibility on the web, what could a vendor (large or small) do if they used the same strategy?

Hope this helps

Steve

Posted in [marketing](#)

3 Comments

Tagged [marketing](#)

 Follow