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sales 'all together, one at a time?' – I don't think so

SOME SOLID TIPS TO KEEP YOUR SALES REVENUE STEADY

'All together, one at a time' is a popular 'British' phrase that describes a disorganised approach to almost any task or project not to mention delivering a company's Sales Strategy

Judging by the increase in the number of telephone calls I have received over the past few months, it flags up that far too many companies – and I include the big boys from various industries in this – have defaulted to disorganised sales tactics which includes a shot gun approach in what I can only interpret as a measure of panic in seeking business.

The worst of the many negative comments that crossed my desk was "we have completely rewritten our sales plan" whatever that meant. A few curious enquiries got an equally confused response. So I was left to guess if it meant selling to new segments, ditching old products and launching new ones, ramping up the discounts and so on.

The foundation of your sales strategy, like the over arching vision and mission, should remain intact. It is after all what your brand is all about – now is not the time to mess with that. Improve it 'yes', mess with it 'no'.

So where does this leave the sales approach during these "unprecedented times". That is the last time I will use the 'un' word as I am sick and tired of hearing it.

I was talking with Dave Kurlan, President of the Objective Management Group and founder of a successful range of Sales Evaluation and Development tools which have been helping companies over the past 25+ years to ensure the sales teams are working at optimum level even in these tough times. The key is having the right people in the team allocated to right roles within the sales team and trained for that roll to capitalise on their identified potential.

Dave's expert view is there are dozens of skills, attributes, abilities, methods and techniques in selling. The 10 most important competencies for every salesperson in every industry on every call, every day may surprise you. You'll notice that even a hard core sales guy like Dave doesn't have closing in the top 10. "Wow you say we have just run a closing workshop" That's a pity because closing wasn't the problem, it was elsewhere in the sales process. If you can do the 20 things on this list, closing takes care of itself!

To start with focus on quality calls and not quantity calls. That might mean you make fewer calls but they are existing and/or potential clients that can buy from you. Ramping up the quantity number i.e. call anyone and everyone will result in non or badly qualified leads. That's a big mistake unless you are in the low margin, high turnover business.

These tips are not a walk in the park and not an overnight fix. In fact those companies that have these tips already in place will do better consistently over time and certainly through the next 24 months or so.

So Dave Kurlan's 'must do' check list is:-

1. **COMMITMENT** – you have to do whatever it takes to get the results you want. Anything short of whatever it takes is a failure.
2. **CONSISTENCY** – it's not how good you are its how often you try.
3. **BE FEARLESS** – Don't let your fears prevent you from doing anything on this list.
4. **HUNT FOR NEW BUSINESS.** Always prospect.
5. **DEVELOP GREAT RELATIONSHIPS** – be likeable, trustworthy, credible and sincere.
6. **DIFFERENTIATE** – stand out from your competition by doing what's on this list extremely well.

7. **SELL VALUE** – don't sell on price. The value added is what you alone can bring to the table.
8. **LISTEN – VERY CAREFULLY.** Listen as much for what isn't said as you do to what is said.
9. **ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS** – good, tough, timely questions. Especially questions to which your prospects don't know the answers.
10. **QUALIFY THOROUGHLY.**

FOR SALES MANAGERS

11. **ACCOUNTABILITY** – Hold them accountable to something measurable every day.
12. **COACHING** – Pre call strategizing and post call debriefing – every day.
13. **MOTIVATING** – Inspect their attitude and level of readiness every day and supplement with external motivation when needed.
14. **GROWING** – Your people must improve every month. Closing sales for them does not help them improve.
15. **RECRUITING** – Identifying, finding, interviewing, hiring and retaining stronger people than those you already have.
16. **PIPELINE MANAGEMENT** – Manage the quantity, volume, quality, stage, balance and movement of everyone's pipeline – daily.
17. **SALES MEETINGS** – Make them memorable, short, motivational, informational and instructional.
18. **TRAINING** – provide plenty of outside training. Make sure it's actionable, memorable, powerful and contains lots of role-playing. A good trainer provides more value than good content.
19. **TOOLS** – Your salespeople should have the best of CRM, an executable selling process, a pipeline tool, a tool to measure activity and a tool to qualify opportunities.
20. **SUPPORT** – What your salespeople need so they can be knowledgeable, confident, successful and timely in everything they do.

Dave Kurlan has 30+ years of stats and case histories that prove conclusively this approach works, but you need to have the right people. Do you? And if so, how do you know you know you have the right people? Do not rely on the sales figures only!

You do not need to be a rocket scientist to work out that the responsibility for the majority of getting a successful outcome rests on the shoulders of your Sales Management.

And that creates a further dilemma. Just how well are your sales management trained to deal with this? If you were to answer "I don't know", maybe now is a good time to find out before your sales blood pressure drops to dangerous levels. ■

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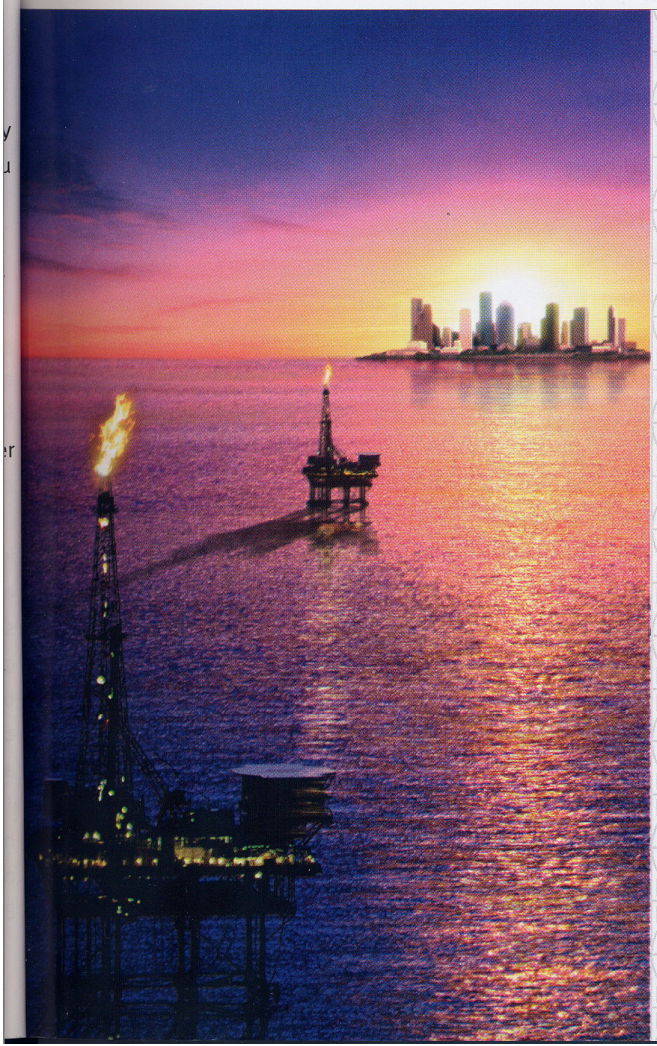

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