

## Rockwood on Selling AND What to Do About It

If it is allowed, selling can become an all consuming, inefficient use of human resources complete with onerous quotas and reporting. When that happens, quantity, rather than quality, of customer contacts becomes emphasized and sales people are forced to find creative ways to beat the system to look good and fatten their paychecks.

As a consultant with over 30 years of experience in marketing and sales automation and new product introduction, Tom Rockwood and his firm Rockwood Management Services know that there are better ways to accomplish sales objectives.

Selling revolves around The Sales Funnel. Those who are familiar with the concept realize that much effort, including cold calling and direct marketing, can be expended to fill the top of the funnel with leads that, when they are refined and nurtured, will turn into sales that come out the bottom end. It is a numbers game where 100 percent coming in, ultimately becomes some small number coming out, such as 3 percent. Obviously, if anyone really knew in the beginning which opportunities would ultimately bear fruit, the process would indeed be simple. Unfortunately, things do not work out that way. However, if the objective is more sales and it better be, the choice might look obvious, either increase the volume going in the top or increase the percentage making it through the process.

Our approach is to do both, but to first improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process rather than increasing the volume of what often turn out to include an excess of ill conceived efforts. Less can, in fact, be turned into more. This ultimately requires starting with trained professionals using highly qualified leads and cutting out the labor intensive aspects of overall sales and post-sales efforts. This sounds like a tall order. It is, but implemented over time, it is absolutely doable as well as being absolutely essential.

Here is a brief list of things that we have found through our consulting to be especially effective and productive in getting the greatest overall return on marketing and sales investments. Some are required from the git-go to avoid establishing a reputation for wasting everyone's time. Let us help you decide which ones.

- Use of databases and Customer Relationship Management Systems to assist in setting and managing customer priorities
- Tools for customer self-service including well-indexed references and support resources for both pre-sale (application, purchase justification and general questions) and post-sale (installation, training, troubleshooting and maintenance)
- The use of role playing in:
  - Interviewing and screening prospective sales personnel
  - Training and building general, but essential, sales techniques and skills
  - Rehearsing and preparing for sales calls
- Sales Training, backed up by role playing and hands-on workshops, builds awareness of:
  - General product features and functions
  - Product application case studies highlighting Total-Value propositions including total cost of ownership (TCO), return on investment (ROI) and competitive issues
- Competitor/competitive research and analysis can be invaluable to avoid being blindsided. However, it takes time to monitor and research what is in the trade press and available in competitor websites and other on-line sources. Sales people also must be trained to listen and report back what customers say about competitors.

- Customer Satisfaction Measurement and Feedback Programs collect and follow up on customer ideas and concerns. They can be a great way to find ideas for new and changed products.
- Channel Partner Programs. Working with market influencers including consultants, analysts, solution partners and integrators is a great low-cost way to build market awareness and increase sales opportunities. Rockwood has its own proprietary database of global market influencers (largely consultants). It has been used to support its vendor client engagements since we have been in business. Many are household names.

Bad habits can be difficult to overcome, especially if they are allowed to perpetuate themselves. What is important is to address realities, set priorities and begin to address and fix the most important deficiencies. Rome wasn't built overnight; neither will a superior marketing and sales operation. What is unacceptable is accepting a status quo that will result in long-term failure by repeating the same mistakes.

What can Rockwood do for your marketing, sales and product and business development? Contact us to find out.

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