

How to Deliver More...With Less

by Jonathan Farrington

I want you to deliver more:

- Profit
- Sales
- Productivity
- Customers
- Quality

And, by the way, you've got less:

- Money
- Staff
- Time

Sound familiar? Year on year, sales leaders are being asked to achieve improved results with fewer resources or, at least, more from the same. To most sales directors, the attainment of a permanent increase in sales revenues must seem like the search for eternal youth: unending and, ultimately, unavailing.

Unfortunately, the task of selling never becomes any easier, and as competition continues to intensify, sales people will face issues that can be extremely difficult to deal with, e.g. decreased product uniqueness, increased competition within 'safe' markets, longer sales cycles and shorter product life spans. The reality is that whatever got you where you are today will not be sufficient to keep you there. A rapidly changing environment is the regular background against which organisations must develop.

Change is continuous and will become more rapid as we move forward over time. Sales management must be capable of reacting to those changes, be prepared to take advantage of them and yet stay within the overall framework of a formalised strategy.

The role of strategy is fundamental if the people within an organisation are to be enabled to make the level of contribution of which they are capable. Strategy, based on a good grasp of the core competencies of a business, is an essential precursor to achieving optimal shareholder value.

Getting more for less or more from the same level of resources, is my simple definition of efficiency. Here then, are six steps you can take... that will help you achieve those increased targets:

Step One: Understand your operation.

Do you know your operation well enough to improve it?

Step Two: Set the right objectives.

Do you have the right objectives to steer improvement?

Step Three: Check customer perception.

How can you identify non-value-added (wasteful) activity? How can you remove it?

Step Four: Increase capacity.

Are you meeting demand? What action(s) can you take? How efficient are your resources?

Step Five: Continuously improve.

Do you have a systematic approach to constant improvement?

Step Six: Check customer perception.

How effective have your efforts been? How can you tell?

And finally, when you review your [annual] performance, consider benchmarking yourself against this *Sales Management Acid Test*:

When thinking about your own sales force:

- Did you understand their motivators: what was driving them?
- Did you always have visibility of their numbers: year to date, forecast vs. required performance?
- Activity levels: did they work hard and smart enough?
- Engagement: did they always meet with the right level in their prospects/accounts?
- Messaging: were they capable of delivering an appropriate message at the right level?
- Qualification: did they only spend time on deals where they could compete and ultimately win?
- Closing: did they construct successful campaigns and close enough business?

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