

## **Sales Sustainability™ – “Sales Program Development” (SPD)**

>> A well-defined sales program is essential to directing sales activities, improving sales performance, communicating expectations, and avoiding common pitfalls in sales management.

What drives sales in a small business? Often it's just phone calls from prospective or current customers. We don't know why the calls came in or when the calls slow down. But when they do slow down, a business decides it's time to “do something” about it. *“Let's make some sales calls” is often the suggestion made in reaction to lower sales.*

This doesn't solve the real problem; it actually tells a sales manager he has one... Why? The real problem is we don't have a proactive sales process. We aren't in control of our business and we don't have a sales program actively generating sales.

***Failure to have a proactive sales program is one of the most common mistakes among small businesses.*** Small business needs to be in control of their revenue rather than waiting for it to arrive over the phone. Most cannot afford a loss of revenue and need a proactive sales program to reduce their risk. The sales manager in combination with marketing develops and implements the program. *These sales programs include a roadmap, key elements to successful sales, and processes which drive sales according to the requirements of your business.*

**The sales manager must deliver a clear and concise program to the salespeople.** This is the roadmap for their activity and a common language for the team. It includes the sales process or structure, the sales measurement system, specific sales objectives, and customer information requirements. All of these elements are key drivers in directing the sales effort, achieving consistent revenue, and building long term relationships with your customers.

***When we don't have a sales structure, sales people interpret their own.*** This can be very dangerous to a small business. Why? Sales people can be overly optimistic and not very disciplined. Without a structure you often get an overly optimistic view of sales progress with vague timelines and progress points. You don't really know when revenues are down or when you need to adjust resources or activities. A successful sales program incorporates a sales process for structure. This

process tells your sales people how to sell your product and allows them to communicate in a common language with well defined progress points. Sales managers can monitor progress and communicate consistently with the entire sales force. Everyone knows the process and the expectations. Sales people are now programmed to succeed.

***Do your salespeople really know how to sell your product or service?*** If your sales structure doesn't include key elements (sales message, value proposition, prospect profile, sales cycle, etc.) *your salespeople are just guessing.* You don't have a roadmap to success. It is a hit or miss proposition if your salespeople will be successful. Even more important is that your sales people aren't really selling the way you want, and your business is at risk. Without structure sales people are practicing a trial and error method to see what hits. Problem is the message is different with every customer and nobody gets the same sell! You have different sales people selling different messages. *The customer doesn't know who you really are!*

***When the sales message is delivered consistently and effectively, through the same sales structure, your efforts will be building a brand or service image for the company.*** The customers begin to know what to expect from a company, despite turnover. This is a very powerful asset for a small business and the direct result of a sales team that is aligned with the requirements of the business. You are beginning to build a successful company image with your customers and this will lead to improved sales performance. With a sales structure, your customers know what they are buying and why they are buying it from your company.

***The key to a successful sales program is the integration of lead generation, prospecting and account management into a sales performance measurement process.*** This requires that sales managers identify clear measurable objectives weekly, monthly, and quarterly. The sales manager establishes objectives for each salesperson and the team. Results are reviewed weekly and communicated through the use of the sales structure. This reinforces a common language and accountability within the organization.

***If a business doesn't have a strong lead generation program, it better have excellent outside salespeople.*** Why? Because the sales force is not likely to be given qualified leads to turn into sales revenue for the company. Lead generation is the first step in a sales cycle which requires excellent prospecting skills. *Most salespeople within a reactive sales based organization cannot generate their own leads. They just haven't been trained to prospect.*

**A good sales program includes a structure which focuses sales on viable prospects through a solid prospect profile.** Management needs to tell their salesperson what type of prospect is best for the business. All too often they don't and the sales team closes deals with customers that don't meet credit requirements or which don't match the long term needs of the business. Define your prospect profile to ensure that sales resources aren't wasted on prospects. *Without a profile, salespeople will flounder by chasing bad prospects, don't let them!*

***Sales performance and prospect progress need to be measured.*** The sales program must include a sales measurement process which has progress points within the sales cycle. Sales managers need to clearly measure progress toward the sale by communicating in the language of the sales structure. This eliminates overly optimistic views and clearly identifies prospects not moving through the sales cycle. If progress isn't being made it can be identified early and viability determined. This removes confusion and the eventual loss of sales force credibility. *The sales measurement process ensures accountability and reinforces the sales structure.*

**Sales information systems are absolutely essential, efforts & results are not meaningful if they are not documented.** Many companies continue to perform at the same level on the same initiatives for years. They never really grow or innovate. Why? They do not document their efforts in a sales information system. They invest in sales resources that continue to work on the same issues, accounts, and prospects. The organization never really communicates prior efforts, results, or the reasons for success. They don't have a system to do this or it isn't used and valuable information is lost with turnover. *Avoid this with a good sales information process.*

***Sales sustainability requires a well defined sales program to avoid these issues and produce long term, viable, profitable, loyal customers for a business enterprise.*** Invest in your sales program before you direct your sales force to "make some calls". *A solid sales program will payoff in improved sales long after the immediate crisis is over.*