

## Discipline in Sales?

By Ron Snyder

We all know that the top sports teams and business teams exhibit a high level of dedication and effort.

Yet, as salespeople, we sometimes resist discipline.

How do we maintain the right balance- that encourages individuality and yet provides the predictability of good process and best practices? This brings up the age-old debate of how much of sales is science and how much is art. Why not use both?

### The Science

The science of selling includes:

- Good territory and account planning and implementation.
- Mounting effective lead generation and nurture marketing campaigns.
- Understanding the buyer's process and managing the sales process accordingly.
- Uncovering and responding to the buyer's needs and role.
- Influencing the decision criteria and key decision-makers.
- A process for staying on top of product, technology and market information.

These elements require process and rigor. Without them, one cannot succeed in sales- especially complex sales.

### The Art

Key elements of the art form include:

- Maintaining a network that generates new opportunities and references.
- Creating good internal champions.
- Uncovering and neutralizing political opposition.
- Resolving concerns as they arise.
- Being respected and trusted by key decision makers.

The art form is driven by understanding people and organizations. It is supported by having good process and knowledge of the market needs and how your offering meets them.

Both of these elements are required to be successful in sales. They directly impact sales productivity and the amount of effort required to produce results.

Finally, the personal energy level, persistence and belief on the part of the sales person have a significant impact on the results.

## The Balance

So how does a salesperson, manager or executive maintain an effective balance between these two important and yet competing elements?

Developing discipline:

1. Identify the critical few processes and codify them into clear, simple action steps.
2. Research what the top performers are doing and use these best practices.
3. Do a pilot, fine-tune the process and then roll it out.
4. Manage adoption by following up and requiring everyone to use the new approach.
5. Coach people and help them be successful with the new approach.
6. Celebrate the successes and publicize how the methods are impacting results.

Allowing individual freedom:

1. Encourage people to adapt the process to their style and their customer base.
2. Have people share personal best practices with the rest of the team.

## Track Progress

Make sure that everyone on the team understands the team objectives and the leading indicators of success that you will be measuring to make sure they are on target for achieving their goals.

The ultimate measure of the success of any sales activity, whether inspired by process or personal style, is how well they enable progress toward these measures. Keep the ones that improve those results and replace the ones that don't.

### Plan 2 Win Software

Ron Snyder is President of Plan 2 Win Software.

Plan 2 Win Software was founded by sales veterans and former VP of Sales. We saw that Sales Force Automation Systems needed territory and key account planning tools.

Our sales planning software enables Salesforce.com (SFDC) users to create and manage territory and account plans right in their SFDC environment. They capture key trends in the industry, geography and vertical market. Sales execs, then, develop strategies, identify target accounts, business opportunities and partners to leverage and develop action plans to grow their business. These plans are perfect for Quarterly Business Reviews (QBRs) and strategic account reviews. This enables sales teams to fill their funnel with better prospects, make better use of their time and resources and produce better results!

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