

ARTICLE REPRINT

Just The Facts, Ma'am - The New Reality For Sellers

Some well-meaning sales consultants, unfortunately, are offering inane advice to sales professionals about dealing with what appears to be a world-wide, long-term economic malaise that is changing the game of sales. I recently read an article by a consultant who advised four steps for increasing sales in the current economic meltdown.

He admonished sales professionals to “stop procrastinating,” which begs the question Yoda might ask: “Get anything done when you procrastinate, do you?” The consultant then advises sales professionals to “get organized.” Again, I can hear Yoda asking “How many sales can you make when disorganized, you are?”

His third piece of timely advice: “energize your attitude.” How many sales are made by salespeople with obvious poor attitudes? Finally, the consultant advises sales professionals to “start prospecting.” This is usually sound advice that helps prevent an empty sales funnel; but under current economic conditions, be careful about prospecting for new customers who have difficulty paying their bills or are headed to bankruptcy court.

My three-word response to this consultant’s advice: *Feel-good-flapdoodle*. If ever there was a time to face the facts of the new reality for sellers - Just the facts, Ma’am - it’s now.

The Facts:

CEOs who are counseled by astute CFOs have three priorities in this climate of unprecedented volatility: Preserve Cash – Protect Revenue – Manage Risk. Find me a CFO in America who disagrees with this and you should scan the horizon for a village that lost its idiot.

To borrow a legal concept, *even a moron in a hurry* has noticed that more than a few companies have fired thousands of employees, allow only expenditures approved by senior vice presidents, eliminated their employee training budgets for 2009 and cancelled their annual sales meetings and holiday parties.

If a salesperson’s product, service or solution doesn’t help customers preserve cash or increase cash flow, protect or increase sales revenue or mitigate perceived risk, the chances of closing many sales in this economic climate registers somewhere between zero and a very large negative number.

Ending procrastination, getting better organized, energizing an attitude or ramping up prospecting activities isn't sufficient to help sales professionals survive or prosper in the new economic reality facing most sellers today. It's time to acknowledge that the old rules of sales no longer apply.

Real help for sales professionals must come from sales leaders and senior executives who acknowledge that they have never slogged through an economic quagmire quite like this one, and who are willing to think creatively about strategy and tactics that sales professionals can use to survive, maybe even prosper in this new economic milieu.

Today's unforgiving economy requires a bold, creative approach to managing sales, rather than simply making sales. Whatever the approach, it seems evident that effective solutions won't be obvious, easy or simplistic. Consultants who offer pabulum advice to salespeople ignore the demands of an economy that no longer tolerates old ways of doing business.

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