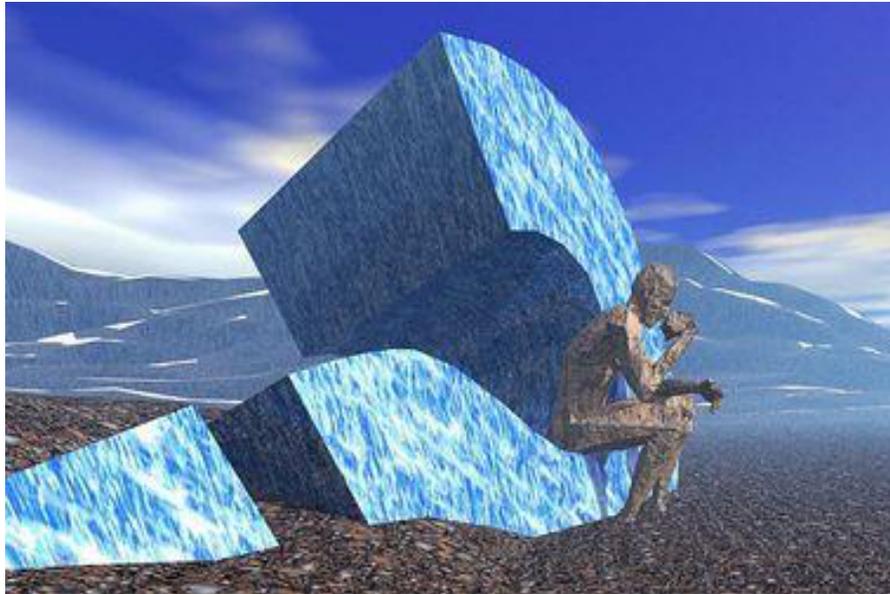




Achieving radical and sustainable improvement in top line performance

Welcome to the New Normal.



Sales Force Leadership in Times of Uncertainty

December, 2011

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The Challenge:

With stock markets stalled and economic growth slowed, sales forecasts are "out the window" again in 2011. The big question is, how do you plan to regain control of the selling environment to maintain/restore top line growth in the new year? Repairing the dislocation within your sales organization must be the number one imperative for the executive team. Based on 30+ years of counseling our clients in difficult economic settings, we would like to share some observations and guidance to help regain sales momentum. No silver bullets here, just three simple yet impactful initiatives you can put into action right now to restore your sales engine to increased levels of performance.

1. Stop reacting & start pro-acting. Wringing your hands, feeling sorry and waiting for the "dust to settle" is akin to operating a sail boat without a rudder - directionless. The longer



"Uncertainty and mystery are the energies of life. Don't let them scare you unduly, for they keep boredom at bay and spark creativity."
 ...R.I. Fitzhenry



"A study of the map will indicate where critical situations exist or are apt to develop, and so indicate where the commander should be."
 ...Patton



"A great leader chooses the path others will follow."
 ...Anonymous



you allow the sales force to operate without firm sales management guidance regarding the going-forward sales strategy, the more difficult it will be to reign in errant behavior. Since reps will follow the money, every deal they latch on to will be a good deal, and not necessarily in your sweet spot. Instead, get them to focus on core opportunities versus near core or outfield deals, and compensate them accordingly.

2. Know the leading indicators. Delayed buying decisions will significantly impact the length of the sales cycle. This in turn, will require that everyone carrying quota will have to offset the delay by maximizing the number of opportunities in their funnel in combination with increasing the size of every deal. Knowing early on in the quarter how many leads will be necessary to produce an increased level of qualified opportunities will help everyone size their territory/accounts and set stretching and realistic expectations for daily activity levels. Keeping the lead and sales funnel full and flowing (with the right core deals) is critical to effective forecasting and making your numbers. And monitoring leading indicators, rather than waiting for the quarter's end, will allow everyone to get an early assessment of how the buying behavior in your market is changing.

3. Demand perfect discipline. In the end, every deal comes down to the skills and competency of each Rep in hand-to-hand combat in the field. To quote General Patton; "There is only one form of discipline, perfect discipline." So it is back to the basics, executing every customer contact (whether in person or on the phone) superbly well, and better than the competition. Every contact **MUST** have a call plan, especially when multiple individuals are making the call. Remember, this is not the time for "Howdy Calls" on your prospects and customers.

What Works:

Action 1: Convene a working session of the firm's sales executives and thought leaders. Clearly articulate the key questions about targeting; who are we selling to and what are we selling? It's all about piling on for focus in core. Remember, the answers will require full management participation and buy-in.

Action 2: Make sure everyone who "touches" the customer is able to describe the funnel phase line definitions, without hesitation. With consensus on funnel phase lines, have every Rep participate in a simple funnel math tutorial to establish leading indicators of lead and deal flow (based on assumptions of sales cycle, hit rate and deal size). The roll-up of these metrics will also provide valuable insight to corporate in support of the field.

Action 3: Make sure everyone who contacts the customer knows how to build a call plan in terms of actions, attitudes and answers. Coach and review call plans before rather than after critical calls to ensure that every call will be effective and better than the competition. (Also make sure territory and account plans are up to date as well.)

Just Try It:

In summary, while we can't predict how long this market upheaval will last, what we do know for sure is that focusing on sales engine fundamentals will produce lasting results.

If you would like to calculate how much (the total dollar value and number of deals) should be in your full funnel, and the number of qualified opportunities that must cross the qualified phase line each month/quarter, click here and receive complimentary access to the model. It is simple to use.

And, please don't hesitate to reach out to us if there is anything we can do to lend a hand. If you have any questions, you can reach us at kappainfo@kappaeast.com.

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