

WHEN TECHNICAL EXPERTISE WAS NOT ENOUGH

From the President:

As the head of an international far flung sales organization, I had two priorities; one was for the entire organization to approach the markets in a cohesive manner. Secondly I wanted my sales force to have an understandable, transferable and sustainable way to approach prospects and service current clients. At the same time there had to be recognition that there were indeed some differences between the US, Asian, Latin American and the Middle Eastern markets. My problem was how to develop a cohesive sales force (and support functions) approach while acknowledging and catering to those differences.

We felt we had the right people and a good products. We had done a lot of work with territory management, developing call metrics etc. Our products however were fairly complicated and technical in nature. It is also important to note that we were a “ wholesale” distribution force. We did not talk to the end user. Our job, therefore was to convince other sales people to recommend our products to their customers.

Because we had never developed that cohesive approach to the markets we defaulted to product expertise. We had in fact become very good technicians. While this made us all feel smart, gave us something to say and was often what our clients and prospects thought they wanted and needed it was not enough. I was searching for a way to take the force to another level. The challenge was to take the fact we had become good at product, territory management, budgeting our time etc and understand what it would take for our customers to use our product. We simply had not been able to quite push the boulder over the top of the hill.

That is when I called in Kevin Stinson of Catalyst 7 Group. With Kevin’s help we realized we could use materials to approach various markets with pointed product messages and uses. Most importantly however, was Kevin showed us how to leverage our technical knowledge and management skills with his system to get to that next level.

Kevin’s system worked for us. He helped us to believe that our products were at best secondary to our success. Yes our products were important but alone would never get to where we wanted and needed to be. The

Catalyst 7 system teaches sales people how to understand their clients' business and personal agendas and how what they have to offer could help them reach those objectives. We asked Kevin to do a 2 day workshop with our internal and external sales people. That was then followed up with one on one meetings both in person and the phone. We also invited Kevin to our sales meetings to refresh and motivate us.

This was not an easy "sale" to our sales force at first. We were asking them to change the very core of how they approached the sales process. It took a while for them to really believe they were best served by not dragging their "product wagon" into every interview or meeting. What they discovered was that by holding out that wagon until they knew how it would help clients reach their goals and objectives it became a much more powerful tool.

The end results were impressive. Our sales increased significantly, our sales force was motivated and focused and we had an approach that was not dependent on the markets, competitors product offerings or pricing.

We discovered that this approach not only resulted in increased sales but also developed a well of good will. Clients were less likely to leave over mistakes. Clients looked at the value of the whole relationship and did not jump ship over minor pricing differences. Clients knew they were valued and valued that immensely.

The field force now had a way to approach clients and prospects consistently and professionally. They did not have to worry about short term pricing or product issues. They were able to approach their markets with confidence they could help their customers in any situation. This resulted in more productivity, less complaining and a happy motivated group of individuals.

At the end of the day the system worked for us very well. Kevin definitely practices what he preaches as he has developed and kept relationships with many of the sales team...including me!