

Sell at the top -- enjoy greater success!

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By Frank Williams

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As a former CEO of a good size industrial company, I always found it strange that I didn't have more salespeople call me directly. Did they know I always answered my own phone? Did they not intuitively understand that, at some point, I would be involved in any major buying decision? Did they not grasp that getting to know me and understand my thinking would be a smart move in closing any sales with my firm? And, to me, starting at the top seems to be the best place to begin any sales cycle, yet my phone rarely had salesman attached to the other end and many studies on sales techniques confirm this.

Would you be surprised to find out that more than seventy-five percent of high-level decision makers are involved early-on in any major buying process? A more shocking statistic yields that less than five percent of all salespeople talk to the high-level decision maker. Why is this?

Global Marketing, Inc. held discussions with many salespeople about this inhibitor to greater sales achievement. Lack of business knowledge, low confidence or no experience connecting with high-level decision makers is the most common feedback as to why these sales people don't start at the top. Global Marketing suggests that if you have these individuals in your organization – route them out fast or train them how to approach and close on high-level decision makers, or your competitor will!

Selling at the highest level in any account makes good selling sense. Calling on these top-level people means talking to someone who has the ability to say "yes" or "no" to your idea. Going straight to the top means shorter sales cycle, better treatment, and will create additional pull for your idea. Those that sell at the top usually find there is less competition because (as earlier stated) most salespeople are too intimidated to call on the top decision maker. And when was the last time you heard a top decision maker suggest that they don't have the budget for an idea they like.

Failure to call at a high level within a targeted business come with a variety of salespeople rationalizations. Many individuals we spoke to said they were afraid to go over the head of their lower-level contact in fear of offending them. Others stated they feel intimidated by the top level decision makers.

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Other on-going myths' surrounding senior level decision makers:

I'll never get by the screener to gain an appointment.

These people have more important things to do.

These are smart people with Yale or Harvard MBA's.

Most high-level decision makers hate salespeople.

Successful sales people I know don't buy-into these or other myths. Remember, that high-level decision makers did not reach the top by being aloof. Many organizations promote from within and these top people usually recognize the importance of meeting with key decision makers. Besides, in today's business, most organizations are flatter making the key decision maker more accessible.

However, the bottom line for any solid sales approach is to bring something of value to the high-level decision maker – this will ensure you will always get their attention.

Working and connecting with high-level decision makers takes a practice and a willingness to plan your sales call. Recognize that you must understand how high-level decision makers operate. Typically, they are more direct. No long-winded chat-chat for these guys. They like to control meetings and are more strategic in their thinking and decision making. Something that may take lower-level contact months to decide may be acted on immediately by the high-level decision maker. They take measured risks and make calculated decisions, so don't waste their time by presenting canned presentations, or lack an understanding of their business -- usually these high-level decision makers are looking for you to make a difference in their business, not just make a deal.

As a young salesman, a person I came to respect gave me some sage advice -- "begin as you mean to continue". Have your salespeople start at the top. Your business will achieve more and your competitors will envy you.

Frank Williams is a marketer. With many post graduate courses in management, leadership, marketing and technology to his credit, Williams is a widely respected speaker, author and technologist. He has significant knowledge in marketing strategies and is the founder and CEO of Global Marketing, Inc. – a leader in business, marketing and sales consulting. Other valuable articles can be found at: <http://members.cox.net/glmarketing/glmarketing/index.htm>

A Team Building Seminar Can Work For Any Business

By Paul Tobey

It amazes me how popular team building seminars have become. Most major companies and organizations have turned to team building professionals at one time or another to get greater results from their employees. But, team building is not just for large companies, it works just as well for the small business entrepreneur. I'd like to focus on a couple of key points that will help you decide, as a big or small business, if team building seminars are right for you.

One of the first questions I always ask in my own team building seminar is; what's the number one

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thing you need to do in business to be successful. And, you wouldn't believe the mixed responses I get like; having a good product, having a good marketing strategy or having good management. While these things are important they're certainly not number one! The most important thing you need to do as a company, whether you like it or not is; SELL. In fact, if you're not selling is a hobby, not a business.

Learning to sell is by far the most important skill you could ever acquire. That's why I teach it in my team building seminars. Everyone on the team needs to know how to sell, not just the sales people. Why? Because that way, everyone understands, not only how important it is to the success of any business but how learning to sell can increase everyone's awareness of what it takes to be successful.

So, if selling is the most important skill what's the second most important? Team! The team is what gives life and energy to your ideas and what propels your company forward. Imagine how hard it would be to push a car up a hill if you didn't have a team. A team makes everything easier if, and only if, people know how to work together. Which, brings me to the third most important thing; Teach!

As part of a team, your responsibility is to teach everyone around you what you know that can help them do their job better. How do you know when and when not to teach? When you've done something and had success doing it, then it's time to pass on that information. So often when people learn something that's worked for them they keep it to themselves because somehow they think it gives them an advantage within the company. That's what you don't want. You don't want a bunch of individuals all competing with each other. That's not a team, that's a contest!

Finally, the glue that holds Sell, Team and Teach together is; Accountability. When you become accountable for the success of others then you realize that your responsibility is to share the information you've learned that can help them. Then, and only then, can you be truly successful as a team. Becoming accountable for each other is truly the magic potion of successful businesses.

So, how can this work for a small business person that doesn't have a team? Exactly the same way! If you're in small business you still need a team in order to sell a lot of products and services. If you can't afford to hire a big team then all you need to do is offer to teach what you know that will help others. In the process, a team will form around you and the energy that you put into teaching will bring you greater success than you ever thought possible.

The cornerstone of Paul Tobey's

is focusing on results through collective

energy. To learn more about what this involves please visit

.

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