



Matt Crabtree



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Matt Crabtree and his team deliver provocative training workshops, one to one coaching and speeches to businesses worldwide. Talk to him about kicking the tyres of your business via:

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#### NEXT MONTH

Cut, Paste and other ways of writing losing proposals

## How to stop your salespeople wetting their pants over the economy

SO apparently we are all doomed. Not only is the planet warming up due to forces that a world capable of sending a man to the moon is apparently powerless to affect, but now the credit crunch/crisis/catastrophe (delete as applicable depending on whether you read The Independent/Sun/Daily Mail) is now apparently going to affect the rate at which everyone in the developed world buys everything from stationary to power stations. Give me a break!

Of course business has got tougher and buyers have become more cost conscious but for many people in highly competitive markets there is nothing new in this. Seems to me that, just like many things in life, we tend to find what we look for and boy are some businesses looking for signs of how difficulties in the economy are affecting their ability to sell stuff.

Don't get me wrong I understand that if you run an airline the underlying cost of crude oil has a serious impact, or if you run an estate agent the fact that few people are buying and selling right now might mean you need to downgrade your Maserati to a Range Rover Sport, but for the vast majority of us the current issues in the economy represent nothing less than a considerable opportunity.

We live in a world that believes that economic growth comes in cycles and that those businesses that invest during a downturn tend to be the ones that enter the inevitable upturn in a significantly stronger position. Equally times like these separate the wheat from the chaff in terms of sales ability.

Put simply there are only two things you can do when the chips are down – see more potential punters and/or get better at converting the punters you do see. Those salespeople who now decide to seriously upgrade what they do and are honest about the extent to which they have coasted in recent good times are the ones that will survive and potentially even flourish. The deluded fools however that claim they have really been doing all they can and that a combination of Alistair Darling's adding up, the yen

to rouble currency and the moon in Uranus are the real reasons for their current difficulties, are the ones who I hope you will see for what they really always were.

The smart clients I am working with right now are all getting back to basics. Seeing more potential clients, working doubly hard to understand clients businesses, developing intelligent relationships with clients based on more than just the next deal and on proposing products and services in a way that is exactly related to the specific needs of each and every client – as opposed to marketing's magic list of so-called benefits that are supposed to be the silver bullet solution to every pitch!

All completely obvious stuff I hear you cry, and indeed it is. So look back to the last paragraph, check each of these and tell me with integrity that you and your sales force are doing all of these as effectively as you possibly could. Thought not...

So what of the bleating clients who claim they just can't do anything until the outlook is more certain? Well first you need to work out exactly how what it is you sell can help to improve the economic fortunes of your clients. If you are selling something that does not impact a company's commercial success then you really are in trouble! In theory everything a company buys they do so in the pursuit of improved company performance. Therefore if you have clients who are currently saying they do not want what you do, then they clearly have little faith that it would make any positive difference to their fortunes. It is down to you to correct this obvious lack of understanding. You need to help your clients to join the dots however tangential they might be.

If you are a leader of people now is the time to step up to the plate, to help your teams get back to basics, to encourage everyone to believe in a brighter future and to get to work to ensure that your business is poised to take advantage of the economic upturn that will arrive long before any commentator says it will - though afterwards they will of course say they saw it coming!