

Sales meetings suck!

THE vast majority of sales meetings I have ever attended have been joyless, pointless and thoroughly dull affairs that seemed to achieve little other than making the manager feel happy that he/she had allegedly sprinkled their own variety of motivational fairy dust over us either in the form of patronising platitudes about our performance or a pseudo sergeant major style rocket supposedly designed to frighten us in to selling more stuff!

Perhaps I was just unlucky or perhaps the only reason most sales leaders run sales meetings is because when they were a salesperson that's what their boss did, so it must be right.

The intention behind a weekly/monthly/annual sales get together is of course laudable and such an activity is certainly preferable to an absence of such forums, however the frequent lack of forethought and preparation so often results in an event remembered only for the world record breaking volume of alcohol consumed afterwards.

So how can you tell whether your sales meetings are hitting the spot? Does everyone attend and always arrive on time - not because of the sanctions imposed if they don't turn up but because this is an event they value? Does the team get involved in the meeting when invited to do so or do you often get frustrated with them for their 'lack of interest'? Does the team leave the meeting with a spring in their step, knowing what's expected of them and looking forward to delivering it? On the odd occasion you don't run one, does anyone even notice? Has anyone ever told you how much they value the meetings - other than when they were sucking up?

For me the most ridiculous element of the archetypal sales meeting is the person by person review of performance/forecast. This reminds me of taking the

register at the beginning of a school day. It's at best boring as hell for everyone that's not you and the salesperson involved and at worst incredibly patronising to believe that I will only perform better if ritually humiliated in front of my peers. This technique belongs to the 1970's together with platform soles and the Baycity Rollers. If this is the only way to drive performance with your salespeople you might think about changing your salespeople!

Here are some quick ideas for improving your meetings:-

- Prepare and distribute an agenda in advance that looks interesting. Think about what would help your team most and arrange for it to happen
- At the beginning of the meeting ask each team member what they want from the meeting. Move them from a place of only being there because you told them to be and towards seeing the meeting as potentially personally beneficial
- At each meeting have a member of the team make a short presentation on an interesting client situation
- Invite people from other departments so that you might have conversations about how to work better together
- Have regular brain storm sessions on key topics like prospecting, closing, negotiation, competition, etc, etc. Facilitate a conversation involving everyone

Most importantly avoid dragging out the meeting just because you have so much to say. Remember that they are probably only hearing about 1 in 10 of the words you are saying. When it comes to a great sales meeting less is most definitely more.

Finally, since this is our festive column, my compliments of the season and best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2008.



Matt Crabtree



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