

## **Sales Trends of 2010**

Breaking through the constant noise to get your company some attention, developing a social media sales strategy and embracing the challenge of collaboration are just some of the challenges that companies will need to confront in 2010. With this in mind, here are the 12 big sales trends ahead:

### **Noise reduction**

Selecting what to take on board and what to leave behind will be critical for sales and business in 2010. The key will be finding reputable online sites, references and publications that provide access to information that is backed by evidence, research and is free from sensationalism. 2010 will be about filtering information through your core vision, intention and strategy. Be prepared to question assumptions. This will help you make decisions about what to take on board and what to leave behind. Remember, too much information and indecision will paralyse.

### **Everybody lives by selling something**

Everybody in the company needs to be an ambassador for the business, the message and the brand. There needs to be recognition that they are in one of two roles: 1) actively involved in selling or 2) supporting someone who is.

Those companies that support and train all their people in a culture of proactive client engagement and transparent selling practices, aligned with their strategy, will gain a significant competitive advantage in 2010.

### **Cultural fit**

What do 'we' stand for? What difference will 'we' make? What value do 'we' create? What is 'our' core message? How will 'I' benefit from working here? What do 'I' value? These are the questions that will knock on your door in 2010.

Making values, team charter and steps for action crystal clear will be key when recruiting, training, managing and leading in 2010. In the words of one senior leader: "Don't ask me what I value and stand for; ask the people who work for me. They'll tell you what I really stand for and then you'll know if I am true to my word."

### **Social sales**

Customers will turn to online communities, blogs, forums and social networks to gather information and make buying decisions.

The traditional channels to the customer such as email marketing, trade shows and face-to-face meetings will be less effective. In some cases you may not even be interacting with the customer directly but with their 'recommendation network'. The real challenge for sales will be to identify and engage with these new networks. Social sales involve different skills, leadership and a culture that values a collaborative model of free knowledge exchange.

### **Weathering the storm**

2009 put emotional resilience to the test and in 2010 we will need to support and heal the emotional scars left from the storm.

Putting emotional resilience high on the agenda of sales in 2010 will not only benefit individuals, it will also mean they in turn can help the achieve company success. Maintaining a proactive, realistic and positive outlook in tougher markets will require business leaders and their people to watch who they let near their minds.

### **Through the looking glass**

Tired of being told you need to sell like someone else to be successful? Unsure which behaviours you should model? Want to be you and be the best you can be? Unsure why you are afraid of doing certain tasks? Well, you are not alone. In 2010, enlightened companies will focus on understanding people; what motivates and drives people; how people think and make decisions; how you play to people's strengths to achieve goals and fulfil ambitions; how people can communicate more effectively; how people can manage behaviours and attitudes.

### **Sustainable selling**

The focus will be on forging legitimate business relationships which serve the environment, people, business and communities. If we are to meet the needs of the present, without compromising the future, we need to engage in sustainable selling. Sustainable selling is an evolving process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are balanced with future, as well as present needs. 2010 will be about putting eco into sales.

### **Collaboration, the new competition**

Markets around the world are crying out for collaboration as innovation and differentiation become scarce in a sea of commoditised products and processes. Collaboration calls for a team effort. Sales teams where everyone is pitted against each other to achieve 'top dog' status will be replaced by a 'lead team' approach. Companies that want to bring in new business and grow and develop existing customers will rely on the united hands of many, rather than one.

### **A sales community**

Recently, the movement towards creating a sales community was evidenced by the inaugural Optimising the Sales Force Australia 2009 conference. Sales leaders from a diverse range of industries came together to learn and share wisdom. You can put the OSF conference on your 2010 agenda and get behind the profession of sales. Keep your eyes out for other forums popping up off and online. There is also a rising tide wanting to see 'sales' on the curriculum of Australian universities.

### **Hot bath turns cold**

The days of one-off training sessions or the hyped motivational speaker to lift sales are numbered. Well founded research shows that continuous learning, a little bit every day, is the way to go.

This doesn't mean spending a lot of money on fancy training - it means creating a culture of continuous learning where practice, reflection, self-learning and coaching occur daily. Leading companies will link this to a clearly communicated and committed sales capability plan and make it a conscious part of everything: every sales meeting, every sales call, every coaching encounter. 2010 will be about sales fitness.

### **Lead the way**

Those companies that invest in properly training, educating and supporting their sales managers will see significant lifts in 2010 and beyond. The verdict is back: sales manager training delivers the best returns, with the highest positive correlation found between training and results.

### **Back to basics**

One of the real challenges of 2010 will be keeping sales momentum while understanding how changes in customers, competitors, markets, innovations, media, technology and all manner of things will impact on businesses and people. In 2010, wise sales people will embrace the 'new' but not forget the basics. This will be made easier by having a clear sales plan in place with direction, targets and activities.

By knowing who and how to target customers and being well skilled in sales planning, prospecting, and communication you will keep sales happening. Repeat the mantra 'hasten slowly' and keep doing the old basics while considering, evaluating and integrating the new.

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