

## THE CORNER OFFICE

### > OFFICE VS. THE FIELD

One manager and one salesperson square off on issues facing sales organizations today

**AT ISSUE: Should salespeople be accessible 24 hours a day?**



**MANAGER:** Unfortunately, yes. The days of checking out or being off the radar are over, thanks to all this marvelous technology that has been provided to us sales and marketing folks. On the positive side, technology today can help us keep on top of our business and earn the customers' faith by helping us with servicing our clients. Additionally, mobile technology can also help us keep the information flowing with HQ and, as a result, help keep sales and marketing strategy in alignment with the marketplace. On the downside, the workweek is now 24/7. It's a salesperson's responsibility to keep on top of BlackBerrys, cell phones, etc. While this may cut into relaxation, anyone who is determined to succeed must know that there is always a competitor out there, somewhere, gunning for your clients. Business is moving at the speed of light. The pace is a lot quicker and, if someone is out of reach, that can mean the business goes away. With that said, I do think there is a time and a place for your technology—if you manage things appropriately, it can help.

—Chris Wightman, president, ProLink Media (the advertising division of ProLink Solutions, a Chandler, Ariz.-based provider of golf course GPS systems and on-course advertising)



**SALESPERSON:** I didn't want a BlackBerry and I eventually did get one two years ago. It was a good decision. I sell fractional ownership in private jets and have owners who fly 24 hours a day. If they have an issue or problem, I really need to be accessible. If I'm responsive to my owners it strengthens the relationship. I do turn it off between 10 and six, but we also have an operations center they can contact if they have an issue. First thing in the a.m. if I need to be involved, I will. Ironically, the BlackBerry gives me the ability to have a life. I can go somewhere without having to be afraid that I'm missing something. The phone in my office pages me when I have a voice mail, so I know immediately—I don't have to check my messages 100 times a day. I really don't see a downside to having it, because even though I'm accessible all the time, I can respond when I want to.

—Mike Goode, sales professional and senior vice president, Net Jets Aviation, based in Columbus, Ohio

### [THE PULSE]

**43%** of IT managers say business priorities at their companies are not aligned with IT.

SOURCE: OPTIER/TECHWEB NETWORK RESEARCH

## Don't Let the Dog Days Slow Sales

How to keep your teams motivated and focused at work

BY MARY DONATO



Summer is here. The kids are out of school. Vacations are being planned. As the outside temperature continues to climb, salespeople and managers everywhere are taking longer lunches and ending their days a little earlier to enjoy the nice weather. With the sunshine so enticing, can you blame them?

Summer can be the time for lots of excuses: "My decision maker is on vacation;" "Business is slow during the summer;" "The key stakeholders aren't available;" or "They spent all their budget dollars in the first half." I'm sure you can add to this list.

Unfortunately, many sales people have accepted the fact that summer is destined to be a slow time of year for business (unless you have the perfect seasonal product that sells during this time). If you think business is going to be slow, then it certainly will. You've already set the idea in your mind before July even starts.

How do you keep your team (and yourself) motivated during the summer months and change the mindset from "slow" to "grow." Having led, observed and assessed many sales organizations, here are a few ideas that have worked in the past. Select one or two that would work in your particular environment to keep the momentum going. Typically, these are implemented during the months of July and August, but you may find them so successful that you'll try them throughout the year.

If any team member achieves her

weekly revenue goals by end of day Thursday, they get Friday off or can choose a gift certificate.

■ **Team competitions.** The team with the highest percentage of their sales goal gets a day off the next month.

■ **Jimmy Buffet Friday's** (particularly good in call centers). One organization I know starts each day with Jimmy Buffet music playing on the loud speakers as associates arrive. Everyone gets to dress down in shorts and tropical shirts. They do a call blitz to drive activity and have a fun wrap-up at the end of the day.

■ **Establish a "Clear the Decks" policy.** Cut the number of internal meetings in half (or eliminate them completely) and give people the time back to make additional sales calls. This will help them make up for any vacation time they will be taking.

■ **Establish a monthly Customer "Thank You" Day.** For one day, salespeople will call all their customers and simply thank them for the business. No selling, just thanks. It's amazing how well this goes over with both customers and associates. (Seems like a good thing to do every month.)

■ **Implement a "Casual Summer" policy.** For July and August, every day can be casual wear, especially for an internal sales team.

■ **Conduct a two-month "Build your Pipeline" contest.** The reps with the highest pipeline growth can earn prizes. Next year, do this contest in May and June so you have business to close in the summer.

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