

THE CORNER OFFICE

> OFFICE VS. THE FIELD

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

AT ISSUE: What's the biggest impediment to improving communications between sales reps and sales managers?

MANAGER: In a word, it's trust. Salespeople don't want to look like they don't know what they're doing, so they often hesitate to ask a question. That challenge is compounded if the manager carries his own quota; you don't tend to share openly with your competitors. Salespeople have to trust that you're on their side and walked in their shoes. It's also important that you initiate conversations; your salespeople aren't going to just come in your office and say, "How's it going?"

—*Shel Reed, vice president of sales, CoreMedia Training Solutions, a consulting/training firm in Portland, Oregon, focusing on safety issues.*

SALESPERSON: Communication hinges on personality type of the manager and salesperson. I want a manager who is supportive but not overbearing or too eager. If I feel like I'm going to get a big "football coach speech" with a lot of hype, I'd just as soon pass on it. But some salespeople want that type of relationship. I like my freedom and independence. If I'm having problems with an account, I like a manager to throw out ideas, but ultimately say, "How do you want to handle it?" I am much more likely to approach my manager to talk through an issue on an account if I feel like I'm setting the pace, and won't have him or her hovering over me for the next few months as a result.

—*Ellen Beldy, senior account executive with a New York-based affinity marketing company serving the higher education market*

[THE PULSE]

62%

of salespeople's time is spent on non-revenue-generating activities. One culprit is cut-backs in customer service support.

SOURCE: INDUSTRIAL PERFORMANCE GROUP

Are You Sticking To Your New Year's Resolutions?

How to get back on track

BY MARY DONATO



Many of us made a list of business resolutions at the beginning of the year. Some of you have been relentless in keeping those resolutions: being a better listener, taking more risks, prioritizing the "A's" speaking up more frequently (or infrequently) during meetings. Three months into the new year, are you still on track? If you've made improvements, congratulations! For those who have fallen back into the old routine, don't give up yet. Now is the perfect time to refocus and recommit.

How can you ensure that this time you'll follow through with the areas you want to change? Here are some proven techniques that will help.

- Take a hard look at goals you felt were important at the beginning of the year. Are they still as important? If no, eliminate them and add two or three items that will make a positive impact.

- How big is your list? At the beginning of a new year, we tend to be overly ambitious and then disappoint ourselves when we can't accomplish everything. Narrow your list down to the top 2-3 items that are the most important.

- Now that you have your top 2-3 items identified, pick just one that you will work on over the next 3-4 months. That's right...just one.

- List specific activities that will help drive change to your one goal.

Be specific. Think about events where you can visualize making the change happen.

- Get out your calendar. At the beginning of each week, allocate time to review your goal and put specific actions on your daily planner that will help you move further towards making change happen.

- At the end of each day, allocate at least 5 minutes to reflect on how the day went. Did you make progress? What will you do tomorrow to move further towards your goal?

- If your goal requires a specific behavior change on your part, find a buddy that can provide you feedback on how you're progressing. Ask them for honest feedback.

- Formalize your goal and the actions required to achieve it and keep them in a visible place. Put it on your desk, bulletin board, refrigerator, bathroom mirror—wherever you can see it daily to help you stay focused.

- Measure how you are doing against your goal and reward yourself for a job well done.

By staying focused on just one goal and following the steps above, you stand a great chance of making changes that will have a lasting impact.

To share what has helped you stay focused on your goals this year, send an e-mail to Mary Donato at edit@salesandmarketing.com.

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