

your biggest opportunity

ACCESSING THE SALES TALENT LYING DORMANT WITHIN EACH COMPANY

In terms of developing your sales team, your biggest potential rainmakers are currently working elsewhere. True or false? Would you be surprised to hear that this is false? They actually work for you today.

You may be taking this statement with some skepticism: “If these wonderful rainmakers are already working for me, how come I’m not seeing the revenue?”

The answer is simple. It’s because you do not have them in sales.

In recent articles, we’ve talked about recruiting, hiring and retaining a winning sales team. We’ve taught you how to use the enrolling mindset to avoid the high cost of the bad hire. And we’ve shared a variety of processes and techniques for getting your sales team to “peel the onion,” ask big-picture business questions and discover the “ends need.”

Now we’re going to reach deeper into your organization for new sources of wealth, past the C-suite, past the middle managers, past the sales team, all the way down to indirect sales people.

Every company has them. Your indirect sales people are your customer service folks: your developers, project managers, consultants. That is, anyone who faces the client during the day-to-day activities of the business is an indirect sales person. Though they may sell themselves and the company all day long, most may not even realize it. Some are naturally gifted. Some need help. Though they have an enormous impact on future repeat business and referrals, it’s amazing that most companies fail to acknowledge, let alone nurture and support, their indirect salespeople.

There is a prevailing mindset among indirect salespeople that sales is somehow dirty, or manipulative, or invasive – or just not for them. We’ve probably all been trapped at one time or another by a pushy fake who should not have been in sales. Second, more than a decade into the Internet era, we have grown accustomed to educating ourselves about products and services without the interference of a middle man, who used to thrive on holding all of the



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knowledge and marking up the price to make his cut.

A negative mindset about sales among your indirect salespeople is crippling to business development. With a negative mindset, they will fail to recognize up-sell and cross-sell opportunities that may be in the best interests of your clients. Because they don’t want to sell, or have a negative view of sales, they leave your customers no choice but to go elsewhere.

Take the case of Phil, Sue and Jacque, who are employed by a large financial advisory firm. Typical of professional service firms, this organization is divided into silos. Phil works in insurance, packaging products. Sue is in mergers and acquisitions, handling legal issues. And Jacque is a tax accountant. Each interacts daily with clients. Each knows the others’ faces when they pass in the hall. Unfortunately, they don’t talk.

The sad part is that all three of them truly love working with clients. They want to protect the clients’ best interests at all times. But because they have no idea of how their areas of specialty contribute to the larger solution, and because of their aversion to sales, they don’t share information with

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their clients. Sue makes no attempt to cross-sell her clients any tax solutions, even though they clearly need them. Jacque never considers whether his tax client has adequate insurance protection. And Phil, who packages products, prides himself on not being an insurance salesman.

The opportunity is there, but nothing gets sold.

Does this sound familiar? If so, what do you need to do with the indirect sales people in your organization? Is there a way that you can help them become successful salespeople?

Absolutely.

First of all, you need to make them aware that they are in sales. Point out that they touch the client far more often than direct salespeople. As a result, they have many more opportunities to elongate an engagement, to up-sell and cross-sell additional products and services.

Second, make them aware that they have different personality types. Not everybody has to be Joe Salesman, the dominating showman who shakes hands like an eagle swooping down on prey. It’s just as effective to be quiet and reserved – if that’s their personality – and let prospects come to them.

Third, help your indirect salespeople understand that they all have different communication styles, and that the communication is really more of a mindset issue than a process issue. For example, findings show that only 7 percent of communication is made up of the words we use, with 93 percent nonverbal. The non-verbal side of communication is driven by mindset. That’s why call centers and customer service desks at traditional companies fail so often. If the callers do not have an enrolling mindset, no amount of processes or scripts will increase their sales aptitude or sales acuity.

Correcting a negative mindset in an indirect salesperson is the most important work you can do. But where do you start? It is critical that they become aware of their beliefs. Do they believe people like them? Do they believe that what they have to offer is valuable?

Once the beliefs – both positive and negative – are established, remember that all beliefs are formed by experience and choice. Experience, for example, is when an indirect salesperson leaves three voice mails with three clients, and none return the call. Choice is deciding to equate “people not calling back” with “people don’t care about me.” And it’s a choice that effective salespeople choose not to make.

Knowledge of select techniques could help your indirect salespeople as well. In the above example, let’s say Sue’s goal is to schedule an appointment with each client. What is she saying in her voice mail messages?

“Hi, Bill, this is Sue Deal in mergers and acquisitions. It’s been a long time since I checked in so I thought I would see if you had a chance to talk to your partners and if you were still contemplating the merger. Just a reminder that we still need to look at your buy-sell agreement and make sure you’re protected against any stockholder disputes. If this is still a priority for you, would you please give me a call if you have a chance?”

That’s too much information, Sue. You are giving Bill a reason not to call back. You are attempting to have the entire appointment in a 30-second voice mail. Try this instead:

“Hi, Bill, this is Sue Deal. I have a couple of questions for you. Call me back.”

The difference is in the brevity, but also in the confidence. In the second example, Sue is not asking, she’s telling. She is making Bill work his memory a bit by not revealing what company she is with. And if Bill wants to find out why she is calling, he will have to call her back.

Next we will explore additional approaches and techniques for helping your indirect salespeople develop a winning mindset. Until then, keep looking for opportunities to raise the awareness of your indirect salespeople that they are, in fact, in sales.

Think of this approach as found money. Your biggest sales opportunity has been there all along. It just needed to be discovered.