

creating predictable sales results

THE KEY TO CONSISTENT SUCCESS

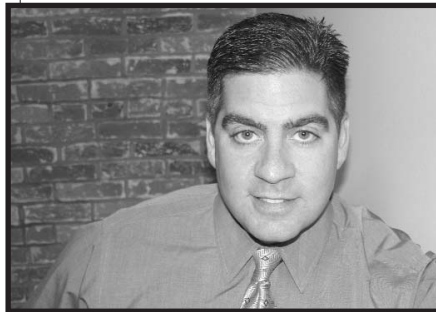
How would you like to be able to predict your sales results monthly? Would you look at your organization differently if you knew how much you were going to sell before the cycle started?

For those of you who read this column regularly, you know that I have focused on you – the sales professional. We have covered simple but sticky concepts such as having a positive mindset, enrolling versus closing, the Grape Zone and the dynamics of communication, in order to help you become a more effective sales professional. It is now time to switch the focus of this column from the individual sales professional to the entire sales process. Starting with this article, we begin a six month journey exploring the topic of sales predictability and how sales organizations can create predictable and measurable results on a consistent basis. Outstanding sales organizations adopt this philosophy the same way outstanding sales professionals adopt the mindset first approach that we've discussed for the past two years.

Being able to predict your sales results is critical to anyone involved in bringing in new business. At its core, sales predictability is the thought or idea that sales can be dependable and more importantly, a repeatable and sustainable process. However, having sales predictability as a priority within your business strategy may not be appropriate for every company. For example, if your company is established or looking to grow only moderately over the next three years, it may not be important to you. But if your organization is progressive, looking to reinvent itself, striving to become a sales organization or a company that has decided to aggressively grow over 25 percent in the next year, sales predictability is imperative.

Because sales is notoriously known to be not only subjective but highly emotional, it is widely accepted that sales is as

much of an art as it is a science. At the individual level, the art is more important in success, but at the organizational level the science of predictability is indispensable. For example, Xerox in the late 1960s, early 1970s created a new line of products for business and decided to compete against their larger competitors like IBM. In order to do that, they understood how important not only the



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art of sales was, but also the science behind getting people to buy. They brought in doctors, engineers and scientists from all over the world to dissect how sales happen. They did not just study Xerox's sales, they tackled the question, "What does it take to make people buy in general?"

They found a distinct pattern of stages, emotions, and a process that both the buyer and the seller engaged in. In the end, they were able to simplify the sales process to educate, train, and develop their next wave of sales people. As you may recall, in the early 70s Xerox was a force to be reckoned with because they truly revolutionized the business-to-business selling approach by combining both the philosophy of sales as an art and a science. To this day Xerox is credited with creating one of the most successful sales training philosophies ever.

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So how do you create sales predictability?

1. The first step is to have a sound and objective *sales process*.
2. The second step is to have clearly defined *goals* for each sales person. Once you have clarity, you can then begin the process of reverse engineering; using the goal as a starting place and then backing out of the activity necessary to achieve these goals. The most important aspect is to do this using your sales process.
3. The third step is to then analyze your sales cycle. Learn how many "leads" convert to "prospects" and how many "prospects" turn into clients.
4. The fourth step in having sales predictability is to take the data from step 3 (the conversion rate of your sales funnel), and analyze it to figure out the specific marketing activities you must engage in specifically to hit your goal and fill your pipeline.

Having the ability to make better decisions in business is something we all strive to do. Because sales tends to be the most important driver in business, making better decisions about your marketing strategy, sales revenue and human resources will be a direct correlation of how well you are able to predict and forecast your sales. Over the next several articles we will get granular with the process of predicting your sales.

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