OBJECTIVE: MAKE YOUR SALES GOALS

Designing, Implementing & Living

Your Plan

(A Guide in Three Parts)

PART III

Introduction

Since the first installment of our three-part series on "Make Your Sales Goals" went into print, the incredible events of September 11 occurred in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Therefore, now that we're writing Part III a mere few weeks later, we feel a little self-conscious about using terms like "battle plan" and "win the war" when we talk about sales goals. Somehow, using warlike terms in even a vaguely light-hearted fashion seems, well… inappropriate.

However, if there is one thing among many that the terrorist attacks on our country have taught us, it's not just the importance of keeping our lives in perspective, but also the importance of carrying on with them. That includes having confidence in the future, and continuing to pursue our professional goals and achieve success in a free and open society.

So, with a nod of respect to everyone affected by the events of September 11 (and that's all of us, by the way), here is Part III — with a little less emphasis on battle plans and war.

A Quick Recap of Parts I and II

In Part I and Part II of this series, we discussed the importance of planning in making your sales goals. Planning is something that professionals do — it denotes a level of expertise that separates you from the amateurs. It keeps you organized and on schedule, and it helps you track progress. Finally, effective planning helps you be productive and able to meet goals.

We reviewed the crucial parts of a sales plan:

- ❑ Your Goal — for example, "Increase my sales by 25% this year."
- ❑ Your Objective — "Achieve this 25% increase by closing 63% of 'X.'"
- ❑ Your Strategy — the approach you use to achieve your objective.
- ❑ Your Tactics — the methods you use to implement your strategy.
- ❑ Your Budget — What will your revenue goals cost to achieve?

We also discussed the importance of creating a tactical sales plan — of customizing your global sales plan to accommodate your particular territory and prospect pool. We talked about prospect research — a crucial part of developing your territorial plan.

So, after reading Parts I and II of our series, you’re ready to go out and live your plan, right? Not yet! Although we’ve provided you with some crucial knowledge so far, you still need to focus on the equipment that you'll need to achieve your goals — the tools (which we suggest) and the talent (yours, of course!).

The Tools

Prospect Development

Your territorial sales plan should detail your tactics, your work plan (the tasks you’ll perform as part of your tactics), your marketing support requirements, and should include a timeline.

But in order to customize your plan to your territory, you need to know who your sales prospects are. That means you need to take some time to answer “Who, What, When, Where & Why” questions about every potential customer you have, so you can identify and rank each one. How? Through research, “intelligence” calls, and targeted sales calls. Those three methods will help you determine the answers to questions like: Who are your current customers and why? Who isn’t a customer and why? Who are your prospects? Why are they a prospect – company size (number of employees, standard industry classification (SIC) code? Types of injuries and volumes? Needs within the organization to change access to healthcare, healthcare expenditures or enhancement to employee benefit packages? What are they most likely to buy and what can they add to their purchase over time? What will motivate each one to buy? What other services can you offer them to help them solve their problems and challenges? Where do you have the most opportunities for business? And so on.

Once you’ve identified your prospects from your research and calls, you must rank them to determine the best use of your valuable time. You may use any ranking system you prefer, but we find that the old reliable “A-B-C” system works just fine. Your “A” list, of course, is your list of “hottest” prospects that you should cultivate first, and you can set up subcategories using “pluses” and “minuses,” too. Create definitions for these categories such as; “A” = must have as a client, most potential for business (dollars and/or volumes), should have them in our backyard, or something political – prospect is on your hospital board, or is a large employer, etc.

NOTE: Be sure to ask for your internal staff and leadership’s input and feedback when you rank prospects and customers. As a team you can agree upon the prospects and their ranking, share market information and, provide them with insights into the sales process.

While you’ll want to cultivate the most promising prospects first, ranking also will help you decide your strategies — your approach. It will help you on such issues as: How much time will you spend on each potential prospect/customer? How will you contact them (in person? by letter? by phone?), and how many times? What form will those contacts take — will they be formal business meetings, or will you choose to encounter them in more of a community or social context? How will you evaluate the success of each contact's outcome? By answering these questions for time spent per ranking category, you will be able to determine the total number of potential prospects or customers upon whom you can call — per week, month, quarter and year.

The answers to these questions will serve as your beginning steps in initiating, developing and nurturing your relationships with your prospects — which is what selling is all about. If you can establish and build on these relationships, you eventually will have the credibility and trust to be able to move your prospects to "taste test" and, finally, commit to your product or service.

So, are you on sensory overload yet? Researching, ranking and strategizing requires gathering a LOT of information that you need to be able to use, refer back to, add to, and track. Which means that you need the right tools to manage it all. Excellent software is available to help you accomplish this, but we also can suggest the following useful forms.

The Company Profile/Action Plan Form helps you detail the name, type, key contacts, and other important information about a prospect, however it is ranked. The Prospect Qualification Matrix is a table you can use to finalize your rankings. Both can help you and your colleagues hold detailed, focused discussions during the research and ranking process.

Company Profile/Action Plan Form

Name/Address/Phone/Fax/website/email

Contact name/Title

Other Contacts/Titles

***Company needs* –** (I = identified by them) (S = identified by you as opportunity) Prioritize needs in terms of timeline, dollars/volumes, acuity of need, etc.

Decision Maker (why, at what level, how involved in the buying decision, what will you do to include the decision maker in the process, politics, who is working for the decision maker who will implement or influence the decision?)

Budget/Timeline

Competitive information (if applicable – who, for what services, for how long, level of satisfaction, how can you distinguish yourself from them, etc.)

Action plan/timeline for gaining account

Date	***Contact***	***Status***	***Next Action***	***Responsible Party***

Prospect Qualification and Ranking Worksheet

Revenue	*Volume*	*SIC Code#*	*Miles to Clinic*	*Employees*	*Services*	*Ranking*
45,000	High	Manu	1-5	500	Injury	A+
					Fee for Ser	
30,000	High	Distr	1-5	350	Injury	A+
					Rehab	
					Fee for Ser	
15,000	Med	Manu	10-15	100	Injury	B
5,000	Low	Print	15+	25	Injury	C

Once you start using your prospect list, research materials and database in an organized fashion, keep them up to date and use them! They need to be accurate and secure, but they are no good if they're not timely and fresh. Which means that *any* time you contact a prospect or customer, note it on your profile form and, if it's in writing, put a copy in the file.

Making an automatic habit of using these planning tools helps you:

- ❑ Manage your sales plan — a *continuous* process in which you plot and refine your strategies, and develop and implement your objectives.
- ❑ Organize and use your available resources to meet your sales goals.
- ❑ Interpret and analyze prospect feedback in a timely manner.

Working your territorial sales plan

Now you can establish and cultivate your relationships. You're ready to learn more about your prospects' wants and needs, and eventually introduce your product or service to them. You're ready to ask for their valuable time so you can make presentations and/or prepare your proposals. In short, you're ready to implement your territorial sales plan.

Scary? Not if you know the nature of your prospects, which you already have a good start on because of your prospect research. But for your hottest prospects (the "A" list), you'll need to do a Prospect Needs Analysis. In Part II of this series we discussed the in-depth questions that a needs analysis raises, but you'll probably want to create your own template that asks questions like the following:

- ❑ What is the name and address of the Prospect Company? (Location can determine budget.)
- ❑ What is its business? What does it make or do? To whom does it sell? What are its annual sales? How many employees does it have?
- ❑ What are the company's needs? How can you supply them?

- ❑ What are the company's buying procedures? Does it buy from your competition? In what amounts, how often, and on what terms?
- ❑ Can you submit a plan that would save the Prospect Company time and money?
- ❑ What is the name and title of the person on whom you would call? What makes them the targeted "buyer?" What are their personal and business needs that are to be addressed through a purchase with you and your organization?
- ❑ Who else is involved in the buying decision, how, when and why? Have you a plan for connecting and selling to them? What are the politics, purchasing timelines etc.?
- ❑ Who are your competitors with this prospect for their business? And what benefits do they have to offer?
- ❑ How does your product or service compare with the competitors'?
- ❑ What do you sell that the Prospect Company needs?
- ❑ What benefits do you offer that will satisfy the company's needs?
- ❑ What opening remarks will you use to arouse the Prospect Company's interest?
- ❑ What questions will you ask the Prospect Company in order to further illustrate how your product or service can benefit them?
- ❑ What will you use to provide proof/documentation to support your sale?
- ❑ What major area of resistance do you anticipate? How will you answer them?

To make your contacts, you will need to outline your key points and develop scripts which help to put your presentation into a manageable, understandable and memorable form and to keep you "on message." But just as when you were in the school play, scripts are meant to be behind the scenes, serving as prompts only. After you make a presentation, you must have a plan for follow up. Note the planned action and timeline in your action plan, and implement.

Now that we've discussed the tools you can use to develop and implement your plan, we'll discuss the talent you'll need to employ in the crucial phase: making the call itself.

The Talent: Making the Call

Getting Ready

Guess what? The first few times you contact, meet or sit down with a prospect, your purpose is NOT to sell. It's to build a relationship.

Or, as Harry Beckwith wrote in *Selling the Invisible*, the most compelling message you can deliver is "I understand what you need." The only way to do this is to get to know the prospect

— through your research, ranking and strategizing, but also through your one-on-one interactions.

Which means that instead of doing most of the talking, you're going to be asking a few well-chosen questions and, then, doing a whole lot of listening. In the 1980 film "Being There," the reticent Chauncey Gardner is taken for a genius, because of how little he says. You can be a genius too, if you ask the right questions, listen to your prospect, and choose your responses with precision, economy and insight.

That's not to say that you shouldn't respond if the prospect indicates an immediate need. But in most cases you will be working to build confidence, loyalty and trust. If you don't do this, you will be shortchanging yourself in the end. Transactional selling without devoting time to a long-term relationship will give you a quick sale, but NOT a solid foundation that you can build on in the future. Instead, concentrate on a deeper and wider relationship with your prospect/customer. You will want to get more business from them later and, of course, ask them for referrals.

So, be patient, and use the first few encounters to add to your Needs Analysis and to refine your strategies. Once you've established a relationship, use your own good judgment to determine when it's right to ask for a business meeting and/or presentation.

When you get that meeting, go prepared. In case you're tempted to say, "Well, duh," think about that piece of advice for a minute. It doesn't just mean to review your prospect profile, your needs analysis, your script, and every last statistic you can cram into your brain. It also means doing less obvious things. Like rounding up different colleagues and role-playing — Method acting, if you will. Using the various points of view of your staff to get into the mind of the customer. Determining what positive solution the prospect needs that you're going to present them (as Beckwith says, "Selling *hope*").

"Being there"

Once you're in the door, remember to do the following:

- ❑ Conduct yourself in a balanced way: confidently but not aggressively. Give a firm but not crushing handshake. Make solid but not penetrating eye contact. Repeat people's names as they are introduced to you.
- ❑ Make sure your prospect can relate to you as a person. This means mastering the art of small (but not too small) talk. Start off with pleasant, personal conversation on safe topics. You are not just a selling machine. The weather, everyone's health, the art hanging in the prospect's lobby, the article you saw in that morning's paper about their employee who received an award… anything that seems natural, unforced and appropriate.
- ❑ After settling in and thanking the prospect again for his or her time, state the purpose of your visit without fanfare. Keep your statements succinct and to the point. Remember the Three P's: your Purpose for being there. The Process you will follow, to achieve the Payoff — that

is, what they will get by giving you their valuable time. Your Payoff will be a part of them buying, of course!)

- ❑ Keep it simple. No fumbling with cumbersome flip charts or referencing arcane sources.
- ❑ Break your script down into memorable tag lines so that during your summation you can easily recap what you've presented.
- ❑ Speak in clear, direct English. Jargon intimidates people, or worse yet — turns them off.
- ❑ Focus on what you're saying.
- ❑ Be sincere. Part of this is a quality that's born in you, not taught. But part of it is also acting, and reacting, like a real human being. That means that you must respond to them naturally, answering their questions thoughtfully, and not just repeating a canned spiel. Be a person!

Conclusion

Well, now you really may be ready — to design, implement and live your sales plan.

There's no question about it — if you take the time as a professional to craft your sales plan, to really think through (and be willing to adjust) your strategies and budget… If you resolve to live your plan every day… respond to new realities… include your staff and leadership in the process… keep yourself open to being flexible and creative… and be willing to invest time in building trust and loyalty with your prospects and customers…**you will make your sales goals.**

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