



The Sales and Sales Management Process (Part 1)

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Within the professional/technical/financial services arenas, the term “sales” or “sales management” is seldom heard. More often, the euphemism “business development” is utilized. However, a rose by any other name is still a rose. The sales and sales management processes are frequently given short shrift in professional/technical/financial services firms, despite the reality that these functions are necessary elements for all successful businesses.

In our experience with small and mid-sized professional, financial and technical service firms, the Managing Partner or CEO is most often the individual charged with managing the sales process. Given the spectrum of individual challenges and responsibilities he/she faces on a daily basis, is it any wonder that these functions frequently receive insufficient attention?

Look at those Fortune 500 firms who are generally considered to possess the most effective and professional sales organizations (IBM and Xerox Corporation come to mind, both former employers of the author). These firms devote significant resources to managing, coaching, and training their sales staff. Despite the fact that most of their sales people are highly trained, possess excellent sales skills, and in most cases, have enjoyed considerable success, the commitment to manage their efforts is unwavering. It is very common to have extended sales planning, coaching, training meetings on a weekly basis. Do they know something service firms do not?

We have found that for most professional services (attorneys, accountants, engineers, etc) as well as in most financial and technical firms, senior



staff members are expected to manage and develop relationships with key clients, and generate new clients for the firm. What type of training have they received? What experience does the CEO or Managing Partner have in managing such efforts?

Ask virtually any professional service provider about their workload, and they will provide you with a long list of responsibilities that prevent them from contacting a potential new client, meeting with a current client to further develop the relationship, etc. Yet, the reality for firms in a business-to-business mode is that the game is won face to face.

In any selling situation, relationship development is the key to success, and especially for service providers, as they are essentially the product. With manufacturers,

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the product itself is what the customer is buying, not the individual or team of individuals. Given this, one would expect the major emphasis on selling to come from the service sector, not manufacturing. But this is not reflected in reality.

Regardless of the level of technical expertise your professional staff may possess, where do they stand on the spectrum of interactive skills? On professional selling, which has become known as “the consultative sell?” To what extent are they skilled at developing relationships, creating trust, and the like? To what extent are they in the “inner circle” of their key clients?

More to come in our next issue. What is sales management? What does contemporary thinking say about what works in a relationship development effort? How much training has your team had in this process, and what training makes sense? How adept is your team and how do you know?

Truelson Associates has served over 200 clients in its 20+ years of existence. Of those clients, fully 80% of them have been professional and other service providers operating in a business to business mode. Law, public accounting, engineering, architecture, banking, and other financial service providers are heavily represented in that mix.

We offer services in these key areas:

- Strategic planning
- Business development planning
- Management of sales and marketing implementation efforts
- Management/leadership coaching

Unlike most consulting firms, we take a hands on approach to our efforts, functioning as part of our clients senior management team to achieve stated objectives.

We are proud of the results we have achieved for and with our many clients, and are happy to provide impeccable references to substantiate those results.



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