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Sales Goals in a Tough Economy

By Mark Hunter



Making your sales goals in a good year is one thing, but attaining them in a difficult year is an entirely different challenge. Putting aside the common cliché that when times are tough, great salespeople are made, the reality is that making your goals puts more money in your pocket. Therefore, I keep reminding salespeople to think of how many times in the past they've watched a customer materialize out of nowhere only to become a major player in helping reach their year-end objectives. If you've been in sales for any length of time, you've had this happen. I am not advocating that you kick back and relax while you wait for the big customer to appear. I understand that it takes work to make your goal, but, at the same time, don't lose sight that occasionally nice breaks do occur. The good news is that you can be successful if you're willing to take the time to work through the following steps, despite the current state of the economy.

The first step to help you make your sales goals in a tough economy is to break down your goal into weekly objectives. Keep in mind, however, that these should not be based on closing "x" number of sales, but instead on accomplishing "x" number of activities that you've found are critical to your success. When your goals are strictly measured in terms of sales dollars or units, you can easily become dejected by numbers you're not happy with. Activities to monitor may include making prospecting phone calls, conducting customer presentations, or having follow-up meetings. This breakdown strategy is similar to the way coaches successfully motivate their teams. By dissecting the game into a series of activities that the coach knows the team can accomplish, they will be in a better position to win the game.

Second, find a peer with a positive attitude who is willing to take an interest in you. By reciprocating the interest, you will motivate each other. Meet together at least once a week, preferably in person, but by phone or web conference if that's not possible. Keep your conversation focused solely on the positives of the previous week to discuss the lessons you've learned from them and then how you'll be able to leverage those lessons in the weeks to come. Remember, there's no point in bringing negative baggage to the meeting. If you blew it, don't dwell on it. Move beyond it! We all know that it's very easy for one person's attitude to rub off onto another. A positive outlook can create a heightened level of energy that will result in both of you being able to think more clearly and foster new ideas and opportunities. At the conclusion of the conversation, make yourself accountable to the goals for the upcoming week by discussing exactly how you intend to make them. Then, at your next meeting, make sure you take the time to review each other's goals to ensure both of you kept the focus where you expected it to be.

Next, use the time in between each meeting with your positive peer to focus on your key activities. At the end of every day, ask yourself what you've done toward accomplishing the week's objectives. By doing something daily to move yourself towards achieving the goal, it will give you motivation for the next day. Try to avoid putting expectations on yourself to accomplish an entire week's goal in one day. If you can attain it in that short of a time period, you've set it too low and you'll never reach your full potential in sales. At the same time, don't allow the weekly goal to be so difficult that you rarely achieve it. Remember, the breakdown of the activities must be achievable. Missing your weekly goals too frequently will cause you to walk away from the entire process.

Finally, never allow yourself to be influenced by negative voices. Today's economy has created an incredible amount of pessimism, especially in the news media. If the news is negative, don't listen to it! This may include not reading the newspaper, avoiding certain websites, and changing the dial on some radio stations. Furthermore, your friends and fellow employees may even contribute to the buzz. Consider cutting them off before their opinions sway you. For those of us in sales, it's important to remember that people who aren't going to make their goal are going to do everything possible to ensure their peers don't either. The last thing they need is for somebody to show them up. Don't allow anyone to take control of your goals.

It goes without saying that achieving your sales goals in a tough economy is not easy. But, like a leaky roof, ignoring it and refusing to take action doesn't make it go away just because it isn't leaking on a sunny day. Resolve to stop the problems that contribute to your discouragement. You can't control what the economy is doing, but you can control what YOU are doing. Take the necessary steps to motivate yourself to achieve those weekly goals, which, in turn, will help you successfully reach your year-end objectives.

About the author:

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