How to Manage your Time to Improve Sales - Part 2 of 2

One of the challenges you will face when you want to replace a behaviour or attitude that is in the way of achieving more sales are your current habits. A habit is an action done repeatedly and automatically, usually without being aware of it.

Wrong habits can result in:

- A low level of sales activity
- Missed sales targets
- Frustration, stress and low self-worth

The following 4 step process can help to replace ineffective habits:

1. Visualize the habit you desire
2. Refine it in great detail
3. Visualize success and the associated feelings of the new habit
4. Practice it at least twice a day.

Planning and Prioritizing

Begin by developing a *'to do'* list and then prioritize each item using an ABC priority framework. As simple as this is, it is amazing how many salespeople do not use it - yet it can reduce stress levels and improve productivity exponentially.

Each item on your *'to do'* list will fit into one of the following conditions:

- ***'A' Priority.*** These are the *'must do'* and urgent activities. Examples include attending to key client needs and meeting deadlines
- ***'B' Priority.*** These are the *'should do'* and important activities but not essential. An example would be a client visit you had planned but if you did not attend then no problem would result
- ***'C' Priority.*** These are the *'feel good'* comfortable activities that need to be eliminated or rescheduled as an out of normal business hours activity. For example meeting a prospect who has limited potential at 5:00pm.

Once you have your list of items completed you can allocate a number to create a running schedule and further refine your priorities, for example: A1 - 8:30 am meet client XY, A2 - 10:00 am meet client ST, and B1 9:00 am follow up phone call with prospect DM.

It is important to remember the ABC priority list used on the day you implement the activities. The next day everything changes so a B priority today may become an A priority tomorrow.

Things to consider when prioritizing:

1. You are the best person to know what must be done.
2. You know the importance of each priority.
3. You know the timing, for example a deadline will dictate a priority

Geographical Sales Territory Management

To maximise sales within a defined geographical area you need to:

- Divide your region into individual selling areas based on potential sales volumes. This could be 4 or 5 regions depending on the call cycle
- Plan your time within these areas to maximise your productivity
- Spend time in more lucrative face to face selling situations
- Invest most of your time with those clients who will provide you with the greatest financial return
- Service your complete sales territory
- Reduce travel time and lower the cost of managing your sales territory

Implementing a sales territory plan

A) Grade your clients, prospective clients and leads based on the potential volume and profit margin.

B) Allocate your list into individual sales areas.

C) Develop a Sales Territory Plan. This will give you an indication of who deserves more of your time. You can further divide your list into:

C1.1 – Greatest Potential**.** Set a minimum target for this category and these are the accounts in which you want to spend most of your time growing sales.

C1.2 – Potential. The sales target should cover all costs and generate a profit.

C1.3 – Least Potential for sales growth. These can be existing clients and prospective clients where you have limited information or new clients where you are growing revenue so they ultimately become a category A or B client. Unless there is genuine potential for a client to become an A or B then re-think how to best manage them. For example, transfer them to client support or increase the sales call cycle.

A sales territory plan consists of 3 parts:

1. Strategies to achieve your sales target

Identify all prospective clients and review existing client sales. Drill down into the different product or service categories to work out how you will achieve your sales target. Identify products and services to increase sales. In summary what you want to achieve is:

- To retain and grow existing clients' business through increased sales
- Convert prospective clients to become clients

2. Set a call cycle for every client

The amount of time and frequency of your sales call cycle is dependent upon client needs and the real possibility of increased sales. Potential clients can provide you with great opportunities to grow sales. Use the ABC account rating system to decide how often you will call on a prospective or existing client. You will also need to take into consideration:

- Their buying behaviour. For example do they only buy when you see them or do they buy regardless? If the client relies on your presence you will need to develop a strategy that will encourage them to buy when you are not there

- Competitor behaviour. For example do they over service the client creating an unrealistic expectation of how they are managed?

- The cost to complete the sale. This is your salary and all related costs in running your sales territory

- Seasonality. For example do some of your clients buy more of one product or service at different times of the year?

3. Plan your schedule
Get a map of your geographical sales territory and use colour marker pens to identify the locations of every prospective and existing client and categorize each in terms of ABC as outlined previously. This will help you to:

- Prioritize the sales potential

- Allocate your time and frequency of your sales calls

Review your plan. Have you:

- Worked out the shortest route between sales calls?

- Included prospective clients to see within a location or adjoining suburb?

- Asked yourself: "*What am I going to do to make the best use of any additional time I have now created?"*

To improve your time management is to improve your self-management and the more effective you are at changing habits that impeded your success the more successful you will be in sales. Changing habits isn't easy, particularly if you need to work on several over a period of time, but the results are worth it.

If you would like to discuss this topic or any other relating to sales or sales management then contact Kurt Newman direct on +61 412 252 236 or email on kurt@salesconsultants.com.au.

Kurt's expertise is in sales strategy, sales management development; group structured sales training and infield sales coaching. As a sales person he has successfully sold products and services in 4 major market/product segments: new product sales, consultative sales, relationship sales and retail. During his selling career he created sales records for three companies in two industries and won many other sales awards for outstanding performance.