

Why a sales and customer service culture can change a company's fortune

Most companies have an operations/administration culture that dominates the organisation.

So what is wrong with that? In this situation the company culture tends to become internally focussed, creating inconsistent customer service due to: competing priorities; processes and documentation designed for the convenience of the organisation but not necessarily for the customer; and slow response to market demands or opportunities. In time a major shake-up has to occur which is often predicated by the appointment of a new CEO or the company being taken over by a stronger competitor.

So how is an operations/administration culture created in the first instance? A recent Sales Culture survey by the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) may shed some light on the question. It showed that 88% of CEO's/Board members and 73% of business owners believe their company's sales performance had been "very poor to average". Most top level decision makers (i.e. CEO's and/or Directors) either don't have sales experience, or if they did, they don't promote it - probably because they don't see it enhancing their personal brand. Almost half of the participants were unsure if their CEO had a background in sales or whether their board had sales related experience. If a CEO has a legal, accounting or operations background this can often explain their natural inclination towards these 'back end' areas of the business, leaving the 'front end' to others in the company.

Of course this isn't always the case. One client, with whom I have completed a range of projects, is the CEO of a global shipping company. He has a strong operations background, yet when he takes over as CEO of a company the first item on his to-do list is to become familiar with is sales. At first employees, particularly those in sales, have a look of surprise which is immediately followed by respect.

It's not an easy task turning a company around from an administration/operations bias to a sales and customer service culture because often times there is pushback from those, particularly from management one or more levels below the CEO, who feel threatened by the change.

So where to begin? It all starts with the CEO or business owner leading by example by developing an understanding of sales and customer service and to experience what it's like to work at the 'front end' of the business. The quickest and most effective way to achieve this is to hire a sales strategist who has a track record in this field. The sales strategist would be able to tailor a program that would meet the specific needs of the organisation and industry. The CEO or business owner should also spend time with the company's salespeople on both external customer and potential customer visits and internal sales taking customer phone calls. The experience may feel uncomfortable initially but what a strong message it would send.

If you would like to know more about developing a sales and customer service culture then contact Kurt Newman direct +61 412 252 236 or email info@salesconsultants.com.au



Kurt Newman is a recognised sales expert, successful author and respected coach and mentor who has guided many well-known companies to improved profitability and countless sales professionals to greater success. Following an outstanding, award-winning and record-making career in sales that spanned three decades and covered all major market segments, Kurt is now focussed on passing his expertise on to others through his work with Sales Consultants and community-based initiatives.