

CEO Peer to Peer Report

Topic: Best Practices in Sales and Marketing

November 2009

The following is the compiled list of Best Practices in Sales and Marketing shared by CEOs at the Raffoni CEO Consulting annual retreat.

- **Try team-based comp strategies.** The CEO of a company that sells software and services to large equipment manufacturers says, "We were amazed at the effect internal team pressure could have on sales people. We shifted the mantra from 'eat your young' to 'you've got to pull your weight because we are all in it for the long haul.'" The result: an increased level of motivation, creativity and focus from sales people with projected sales growing above the industry average.
- **Reconsider focusing on vertical markets.** We've heard the case to focus on verticals before. Why is the case stronger now? Some markets are recovering faster than others. There's more distinction in performance between markets. If you can, it helps to go where the money is freeing up. Also, customers always feel better when you really understand their business. A vertical approach gives you the expertise that customers appreciate.
- **Take a "personals" approach to partnerships: "Aggressive company seeking another for long-term relationship."** Partnerships ranked first in our survey of what CEOs wanted to talk to other CEOs about. Finding the perfect partner is a nice thought, isn't it? This dreamy partner is not only easy to get along with but brings a sales channel and/or more products to sell. Unfortunately, finding corporate partners works like finding personal partners. Some do a lot of dating, some are selective, and some get lucky. There's no science to what will work. On a positive note, what's different about today's economy is that there are a lot of companies on the "dating scene" that are willing to talk. It's a good time to get out there. CEOs said it's time to replace the old "win-win" proposition with a "this is what we have that you don't" message, and then translate that into business impact. It can help you prioritize your partner prospects and take you from an open-ended lunch and chat to something more serious.
- **Don't ignore social media.** You just can't blow-off the impact of social media sites--in particular, Facebook. According to [Facebook's statistics](#), 150 million active users log in on any given day. Even one percent of that is a large pool of potential customers. (More data can be found at [www.insidefacebook.com](#)). If, in any way, you sell directly to consumers--it's time to delve into social media.
- **Make the most of Web & customer metrics.** Great, you've created some pull on Facebook and you're investing in Google Ad-words. Now what? There's great technology out there that helps you to better understand who's coming to your site and what they are looking at so that you can arm your sales team. One CEO referenced [www.demandbase.com](#), which has a free app and other for-pay products that have made a difference for his company. Another tool worth looking at is [www.insideview](#). This connects salesforce to linked-in.
- **Try coupons, "....they're actually working."** One CEO says, "In my 10 years as CEO, I've never done a coupon promotion that worked, but this time it did!" This CEO's customer base knew they needed to purchase the product (forced by upcoming regulation) but kept putting it off. Running the coupon promotion not only boosted sales in a targeted time period but helped this start up to generate cash needed to bridge their next round of funding by requiring 1/3 payment down. Smart!
- **Invest in training. The time is right.** Everyone services, everyone sells. Remember, it's a down economy and everyone's feeling a little beat up and we are all human. One CEO said his company ran an internal program that emphasized the importance of the customer and how to deliver value each day. The CEO noted, "Higher measured customer satisfaction, new wins, and new partnerships contributing to a 14% growth rate in a down cycle."
- **Debrief with discipline.** The best companies aren't limiting themselves to standard pipeline reviews. They're analyzing the heck out of data and refocusing their sales efforts. One CEO noted that his company cast a very broad net for a new product launch and every week they whittle away and whittle away, getting down to the best, most essential target customer segment. Another large manufacturing company CEO talked about his program in which each salesperson receives a predictive report that estimates the amount of new and repeat business for a target customer/distributor based on deep, cross-referenced historical and industry trend data. The sales people then validate the data in the field to make it even more accurate. It has helped to focus the sales staff and identify where there are territory performance issues.
- **Keep an eye on Google Adwords.** Many Google advertisers are faced with having to "enable broad bidding"—this allows Google to extrapolate associated user word searches and point them to your website. If they click—you pay. For, example one Globalization Company that offers translation of the medical device industry budgets about 15k a month on Google advertising. After looking closely, they noted that they were paying for all searches on "Dentist in Spanish" which is really not relevant to their business. The team reviewed the weblogs in detail and found loads of misdirected searches. They "blocked" these words and now expect to save nearly 50k per year.