

Tips for Innovative Meetings/ Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Sales Meetings

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WELCOME

Happy New Year and welcome to T.I.M.E. If you are a new subscriber to T.I.M.E., this is the first issue of the year. We publish this e-newsletter filled with ideas for experiential, innovative meetings, training events and conferences every month.

In this issue we will address Sales, Sales Meeting and Award Presentations.

An index of our past issues is included in the last section.

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For your ease, sections are numbered and separated with “___’s”; Scroll down or use Ctrl +f to locate a specific section.

1. SELLING ICE TO ESKIMOS

During wonderful economic times – like the past 107 months or tighter recessionary markets, all organizations seek to increase revenues and increase market share.

When consumers and businesses are spending money, how can you insure that they are buying from you?

Add sales training to your next regional or national sales meeting. Consider the following:

- 81% of customer inquires are never followed up by a sales contact
- 81% of all sales aren’t closed until after the fifth call
- 40% of all sales veterans experience bouts of “call reluctance”

Experienced and new sales people alike can benefit from training. Effective training will arm a sales team to become World Class Competitors.

A sales training program, like Planet X from On Track, allows sales people to practice these important skills in today's global and highly competitive environment:

1. Know their customers business

Sales people are no longer vendors offering commodity products. In today's environment, sales people must be partners who deliver high value. Sales teams must help customers think through business issues and then allow the sales person and customer to jointly develop the most valuable solution.

2. Ask insightful questions that cause customers to make better decisions

The increase in mergers and acquisitions (in 1999 they were valued at \$3.4 trillion) means that organizational direction, strategy and the key players are or may have changed. Global competition shifts your customer's needs. Sales people need to analyze the situation and ask probing questions that will allow them to effectively position their products and services as a "solution" to a customer need.

3. Use all the resources available and not rely on the "lone ranger" approach

Effective sales people must be able to focus internal resources on key accounts, align resources (centralized and field resources) and engender cross department collaboration to support the specific customer needs.

4. Keep the sales process moving.

While not every customer call will result in a sale, a good customer call will result in a "next step" which may include

- Meeting again
- Reviewing product literature
- Accepting a bid or proposal
- Participating in a demonstration
- Using the product/service on a trial basis
- Talking with others
- Arranging a meeting with the decision maker

5. Compete on a basis other than price

Companies want to develop long-term, valuable, and fair relationships with their customers. Competing solely on price offers a short-term fix to meeting long-

term goals. Effective selling involves creating value for the customer in areas like customer service, customization, creativity, and idea generation.

Effective Sales training will pay big dividends for your organization. Avon, which offers education as part of all their sales meetings, tracks post-training sales and has seen an average increase of 53% in sales among reps who attended their training sessions over a 2-year period.

“Training of customer-contact employees, (like) sales is one of the most effective ways to gain a competitive advantage,” says Jerry Fritz, director of sales and customer service management of executive education at University of Wisconsin – Madison.

Furthermore, skill and career development is highly valued by employees. A fun, experiential, engaging sales training program, like Planet X, also helps retain employees.

A recent American Society for Training and Development study of 7 companies including Dow Chemical, Edward Jones, Great Plains, LensCrafter, Sears Roebuck, Southwest Airlines and South African Brewers indicates that investments in employee growth and career development is key to low turnover rates and high employee satisfaction. “Training and development are not the only options that keep employees loyal, but they are an integral part of why employees go to and stay at organizations,” states Stacey Wagner, director of the ASTD study.

Consider the needs of your sales force. Planet X is unique in that it allows the sales force to put in practice the important selling skills. It is not a lecture-based training program. Planet X is a robust sales simulation that covers all aspects of the sales process (territory management, prospecting, establishing rapport, closing, etc.); it can be customized to meet your specific needs. Experienced and junior people will gain new insights into consultative selling through Planet X. It may be the perfect program for an upcoming meeting. More information on Planet X is included in Section 6, Tracking Success.

Sales groups are a tough audience. Selling ice to Eskimos is not easy either. Incorporate sales training to meet the needs of your organization (more sales), keep your teams’ skills top notch (helps them and helps you), and motivates and retains employees (again, helps them and helps you).

2. AND THE WINNER IS...(AWARD PRESENTATIONS)

Another huge motivational factor for sales people is Recognition. People, especially members of a sales force, thrive on recognition. Here are some things to consider when planning your next awards presentation:

- Make it Visible

Present the awards publicly. Statistics show that 82% of recipients who received awards in front of peers were satisfied or very satisfied.

In contrast, only 52% of people who did NOT receive awards in front of their co-workers were satisfied or very satisfied.

- Recognize All Contributors

Create time to recognize and thank all people for their contributions. If everyone feels that they are valued, they will walk away feeling like a winner – and perhaps be more motivated to work toward an award next time.

- Create Suspense and Newness

Announcing the winners should be a surprise. Utilize a surprise element to the ceremony (new categories, intriguing introductions, etc.). Consider having someone other than the same managers give out the awards (use your valued customers, a speaker from the meeting, last year's winners). Add variety and spice to your awards presentations and don't simply rely on traditional methods each time.

3. PUMP UP YOUR PDA

Many of us carry Personal Data Assistants whether we are in sales or not. When traveling to and from your next meeting, training event or sales calls, here's some sites to add functionality beyond the usual address, calendar and To-Do list:

Avantgo.com: News and movie listings from sources like the New York Times and the Weather Channel. Choose the "channels" and hot-synch it to download the latest stories. (Free)

Vindigo.com: Plug in a neighborhood in Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco or Washington and you'll get free daily updated listings of the closest restaurants, stores, nightclubs and movie theaters. (Free)

Handago.com: A source of PDA software ranging from freeware to commercial applications. (Free)

Palmgear.com: Thousand of Palm titles arranged by category and popularity.

Trekware.com: StreetSigns is an interactive program of maps for hundreds of US cities. You tag your destination and the software points you in the right direction (\$49.95)

If we should pass, please beam me your business card. In the meantime, don't forget to incorporate the technology for these gadgets into your next training event, meeting or sales conference.

4. HUMOR

This is totally irrelevant and without business value, but if you have 15 seconds to waste and need a good laugh do the following:

Call National Discount Brokers (you won't have to talk with anyone and it's a legitimate toll free number) by doing the following

Dial 800-888-3999

Listen to the Options

When you hear the #7 option described, hit #7

Every voice mail system should have an option like #7. And it proves that some organizations do have a sense of humor.

5. FREEBIES: THE GRANDMA TEST

Sales Tip for the Day: Here's a fun way to insure you aren't inadvertently alienating customers with your answers and language.

Here's a quick test to see if the words and phrases you use when talking to customers are potentially alienating.

Say the sentence but that the end of put the word "grandma".

For example, "Its not our policy, Grandma."

"Let me transfer you to the people who handle that, Grandma."

If you wouldn't say it to your grandmother, then doesn't say it to your customers. From Jeffrey Gitomer's book, Customer Satisfaction is Worthless, Customer Loyalty is Priceless.

For other sales ideas on cold calling, being a good sales manager, email us for some innovative tips. Send an email to stinnish@ameritech.net with the words "WARMING UP TO COLD CALLING" in the subject line.

6. TRACKING SUCCESS

We can help “Open Minds to the Possibilities” through our high-impact conference and training simulations.

Our programs and workshops address such issues as sales skills, teambuilding, communication, leadership, and value alignment. We offer workshops, simulations (3-4 hours in length) and can customize programs to meet your specific needs.

For example on the sales side, Planet X immerses participants in the challenges of building and maintaining a customer base. It also helps participants experience what it’s like to be on the receiving (the customer) end of the business building effort. Participants leave Planet X with a renewed commitment to exceptional customer service, both internal and external, and a better understanding of the importance of listening and leveraging information across functional areas.

Here’s what people say about Planet X:

“I never realized how much we push product rather than help the customer satisfy needs or build business.”

“The team selling to us lost the sale because they weren’t there when they had promised, with the information we needed. I won’t make that mistake with my customers.”

“I learned how important it is to maintain contact with customers and potential customers through all business cycles.”

If you would like to learn how we can help you meet your business objectives, or to learn more about On Track, our clients, and our programs, please contact Sue Tinnish, 1415 N. Salem Blvd., Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004, 847.394.9857, email stinnish@ameritech.net or visit our website at www.ontrackusa.com.

7. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

We welcome any comments or suggestions about the newsletter or topics you would like to read about. Our February 2001 issue will discuss the topic of Change and Change Management.

Please forward this newsletter to your associates and colleagues! Your recommendations are key to our success. Or anyone can subscribe by sending an email to stinnish@ameritech.net.

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be requested by emailing us. Here is an index of topics and “freebies” offered in the past:

May: Teambuilding and (freebie) New York Times reprint and summary on why teambuilding programs miss the mark.

June: Green Meetings and (freebie) list of books that have 20-30 minute exercises for meetings and events.

July: American (Values) and (freebie) Meeting Analysis, a 1-page document that will outline the scope and needs analysis for your next meeting.

August: Minimum/Minimal Meetings and (freebie) Web Winners (web resources to make you and your meetings more productive).

October: Evaluations and (freebie) sample evaluation questions.

November: Politics and (freebie) on-line experiences.

December: Toys and (freebie) brainstorming ideas.

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