TOP TIPS for a SELLING ORGANISATION in a RECESSION

By JOHN GRAY

TIP NUMBER ONE

I just 'googled' the term 'Selling in a Recession' – and sure enough, there was a VERY large volume of hits!

I read the first five or six and realised that they all had pretty much the same theme and 'call to action'*…"You're going to have to be a better salesman now that the going is tougher. Enrol in our Sales Training Program and we can help you be that better sales person!"*

I have no disagreement with the notion that when times are tough you need to 'Sell Harder, Sell Better'. Unfortunately many companies subscribe to that view on the one hand, but slash their training budgets to zero on the other – almost assuming that tougher times will automatically make their sales people better at their job! Others think a training course will act as a miracle cure and that come Monday morning, sales will go through the roof. What a pity that it's not so simple.

I know from experience that both selling and managing selling teams during a serious recession, involves much more. After all, if it were that simple we probably wouldn't be in a recession. So I am posting on the ***JFK&P*** website my FIVE TIPS FOR A SELLING ORGANISATION operating in today's depressed markets. They are generic – they may not apply to YOU. But I'm happy to talk with you individually and build a program that is specific to your company's needs. But for now…here's tip number one:

Look at the quality and integrity of the sales forecast from review to review. If it's chopping and changing, you have a valuable early warning sign of a problem in your team.

In good times there is generally enough depth and cover in a sales forecast – be it a rep's individual forecast, or a manager's roll-up – to cover bits of business being delayed, being lost, or not being closed in time. Now, in saying that, I'm not condoning a sloppy approach to reviewing a sales rep's forecast. I'm just stating a fact – you rarely (well, you shouldn't!) miss a forecast when there's enough business opportunity out there in the market. And in those easier times there's always a risk that the forecast review process is allowed to slacken, giving rise to problems that really grow when the tide turns against you.

And when that happens, and the market isn't so bountiful, the forecast is much thinner, lacking in depth, and increasingly prone to inaccuracy. More and more these days, the process is over-automated, with the manager's role as a coach being less and less. I'm a great believer in a simple approach – one that focuses in on how frequently and by how much a rep changes his forecast from one review meeting to the next, and the next, and why.

But here's a typical problem. Many managers don't actually worry WHY the rep's forecast has changed! They are more focused on adding up numbers to see if they can make their team's targets. All they see is that 'Tom is short, but maybe Paul can make it up'. A struggling sales person rarely comes forward and asks for help – particularly when times are tough. Fear of being 'the obvious one to go' tends to act as a de-motivator for such openness! So a good manager should be trying to spot the early warning signs – and to help before it becomes a real issue.

Once a rep's forecast begins to show a pattern of changing significantly from one review to the next, you have a warning sign. These changes might be dates, size of deal, or the percentage likelihood of winning the order. Take action to find out why these changes are happening, and take action to make the rep's forecast more consistent and accurate – and successful.

Identify a problem early – and take remedial action.

Look out for tip number two, next month!

©This article has been written by John Gray – a senior partner with ***JFK&P***

END