

Sales Training Becomes Your “Secret Ingredient” During Recessionary Times!

Management tends to cut entertainment, travel and training budgets first, when the economy slows down. It's unfortunate, ironic and a huge mistake that can cause serious setbacks to competitiveness and marketshare growth. It's been proven that when organizations continue to invest in their people, training and systems during economic slowdowns, they tend to experience faster growth as the economy begins to recover. In fact, these companies tend to out-perform their competitors for years to come. Companies need to ensure that their sales teams are well trained, able to call on more prospects and to reach the quotas and plans that have been defined; especially now, during these tough economic times.

What Message Do You Send?

When a company slashes expenses, reduces costs across the board, and administers lay-offs, they are following the same strategy as most of their competitors. More importantly, what message is being sent? The company is sending a message to their clients that they may be having financial problems. They're also sending a message to their suppliers that they may be experiencing some financial difficulties. Worst yet is the message being sent to their own associates, which is that their jobs could be eliminated. Top performers start considering their options anytime a company starts making cutbacks. They start looking for other employers who are strong, aggressive and still growing successfully. So, if competitors are cutting back, look for opportunities to “snatch up” some of their top performers!

During slow economic times, clients will be under a lot of pressure from suppliers to try and close a deal. Without proper sales training, salespeople can put undo stress on a client, possibly damaging the relationship. Now is the time when Sales Professionals need to have the best skills possible that teach them how to overcome the challenges of selling in a tough economy. Otherwise they fall into the familiar trap of “other” salespeople...discounting prices and making promises they can't fulfill.

Have You Standardized Your Selling Process?

Visualize these scenarios: What would happen if architects didn't use blueprints, actors did not have scripts, accomplished musicians had no sheet music and professional athletes didn't use playbooks? None of these professionals would succeed. The same holds true for Sales Professionals today. Companies are standardizing their Selling Process with emphasis on preparation and pre-call planning. Salespeople need a framework, outline or roadmap to visualize sales success and organize their thoughts. It's no different than using blueprints, scripts, sheet music and playbooks!

Today, salespeople must utilize a sales team approach by delivering a Value Story with consistency. It takes multiple touch-points to get the attention of clients and prospects. The account managers need assistance from the sales team in order to reach sales goals. These sales leaders must be accountable and accept their leadership position to "quarterback" the account sales team. Team selling is different and takes structure and preparation to make it work. Training becomes the vehicle to communicate this to sales teams by providing definition and structure to carry out their sales strategies.

All eyes are now on sales and marketing because of the volatile fluctuations and conditions in our economy. Margins, revenue and marketshare are now the priority of all business leaders. The tendency is to pull back and "batten down the hatches," when in all reality, we should be building, investing and pushing forward during these slower times. Now more than ever is the opportunity to go after marketshare and be ready for accelerated growth when the markets swing back...and they will.

Sales Training Becomes The Vehicle To Introduce Change!

Equip your Sales Professionals with the proper selling skills and techniques and watch them soar. Sales training makes sense right now, especially as a team-building tool. Salespeople like to interact with each other and share their selling experiences. Training brings everyone together and makes them feel united as one. Self-confidence is needed to overcome sales hurdles during a slowdown period and keep the sales engine churning. Salespeople will all be in alignment with strategic initiatives and use a productive approach in communicating with clients and securing business. Sales training provides a common sales language and reignites sales culture as the training concepts and skills become part of everyday sales activities. Your people will do it instinctively, automatic and by habit.

Proactively investing in training during economically challenging times has been shown to stabilize and even increase sales. The single greatest asset at a company is it's associates. This statement is often used, but not enough companies truly understand and fully embrace this concept. Their growth is the foundation of the company's continued success. Training sends a message of confidence to sales associates that during these insecure times, the company is still a dominant player that will be around for a long time. As the economy improves, you will have already taken the steps needed to grow rapidly, while the competition will only be starting to think about their training needs.

Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Historically, economies consistently experience both up and down cycles every seven to ten years. However, history has shown that these cycles are regular and can be an advantage to those organizations who know how to maximize them. Make sure that all leaders and associates understand how to take advantage of opportunities during rough economic times. Understand that selling skills which work during a strong economy, may not work during a weak economy. So, train sales leaders and their teams to maximize selling skills and grow the business. You'll not only survive a recession, you'll emerge from it as a market leader.

If your company would like to become more dominant in your industry and gain marketshare, consider the next year as a great opportunity that is waiting for you. Now more than ever, the timing is right to invest in your people with sales training that can become your “*Secret Ingredient*” or differentiator in the marketplace. While competitors are worrying about the slowdown, take this opportunity to grow and dominate. Don't be afraid to invest and grow during a recession. It's the best time to take marketshare away from other industry players. If you miss this window, you may have to wait another seven to ten years for the next chance.

Good Luck & Good Selling,

Bob Butler, TSP

Bob Butler is president and CEO for Butler Learning Systems (BLS). BLS provides sales training, consulting, leadership development and service excellence...enhancing relationships and changing lives. BLS has emerged as the “sales training experts” after nearly 50 years.

Bob is truly “The Sales Professional®,” celebrating over 30 years of experience in the sales trenches and as a sales trainer. He has coauthored numerous sales training programs with his father and founder of BLS, Don Butler. He is a “product of the product.”