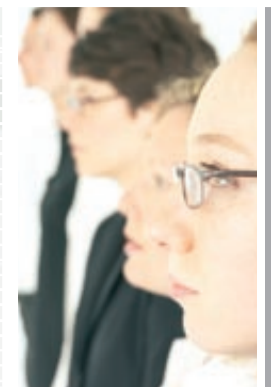


Sales Weekend



PROFESSIONAL ADVICE
HOW TO GET PAST THE GATE KEEPER
 SUPER P.A. REVEALS ALL
 P3



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A SPECIAL RECRUITMENT REPORT

REVIEW INSIDE

BOOMTIME IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES P3



EXCELLENCE IN SALES AWARDS 2006

JUDGING is over and all that remains is for the winners of *The Australian's* inaugural Excellence in Sales Awards to be announced at the gala dinner and awards ceremony at Pyrmont in Sydney on Wednesday, November 8.

An astonishing list of salespeople were nominated for their skills in increasing sales across industry categories including information technology, telecommunications, FMCG, property, finance, travel and automotive.

Each category winner was also judged for the Salesperson of the Year Award.

With a keynote presentation by internationally recognised sales and business coach, Brian Tracy, the night will be more than just awards and fun. Brian's presentation is loaded with powerful, proven ideas and strategies that salespeople can apply to get better results.

Winners of the Excellence in Sales Awards and their companies will feature prominently in future editions of *WEEKEND SALES*. The section is the only dedicated "home" for all those who work in the sales profession, and appears on the last Saturday of each month in *The Weekend Australian*. Remember to pick it up and make it "your weekend sales retreat".

To book your tickets for the gala dinner and awards ceremony at Dolton House, Jones Bay Wharf, Pyrmont, go to www.theaustralian.com.au/salesawards/entry.html

TOOLS OF THE TRADE DO YOU REALLY NEED AN OFFICE?

written by Helen Bradley

WHEN it comes to working in the office, these days many sales people simply don't. When you think about it, it makes good sense. Your primary focus is to make sales and service your customers so the time you spend pitching to them and servicing their needs directly impacts your success. Driving back to the office to complete paper work is time that could be spent more productively.

» FULL STORY P2

INSIDE THE INTERNET

WHY SELLING ONLINE IS TAKING OFF



written by Jeni Harvie

I just sold my house. No big deal really, except that it was done entirely online. The buyer is an Australian living in England who is returning to take up an academic posting in a few months.

She found the house through the Internet, she contacted the real estate agent by email, she downloaded the virtual tour, we haggled over the price (via more emails) and the deal was closed.

» FULL STORY P5

When the world's roundest thing becomes a sales tool

written by JULIAN CRIBB

THE world's most perfect ball is in Sydney, in a pristinely-pure laboratory set in the leafy suburb of Lindfield. Here, white-suited scientists tenderly polish a few atoms more from the surface of what is to be the roundest thing on Earth, a perfect sphere of silicon weighing exactly one kilogram.

For those who are off the social pace, next year is the Year of Avogadro's Number. For the mathematically minded, the number, named after the 19th century Italian chemist Amadeo Avogadro, is roughly 6.02×10^{23} and it represents the number of atoms in 12 grams of pure carbon.

What does this have to do with sales?

The sphere is an amazing marketing tool for scientists who need funding to develop products for commercial applications – and to make money from them in return.

As a marketing statement for the unique skills of the team at the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Precision Optics (ACPO) team of Australian researchers the sphere is literally unbeatable – because no-one in the world can excel it.

The scientists are out to celebrate the Year of Avogadro's number by producing the world's most accurate kilogram weight from a crystalline boule of purpose-grown Russian Silicon 28.

"We've a lot more than balls here," says Manfred Claasz, director of ACPO and the man charged with turning one of the world's leading optical measurement and fabrication labs into a commercial operation, sell-

ing ultra-precision optics to global technology leaders including NASA, Caltech, MIT, Tokyo and Kyoto universities, Nikon and Canon, BAE Systems and Germany's famed Max Planck Institut.

» The role of optics

Should the human race spot another earth-like planet capable of supporting life, chances are that key components of the "eyeball" that does it will have been made in Australia.

When the Joint Strike-Fighter takes to the skies in our defence, part of the optics that will guide its weapons with unprecedented accuracy for years to come may originate with ACPO.

When researchers labouring to defeat bird flu, SARS, HIV and other threats to human health use synchrotrons to tweak out

better drugs, ACPO optics will be there in the beamlines where the delicate molecular structures of the new substances are analysed.

"These guys perform magic," Claasz says, with quiet awe. "The things they are doing are amazing."

And it will take a touch of magic to market science at this level. For years the ACPO team worked within CSIRO's National Measurement Laboratory, part of the group that lends and monitors precision in almost every facet of Australian industrial production and daily life. Now the decision has been taken to commercialise those optical skills which, for the past 15 years, have chiefly been sought by the world's leading science laboratories and instrumentation companies.

Their skills lie in three main areas – optical coatings, in which layers of specialized

materials only atoms thick are tailored and deposited onto optical devices, advanced optical instrument design for scientific, industrial and military applications and precision engineering of optical lenses and devices.

One of the most exciting ventures in which ACPO is engaged is the NASA mission to discover new worlds.

» Winning contracts for deep space exploration

The centre beat off a bevy of international competitors when it was commissioned by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)

» CONTINUED P4

Will aligning sales and marketing really boost your bottom line?



written by MARY MOREL

WHEN sales and marketing departments work well together, companies reportedly see substantial improvements in their performance metrics. Sales cycles are shorter, market entry costs go down and the costs of sales are lower. In short, they make more money.

These are just some of the benefits of an integrated sales and marketing approach outlined by Phillip Kotler, Neil Rackham and Suj Krishnaswamy in the special edition of *Harvard Business Review* dedicated to sales (July-August 2006).

Conversely, when sales and marketing teams are not in alignment, companies may run into conflict over which products to push and when to launch new products. Sales may wish to push products with lower margins that are easier to sell, while Marketing wants them to promote products with longer lead times but higher profit margins.

And then the blame game starts. Often the trouble starts because Sales and Marketing compete for the same budget dollar. Salespeople find it easier to demonstrate a return on investment as they can often prove how much revenue they make on each sale.

Marketing can't produce these short-

term metrics as it takes much longer to know whether a marketing program has helped create a long-term competitive advantage.

» Strategy and collateral support

David Corkindale, professor of marketing management, University of South Australia, says Sales often questions how Marketing can justify its existence if it can't demonstrate its worth. This is a valid question, he says.

The issue is further complicated as the role of sales and marketing have changed dramatically over the last 15 years, particularly in larger companies. Small-to-medium sized companies often don't differentiate between sales and marketing and the sales function usually dominates.

As companies grow in size, they separate the marketing from the sales functions and split it into two roles – strategic and support. The support function consists of providing collateral, such as brochures and website content, and undertaking direct mail and telemarketing.

Marketing's strategic role involves studying market trends and identifying longer-term sales opportunities. Over the last 15 years, the power of strategic marketing has increased as many companies have moved beyond the traditional four Ps (product, pricing, place and promotion) to look more closely at segmentation, targeting and positioning.

"It's easier to appreciate the value of the support function," says Corkindale, "but more difficult to prove the value of strategy which may identify long-term opportunities in new areas that take three years to become

profitable.

"The issue is short-term versus long-term returns. Often companies need an act of faith to appreciate strategic marketing's worth."

This is one reason why marketing and marketing spend is often cut first in hard

SHOULD YOUR COMPANY MORE TIGHTLY INTEGRATE SALES AND MARKETING? HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW GRAPH REVEALS P4

times.

In the United States, Blackfris Communications' second annual sizing of the US marketing market found that 2006 marketing spending dropped to 4.7 per cent of business revenues this year, from 8.9% last year. The survey attributed this fall to poor weather and rising petrol prices.

» Changing sales roles

Strategic marketing's increase in power has come at the same time as the role of Sales is changing.

"Sales often happen without salespeople these days," says Corkindale. "We don't require salespeople in a supermarket or electrical retailer." And a lot of sales take place online or through call centres."

In the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) industry, another change has been the power shift to a new "customer" – the big players, such as Coles and Woolworths.

Bill Corbett, Brookcar Consulting, works both in Australia and internationally in

FMCG. He says that companies selling to supermarkets have had to reorganise their selling and marketing approach.

"There is an over-supply of most goods, which means large customers have choice and they want to deal with suppliers on a

national basis. Accounts are now much more complex and involve overlapping account teams.

"There's now a need to establish long-term relationships so identifying how an account manager is performing is no longer as straightforward."

One-way Sales and Marketing have learnt to adapt to these new customers is through forming a new division—trade marketing. Its role is to crunch numbers and identify trends. Trade marketing, usually, but not always, sits under Sales.

» Cultural clashes

As well as the tension caused by fighting for budget and adapting to changing roles, cultural differences can also create friction between Sales and Marketing. "Several marketing people go straight from university into junior brand positions," says Corbett, "and so have very little experience with the customers."

Sales and Marketing also attract different

types of people. "Marketers have traditionally had more formal education and spend their time behind a desk. Sales are in the field, talking to people. They are skilled relationship builders and are used to rejection.

"A lot of marketing people don't get out into stores enough," he says, "giving the excuse that they 'don't have enough time'."

Some companies insist marketing staff have sales experience before they move into marketing. Corbett agrees this is a good idea. "I think people make better marketers if they have had sales experience and direct contact with customers."

"They can observe the way consumers shop rather than rely on data research. They can also appreciate the realities of what works and doesn't work in stores."

Ken Grant, associate professor, Department of Marketing, Monash University, has researched variables that impact the relationships between Sales and Marketing. His research looked at both employees and management's level of satisfaction with their relationship, the level of trust and cooperation between them, and the perceived importance and overall understanding of the relationship.

For employees, level of trust scored the lowest, but in terms of communication, the study found that completeness and accuracy of communication were not as important as adequacy, credibility and timeliness. "We also found," says Grant, "that the level of encouragement to interact, the friendliness or atmosphere in cross-functional teams did not have a significant impact on the relation

» CONTINUED P4

"The issue is short-term versus long-term returns. Often companies need an act of faith to appreciate strategic marketing's worth."

David Corkindale, professor of marketing management, University of South Australia

QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

"What I am doing is selling myself. Intellectually I think I understand that, but emotionally I didn't until I experienced the pain of constantly putting myself on the line and facing rejection. It makes sense to look at yourself as a work in progress and to define your core assets and then sell them to the marketplace. The question ultimately is, "Are you willing to do what it takes to get the opportunity you want?"

Susan Gould in *Free Agents*, quoting an executive making a career transition

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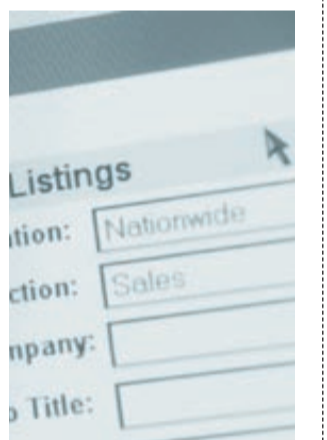
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 FIND THE ONE

» CONTINUED P4



MR STYLE JON MICHAIL COURTESY AND MANNERS ARE YOUR STOCK IN TRADE

GOOD manners might go un-remarked, but bad manners are not forgiven.

Salespeople used to epitomise good manners. But something has gone wrong with Generations X and Y. But don't blame them - the Baby Boomers haven't demonstrated the leadership to teach them what to do.

To transact business and to communicate more effectively we need to recognise that business etiquette is an essential tool that opens doors like nothing else.

By being consciously aware of courtesy, you may find you adopt a more formal approach than that currently employed in your work culture. In today's society there is a tendency to promote the cult of celebrity and informality. But while this may work in the entertainment world, in business the trend is still towards good manners.

Steer clear of anything that screams "bad taste". The following 10 tips will help enhance your presentation with clients.

1. Be punctual - ON TIME
2. Wear contemporary classic and modest business attire
3. Be business-card savvy - never run out of cards
4. Do your homework
5. Make sure you have the proper introduction
6. Remember names
7. Be sensitive to the differences within cultures
8. Keep your mouth shut, listen and be discreet
9. Spend time on their people, develop relationships
10. ALWAYS send a thank you card or note



As a reminder always to be on time, why not invest in a distinctive (but not ostentatious) watch? It may celebrate a particularly lucrative deal and constantly remind you of the importance of time. It will also send a message about your style. ■

JON-MICHAIL IS CEO OF IMAGE GROUP INTERNATIONAL AND AUTHOR OF LIFE BRANDING. www.imagegroup.com.au

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Do you need an office?



written by
**HELEN
BRADLEY**

WHEN it comes to working in the office, these days many sales people simply don't. When you think about it, it makes good sense. Your primary focus is to make sales and service your customers so the time you spend pitching to them and servicing their needs directly impacts your success. Driving back to the office to complete paper work is time that could be spent more productively.

Thanks to the new technologies, being on the road no longer means being 'out of the office' rather it's being 'out in the office'.

Key to staying in touch when on the road are devices like portable computers and intelligent phones. Well suited to the road warrior are PCs like the Toshiba M400 Tablet which is specially constructed to be both lightweight and rugged. You can type using the spill resistant keyboard or flip the screen over to write with a stylus and your handwriting is automatically converted to editable text. It's not only high tech but it's very practical too and if dropped, it's smart enough to protect your data by disengaging the hard drive.

Security is a big issue for mobile users and the small size of a laptop makes it not only easy to leave behind in an overhead locker on a plane but also an easy target for thieves. Devices like the Toshiba's biometric fingerprint reader, signature sign-on, and BIOS and hard disk locks protect the computer - and your valuable data - from unauthorised access.

Smaller in size, the ubiquitous Blackberry is a cross between a downsized PC and a smart mobile phone. While it's not a replacement for a PC, it can be used for emails and you can view Word and PDF file attachments on its

screen. It includes calendar and contact management features that can be synchronised with those on your PC and its My Office application can interface with your company's network. With the right software installed on your company's server you can even access secure data and corporate email.

Wireless wonders

When you're on the road, keeping connected is a big issue. Wireless hotspots such as are found in good coffee shops and hotel rooms are handy if you stop long enough to use them. If you're on the road, other solutions are available such as wireless broadband from iBurst or a 3G data card service from the likes of 3, Telstra, Optus or Vodafone.

For iBurst you need special software and a modem which plugs into a slot in your laptop. Coverage is limited to most capital cities and larger population centres but it's constantly increasing. The service is an always on solution and the connection speeds are good. Remain in the coverage area and the service takes care of switching you from one connection to another so you're never out of touch.

Being able to connect to the Internet is one thing - being able to work once you're there is another. Today's smart applications and networks give you access to central data sources such as your company's CRM application and inventory on the road.

Corporate solutions such as virtual and private networks allow authorised users access to the company network so they can view files, customer data, inventory details and email using a handheld or laptop.

Salespeople at Fossil Australia check inventory availability on their hand-held Telstra GPRS devices as they're placing a customer order to ensure items are in stock.

Managing director Annemiek Ballesty explains that typing the order direct into the system by passes the need to re-key phoned

orders and ensures a 24-hour turnaround on shipping". "That helps our sales people build better relationships with their customers," she adds

Another solution involves the organisation moving its key applications to the web utilising a software service like Salesforce.com. Any size organisation from mom and pop to large enterprises can use this online software to provide access to company data to anyone with internet connection and a browser. "With Salesforce.com you get the benefit of centralised data without needing to be in the office to access it," says Doug Faber, Vice President Operations Asia Pacific, Salesforce.com. "Your contacts, accounts and opportunities are always available to you, even using a Blackberry, and everyone is using the same data so there's no confusion about whose information is the most current".

If you're working where internet connections aren't yet available, such as on a commuter flight between Sydney and Melbourne you can still use Salesforce.com. Its briefcase tool lets you download the data you need, work on it offline, then it synchronises automatically when you next connect.

Appearing to be in the office when you're not

It's even possible to appear to be in the office when you're not. Matt Lovegrove, general manager of sales and at Brennan IT uses a software-based phone, called a soft phone, to receive and to make calls utilising the company's VoIP-enabled PBX on his laptop when on the road.

(VoIP stands for "voice over Internet protocol" and refers to a phone system that uses cor-

porate IP, or Internet protocol, networks).

When someone calls the office number and dials his extension, his laptop-based soft phone rings. He can take the call anywhere in the world and the person calling doesn't need to know where he is, unless he chooses to tell them.

For some people on the move, the office and the hotel have morphed into one space. Graeme Armstrong grew his company, Readyfy, from his living room and, when rooms in the house ran out, he rented apartments in Sydney and Melbourne for employees on the move. The apartments are work/living spaces with all the accoutrements of a modern office and hot desks that anyone can use. Convenient onsite overnight accommodation is a bonus. Armstrong explains "no one spends nights in lonely hotel rooms and they're now free to collaborate at all hours, and they do!".

He adds, "We provide everything they need to function properly without being tied down by outmoded business practices."

For meetings on the road there are solutions like the Skype Certified Polycom VoiceStation 500 conference phone. This space-age looking device allows for hands-free business quality conference to be made either using Skype from a PC or over a normal phone line. It's small enough to carry with you and lets you turn any office into a conference room.

Other solutions like GoToMyMeeting from Citrix let you launch an online meeting from any internet browser and make a sales demonstration, demonstrate a product or collaborate with anyone anywhere in the world in real time. Play a PowerPoint presentation on your computer and your meeting attendees can see it on their computer as they listen to you on the phone.



Walking the walk on mobile solutions

written by **HELEN BRADLEY**

BRIAN Harris, professional services director for Si Partners, a company that sells wireless data services, talks the talk and walks the walk on mobile solutions. The company is two years old and, although it now has ten employees and presences in Melbourne, Adelaide and Wellington, New Zealand, until now it has had no formal office. Instead it has operated out of its clients' offices and its employees' homes and cars.

While it is about to settle into its own premises, the reasons for doing so are purely to give customers a place to come to for meetings - it's not that anyone intends to camp there for long.

At Si Partners, Blackberry devices are the tool of choice and the company runs the Blackberry Enterprise Server. "We're a full-blown Blackberry system", Harris explains.

In the organisation there is one desktop at its new office and senior staff and engineers have laptops but the salespeople use handhelds almost exclusively and they use them in ways that might surprise you.

"The Blackberry gives us access to Salesforce.com which handles everything except our general ledger", Harris explains, "it has our CRM, contacts, expense management, case control for our engineers, and it manages our opportunities, our purchase orders and our timesheets. We use it because as soon as something is

available on Salesforce.com we can instantly access it via the Blackberry."

Anyone at Si Partners can access the company's documents stored in what Harris calls 'silos' at salesforce.com and can email or fax them to customers from there. If a salesperson needs a customised document? Simple! Pull up a company template using the Blackberry, merge it with client data and, instantly a contract or other document can be on its way to a client.

Connection speeds aren't an issue as none of the document processing is done on the handheld - it's all done on the salesforce.com server. "Faxing is done using software on the Blackberry that lets us fax anything attached to a document anywhere in the world," Harris explains.

In addition to faxing and emailing documents from the Blackberry, salespeople also make PowerPoint presentations from the device. After shrinking the presentation to a manageable size using a software compression tool, salespeople simply plug a Bluetooth device into a projector or monitor and start and run the presentation from the Blackberry.

Because it's done wirelessly, the presenter can walk around the room with the Blackberry in hand. "It removes the barrier between us and our customers that is hard to avoid when you make a presentation from a laptop computer," Harris says.

"It is also handy because the presentation notes display on the Blackberry as the presentation displays on

the monitor - if I forget something, I have a reminder in front of me."

At Si Partners, managing expenses is not the time-consuming exercise it used to be as it's all handled online using the Blackberry.

"This saves our salespeople time that they'd otherwise waste doing their expenses and it ensures they're done on time," Harris explains, "we also do time slips on the Blackberry so invoices can be raised within hours of the work being done".

On the security side, Harris says, the Blackberry comes up trumps.

"Our devices download their data to the server once a day and, if one is lost or stolen, we can wipe it remotely to remove the data. The devices may not be seen as pretty, but they sure are robust and they can take a fair bit of rough handling without failing." ■

"This saves our salespeople time that they'd otherwise waste doing their expenses and it ensures they're done on time."

Brian Harris, professional services director, Si Partners



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SALES

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QUICK QUOTES
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KNOW?**

"You can do homework from now until doomsday, but you will never win fame and fortune unless you also invent big ideas."
David Ogilvy

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SUPER PA REVEALS

How to get past the gatekeeper

written by **JUSTINE HAMMILL**

I'VE supported many senior executives that you would know as household names in Australia. Currently I'm with a company which has a turnover in our Melbourne office of about \$90 million a year.

As a personal assistant, I get plenty of calls from salespeople - probably about 20 to 30 a week. A large part of my role is that of gatekeeper and I'm sure that if you're in a sales position you have been frustrated by someone in that role many a time.

The gatekeeper has one major job - to block any unnecessary traffic or interruptions to chief executive officers or senior executives. The title can be very different: personal assistant, executive assistant or secretary, but they all do the same role.

I understand why people want to go straight to the top. Such contacts are usually for sales of larger amounts and they can be quicker to organise and are generally more resilient. It follows that the best salespeople know how to get past the gatekeeper.

Before working out the best person to approach in the company, salespeople should get a relationship going with the PA first of all - initially making a telephone call to introduce yourself, followed by an email, very brief and straight to the point.

You should outline what it is your product does, how you can assist the company in their business, that sort of thing.

A big no-no is to send an email to the PA and "CC" it to the CEO. Sometimes this will simply result in the PA binning the email so it doesn't even reach the CEO.

Will it reflect well on me?

Salespeople should always put themselves in the place of the PA. Will their proposal reflect well on the PA if they set up a meeting with their CEO? If it is likely that it won't, the meeting is just not going to happen. You need to work out how the PA is going to benefit in terms of increased respect from her executive. If the request will diminish his respect for her, it's not a goer.

What works for me is having someone call who is very real. I'm a person too just doing my job and

I understand that you have a job as well. But try to build a rapport with the PA and have a bit of a sense of humour. It also helps to be very passionate and articulate about what you do.

I'll give you an example of a call that didn't work for me and a situation that has worked where the salesperson has made the sale to our company.

• **Unsuccessful caller.** This man phoned our company receptionist and she put him through to me. To start off he wasn't very articulate about why he wanted to meet my CEO. I prompted him many times for further information but whether he was unwilling or just not articulate I don't know. The bottom line was that I got no information that I could use.

He phoned constantly for about six weeks every week, if not twice a week. After asking him the same questions and prompting him many times he still was not able to articulate what he wanted to discuss with my CEO.

I didn't hear from him for a while. Then he phoned about three months later and I asked him to email information through. He never did, but kept phoning. So I instructed my receptionist to tell him I would not be able to make a meeting with the CEO. For him, the pitch ended before it even started.

• **Successful caller.** Part of my role is human resources, and shortly after being given this responsibility a gentleman rang selling a solution to my HR problems. On his part it was good timing as it was something I was thinking about and looking for. I met him directly and went through his proposals. He told me what sort of issues I was experiencing and how his solution would meet my needs.

I got some more information from him and did some research on other products and what they were able to do. When I went back to him and outlined what the other people had to offer, he showed me how his product also had those benefits. Once that was discussed, I took the software solution to my CEO and was given approval to go through with the implementation.

In this example I was given delegated authority to be able to meet with the salesperson directly and work out which solution was the appropriate for our company.

Someone asked me if it was common for a CEO to delegate authority to his assistant. The answer is "absolutely". The role of the PA has changed dramatically from what it was. Years ago the PA did typing, diary management, filtered phone calls and took dictation. But these days they often attend meetings on behalf of the CEO, chairs meetings for them and then briefs them on the meetings.

I have also been given delegated authority in some matters to implement or approve some processes.

It's my job to keep up with what's happening in the company and keep the CEO abreast of it. I usually know all the issues good or bad and am therefore in the best position to advise you on the workability of what you are proposing. ■

JUSTINE HAMMILL SPOKE AT A MONTHLY BREAKFAST ORGANISED BY SYDNEY-BASED SALES IMPROVEMENT COMPANY MILLER HEIMAN SKILLSFARM, WHICH CAN BE FOUND AT www.skillsfarm.com

written by **JUSTIN BARLOW**

THE professional services industry is now being judged on technical ability and bottom line results. In selling terms, the new market leaders are emphasising the fact that they "partner with clients" rather than simply sell a service.

The big winner out of this approach is the technically astute salesperson who brings both an understanding of the industry as well as an ability to address a potential client's issues.

Leading law, financial services, consultancies and engineering firms are among those who have recognised a need to greatly reward their technically skilled employees who have "the gift of the gab".

Industry segments are dominated by niche requirements and long-established relationships but there is an increasing need to monitor existing accounts for growth opportunities as well as to aggressively hunt for new business.

Salespeople with titles including account manager, business development manager or client services representative are working to "wow" the prospective client by offering them a single point of contact and the ability to consult on any technical issues that may arise.

A recent survey conducted by Michael Page says firms are hiring sales and marketing professionals with the skills to increase brand awareness, market penetration and the quality of client relationships. This trend is driving demand for specific skill sets in marketing campaign management, external communications and business development.

Catch them and train them

Managing director Phillip Guest says that while the preference is for candidates with a background in professional services, firms are also becoming more flexible in their demands because of the tightening labour market.

MARKET TRENDS

- » Preference is for candidates with background in professional services, but employers becoming more flexible
- » Mid-level and executive recruitment has strengthened
- » Quality candidates receiving multiple offers so employers need to act quickly

NOTE: Salaries are based on the total cost of employment (TCE), including salary, superannuation, car. "Small to medium" companies are defined as having a turnover of less than \$100 million. Larger companies are more than \$100 million. For management roles, salaries are dependent on the size of teams and staffing responsibilities.

Boomtime in professional services

"The number of professionals with exact industry experience has always been limited and many mid and senior level candidates are leaving professional services for experience in other industries, which is eroding the talent pool further."

He says that in the current employment market it is common for high quality candidates to have multiple job offers.

"Firms are responding by offering competitive salary packages with increases reaching 10 per cent for roles in business development and client relationship management. Other non-financial benefits such as training, team culture and career development are also important considerations for job-seekers."

"The greatest competition is for candidates from a professional services background with experience in relationship management, business development and tender management. High-calibre candidates who satisfy these requirements are in a strong bargaining position and in many instances have the luxury of considering multiple offers."

"The tight labour market does mean that applicants from other industries are being considered and firms are prepared to offer training as required. However, there is still a preference for candidates who show an understanding of the partnership model and have exposure to a business-to-business environment."

"Mid-level recruitment activity has increased in the last year and there are high levels of demand for business development and marketing managers. Movement at the executive level has also escalated in the first half of 2006. Directors and senior managers are moving between top tier firms and to progressive mid-tier firms as this offers greater scope to impact market positioning and strategic direction." Guest says.

» **Contractors in demand**

The survey shows that most opportunities are for contractors with specialist communications skills, such as tender and proposal writers who are being hired to support business development initiatives.

There are also contracting opportunities in online communications at both the content development and website management level.

As in most white-collar sectors, the shortage of permanent candidates in professional services has made contracting a necessary interim solution.

This may involve solving an immediate skills shortage until a permanent employee can be found, or be part of a strategy to secure quality candidates initially on a contract basis with a view to a permanent job offer down the track. ■

"The tight labour market does mean that applicants from other industries are being considered and firms are prepared to offer training as required."

Phillip Guest



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SALARY TABLE 2006

State	NSW	NSW	VIC	VIC
	Size of Company	Large	Size of Company	Large
Salary	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
MARKETING				
Assistant (two years plus)	45-55	50-60	35-45	40-50
Co-ordinator (three to five years)	55-70	60-75	55-65	60-75
Database/knowledge manager	70-80	80-90	70-80	80-90
Publications manager	70-80	80-100	70-80	80-100
Web/Internet manager	60-70	80-90	60-70	75-85
Events co-ordinator	50-65	60-75	40-55	55-65
External communications manager	70-80	90-100	65-80	80-95
Marketing communications manager	80-100	110-130	80-95	95-120
Marketing director/sales director	150+	170+	140+	160+
Business development/sales administrator	50-55	55-60	50-55	55-60
Business development/sales co-ordinator	65-75	65-80	65-75	65-80
Business development/sales manager	80-100	100-130	80-100	90-110
Business development director	130+	150+	130+	150+

QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

Through single-minded devotion to the product, to the environment in which it appears and through the way in which it communicates, BMW has created a tangible image of itself.

Wally Olins
in Corporate Identity

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QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

The discipline of writing something down is the first step toward making it happen.

Lee Iacocca

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QUICK QUOTES
DID YOU KNOW?

Start asking yourself every day, "Is what I'm doing now consistent with building a brand - my brand?" If not, well, wonder about how you're spending your time.

Tom Peters
in *The Brand You - Fifty ways to transform yourself from an 'employee' into a brand that shouts distinction, commitment and passion.*
Published by Knopf.

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When the world's roundest thing becomes a sales tool



» CONTINUED FROM P1

"The goal of the interferometer is to explore deep space and attempt to answer the question 'Are we alone?'"

Manfred Claasz, director of ACPO

produce a prototype retro-reflector for its new space-based interferometer, Claasz says.

The goal of the interferometer is to explore deep space and attempt to answer the question: "Are we alone?" The interferometer will have the power to see more clearly into our galaxy than any earth- or space-based telescope yet, to pick out the stars whose "wobble" indicates they may be orbited by earth-like planets. Astronomers and astro-biologists will then focus on those star-planet combinations considered most likely to harbour life.

"ACPO has developed its competitive advantage by achieving ultra-flat, smooth and precise planar optical surfaces and assemblies for demanding applications in the aerospace, R&D, astronomy and defence industries," Claasz explains. "This competitive advantage was recognised by NASA's JPL when it commissioned the prototype retro-reflector, known specifically as a double corner cube, for the space-based interferometer."

The retro-reflector was completed by ACPO on budget and three days ahead of schedule in mid 2005, and the interferometer is now due to be launched into space in 2011 to begin its mission in the search for life. Work on upgraded flight optics is due to begin this year in anticipation of an announcement for further support for NASA's Space Interferometer Mission (SIM) by President Bush early in 2007.

The centre is making other outstanding contributions to human understanding of the universe. Its researchers' unmatched ability to design, fabricate and polish ultra-accurate lenses and mirrors led to a contract to make the reflectors for the first earth based Laser Interferometer Gravity-wave Observatory (LIGO) in

USA - a contract in which it held off even the giants of American industry.

ACPO's previous achievements in developing the mirrors for Caltech's LIGO have positioned it to bid for the manufacture of optics for the Advanced LIGO project which is due to start in early 2008. Contracts for this project will be let in late 2007.

An even more exciting prospect in which ACPO hopes to participate is the construction by NASA of a proposed "Terrestrial Planet Finder". The present interferometry technology infers the presence of earthlike planets by detecting stars which wobble in the right way. The TPF will actually be able to "see" the planets themselves from the corona round them when they pass in front of their companion star.

"ACPO's vision is to be at the cutting edge of contributions to interferometry over the next twenty years as well as continue to meet astronomy, aerospace and defence industry demand for precision optics," Claasz states.

Nonetheless, it is an ambitious call for the small Australian precision optics team. For 15 years their contributions have been at the very forefront of science and technology - areas where demand from Australian industry is slight to non-existent.

Claasz proposes to change all that with forays into advanced military optics, such as those used in the Joint Strike Fighter, and into civilian applications like the use of optics in synchrotrons to develop the next generation of drugs and advanced industrial materials. Here, he says, the market is both domestic - in Australia's new synchrotron in Victoria - and worldwide.

The task is urgent. "To keep a team like

this together, we need to double our turnover in the next year," he states. Aware of having been out-competed in the precision game, a number of world technology leaders are already watching the Aussie talent with a predatory gleam in their eye. Like any football coach, Manfred knows there is a fine line between being able to keep together and deploy a winning combination and seeing it picked off one by one.

» NASA projects

Among its many achievements, ACPO pioneered the technique of ion-assisted deposition - a technique that blows a dust of atoms over the optical surface leaving a layer around a billionth of a metre thick. Other major achievements include:

- Creation of the prototype retro-reflector for NASA JPL
- Development of an optical surface profiler used by the Royal Australian Mint, Philadelphia Mint and the Chinese Mint to help protect the security of the currency
- Development of an ellipsometer used in precision industrial and medical applications
- Development of etalons (tunable filters) for use in astronomy and environmental monitoring.

"Our scientists and engineers frequently push the limits of what is physically possible in order to achieve our clients' aims," Claasz says. "The fact that they keep coming back to us is testament to our international reputation in research and our proprietary methodologies and techniques."

In a career spanning universities, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre, Manfred Claasz is only too

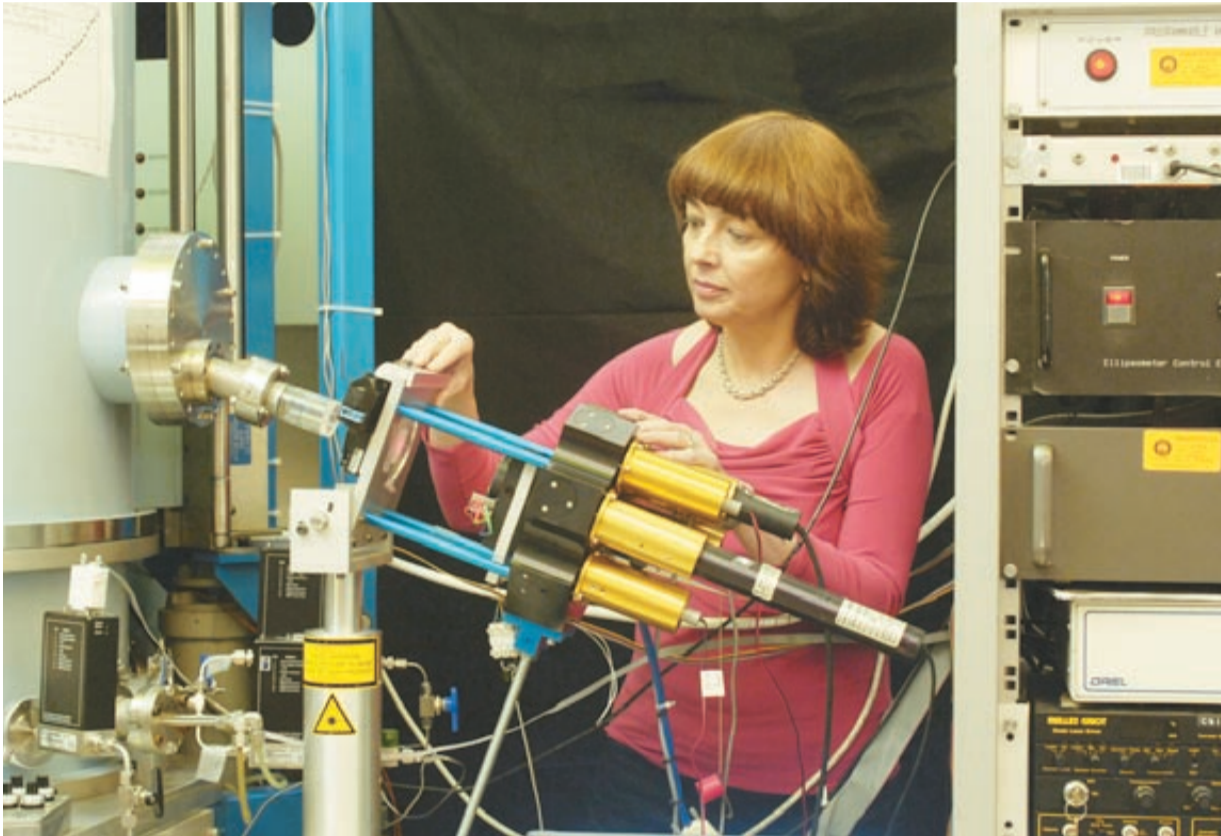
aware how hard it is to "market" science, especially high science, from Australia.

Yet there is one rule of marketing which applies everywhere and which, he is sure, will underpin the commercial success of the Australian Centre for Precision Optics.

It's being recognised as the best in the world at what you do. ■

JULIAN CRIBB IS A SCIENCE WRITER AND ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY. HE ALSO RUNS A NEWS WEBSITE: www.sciencealert.com.au

"Aware of having been out-competed in the precision game, a number of world technology leaders are already watching the Aussie talent with a predatory gleam in their eye."



QUICK QUOTES
DID YOU KNOW?

The old economy says, Make a plan and stick to it. The new economy is so unforgiving, so out of the ball park, that the rules are different: Dream wild, stick out your thumb, and climb aboard for the ride. Be loose, be open to surprise, and be cool.

Harriet Rubin

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WILL ALIGNING SALES AND MARKETING REALLY BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

» CONTINUED FROM P1

ship." From management's perspective, the study found that negative interdepartmental conflict was the most significant predictor of a poor relationship. On the other hand, a market orientation was found to build trust and managers believed that if employees felt valued they placed more importance on the relationship.

"Factors not found to have a significant impact on the relationship included the organisational commitment of employees, management style and the setting of clear objectives."

» And the solution is?

As Kotler and other experts say, every company can and should improve the relationship between Sales and Marketing to "boost both your top-line and bottom-line growth".

One popular solution, says Grant, is to form cross-functional teams made up of representatives from Sales

and Marketing. "Predictors of good relationships in these teams are the level of communication and formal team structures," he says.

"Sales and marketing will always be separate functions, but you can get a closeness if cross-functional teams work together. Marketing people don't necessarily make good salespeople, but they do need an understanding of sales. And vice versa for salespeople."

One of the problems Corbett sees time and time again is that companies restructure too often. Sales and Marketing usually have different reporting hierarchies within an organisation and Corbett says one way of improving communication would be for sales and marketing to be accountable to the same person.

"But more importantly," he says, "I would like to see companies develop sound strategy and stick with it, rather than read the latest fad and jump on the bandwagon." ■

SHOULD YOUR COMPANY MORE TIGHTLY INTEGRATE SALES AND MARKETING?

Does your company really need to be more aligned? The nature of relations between Sales and Marketing in your organisation can run the gamut from **undefined** (the groups act independently of each another) to **integrated** (the groups share structures, systems, and rewards). Not every company will want to - or should - move from being undefined to being defined or from being defined to being **aligned**. The following table can help you decide under which circumstances your company should more tightly integrate its sales and marketing functions.

DO NOT make changes IF	Undefined	Defined	Aligned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your company is small • Your company has good informal relationships • Marketing is still a sales support function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your company's products and services are fairly cut-and-dried • Traditional marketing and sales role work in your particular market • There is no clear and compelling reason to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your company lacks a culture of shared responsibility • Sales and Marketing report separately • The sales cycle is fairly short
TIGHTEN the relationship between Sales and Marketing IF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts are evident between the two functions • There is duplication of effort between the functions, or tasks are falling through the cracks • The functions compete for resources or funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even with careful definition of roles, there is duplication of effort between the functions, or tasks are falling through the cracks • The market is commoditised and makes a traditional sales force costly • Products are developed, prototyped, or extensively customised during the sales process • Product life cycles are shortening, and technology turnover is accelerating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common process or business funnel can be created for managing and measuring revenue-generating activities
	Move to DEFINED	Move to ALIGNED	Move to INTEGRATED

SALES AND MARKETING INTEGRATION CHECKLIST

To achieve integration between Sales and Marketing, your company needs to focus on the following tasks:

Integrate activities	Integrate processes and systems	Enable the culture	Integrate organisational structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly involve Sales and Marketing in product planning and in setting sales targets • Jointly involve Sales and Marketing in generating value propositions for different market segments • Jointly involve Sales and Marketing in assessing customer needs • Jointly involve Sales and Marketing in signing off on advertising materials • Jointly involve Sales and Marketing in analysing the top opportunities by segment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement systems to track and manage Sales and Marketing's joint activities • Utilise and regularly update shared databases • Establish common metrics for evaluating the overall success of Sales and Marketing efforts • Create reward systems to praise successful efforts by Sales and Marketing • Mandate that teams from Sales and Marketing meet periodically • to review and improve relations • Require Sales and Marketing heads to attend each other's budget reviews with the CEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise shared responsibility for results between the different divisions of the organisation • Emphasise metrics • Tie rewards to results • Enforce divisions' conformity to systems and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split Marketing into upstream and downstream teams • Hire a chief revenue officer



INSIDE THE INTERNET

Why selling online is

written by JENI HARVIE

I just sold my house. No big deal really, except that it was done entirely online. The buyer is an Australian living in England who is returning to take up an academic post in a few months.

She found the house through the Internet, she contacted the real estate agent by email, she downloaded the virtual tour, we haggled over the price (via more emails) and the deal was closed.

It's the age of ecommerce and it's booming. Australians are logging on and buying up big. And they can find almost anything their heart desires, from a magnificent 36m Wallypower motor yacht (\$37 million) to a bottle of 1951 Penfolds Grange Hermitage (\$69,500), from luxury world cruises (\$253,000) to a humble central bearded dragon (\$100).

Last year market researchers ACNielsen estimated that the Australian online shopping market was worth \$7.6 billion and growing at about 40 per cent a year.

ACNielsen also put Australia in the top 15 countries in the world in the number of consumers buying online and in the top five in the Asia Pacific region.

While the survey showed that the highest sales were in airline tickets, not far behind were DVDs, games and books.

Lastminute.com is riding the wave in the travel industry. Established in 2000, it has doubled its turnover in the past two years. The site offers accommodation, flights, gifts, experiences and entertainment.

Helen Demetriou, general manager of supply and sales, says lastminute's main demographic is 35 to 45-year-old females earning more than \$80,000 a year.

"They are not looking for a bargain but want something reasonably priced," she says. "They want to do something spontaneous and fun. They can log on at night after work and everything is at their fingertips."

» Aggregation trend

Technology analyst Bruce McCabe calls this "aggregation", where consumers have all the information they need at one site, and says the concept has been highly successful in boosting sales.

"Businesses now understand that people don't like to go to lots of sites," he says. "They realise the Internet is a very efficient avenue [for selling products]. The real power is having a single place for people to start. In terms of sophistication, Australian consumers and businesses are right up there."

One of the new growth areas is comparison shopping where customers can log on and compare prices, features, warranty conditions and after-sales service among online retailers.

Leading the charge in this area are myshopping.com.au and dealsdirect.com.au, with both sites claiming 30 per cent growth in recent months.

Specialist sites that have a catalogue or club

base have been particularly successful, such as those selling wine, books, CDs, cars, toys and electronic goods.

Peter Addison took his specialist motorbook business online four years ago (motorbooks.com.au). "My lease had run out on the shop and the owner wanted the space," Addison says. "I had already started to recognise that the day of the specialist bookshop was diminishing because of the impact of the internet. So I set up a website and continued the business from there, a combination of online and on the phone."

Addison says turnover now is about \$600,000 a year, a slight decline from when he had the shopfront but more profitable because of lower overheads.

Some examples big and small include:

» WINESTAR

Ten years ago Bert Werden was the owner of a small suburban bottleshop in Strathmore, Melbourne. Today he runs the winestar website [winestar.com.au] which is turning over \$10 million a year.

Werden leapt online on the advice of a customer. "He made it sound so simple," Werden says. "We designed a five-page website using an Excel spreadsheet and put it up in October 1997 with about 100 products. It was very primitive."

The orders trickled in until Werden decided to set up a full ecommerce website in December 2000. The first month he had eight orders, the next 20, very soon it was up to 100. Now Werden gets 2500 orders a month with an average value of \$350 an order.

"The growth has been phenomenal," he says. "I put it down to being in a niche market and having competitive prices. We only sell premium wines and that differentiates us from the Dan Murphy's of the world."

Werden says he has 10,000 subscribers, mostly high net-wealth individuals in law, finance, IT and politics: "Yesterday I received an order from a customer who spent \$12,000," Werden says.

» DUTTONDIRECT

Want to buy your own bit of motoring history? Would Michael Schumacher's 2002 Formula One Ferrari for \$2.8 million fit the bill? Or perhaps you have a need for a Gulfstream V jet for \$52 million? Click on www.duttondirect.com.au and they can be yours.

What began as a coachwork building enterprise in 1911 has evolved over the years into a luxury motor business and now has gone online selling prestige cars, boats, planes and property.

James Dutton says the business was set up out of necessity 18 months ago. "Clients were coming to us wanting to sell cars but it is illegal in Victoria to sell by consignment," he says. "I started thinking about how I could use the Dutton brand to further support customers with online sales."

In December 2004, duttondirect went live. Today it has \$1.2 billion in classified listings, receives 3.5 million hits a month and in the first

year sold almost \$10 million worth of products.

"The success has taken me by surprise," Dutton says. "The website is quite simple and very fast because people don't want to waste time. At the same time, the average viewing time is six to 10 minutes which is huge. I guess it is a tantalising site, you can go on and dream a little."

» ONLINE LEARNING

Smaller businesses too are going online. One you've finished dreaming about Gulfstreams and Lamborghini cars, and realise you need new skills to earn enough for your dream car, you can also learn online. The M Factor is one company that saw the opportunities for online training three years ago.

At www.mfactor.com you can find three programs — grammar, business-writing and promotional-writing courses which can all be done online.

"The advantage of online programs for individuals is their flexibility," says Monica Rosenfeld, The M Factor's PR spokesperson. "People don't have to leave their office for a day's training—they can dip in and out of the program when they have 20 minutes to spare. They also retain more as they learn at their own pace."

Some companies give all their employees access to The M Factor's online grammar course. "Another advantage of the online environment," says Monica, "is that companies have access to an online admin page and can monitor their employees' progress — though they can't see what answers they got right or wrong!"

» SOUTH COAST HOLIDAYS

Destination marketing is the latest buzz in the increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. And web-based business South Coast Holidays is growing its online presence to meet the demand from markets in China, India, Europe and the Americas to visit the world-class coastline, rainforests and beaches along the south coast of NSW.

Paul Baldwin, ex-CEO of a major financial services group, became part owner of online accommodation booking service at www.southcoastholidays.com.au, earlier this year. Although he has had previous experience with Web-based businesses, he is staggered by the growth in the numbers of travel customers who go online 24/7 to research and book all their holiday needs.

» 46 per cent of travel online soon

Baldwin says the research group Forrester estimates that by 2010, nearly 46 per cent of total travel sales will be booked online, second only to computer hardware/software at 55 per cent.

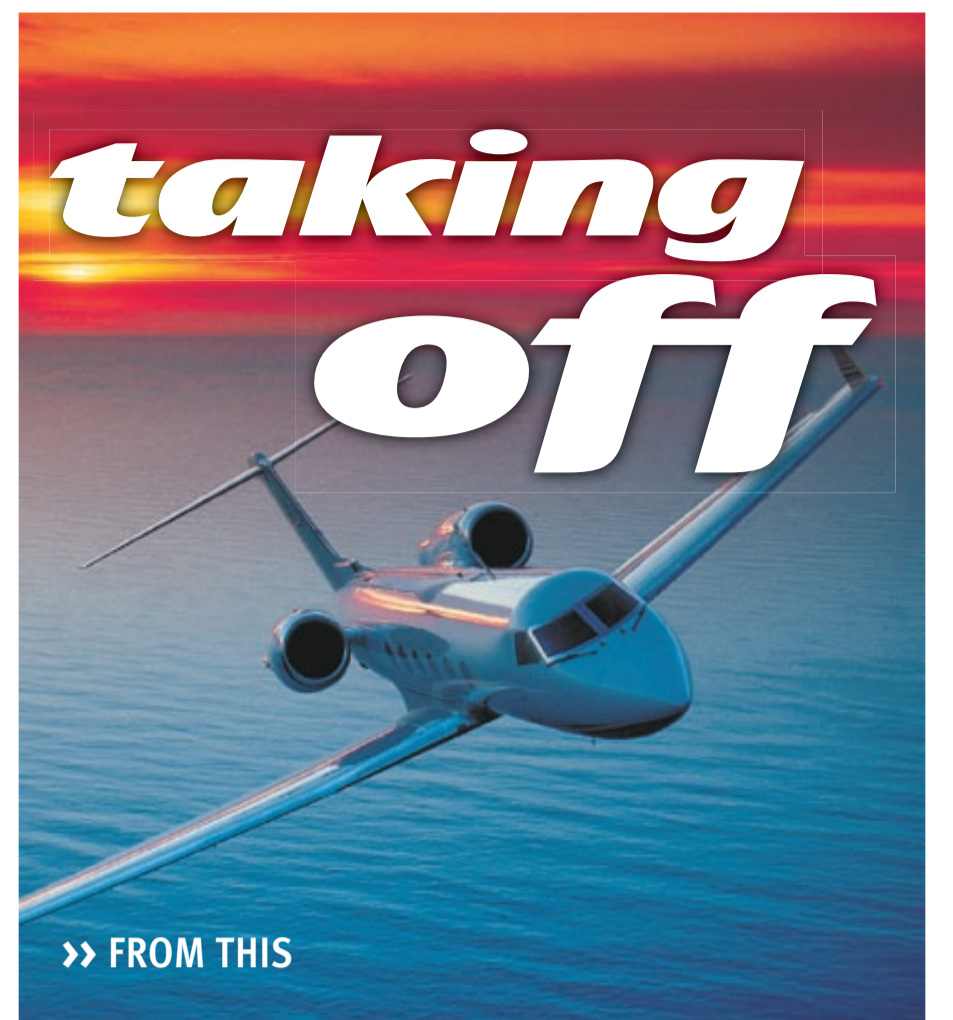
Baldwin has seen business bookings double each month from the previous year's figures.

"I spent some time investigating online booking systems similar to the wotifs and lastminutes. Our new site, launched this month, has a straight-through booking functionality for many properties, which will improve our back office systems and data collection." ■

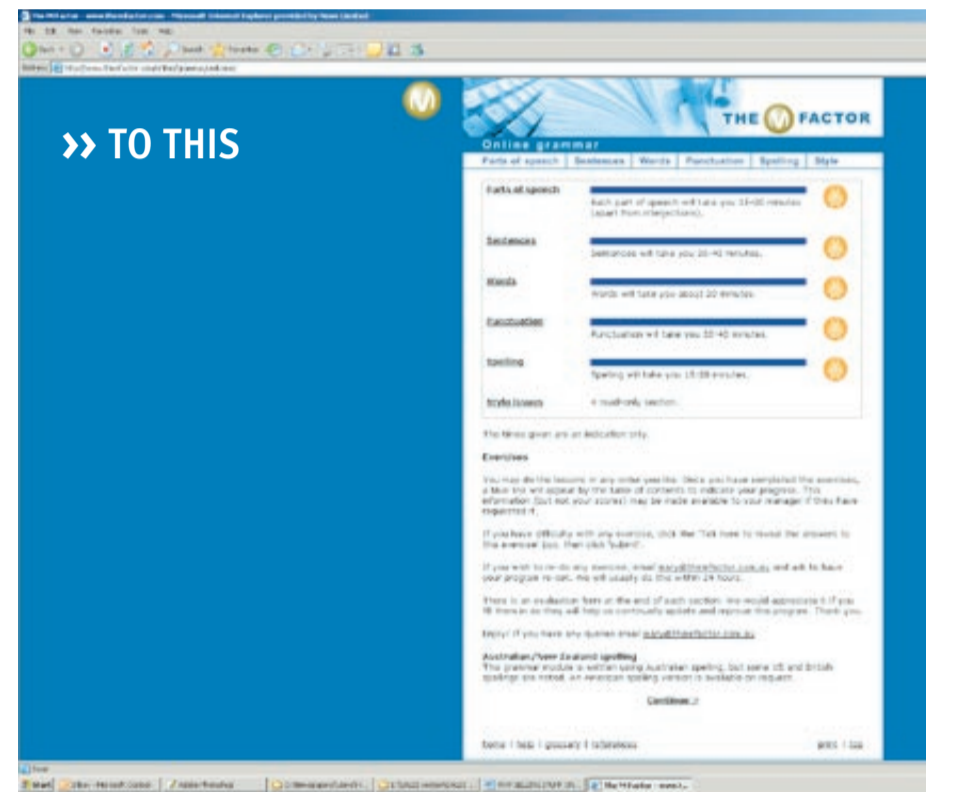


"...Want to buy your own bit of motoring history? Would Michael Schumacher's 2002 Formula One Ferrari for \$2.8 million fit the bill? Or perhaps you have a need for a Gulfstream V jet for \$52 million? Click on www.duttondirect.com.au and they can be yours."

James Dutton, duttondirect



» FROM THIS



» TO THIS

ONLINE SHOPPING SPREE

THE REASONS GIVEN FOR THE GROWTH IN ONLINE SALES ARE:

- » People are more familiar with the Internet
- » Businesses have aggregated information
- » Sites are easier to navigate
- » Convenience for time-poor customers
- » Competitive pricing
- » Improved security
- » More flexible payment options
- » Growth in specialists in the department stores category

QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

"The secret to life is to have a task - something you bring everything to. And the most important thing is that it must be something you cannot possibly do."

Henry Moore
sculptor

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QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

"The 'attention economy' is a star system. If there is nothing very special about your work, no matter how hard you apply yourself you won't get noticed, and that increasingly means you won't get paid much either."

Michael Goldhaber
Wired, quoted in The Brand You, by Tom Peters (Knopf)

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SALES TIP THE PRICE OF CUTTING YOUR PRICE

THE strategy of enticing people to buy for the first time by lowering your price could be dangerous.

If you're cutting your price from the start, be prepared to do it all the time.

What clients really want is extraordinary quality, service, convenience and value. They want to work with a salesperson who can save them time and make their life easier. But most of all, they want someone who can consistently deliver knowledge, expertise, information and education, and they're not as worried about price.

Yet many clients end up buying price, and do you know why? Because they find it so difficult to find all that other stuff. The single biggest reason a client will buy on price is that far too often it is the only alternative that we leave them with.

If you want to continue selling nothing but the price, do you know what you'll become. An airline. ■

From The Best Damn Sales Book Ever, by Warren Greshes (John Wiley & Sons Australia)

Crunch point

HOW TO STEER YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH A SALES CRISIS



written by
BRIAN TRACY

THE measure of top sales divisions is how they come through tough times. One of the major reasons that a company gets into a crunch in the first place is that it starts to move away from the basic activities that made it successful in the beginning.

Sometimes, the most helpful thing you can do is to remember the little things that you have forgotten in the growth and development of your business. For example, every business begins with certain core competencies possessed by the business owners and key employees. What are yours?

Your core competencies are the things that you do especially well, better than 90 per cent of your competitors. Your original product or service is an extension of your core competencies into the marketplace. You use them to produce a product or service that you can sell and deliver at a price that people are willing to pay.

In dealing with the inevitable problems, disappointments, and reversals of business life, you must continually ask, "What are we good at? What do we do better than anyone else? What has been the major reason for our success to date?"

Remember that 80 per cent of your results comes from 20 per cent of what you do. In other words, 80 per cent of your profits comes from 20 per cent of your products and services; 80 per cent of your productivity comes from 20 per cent of your people; 80 per cent of your success comes from 20 per cent of your activities, and so on. You must stand back and be clear about the top 20 per cent in each area when you face a sudden reversal in your business.

» How are you different and better?

Start with your area of specialisation. In what customers, markets, or products do you specialise and focus your time, attention, and efforts? If you were to ask your customers about your business and your area of focus, what would they say? A major reason for business problems is the tendency to expand out of your areas of specialisation into areas where you are not as good.

What is your area of differentiation? This is the key to success in business. What is it that you of-

fer to your customers that none of your competitors can offer? What is it that your business does for your customers that makes you special in some way? The rule is: If you don't have competitive advantage, don't compete.

One of your greatest responsibilities is to either determine or develop your area of differentiation, your competitive advantage, and then focus all of your marketing and sales efforts in that area. What is it that you, and only you, can do for your customers that no other company can offer? What is your "unique selling proposition?"

Each company has to have an area of excellence. What is yours? This is something in which you excel and that is important and valuable to your customers.

Every individual must have one or more areas of excellence as well. What is it that you do, or could do, better than anyone else in your business? The development and exploitation of your competitive advantage and your area of excellence is the key to getting through crunch time. Sometimes, just reverting to what it is that you do extremely well for your customers can turn your situation around.

» The 8-point citadel strategy

Practice the "citadel strategy" in your business. Imagine that your business is like a besieged city. You have to withdraw step-by-step from the outer walls to the inner walls and finally to the citadel, the most important and protected part of your city.

Here are the eight key points to finding and protecting your core:

1. Your citadel consists of your most important products and services that are most responsible for your growth and profitability today. If you had to drop most of your products and services, what would be the one or two that you would hold onto if you wanted to survive and eventually succeed in the current market?

2. Identify your key people. Who are the 20 per cent of your staff that produce most of your results? Who are the 1 bankers, suppliers, vendors, and customers who are most responsible for the success of your business? What should you do immediately to ensure that they remain loyal and supportive of you?

3. What are your core marketing activities? What are the things that you do that bring in the greatest number of qualified prospects? What do you need to do to focus more of your time and resources in these areas?

4. What are your most important selling avenues?

These are the processes, people, and methods that generate the highest and most predictable levels of sales, revenue, and cash flow. What are they, and what do you need to do to maximize your results from them?

5. What are your key profit centres? What are the 20 per cent of your business activities that generate 80 per cent of your profits? What should you do immediately to rein-force these areas?

6. Who are your top customers? These are the most important customers you have, the ones who buy the most, pay the most predictably, and represent the greatest source of your profits. What do you need to do to ensure that they are on board with you during your period of crisis?

7. Think of your own personal skills, qualities, and attributes. What one thing could you do all day long that would contribute the most to the success and survival of your business? How could you reorganize your time so that you are spending more time every day doing the few things that make the greatest contribution to your business?

8. Finally, it is essential that you identify the key result areas of your business, and the particular results that you must achieve every day, week, and month in order to make sales, deliver products, and collect revenues. Where are you strong? Where are you weak? What do you need to do immediately to strengthen and reinforce your weakest key result area?

» Crunch point actions

If you expect to get through crunch time, your ability to select your key result areas and focus your energy and resources on your areas of competitive advantage is essential.

To sum up, there are two things you need to do:

1. Determine your most important and profitable products, services, and activities and focus your time and energy on them.

2. Determine your most important customers, markets, and selling methods and dedicate 80 per cent of your time and money to maximising your results with them. ■

BRIAN TRACY'S LATEST BOOK, CRUNCH POINT – THE 21 SECRETS TO SUCCEEDING WHEN IT MATTERS MOST, IS PUBLISHED BY AMACOM AND DISTRIBUTED IN AUSTRALIA THROUGH MCGRAW-HILL

If you expect to get through crunch time, your ability to select your key result areas and focus your energy and resources on your areas of competitive advantage is essential.

TEN WAYS TO KEEP YOUR CALLERS CONTENT

written by **ANNALIZE CUTHILL**

FROM time to time, you might notice from your records that a good customer hasn't been in touch recently and you'd like to know why. On the other hand, you might have a disgruntled customer on the other end of the phone telling you exactly what the problem is.

In both situations, you need the right skills to resolve the issues and make sure the customer continues to be happy doing business with

you. The following ten skills and approaches will help you to keep your caller content in a crisis:

- As a starting point, think, "them", not "us". Of course, you need to bear in mind what would be an ideal solution from your company's point of view but don't make it your only priority. Worry what the customer needs from you.

- Listen. Pay attention not just to what the customer is saying, but how they're saying it. You need to understand the feelings and emotions behind what they're saying to respond with an appropriate behaviour – usually empathy.

Strike a balance between empathy and detachment. If you already know you're not the one to deal with a particular situation, let the customer know immediately. I've even seen one operator listen to a lengthy spiel out of sympathy, only to ex-

plain there was nothing he could do!

- Keep the customer informed of what's happening and give reasons. For example, if you need to put them on hold, say something like: "I'm just going to go a bit quiet while I process the data. Do you mind holding for a moment?"

- Test your understanding – clarify and confirm what you think is the problem, e.g. "Mr Jones, you've said you've already contacted us. Can I please check when that was?" Then replay a summary of what you understand when you have all the information you need.

- Acknowledge there is a problem. You need to take ownership of the problem, not blame necessarily. If you have done everything you could and your brochure still didn't arrive with the customer, you need to explain. "There seems to be a problem with our mailing process." Then keep the customer informed on the steps you're taking towards a solution.

- Add a service level agreement. Even something as simple as a promise to call by 5pm can help pacify an enraged customer. Just make sure you call at the agreed time, even if you haven't found out what you need. Let them know you're still trying!

- Obtain commitment. Many companies call this, 'closing,' but the techniques

are different. Closing is pushing your own solution; obtaining commitment is pulling what the customer wants to do. And make sure the customer is satisfied!

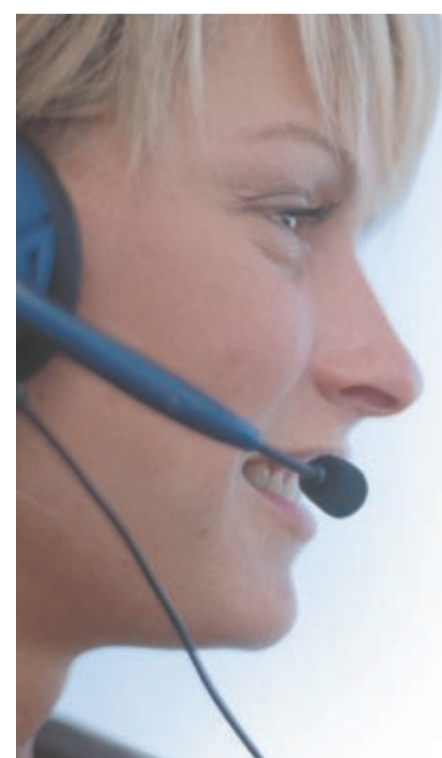
- Maintain communication with the company's field salespeople. Make sure you're not giving out conflicting information and help the customer to understand the different roles and what you can and can't do for them. They will feel more empowered if they know whom the right person to speak to is.

- Plan and prepare. Before contacting a customer, focus on what you want to achieve as a result of your call, be that obtaining feedback on previous problems, updating records or preventing the customer walking away.

- Finally, don't be prescriptive. Say something like: "This is what I want to do; could you fax me your bank statement so that I can quickly process your details."

Rather than lecturing them on what to do, your customer will appreciate seeing that you are willing to solve the problem together. ■

ANNALIZE CUTHILL HAS MORE THAN EIGHT YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN CALL/CONTACT CENTRES AND TRAINING THEIR STAFF, AND IS MANAGING CONSULTANT OF SKILL4.



Rather than lecturing them on what to do, your customer will appreciate seeing that you are willing to solve the problem together.

QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

“The most essential factor is persistence, the determination never to allow your energy or enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come.”

James Whitcomb Riley

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QUICK QUOTES DID YOU KNOW?

“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”

Michelangelo

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