



INSIGHT FROM THE GREY FOX:

You Can't Pay Bills With 'POTENTIAL'!

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There is no organization operating in the complex, B2B marketplace that I know of that doesn't desperately want to achieve their sales revenue goals. Even better, to consistently exceed them!

And yet when the words '*sales process*' are used with senior executives of these business to business (B2B) organizations their eyes seem to glaze over. These words just aren't sexy I must admit. Actually, when you think about it... *sales process* is really back room stuff anyway and so it is hardly worth investing much time in - right? Oh, and besides; many executives have already convinced themselves they can just go out and buy a 'solution' that will fix their sales revenue problem(s) using technology as a magic pill!

There is an old adage that is especially applicable here and it is this: '*great accounting software won't fix bad accounting practices*'. CRM software used by many sales organizations to manage not only the details of the customer relationship but the entire sales opportunity process (including forecasting) is in this very same category. The State of CRM today is this: significant financial investments are being made in CRM that are too often resulting in implementation failure after implementation failure. Could there be the slightest chance that you should *fix your sales process practices* first?

Let me cite a prime example of a severe sales revenue problem where an assessment of the sales process turns out to a key to solving the problem. Who would have known? I am working with a client in the software business. In many ways they are one of the fortunate ones; they have a great product that is a true solution in a tightly defined vertical market. The marketplace for this vertical application is in the early adoption stage of the bell curve so there is strong interest now and for the foreseeable future. This organization has wonderful support personnel and very knowledgeable people regarding the application at every level. Further, because of early adoption they also have a very large batch of leads. And yet their sales revenues are absolutely in the ditch! What's wrong with this picture? Simply put; virtually all of the communication that happens with prospective clients could be described as *robotic*

at best! In a few words this client is operating in the 'Show & Tell' mode to demonstrate the technical 'features' (no benefits) of their offering. In this mode it is essentially a one-way presentation of information. When there are questions there are lengthy technical answers with virtually no other dialog. There is no business case established even though there is an excellent ROI worksheet available but it isn't used. Finally, there is no real plan how to logically move from one stage of the sales process to the next. The unfortunate results are this organization isn't close to making their numbers even though they throw away or lose a significant number of identified sales opportunities on an ongoing basis.

The 'solution' for this firm isn't found in buying technology by any name. It's this non-sexy thing called analyzing every facet of their sales process to make necessary changes and improvements. In short, this client must evaluate exactly what is being said at *every* step by *everyone* involved in the sales process from the first time the phone rings at the initial identification stage to the needs definition stage, to the proposal stage and on to a commitment by the user to place an order.

[Note: there a number of individual steps in each stage of a sales process].

But there is much more to a sales process assessment than just improving the sales communication that goes on at each stage of the sales process. A few examples are:

- There should be an honest assessment of the *sales skills* of the frontline people involved in the sales process.
- There is a strong need to validate all identified sales opportunities that are currently in the pipeline.
- There is the challenge to bring reality to the question of exactly how building the sales pipeline will be the key contributor to goal achievement
- And there must be a sales pipeline management system that isn't based on rocket science; i.e., it must be simple and easy to use.
- More...

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