

ARE YOU BUSY . . . OR PRODUCTIVE?

By Mason Duchatschek

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Are you busy or are you productive? The question is innocent enough. But can you handle the truth?

Recently I was doing some consulting with a client who carefully examined how his sales representatives spent their time. He concluded that they actually spent less than 5 percent of each day engaged in the act of selling! Imagine, 95 percent of each sales day spent on nonselling activities. Writing letters, putting together information packets, filling out paperwork, telephone prospecting, and traveling consumed their days.

As you can imagine, my client wanted to grow sales revenues. Some sales trainers attempt to convince prospects that training is the answer for everything. While I encourage the acquisition of knowledge and new skills, I disagree with the blind assumption that training is always a cure for poor sales performance.

Let's pretend that he sent his entire staff to a sales training seminar, and they learned skills that made it possible for them to double their closing percentages. The improvement would only be useful during that 5 percent of each day they spent selling.

Adding salespeople isn't always the answer either! If each rep is spending 5 percent of their day selling, it would take another 19 reps to achieve 8 hours of selling time. Common sense will tell you that the costs of recruiting, training, and managing such a force would be an awful waste of potential profit.

So let me get to the point. Are your salespeople spinning their wheels? Are they spending time, money, and energy keeping busy or producing results? If you're not sure, be on the lookout. Watch and see if your reps are doing things that less-skilled and lower-paid support personnel could be doing for them. Do your representatives spend time doing things manually that could be done better, faster, and more efficiently using technology?

For example, are they writing and launching mailing campaigns that could be done better and faster by an assistant with a computer and automation software? Are they spending hours each day leaving messages in prospective clients' voice mail boxes instead of having sales assistants with Direct Voice Mail Marketing Systems make calls for them?

Let me encourage you to rethink the assignment of individual job responsibilities and list the tasks necessary for successful job performance. Take a look at which tasks require the specific

knowledge and ability of a salesperson and which ones don't. Build teams of support personnel and leverage technology wherever possible to cost effectively and efficiently accomplish the simple, yet time-consuming, tasks that hold your salespeople back.

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