

What service managers should know about sales

Coen Jeukens, Chief Service Officer, D-Essence describes himself as a business leader with sales DNA and a service heart, here he outlines the knowledge he thinks every service manager should have in his toolbelt when it comes to selling service both externally and internally...

In the boardroom

Let us start with an example of a typical business plan review meeting:

- Exhibit A: our targets are more ambitious than our current performance.
- Exhibit B: we face increased competition, increased customer volatility and shorter product life cycles leading to declining market share and diminishing attach rates.

Now suppose the CEO invites you, the field service manager, to pitch a solution to this non-sustainable situation.

Are you prepared? Will your message and vocabulary resonate with the board members?

For as long as I can remember, field service managers bring a message of reality about healthy



and sustainable profit margins - about attach rates and trusted relationships.

What do you think the sales manager brought forward as solution? A message of hope: "if we introduce a new model, add a new feature or drop the price, we will regain market share".

When it comes to choice, a message of hope

prevails over one of reality.

What makes the clock tick?

The ugly truth of corporate economics: it's all about sales and success is measured in revenue figures.

Add to that the sales perception that after-sales does not exist without an initial sale and you know the picking order is set. Also factor in mind that

most CEO's have a sales background.

Sales targets

Sales is a big numbers game. Product hero's playing with capital expenditures.

Going for the win is putting in a peak performance in a short period of time, balancing effort and reward. Asking sales to include Opex related propositions in the sale does sound altruistic considering that doing so complicates, lengthens and may jeopardise the sale. What about profitability?

In the sales mind-set profitability is not a driver or performance indicator. Not because they don't care, far from that. Because in most customer organisations the decision making unit for both Capex and Opex are different entities optimising their own silo.

Profitability, who cares? Certainly not sales.

Funnelling leads and Qualification

Sales vocabulary uses words like suspect, prospect, lead and qualification. Elias Lewis has put these words in context in 1898 when he conceived the sales funnel. This funnel is engrained in every sales process. It is in the DNA of sales people to convert leads into a sale.

One of the most important steps in the sales process is the qualification of a lead. Here sales balances effort with reward. When service starts feeding the funnel, it is crucial to know the difference between a lead in the eyes of a field service engineer and a lead according to sales. In the eyes of sales service-leads are a big bag of small peanuts.

Converting those requires a lot of effort with small

reward. For sales to follow-up on service-leads, those leads need enrichment and qualification. What we need to grow sales? Leads, more leads and qualified leads.

Window of opportunity

Though the clock ticks sales, typical sales solutions to the corporate challenge fail to reverse declining market share or do so at the expense of profitability. In both cases the course is not sustainable. This is good news as it provides the opening for the field service manager to come forward with his ideas.

Remember, growing sales is an operational process. Growing your business is changing your business model.

Find the right tune

Although ideas have been voiced for many years at field service conferences, they will be new for sales once rephrased in sales vocabulary. It will become a customer touch points game with roles for hero's and ambassadors. It is the perseverance of sales to get to a customer on board. It is the caring mindset of service to keep a customer happy. It is their joint effort to come up with new business.

Find the right mix between sales DNA and a service heart to develop new business."

How will sales react? As long as the field service manager doesn't gloat over his profit contribution and trustworthy customer relationships ... and sales can stay in the lead, then sales will go along.

Field service managers can lead by following.



Coen Jeukens,
Chief Service Officer, D-Essence

