

3 Keys to New Business Sales

By Tony Cole

Are your new business sales growing? Are sales growing at the level you projected for budgets last year? Are your sales able to compensate for the narrowing margins your company is experiencing due to higher expenses and stagnating prices?

"We're on target for new sales but revenues are down..." Does this sound familiar to you? If so, you are not alone. Unfortunately, this may be the norm for awhile-- who knows how long?

So, how are we going to stay in business? How are we going to profit and move forward? We can lay people off, but then who will do the work? Many of us are already overworked. We can take the easy way out and get creative with the numbers. We can defer expenses and accelerate income to make our reports look better. And this may actually work for a little while. But, if the economic outlook remains the same, a time will come when this strategy will come back to haunt us. Because, by then, we will have lulled everyone into thinking that everything is fine, that their current efforts and strategies are sufficient and they are able to rely on this company long term.

Of course, the hard thing to do and the right thing to do, is to focus on new business sales. As the sales arm in an organization, we are the lifeblood and prospecting and selling is our #1 job. ALWAYS.

So, if you haven't treated new business sales as your #1 job, it is time to do so now. The message of this month's newsletter and the secret to consistent and predictable sales growth:

CMBMQHM-Close More Business More Quickly at Higher Margins. If you are responsible for salespeople, it is your job to drive this initiative.

CMB- Close More Business. You must keep a close tab on the opportunities that the sales staff is creating. Make sure that they qualify prospects and they aren't wasting energy and resources quoting business that they have no chance of closing. Help your salespeople qualify for "severe mental anguish". They must uncover whether or not the prospect has real motivation to buy that which your company offers. Make sure they learn if the prospect is ready to leave behind any current vendor relationship.

MQ- More Quickly. Challenge your own thoughts about the length of your sales cycle. Challenge your sales staff's beliefs about the length of their sales cycle.

When I was in the life insurance business, I was told that an estate planning case took between nine and twelve months to complete. Of course, my first case took 12 months from start to finish because that is what I had been told. Then I heard a speaker who advised that I set the expectation for the client by saying something like- *"This normally takes 90-120 days. What obstacles will we need to overcome to meet this time frame?"* Help your salespeople recalibrate and set expectations for the customer. By doing so, your sales team can shorten their sales cycle and have more time to prospect and close additional opportunities.

HM- Higher Margins. Protecting margin is critical for those of us who want to stay in business. However margin is often ignored by salespeople and management in the interest of getting volume. While twenty-five percent of a deal might be better than no deal at all, if the company breaks-even at thirty-

five or forty percent margin, the difference must eventually come from somewhere. Otherwise, it is a matter of time before this slow leak drains the company coffers making it a bad risk for employees, lenders and buyers alike.

No doubt about it, as sales manager, you have a tough job- motivating and coaching your salespeople to sell while protecting margins. But your involvement, your desire and your commitment are critical.

CMB- Close More Business—Hold regularly scheduled meetings with salespeople. [Pre-call plan](#) prior to calls and [debrief](#) after calls. Track and hold salespeople accountable to their numbers. This will help your team do a better job of prospecting and setting appointments.

MQ- More Quickly- Shorten sales cycles by teaching salespeople the critical skills of [qualifying](#) to enhance efficiency and productivity.

HM- Higher Margins- Finally, help your people learn to [sell value](#)- value of product/ service/ expertise so they can avoid compromising margins.

Help your salespeople **Close More Business More Quickly at Higher Margins**. This is a long term, grow your business strategy.

Good luck and good selling.

Tony Cole