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A COMMUNITY SALES EFFORT

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I had an interesting experience recently. During a visit to a hotel team/community, I was asked to sit in on a staff meeting. At the end I inquired, how was each person driving the top line? Though the Director of Sales had some good things to share, the rest of the community had that funny look in their eyes. Needless to say, the operations team was confused and out of their mouth came the words we all hate to hear, "well technically that isn't my job."

We have all heard it and even said it -- "sales is everyone's job" and the real question is how do we get everyone selling when most businesses have cut to the bone (and some into the bone). There is only one solution moving forward and that is driving the top line. Those that get focused on it will win over the next 12-18 months and those who don't will learn the lesson that sales performance is the ticket to marketplace success.

So how do you get everyone selling? Here are a few ideas to consider:

1. Think "Blue Ocean." There are positive things happening in the marketplace. Not all businesses are having a tough time. If you stay open you will start to see and hear things that will unlock new doors.

I remember recently working with a hotel that had a huge dependency on the car industry. They had all but given up when fuel prices doubled and the talk amongst most of their clients was downright depressing. When we started to

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open our minds and started asking the question of "what are car companies doing to stop this pain and what is happening with the research and development areas," we were able to target many untapped clients. We just had to stop thinking about the industry the same way.

There are a lot of blue oceans out there and when you start looking and listening differently you will see opportunities. The Internet, the news, your key account market trends are just a few places that can help you get curious and explore.

2. What you focus on comes true and what you focus on they do! Start asking people what they are doing differently today to drive sales and improve client retention as compared to six months ago. You will be surprised (and maybe frightened) that many people are doing the same things and expecting different results. Check in on everything. Here are a few example questions:
 - a. How are you networking differently than six months ago?
 - b. What is your powerful and unique message? How has it changed from six months ago?
 - c. How are we standing out from the clutter?
 - d. What are we doing better today to help our clients/guests enjoy their stay as compared to six months ago?
 - e. How have you personalized the guest experience more powerfully in the last six months?
 - f. What guest leads did you turn over in the last month?
 - g. Is there anything else we could do?

Different questions will help your managers think differently and create different and improved answers/solutions. Questions help them focus on how they affect sales regardless of their position. Look for incremental improvement and you will move the needle.

1. Change up your participation in the sales meeting. Ask one question that gets the sales team results focused. For example:

"Tell me about each new potential business you found this week and how you found it?"

This will get your people prospecting, networking and looking for new deals. Stop talking about activity. You want to know what the activity is yielding. If they aren't delivering results they will be open to more coaching surrounding their activity.

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Accountability comes from placing responsibility "in the chair over there." I have sat in on hundreds of sales meetings and the conversation is usually about how many calls they attempted/connected. The real focus has to be on how many potential deals they put into their pipeline, end of discussion.

2. Ask your front desk people individually (this is a critical coaching technique):

"Tell me about any new customers/business cards from guests today that I should speak with and personally thank for choosing us."

Show them how to engage the guest on the other side of the front desk. And don't forget to ask your front desk personnel how they think they would make the first 50 feet a more extraordinary first impression, so each guest was excited that they were staying with you.

3. Instead of a passing hello, find a way to set a culture of extraordinary. Individually ask your employees, *"How did you change a guest's day today?"* Ask regularly and your guest comment cards will change exponentially.
4. At your staff meeting, ask each person to share how they personally drove new sales this past week. (You might want to have a medic on call!)

Sales is a community/team sport. Get everyone thinking about how they contribute to driving new sales and you can count on market share domination. Rest assured most people are still looking to cut more expenses. Keep your eye on the three critical sales balls:

1. Look for the blue oceans.
2. Ensure retention through extraordinary (not ordinary) guest experiences.
3. Stay all over the fundamentals -- I'm not sure why we ever go back to them...we should just stick to them!

Renie Cavallari is CEO and Chief Inspirational Officer for Aspire, an international training and consulting company positioning organizations to achieve optimum performance. Aspire provides innovative learning, strategic marketing, leadership training and cultural alignment for increasing revenues, growth in market share, a re-energized sales force and lasting changes in attitudes and outcome. Founded in 1995,

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Aspire has headquarters in Phoenix with a network of inspiring professionals across the country.

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