



A white paper presented by The Sales Company
By Debbie Mrazek, Founder

Prescription for Healthy Sales

Most companies today struggle with sales challenges. With economic instability and world conflict, these issues may seem to be externally afflicted; however, most businesses can utilize a sales check-up to determine areas of vulnerability and to uncover healthy, revitalized sales.

Sales is an operational area that confounds even the savviest executives from time to time. Determining when it is appropriate to call for reinforcement and when a simple adjustment to a vulnerable area will do can mean the difference between achieving results desired and a vicious cycle of one-time starts.

Companies in all industries face similar sales issues and the extent and complexity of sales challenges vary from company to company. However a simple sales check-up can help executives pinpoint where along the sales process their sales teams stepped off the golden patch.

The first step

The first step is the sales examination. Just like a doctor, this step takes the business's vital signs to get an idea of the health of the sales organization.

In this phase, key employees talk about where the company is and whether they believe the cause is in-

Is it time for a shot in the sales arm?

ternal (the organization is responsible for what's going on) or external (that means someone else is impacting company efforts).

Internal issues may include fear or lack of certain skills or tools needed to be successful. External forces could point to something in the business or company that affects sales. This could be anything from poor customer service to unfulfilled customer expectations.

Key questions asked during this phase, include:

- What are sales?
- How do the company's sales stack up against sales goals?
- How does the company set sales goals?

Working *with* the check-up allows participants to reap the full benefit.

Companies find that simply taking the time to analyze the current situation yields positive results.

For instance, a large manufacturing company met for this phase. When company executives and sales professionals discussed each area systematically, they discovered that they were not meeting a critical client need. Their sales message lacked the necessary punch to move clients to buy.

With minimal adjustments, a coordinated marketing campaign and renewed sales vigor, the company was able to move sales upward very quickly.

This was a problem the company struggled with for quite some time, but feared that hiring outside consultants would cost too much considering the company's already weakened sales.

The end result, however, paid them 10 times over in increased sales, improved client relations and a turbo-charged sales force that looked forward to selling the company's products.

The diagnosis

Once a company has disclosed everything about its sales life, it's time to move to the diagnosis. This is where an objective third party can truly add value. Sometimes the issues hit too close to home. Sales consultants can walk through a sale with company sales representatives and provide great insight into what's working and what's not.

Companies need a safe environment to explore what is happening so they can pinpoint what is causing the pain.

When choosing a consultant, select a professional who can be both objective and honest, and possesses a successful track record in sales.

The diagnosis might be changing the sales approach or it might be to hire more capable sales people. It could be a combination of two or more things. What is important is figuring out what it is and moving *past* it.

The prescription

The next, and perhaps most active, phase is the prescription. During this phase, companies look at what they can reasonably accomplish *today*, tomorrow and in the future to move sales in the desired direction. This may begin with more aligned goals. Sometimes it can be as simple as that.

While setting goals may sound easy, it isn't. Goal setting requires a structure that can ensure sales organizations are on the right track for its professionals and for the company.

Sales consultants who are also business-minded can determine other operational areas that may be affecting sales. Human resources, for example, may be hiring the wrong types of people for the sales positions. In this case, it may be determined that the company needs a shot in the arm, too. That's where sales consultants with business knowledge can help.

Here's a good example. A client company's business was going well,

but not great. It seemed like every time the owner would turn the sales corner, something would push him back. It didn't take long to see that it wasn't his sales efforts that were impeding his success. It was his team *delivering* his company's services. He had some employees who were very nice people, but just not cut out for providing his service. When this part of his business was addressed, he could more readily focus on the business of his sales. His company has grown more than 30 percent in the last year. Needless to say, this is a great example of how sales were not the problem. The prescription involved human resource changes.

Sales consultants
who are also
business-minded can
determine other
operational areas
that may be affecting
sales.

The next step to getting sales to a healthy level is a sales regimen. Once a specific diagnosis is made, the plan is developed to keep companies from returning to a vulnerable situation. A regimen is a plan that helps turn sales efforts into actual, measurable results. This plan outlines what the company will do, how often company professionals will do it, what executives can expect from these efforts and strategies on what to do when things just aren't going as planned. It's a scaffold for professionals to develop new habits that will make sales easier and that will not only help company sales grow, but will lock in more *profitable* sales. It's not enough to grow sales if greater profits aren't realized at the same time. Who wants to work more and make less?

When sick individuals see a doctor who sends them out the door with a shot and a prescription, what are the odds that that person will take all of their prescription?

Very few of us do *exactly* what we are supposed to do. We start feeling better, we get our energy back and the prescription goes by the wayside. We behave similarly with sales. Once a company has a regimen, it's tested and it's helping ailing sales, company professionals may feel like they are cured. It's hard to change – even when we are getting exactly what we want. In this case – more sales.

A sales check-up can help companies stay on track. Talking about what's working and what's not working will ingrain the process even more. The goal of a check up is to minimize the pain so it's not necessary to get another shot three months, six months or even a year down the road.

One particular company owner knew the importance of staying accountable to an objective third party. But, one day, industry issues hampered sales and internal conflict between two employees became almost too much to handle. The owner called to scale back sales consulting.

It's important to remember in this type of situation that conditions are temporary, but commitment to sales will last as long as the lifeline of the company. After just a short conversation, the owner decided to continue with sales check-ups and accepted a lower expectation due to these issues. The next month, the client was back on track having alleviated the temporary issues.

Staying on track

Once a company adopts a regimen, continues addressing what's working and what's not feels good about its progress, how do professionals stay on track? That's where a coach can make the

difference between staying motivated and backsliding. Clients of The Sales Company, including owners and professionals, call us the boss's boss.

Becoming accountable to someone, even if that someone is within the company, equates to bottom line success. In a lot of ways, maintenance is the most important part of the sales program. But how do companies maintain the regimen?

The basics are the same for everyone. Apply the knowledge gleaned from the rest of the process and continue to expand sales endurance. Like any good maintenance training program, companies and sales professionals must push to work outside of their comfort zone— just a little everyday. Make one more phone call, use a different sales tool, push to exceed weekly sales goals. Every step taken toward growing the sales repertoire makes newly learned skills easier. Each skill builds upon another.

What are healthy sales?

And at the end of the sales road, sales professionals arrive at the healthy sales they've always wanted. But what are healthy sales? Healthy sales translate into an increased bottom line that delivers profits and more of the right customers the company wants. Sales success is about making sales efforts better and more effective. It's also about enjoying the *process* of sales. Working through each phase of the sales process *will* make sales activities more enjoyable. Companies will be able to forecast – accurately and predict-ably – sales performance.

A sales check-up provides the tools to help organizations meet future goals and continue to increase long-term objectives. It also sets a plan in place that helps diagnose and prescribe what's needed to transform future sales challenges into healthy sales.

No matter where a company is on the sales continuum, using a *proven* process makes the sales process easier and more profitable than imaginable!

Debbie Mrazek is founder of Dallas-based The Sales Company. She can be reached at 972-618-1880 or debbie@the-sales-company.com. Learn more about sales at www.the-sales-company.com.

