



2010

Managing Salespeople in a Recession



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The Ultimate Sales Tool Kit

Managing salespeople in a recession

Ten tips for sales managers

When times are difficult, people in sales are the first to suffer. During a recession:

- Their confidence levels drop
- They get rejected more often
- Deals get thin on the ground
- Profits fall as desperation rises
- Customers demand more
- Their activity levels decrease

That last point often surprises people. You would think that they would increase activity level and see more customers. In most cases the opposite seems to be the case.

The view they take is “Why bother wasting time. They won’t buy anything from me”

I have a friend who shared with me his personal experience recently of trying to buy a new house and a new car, where the salesperson concerned failed to follow up and as a result lost the business.

People who say there is no business out there are just plain wrong!

For sales managers it can be a bit like managing a losing football team. We have to get the team believing in itself again and to get right back to basics.

Here are 10 tips for sales managers managing in a recession.



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Ten tips for sales managers

1. Begin by working on their self confidence

Find facts and figures. All economies follow a regular pattern of expansion and contraction. The economy will typically expand steadily for six to ten years and then enter a recession for six months to two years.

Most people define a recession as two consecutive quarters in which the gross domestic product (GDP) decreases. The UK economy is worth about 2.3 trillion pounds, so although sales tend to dip there is still a lot of business out there.

Recession has happened before and it will happen again. You need to meet with each member of the team individually and reassure them that you have confidence in their ability to succeed. Call the team together and repeat the message. If they are expecting to fail they will probably meet their expectations.

2. Explain your vision for the team

All teams are the same. They want to feel that they are going to win and they have a leader who they respect and knows what he or she is doing.

This means the sales manager has to communicate with the team and paint a very clear picture of where they are going and how they are going to get there.

Keep the big picture in mind, stop rubbing the board back to Zero each month, keep the annual figures on the board, so everyone can see the results for the year.

3. Put your sales plan together

There has to be a plan that everyone can buy into and believe in. The plan will help to define the team's objectives and sales strategy.

The plan is a living document that should be reviewed and reassessed on a regular basis. Each salesperson should have their own personal sales plan and this should be regularly reviewed with the sales manager. (e-mail for free copy)



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4. Start to really focus on your existing customers

In times of recession customers often complain of being neglected. Put together a strategy for holding on to your existing business. Most customers give as their reason for leaving the fact that they weren't looked after.

Review your service levels. Speak with your existing customers and ask for feedback. "How are we doing?" "What can we do to improve the service we give you?"

Stop blanket calling the database at the wrong time, with the wrong offer, talk to each customer individually and listen to what they say about when they will be next in the market and what exactly they will be needing.

5. Make prospecting a real priority

For many salespeople, prospecting is an ad-hoc activity. Make sure the team sees the importance of prospecting. Set aside time every week for prospecting activities. Make it a team activity. Prospecting can be soul destroying, or it can be fun. It depends on you and how good a leader you are.

Prospecting is not follow up!, prospecting is finding new customers, conquest business. Walk the high street you will find opportunities everywhere, get some conversations going, remember when you get busy you get busy!

6. Communicate internally with other departments

This isn't just about sales. Every part of the business needs to understand it has a part to play. Is the customer getting the best service possible from everyone in the business? Put it another way. Does everyone in the business understand they have a responsibility for delivering excellent customer care?

We can't afford to lose customers at the best of times. In a recession it just should never happen because we haven't given them great service.

Raise the bar, raise the standards, challenge the rules, Just how good can you be?. Ask more questions, like who outside of industry gives great customer care?, what do they do differently? and how can we embrace it as part of the culture in our business to keep more of our customers coming back to us?.



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7. Get the team to work harder at staying sharp

One feature of a recession is that sales activity levels drop. The team make fewer phone calls and get fewer appointments. Less face to face business to work with. Do not allow slow days to lead to underperformance.

Get busy, get active, set goals and demand more, create the urgency needed. Role play with the team, get them to handle objections, practice, practice, practice. You must remain at red alert state.

What time is their first sales call? Do they have an admin day? If so, why? Studies have shown that the typical salesperson spends only 5% of their time in productive selling situations. Try for a targeted increase in activity. Is an extra 10 sales calls a day possible? How about 20?

As the manager, manage and target quality activity and the results will follow.

8. Train the team

There is a saying I heard once, "If nothing changes, nothing changes."
It's important because there are far too many people in many business who lack the skills needed to get the results needed.

Take the example of prospecting, most salespeople would rather stick a pencil in their eye than prospect, why because they are uncomfortable doing it.

Why is that?

Because they don't know what to say, don't know what to offer, and don't know who to call and when to get the best result!

That's bad management, you might as well forget the message in key point number 8 then, I wouldn't want an untrained salesperson making more calls to valuable, irreplaceable and potentially profitable customers, when they doesn't know what to say, when to say it and why they are saying it in the first place.

Message - Get them trained!



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9. Get yourself out there

Try to spend as much time with the team and their customers. Lead from the front and use the time you spend with them to coach them and work on improving their selling skills. Communicate good news to the team and the customers.

If you want them to prospect, prospect yourself, show them how it is done, more importantly show them that it works and that you can get results. If they can't close a deal, show them how to.

The invisible manager, in a recession is no good to anyone!

10. Give regular feedback

Keep giving feedback. Reward positive activity instantly. Praise good behaviour and success instantly. Tell everyone what went well yesterday and how you would like it repeated and improved on today.

Let people know things are going to be okay. If people feel threatened that they may lose their job, or become de-motivated their performance will suffer.

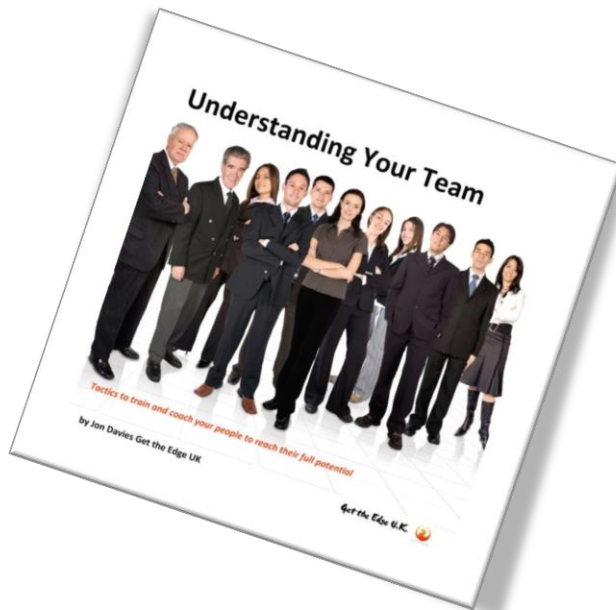
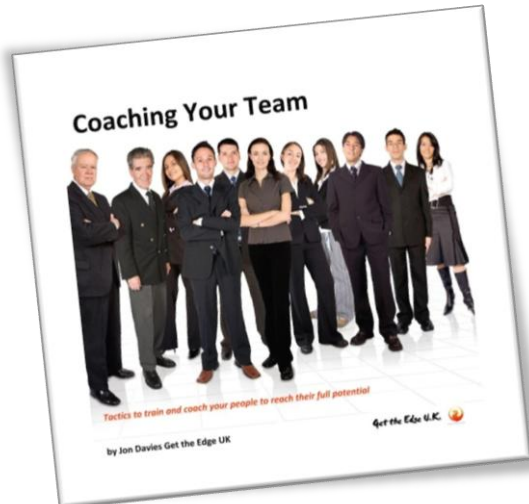
Work on your leadership skills and things will be okay.



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Two Great Books

To help you be a better Leader in your business



*Each filled with
Dynamic ideas,
techniques, tactics
and tips, to grow,
stretch, challenge and
lead your team to
new levels in 2011*

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