

Managers Feed Back Aids Salespeople Before A Sale

Imagine taking an auto trip between cities that are 50 miles apart. The auto, however, contains no speedometer, no odometer or clock, and the road has no signposts. Add to this scenario the requirement that you will reach your destination in one hour, without going over the 55-mph speed limit.

Even though ample time is allocated, picture the anxiety, frustration and pressure you might experience on such a trip. If you go too slow, you miss your objective; too fast, you get a ticket.

Those problems are removed when the odometer, speedometer, clock and road signs are brought back into the picture. These items comprise the "feedback system," which tells the driver he is on time and controls the only factor that determines arrival time —miles per hour.

In the world of marketing and public relations, there unfortunately are too many situations akin to this analogy. Programs are created and launched — employees are hired for sales or service positions - and one or both fail because management has failed to build in proper feedback mechanisms to identify areas of weakness and trigger proper corrective actions.

According to Vincent L. Zirpoli, president of Mega Marketing, Inc. —a Timonium-based consulting firm —this problem is particularly acute among firms that rely on a sales force for

product distribution. Mr. Zirpoli, who contends that managing pre-sale activities is a key to increased productivity and reduced expenses, has designed a feedback program that removes much of the anxiety and pressure associated with meeting sales objectives. And according to management executives of

Programs are created and launched — employees are hired for sales or service positions —and one or both fail because management has failed to build in proper feedback mechanisms.

local companies using the system, everyone involved in the program is operating in a more relaxed fashion.

How does it work? Controllable activities that precede a sale are identified; ratios established between these pre-sale activities and sales results; and a feedback system implemented that places the focus of management more squarely on manageable, presale activities.

By itself, the program is a valuable tool but even Zirpoli admits that results will not be achieved unless management can learn to read the information and

take proper corrective action —in short, to manage.

That added dimension —and the reason we're spotlighting the program — is accomplished with a highly structured and motivational Personal Development interview, held on a weekly basis between manager and salesperson. The first portion of the interview focuses on activities and results for the previous week, as well as developmental objectives, while the final portion of the interview focuses on activity planning for the coming week..

What's accomplished? Well, performance problems come to light much sooner; the emphasis on controllable activities reduces pressure; and the salesperson also gets a clear picture of the amount and type of activity necessary before the goals can be met. Instead of trying to control a buyer's behavior —which can produce sales resistance —efforts are better directed to key pre-sale activities. From Mega Marketing's highly sophisticated program —which extends from analysis to training and personal development —to others that address similar needs, the bottom line for anyone charged with management responsibility is that constant feedback is the best way to accomplish objectives in an economical, efficient manner.

Article reprinted from

THE JEFFERSONIAN
BUSINESSVIEW MARKETING

by James A. Holechek