

Sales Operations Forum

Getting Ready for 2009; Solving Sales' Biggest Challenges

If history is any indication of the future, next year's revenue bar will be raised higher. What are we going to do differently in order to achieve those new goals? While Sales organizations are focused on results through the end of 2008, it's time to look towards 2009. During a recent Sales Operations Forum, fifty sales operations executives shared best practices for truly optimizing performance.

Does anyone know what 2009 will bring?

Economic conditions are obviously impacting our sales teams. Regardless of their 2008 results, everyone seems to agree that "business as usual" will not cut it, and it's time to find new approaches for improving sales productivity.

At the October 2008 Sales Operations Forum, Jim Dickie, Principal of consulting firm CSO Insights, led a discussion focused on best practices for driving sales results in a difficult economy.

Can you afford to invest in sales during the downturn?

"Can you afford not to?" was Dickie's question. The challenges facing your sales team are only increasing; if you expect your reps to sell effectively, you have to do a much better job collecting, synthesizing, and sharing knowledge/best practices. Dickie asserts that efforts to move into "trusted partner" status (see the SRP Matrix) should not change in a downturn. He encourages investments in Sales Knowledge Management (SKM) tools.

Investments in improving the sales process was a common theme of the members' suggestions:

- Invest in technology to support and reinforce sales process. Salesforce.com CRM and Salesforce.com Content were mentioned specifically.
- Advertise successes to your sales team on a regular basis.
- Do a "day in the life" study of your sales team.

- Back to basics; document sales strategy with sales play books. Avoid strategy "du jour" - ensure the senior management sticks with it.
- Maximize the impact of your sales compensation plan. Use tools like Centive to ensure you monitor, communicate and reward results.
- Take your sales analysis one layer deeper to understand where your process is failing. New tools for pipeline development can provide critical insights.

Improving lead generation process

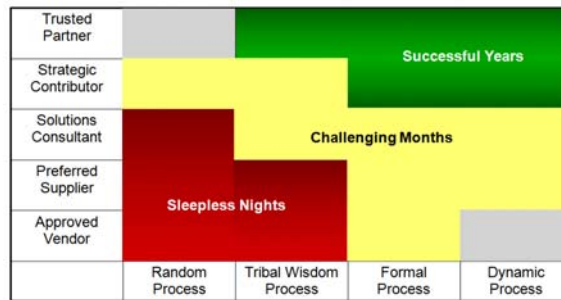
Every sales enablement conversation seems to point back to lead generation and ways to improve the process of managing leads. The CSO Insights' 2008 Sales Performance

Optimization study revealed that in 2008, sales executives' number one goal to enhance lead generation programs.

Dickie states that if your lead and sales process lacks consistency your organization will never reach "trusted partner" in the SRP matrix.

One company invested 18 months to revamp their entire lead process. Other suggestions included:

- Metrics, metrics, metrics. Take your analysis one layer deeper.
- Ensure your lead data is clean. Hire outside firms to clean up data.



Sales Relationship/Process (SRP) Matrix™

Sales Operations Forum

- Invest in technology to nurture existing leads. Many companies have put buying on hold— you want them ready to buy budgets loosen up.
- Agree on which team owns lead nurturing. In the CSO Insights Lead Life Cycle Optimization Analysis, 48% of firms interviewed said Sales owns it; 42% said Marketing was the owner.

Maximizing the value of your existing customers.

In this economy, no one can afford to lose customers. But how do you go a step beyond and ensure you are leveraging all your customer assets?

- Ask a customer! Whether you use a customer advisory board, a customer forum, or other meetings, your existing customers are the best source to answer the question.
- Enable and monitor communications between customers via a blog.
- Ensure your customer data is clean. One company even held back compensation if their CRM data was not updated.
- Keep in touch with prospects that choose your competitor and analyze the results consistently.
- Conduct a customer wellness program (quarterly face to face meetings) with the caution not to overdo this (i.e., becoming too frequent).
- Analyze your sales force. Are they competent to sell solutions? Evaluate readiness by territory by region.
 - o Interview each salesperson to see if they can “strategically sell” using Sales Management to develop the questions.
 - o Reward Salespeople when acting as trusted partners.

	Sleepless Nights Category (34% of firms surveyed)	Challenging Months Category (49% of firms surveyed)	Successful Years Category (17% of firms surveyed)
% Reps Making Quota	56%	62%	69%
% of Company Plan	86%	90%	93%
% Forecast - Wins	44%	49%	56%
% Forecast - Loses	35%	28%	25%
% Forecast - No Decisions	21%	22%	21%
% Sales Force Turnover	32%	31%	23%

Sales Relationship/Process (SRP) Matrix™

Successful Years Category

The results of the CSO Insights 2008 study revealed that companies reaching “trusted partner” status were those that maintained a consistent, yet dynamic sales process. Dickie encouraged the room to consider new ways to optimize how they sell and leverage all their assets.

About the Sales Operations Forum

The Forum provides Sales Operations executives an opportunity to network, exchange ideas and share best practices. Quarterly meetings focus on topic such as sales effectiveness, sales methodologies, compensation, and CRM. There is no cost to join the Forum. Contact Alison Chandless at 650-315-7501 if you are interested.

CSO Insights – CSO

Insights has served sales and marketing executives for over 15 years. They benchmark the challenges faced by today's sales and marketing organizations. They track trends in the use of people, process, technology and knowledge to improve sales effectiveness. CSO Insights only offers pragmatic suggestions, experienced-based examples.

To participate in CSO Insights studies or receive a copy of their report, go to CSOInsights.com.

Sales Relationship/Process is a trademark of CSO Insights.

Price Burlington – Director Sales Operations, SAP

Price is an accomplished sales professional with twenty years resulting in successful process improvements and business development. His background includes sales operations, alliance management, territory and sales management, and strategic account planning.

Alison Chandless, Regional Sales Manager, Centive

Companies use Centive Compel, hailed by CIO Magazine as the "most widely used choice for sales compensation management," to accurately model and forecast commission costs, calculate commission and bonus earnings and gain real-time visibility into sales performance metrics.