

Rev Up Your Sales Organization for Success ***Observations and expectations for today and beyond***

By Janet A. Gregory

The bumpy economic ride of the last decade has resulted in considerable change in the world of sales. These changes represent opportunities for significant sales productivity in the months and years ahead for companies that can capitalize on them.

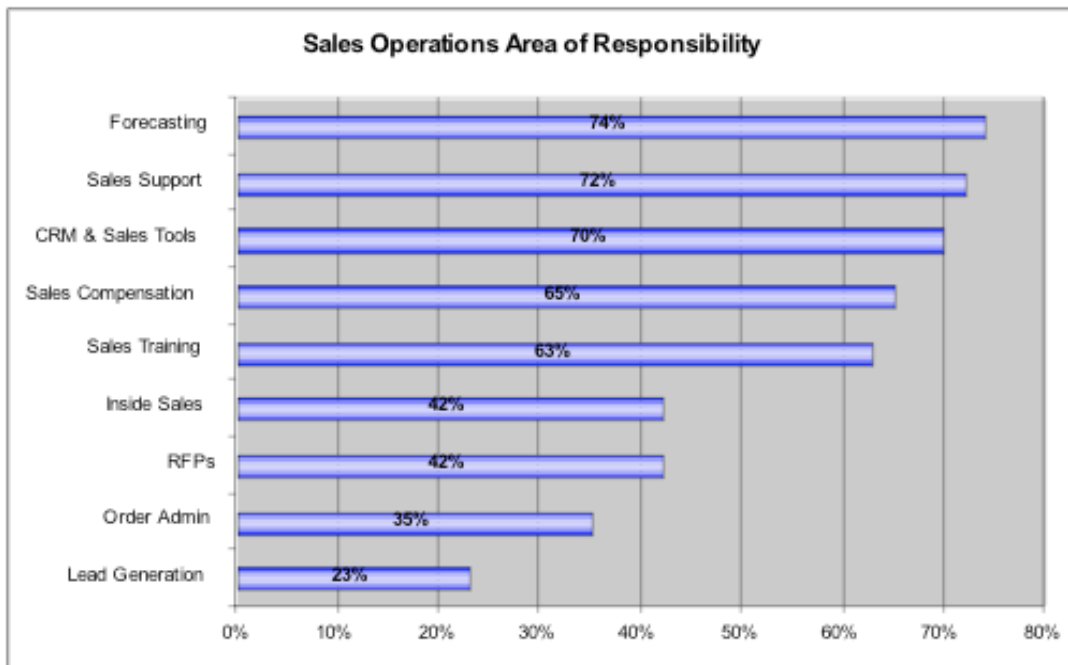
- New sales delivery models have proven themselves... in, out & ops.
- New markets have opened up.
- New tools are available to sales people.
- New selling methodologies have emerged.

Trend #1: New sales delivery models have proven themselves... in, out & ops

Inside. Inside sales has established itself. More complex, larger deals and higher volume sales are being done through inside sales. For your business it provides a lower cost of sale model. For your customer it provides a more accessible sales force with a more consistent business approach. For members of your inside sales team it provides a great work environment with more team selling, less travel and work-at-home options. If your business has not moved inside yet, start by addressing your installed base sales with expansions, upgrades and service contract renewals. You will be amazed at the results. The next adventure for inside sales is new customer sales for smaller deals and small business, like SOHO & VSB. Professional selling has broken away from the briefcase-toting road warrior into the business collaborator. See Mike Gospe's article on "Collaboration Trends" for how collaboration is changing the way we connect with the marketplace.

Outsource. "Outsource sales? You have to be crazy." No, the world has not gone crazy but there are new proven options to enhance your go-to-market channel strategy, including the addition of resellers, VARs and 2-tier distribution outsources sales. For certain businesses the use of agents or manufacture's representatives provides an outsource extension to the sales effort. Now you can also extend your inside sales team effortlessly by engaging an outsourced sales team (like Initial Call www.initialcall.com). Yes, an outsourced sales team can close business for you and can address special marketplace promotions, turnover, expansion and consistent productivity. These organizations are experts at inside sales and it can be a great way to introduce inside selling into your business. Recognize that building clear objectives, providing thorough sales and product training will be needed to ensure success.

Sales Operations. Sales operations has established itself as a recognized career field and business discipline over the last five years. It is critically important to sales and business success. Sales operations drives sales productivity through sales process, sales force motivation, progress tracking, and frankly, just helping to get things done! Address the needs of sales people and sales management by centralizing the sales ops function. Recognize that with a clear mission, a modest budget and a corporate identity, sales operations can significantly contribute to your sales and business success.

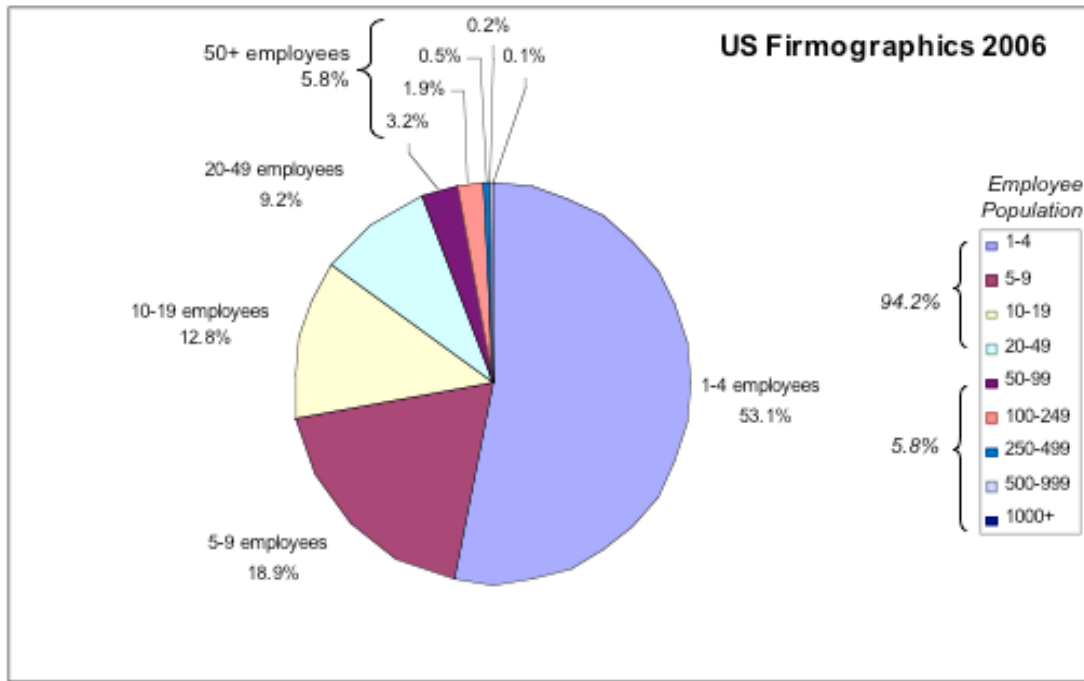


From a 2006 Sales Operations Forum member survey of responsibilities

Trend #2: New markets have opened up

Mash-ups & Eco-systems. You can't go it alone. Ever intensifying specialization within business has delivered the realization that you can't go it alone. In technology, mash-ups are delivering a richer set of capabilities to the user experience. In business, eco-systems of partners address a more complete set of customer needs. Address these mash-ups and eco-systems with programs of equally shared activities that drive mutually beneficial results. Recognize that you will address a new and previously untapped market for your business; have marketing messages and sales activities mirror those new vertical (industry) and horizontal (departmental) business benefits.

SOHO & VSB. Small business fuels the economy, both US & globally. Small-office-home-office (SOHO) and very-small-business (VSB) are strong and growing business segments. Reaching them with your sales and marketing messages is challenging because buying decisions combine both consumer and business methods. Address the 94% of businesses with easy access via the web, multiple communication mediums and acquisition alternatives. Recognize that acquisition alternatives can unlock this market through accessible channels (ecommerce, web, retail, direct sales, 2-tier distribution, VARS and resellers), flexible financial choices (on-demand offerings, subscription services, perpetual license, CapEx, OpEx) and positioning as an extension of their operation.



From the US Census Bureau, Economic Census

Trend #3: New tools are available to sales people

Sales uses an impressive array of technology but few companies have a sales technology plan.

- *Customer and partner facing technologies* help you communicate and stay connected with your most valuable assets, customers & partners. These technologies provide the first impression and lasting impression that your customers and partners will have for your business, your products and your services.
- *Field sales technologies* are personal productivity tools. The tools vary based on mobility needs of road-warriors, corridor-warriors or desk-warriors. These technologies help your sales team stay connected, organized and focused on company priorities.
- *Corporate facing technologies* keeps sales connected with core business functions, everything from sales management to order administration to production, shipping, and everything in between. These technologies ensure that corporate intelligence is not lost and that customer expectations are being met or exceeded.
- *Marketing technologies* introduce your company to new prospective customers and markets. These technologies allow you to personalize communication when mass-mailing or e-marketing and give you the ability to track results.

Build your sales technology plan by starting to identify all the technologies in use today. How do or don't they work together? What are the possibilities if new cross-technology integration is established? See Andrew Cadwell's article on "Sales Technology" for an in-depth look at this topic.

Trend #4: New selling methodologies have emerged

Business value selling connects your product capabilities with customer business needs. Sales needs to penetrate two parallel tracks to successfully close a deal. Today's sales people are particularly good at the technology track, spewing product knowledge and bringing in sales engineers to go deeper. The business value track often gets left in the dust. Later when a decision is made for another vendor's product or service the sales person is perplexed. Business value selling may not sound like a new concept but it needs to be rediscovered and reinvented to keep sales growing. Business value selling employs the "law of the 5 whys". Anyone with a 3-year old child knows how this works. Ask your current customers why they bought your product or services, then ask them why this was important, then ask them why the payback had value, then ask them why... well, you get the idea. Address the fact that one size does not fit all, except in tube socks. Recognize that your customers are busy and they hear sales messages all the time. Have your sales people stand above the competition by making the connection for the customer – how your products and services directly impact *their* specific business. See Mary

Gospe's article "Evolving World of Direct Marketing" for ways to connect with your prospects and customers.

Sales training is making a comeback. The wild ride of the late '90s and the dot-com era saw little to no sales training take place. Companies focused on product training alone as market demand was high. Over the last five years demand waned, training stayed product-focused and sales skills have gotten rusty, been mis-used or even worse, don't exist. Assess the needs of your sales team for skill development (listening, probing, presenting, objection handling, etc.) and for process development (situation identification, problem analysis, solution selling, account management, etc.). Address the gaps with customized sales training you can develop internally or bring in external resources. The pre-packaged sales training programs (like Strategic Selling, Target Account Selling, Jack B. Keenan, IPG and others) are great if their model and methods fit your business process. Recognize that the value of sales training is to deliver a consistent high quality approach to customers, improve sales productivity and retain good sales people.

Sales is the face of your business to the public and to your customers. It is the arms & legs that carries out marketing and product programs. It is the heart beat that finance is continually measuring, forecasting and analyzing. In good economic times and bad it is what pays the rent, keeps the lights on and pays employee paychecks. Sales is ever changing. Continually help the sales organization to look forward and embrace new markets, tools and methodologies that will help them succeed.

Janet Gregory is a veteran sales executive and co-founder of KickStart Alliance. For assistance with sales strategy, sales planning, training, compensation or any aspect of sales operations, contact [Janet](#). Janet leads the sales readiness practice at KickStart Alliance. For help in aligning sales & marketing for results contact any member of the [KickStart Alliance team](#).