

» YOU PROMISED WHAT?

CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION DELIVER ON ITS PROMISES?

Salespeople live for the adrenaline rush experienced when the “deal is struck”, the moment when the prospect pursued becomes the customer. All of the careful planning and sales positioning ability is about to pay off. The contract is signed – the handshake – the celebration! Now, deliver.

Do the realities of delivering increase your excitement about the feat you just achieved or does the pain begin gnawing in the pit of your stomach? Do you believe in your sales support organization’s ability to deliver or are there indicators that promises are not always easy to keep?

Consider these potential situations:

- Backlogs in support units are the norm not the exception.
- Internal errors and delays due to “re-dos” are too frequent.
- Turnover is high and morale is low.
- Customers complain of missed expectations and less than accurate results.
- Support functions consistently ask for more time or challenge agreements with customers.
- Internal initiatives, programs, meetings, and issues are consuming sales support managers.

Sound too familiar?

Organizations spend tremendous amounts of time and money nailing brand identity, word-smithing to describe their customer service philosophy, and entrusting their customer base to those hired to deliver the product or service. We argue about defining ourselves as customer driven or customer focused. We tell our customers we are responsive, entrepreneurial, flexible, and decisive. We pursue industry and quality certifications. We require the latest customer service texts to be read by service and operations managers.

Why do the situations above feel like they are hitting too close to home?

Organizations tend to make assumptions that everyone involved with “making it happen” knows and understands:

- The organization’s overall mission, values, goals, and strategies.
- The business plan for getting to “the goal”.
- How to behave and collaborate cross functionally to produce results.
- How to link and leverage communications about customer service philosophy, empowerment, etc.
- How to make words like responsive, entrepreneurial, flexible, and decisive become real behaviors and actions.

As additional “initiatives” and “programs” are rolled out, or goals and strategies change, most organizations assume people will embrace them and translate them into the right actions. These are all very dangerous assumptions for organizations fighting to stay a step ahead of the pack.

To be successful in their job people must understand what the organization needs to achieve, by when, what success looks like, and most importantly what effective execution looks like. They need to know what they are being held accountable for and how to execute the actions that will drive the organization in the right direction.

Using an integrated approach to giving people the skills and knowledge that support the business strategy significantly improves sustainable results. The approach proves most significant when customized to focus on those things necessary to most effectively serve customers in the particular ways of the organization.

Leadership driven, well disciplined organizations introduce their unique and changing goals by using a “linked and leveraged” unified approach, allowing for smooth transitions. New hires are immediately brought into alignment through a formal process of off loading “the old” and defining “the now”. They know what is expected of them and why, how the job is done, and the rewards for doing so.

Creating and sustaining world class sales support organizations is accomplished when:

- There is clarity in roles and accountabilities.
- Individuals are focused on the primary activities that will achieve success.
- The proven process for success (the sales/business process) is standardized.
- There are standard tools, knowledge and skills to support success.
- The “how-tos” are reinforced with uniformity and over time.
- The organization continuously evaluates and refines all of the above in order to meet changing demands.

Does having all these things in place mean there will be no bumps in the road to success? That is a nice thought! What it does mean is an increased ability for the organization to direct time and resources to the right things. There is a greater opportunity to take phrases like “committed and productive salespeople”, “focused and efficient sales support staff”, “a framework for managing changing demands and priorities”, “enthused and supportive stakeholders”, and “a delighted and loyal customer base” – and turn them into actual outcomes.