



STOP CUTTING & START SELLING!

The National Post, Profit Magazine and Canadian Business Magazine to name a few all report that companies who continued to invest in sales and marketing during a recession acquired more customers and emerged in a stronger position than companies who decreased their marketing efforts. Let's face it you can't cost cut your way to prosperity.

We all know there is a need to cut expenses in order to weather the storm. Sure you can stop the business lunches with little impact or try using recycled ink and toner as another method. However, there are areas where you need to show momentum and leadership if you want your company to survive and prosper.

"Going dark" is the term generally used for companies who stop spending on sales, marketing and advertising, but the same phrase can be applied to the communication you are delivering to your employees through word and action. Your employees are most often the front line between your company and your customers. Are you delivering a positive message to your people that you are a strong and will make it through this storm, or are you sending the message they may not have their jobs for long at the rate you are going? If your employees think the company is in trouble and you are not showing the strong leadership required to change this mindset, then you are in trouble.

This current business climate is very reflective of what occurs when a company is being sold and the employees believe they have nothing to gain and everything to lose when the sale happens. The morale in the business soon crashes. What's worse is customers soon learn of the problems. If they don't find out from your own employees you can bet your competitors will tell them when the opportunity arises. Once your customers know you are in trouble, then your ability to sell new products or services is severely affected. Just look at the recent announcement that the government is going to "guarantee" the warranties for GM and Chrysler vehicles.

We keep hearing the mantra to cut expenses. What's left to cut? The new battle cry from companies who are going to survive will be "make sales". People and companies are still buying but the question now becomes; "if not from you then from whom?" If you do not continue to drive sales and market your products or services, your competitors will take advantage of any opportunity you provide and attack your customer base.

Now is the ideal time to look at how technology can be employed to reduce your costs and improve your revenues. For example, don't fly your sales people to training sessions or sales meetings, invest in on line systems, webinars and conference calls. You can often accomplish more in a few hours of well focus training than taking your people out of the field for a few days at a very high cost and lost selling time.

An economic downturn often breeds innovation, and creates ways for companies with strong leadership to do more with less. Everyone at your company should be focused on doing everything possible to find new customers, new products and new opportunities. Every employee in your company is a potential sales person not an expense. To paraphrase Charles Darwin, it's not the strongest nor the most intelligent that survives, it's the one most adaptable to change.

Aim Higher!

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Robert is a managing partner in B2B Sales Connections Inc. He has over 25 years of experience in B2B sales, sales management & training. The firm helps clients achieve greater sales success in the B2B marketplace by focusing on recruiting, training and marketing services for both the sales organization and sales professional alike. B2B Sales Connections also hosts Canada's premier niche job board and career website for business to business sales professionals. For more information, please visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com.