

The Importance of the Alignment of Your Staff with Your Sales Strategy

In our last issue we explored what to base your sales strategy on and the important questions to ask and answer in building that strategy. In this issue we'll delve into the importance of the alignment of your staff with your sales strategy.

Alignment is defined as *a state of agreement or cooperation among persons, groups, nations, etc., with a common cause or viewpoint.*

Alignment is critical for a successful organization.

The culture of an organization is an amalgamation of the values and beliefs of the staff. It can be felt in the organization's implicit rules and expectations – the rules are not written down, but employees know what is expected of them. Usually management's policy decisions set up the culture of the organization.

Every organizational culture has values and beliefs that either support or hinder the organizational goals. If it is positive, the culture of the organization can motivate employees, or at least prevent them from becoming disengaged. If the climate does not satisfy employees' needs, it will become a de-motivator and employees will become less inclined to work towards the organizational goals.

Without alignment, your sales strategy will limp along through a series of successes or failures (best case scenario), or fail completely (worst case scenario).

There are many ways to gain alignment within your organization, including working through a series of exercises yourself and/or hiring a firm to guide you through the process.

For example, a process of attaining alignment might include these steps:

- Communicate the goal
- Share the data
- Seek input and incorporate that input into the sales strategy
- Empower - assign teams and task the work
- Direct and inspect the rollout of the final sales strategy

Staying with our earlier example of the company that wants to move from the automotive market to the medical market, let's walk through the steps of the sample process.

Communicate the Goal

The owner and leadership team could put together a justification presentation for the staff on the importance of moving from the automotive market to the medical market. This presentation could include information such as declining sales, the shrinking market, increased competition, financially impractical margins, etc., faced in the current automotive market. It would then give reasons why the medical market is the 'market of choice' for expansion. The important part of this presentation is effectively communicating how this will impact each staff member in the organization (not just the company overall) in terms of wages, benefits, hours, retirement, etc. An easy way to communicate this would be: "If we stay in the automotive market, we're going to

have to make the following concessions....” And, “If we move into a more profitable market like medical, we believe you will receive the following benefits....”

Share the Data

Since most people are skeptical of and adverse to change, it is important to back up your message with data. Many business owners are opposed to this, but in *The Great Game of Business*, author Jack Stack demonstrates that the benefits far outweigh the risks. (By the way, if you have not read this book you should.)

Open your books (in summary form) and show your staff how the market has changed, why, and its impact on them at an employee level.

Then share the data you’ve obtained in your sales strategy development (discussed in our two previous issues), showing the potential of moving to another market and how, if that potential is realized, it could impact them at the employee level.

Seek Input and Incorporate It

Ask for your team’s thoughts on the goal and the data. Not only might you gain insight, but you have now involved them in the rationale for the change and therefore increased the likelihood of buy-in and alignment.

Empower Your Team

Based on the input you receive and/or your team’s reaction to the goal and the data, it is crucial to hand them the ball now and allow them to immerse themselves in the steps to attaining the goal. This will further entrench them in the reason for the sales strategy and the steps needed to execute the strategy once it is rolled out.

Direct and Inspect

After the sales strategy has been finalized and documented, it is time for rollout. It is important that you – the leader of the new sales strategy – direct and inspect the successful execution of the strategy.

This is one possible process. There are many other processes and many organizational development firms and strategy firms with solid processes. The key is the communication and involvement of your people in the development of the strategy. With this as your guiding principle, and a solid team in place to help you, there is little you cannot overcome in the development of a solid process in sales strategy development.

In our next issue we will discuss the key points of the ongoing measurement of the success of your sales strategy and when and how to adjust your strategy.

Until then...

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