

WHAT IS YOUR SALES BOTTLENECK?

Craig was an experienced sales person who was going through the worst selling slump of his career. His sales production had plummeted by over 50% and no one knew why. Craig had even met with his sales manager numerous times and had reviewed with him his entire sales presentation, but still nothing seemed to help. With each day that passed Craig was becoming more frustrated as his performance continued to decline. Craig had begun to believe that his situation was hopeless. It was at that time that Craig's sales manager asked me to meet with Craig to see if I could identify what was wrong. During our first meeting, I talked with Craig for a while and asked him some diagnostic questions. I then had him demonstrate two parts of his sales process for me. It was at that time that I realized what the problem was: Craig had a sales bottleneck. A sales bottleneck is a part of the selling process that limits production. It is in the bottleneck where the sale slips away. As I disclosed to Craig what his bottleneck was, his eyes grew wide with excitement. We then discussed how to immediately correct the situation. Within a very short period of time the bottleneck had been eliminated and Craig's sales rose beyond where they had been even before the slump.

Craig's situation is not unique. The reality is that there are many sales people who are not selling at the level they could be. Their problem is that there are one or more bottlenecks that are reducing their capacity to generate sales. It is important to remember that when a sales person is experiencing low sales production there is a reason. The lack of sales is a symptom, not the problem. The problem is the bottleneck. The question is what is the bottleneck?

Accurately diagnosing a bottleneck is imperative. A sales bottleneck is caused by either a poorly designed part of the sales process or a sales person improperly conducting a part of the sales process. If the bottleneck is inherent within the process itself then it must be dealt with aggressively. This is serious because the bottleneck is limiting the sales that the process can produce, even when competently executed. In addition, even if the results of the bottleneck are manifested more noticeably in some sales people than others, it is still sabotaging the efforts of all who use the process. Consequently, correcting a bottleneck is mission critical because it is the part of your sales process where you are losing sales. Also, once the bottleneck is fixed the effectiveness of those who are using the process will be transformed and so will their results.

However, as previously stated, the bottleneck could also be created by the sales person. Though an effective sales process is vital, it is not enough. Sales people must also be able to skillfully complete each step of the process. If one essential component of the sales process is not properly carried out, it will render even the most dynamic process ineffective. To be sure, sales people do not intentionally seek to trigger a bottleneck. Nevertheless, because the bottleneck is why sales are being lost it must be identified and eradicated.

Take a moment to think about your sales process and your execution of it. What is the weakest link in your sales process? Is the issue the sales process or your ability to implement it? If you could elimi-

nate your bottleneck how would that enhance your ability to produce sales? I have personally assisted hundreds of sales people in identifying and correcting bottlenecks and often the effects of doing so are profound. Their sales production skyrockets, frustration melts away and sometimes careers are even reborn. The reality is, if you are a professional sales person or sales manager, a bottleneck is not merely hindering your productivity; it is hindering the quality of your life. Therefore, it demands your attention.

About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group's groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.