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ACTIONABLE "HOW-TO" INSIGHTS FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

SALES STRATEGIES THAT WORK

From dealing with corporates, to B2B and B2C sales, three experts share their secrets for achieving sales success.
By Nadine Todd



WORKING WITH CORPORATES

BUSINESS 2 BUSINESS SALES

BUSINESS 2 CONSUMER SALES



PLAYER: Andy Reid
COMPANY: Vespa South Africa
CURRENT TURNOVER: R50 million
GOAL: R100 million, requiring 1 000 scooter sales per annum
VISIT: www.vespa.co.za

PHOTO: MIKE TURNER

ASK YOURSELF Is your company achieving its sales targets?



PLAYER: Herschel Oppel
COMPANY: Retail Revolution Group
PAST ACHIEVEMENTS: Group MD, Platinum Group
CONTACT: +27 (0)82 559 3004

analysis of my personal experiences with the brand, benchmarked against international standards, and with a number of solutions ranging across budgets. Again, I'm drawing on the first meeting, where if I did my job right, the CEO shared some of his pain points with me, enabling me to understand his business needs better. If I can't prove the value I'm adding there and then, there won't be a third meeting. Corporate decisions take time. Show the value upfront, build relationships, and don't be afraid to leverage your networks and experience. At the end of the day, corporates are made up of people, and people do business with people, so be a supplier or partner they can trust."

THE B2B SPECIALISTS

In the B2B world, sales strategies must be multi-faceted. You're not just selling your service or product; you're selling a solution to your clients – one that must meet their own business objectives. If they can't see a return on investment, chances are you won't get repeat business from them either, which makes the ability to track your impact on their business all the more important.

As a marketing platform, the founders of Sky Messaging understand these concepts well, but they are as true for any B2B business. "Companies do spend money. That's a fact. What you need is for them to spend money with you. People like to spend money with people they like, so take the time to build a relationship. We're professional and serious about what we do, and we understand that often the things really worth doing take time," says Thomas Kritzer, MD of Sky Messaging.

"At the end of the day, the aim of any business is to move product off shelves. Marketing can help you do that. Our role is to show our prospects how we can help them achieve their marketing and sales targets, and then give them a way to track the impact their campaigns are having," explains Kritzer. It's not a sale that happens overnight.

"Our average sale turnaround time is two to four weeks, but we have had sales cycles that have taken up to two years, simply because we needed to build the relationship with the client first, and hold their hand through the process. The general public doesn't understand what goes into Sky Messaging –

PHOTO: MIKE TURNER



PLAYER: Thomas Kritzer
COMPANY: Sky Messaging
GOAL: R50 million for 2016/17
VISIT: www.sky-messaging.com



Sky messaging at work.

what banners work, how planned the whole process is, where the plane goes, how it's tracked and so on. We need to really show people how to use the platform."

In addition, timing needs to be right for these campaigns as well. "Companies are sometimes waiting for budget again, or a promotion to happen, a new product range to launch, or a website. If we push too hard at the wrong time, we lose the sale. Instead, follow-through is important. We build relationships, find out as much as possible about the business and its strategies and goals for the year, and then keep track of when they're doing what. That way, we're able to go back to them at exactly the right time and pitch our unique marketing platform at a time when the extra visibility will really boost a sales drive they're doing."

PHOTO: SARAH SCHÄFER

IN BRIEF

- Understanding – and leveraging – corporate pain points
- Systematic relationship building for B2B sales
- The art of sales pipelines and the trick of always closing.

CORPORATE PLAYER

When Herschel Oppel left his senior management position at retail giant Platinum Group (holders of Jenni Button, Hilton Weiner, Urban Degree, Aca Joe and Vertical Clothing retail brands) to launch his own retail consultancy, he knew that the secret to his success would be his ability to access CEOs at major retailers. As anyone who has worked (or tried to work) with corporates knows, accessing the decision-maker is difficult enough; holding their attention even more so.

"What's become apparent is that reputation is key. Most of my industry experience so far was spent at the Platinum Group, and I'm not afraid to use it. I was instrumental in the turnaround of the Aca Joe brand, and that, along with 15 years of management and senior management experience, gives me credibility I can leverage when asking for a meeting.

"CEOs and senior managers are incredibly busy. Before you approach a retail group or corporate, understand that you're asking for a slice of very valuable time, so you'd better

make the meeting worth their while.

"For me, that means that first meeting is never about the pitch. It's a relationship builder. I use my contacts, network and in many cases LinkedIn to ask for a chat over coffee. I don't indicate I have a sales pitch I'd like to share. This is all about the prospect, and sharing my story.

"Once we do meet, I tell them details about Aca Joe's turnaround, and what I've learnt from my 13 years of annual trips to the UK and Europe, evaluating the best global retail brands. The more personal the better – relationships are built on personal stories, and credibility is the direct result of offering valuable ideas, so it's a two pronged meeting. I want the CEO I'm meeting with to walk away feeling smarter and more informed for having spent an hour with me; I want them to return to the office with some new ideas about how the industry greats are approaching their sector, and how they can leverage those ideas in their business. And I want them to feel like they know me, and can therefore trust me.

"Based on this, I then ask for a second meeting, and that's when I really come prepared. It takes a large amount of time and effort on my part, so I need to be sure that this really is a company that I want to do business with, and that is interested in potentially doing business with me, before I formulate the pitch.

"And then I become a mystery shopper at their stores. The best way to find pain points and devise solutions is to experience the brand. I formulate a strategy based on careful

Timing: Plan client approaches

The ability to approach clients at the right time involves a careful and systematic tracking process. "We track every step in the sales process. We do it through software, but the principle is what's important: Who is the target, when was contact made, what's the next move? Everything is tracked with follow-up flags, and these are automated to pop up and remind our team when a follow-up is due. And we always, always follow-up. We don't wait for the phone to ring. We go out there and make connections, offer solutions, and track what our prospects are doing to align our offerings with their sales and marketing strategies."

Value-add: Meeting client needs

Because the platform is so unique, it helps to put the pitch into context, even though this comes at a cost to the company. "We always try to put the pitch into context – mock-ups, routing examples – what we can do with available spend. We make the pitch as real as possible. We also give the same treatment for all clients, irrespective of size. We understand that clients grow. We want to grow with them, and treat them well at the beginning of their growth journey."

Kritzer's chief goal is to add value to his clients, and that means working within the framework of what they're trying to achieve, rather than getting as much spend for Sky Messaging as possible. "We always ask our clients what other channels they're using:

Radio, TV, billboards or print ads. We never suggest getting rid of those other platforms. Instead, we ask them to look at what they're spending, and then take 5% to 10% of that and channel it into our product, and allow them to be the only brand in their sector in an uncluttered sky. We work best accentuating an activation at a rugby match for example, or flying over captive audiences in grid-locked traffic. We also guarantee that clients who take contracts starting at 200 hours per year have exclusivity in the sky. At the end of the day though, our biggest aim is to help our clients move product, and that means working within a broader strategy, rather than simply trying to make as high a sale as possible." →

QUICK TIPS

- » **Tenacity pays.** We can't stress this enough: Don't expect the phone to ring. You need to make it ring. You need a good product to sell, but don't ever assume that it will sell itself. Even great products need to be sold.
- » **Be patient.** Work your leads. Build relationships. Have realistic forecasts. Be prepared to change direction; sales is a meandering road.
- » **Work at it.** Success doesn't come before work except in the dictionary.

← THE B2C MASTER SALESMAN

With a background in B2B business, Andy Reid, founder of Vespa South Africa, learnt some quick lessons when he launched the much-loved brand in South Africa. "The B2C sale is very emotional, which means there are a lot of perceptions influencing the buyer," he explains. "In the case of Vespa, people love the brand, and yet at the beginning we weren't transacting. We had people coming into the store, responding to our advertising, telling us how much they loved Vespa, and yet we weren't making any sales. It was incredibly frustrating."

And then the realisation sank in. "It took some time to understand that although people loved the brand, they were scared: Scared of our roads, scared of riding, or simply unsure of how to get a licence. We needed to overcome those barriers if we wanted to make sales."

And Reid needed to make sales. Thanks to the sale of his previous company he was able to invest heavily in the brand, and had taken a 'go big or go home' attitude: Seven national stores, 35 staff and 600 vespas brought in from Italy. It was time to put that investment to work.

Switching strategies

The simple question, "Welcome to Vespa, do you ride?" was Reid's sales breakthrough. "70% of the time the answer is no, which means we can follow up with, 'Would you like to learn?' Most people say yes, and that's our first step to getting their bum on a bike, which is essential if we're to make the sale."

It meant a major shift in business strategy. Instead of focusing on being an importer of scooters, today Vespa South Africa is in the business of teaching people how to ride for free, and helping them get their licences. Selling actual scooters is the result of that strategy. "Once prospects are comfortable on



According to Vespa's Andy Reid, selling is in the details: Having a strong pipeline, building relationships and hammering out the details.

the bike, our average conversion rate is 6:1, so if a sales person wants to make four sales in a month, they need to get 24 people on the bike, either through lessons, or test rides," says Reid, explaining the second arm of his sales strategy, which is numbers. Know your numbers, and you'll make your targets.

To really meet numbers, the sales pipeline is crucial. "We have processes in place so that our reps aren't only concentrating on the here and now. They need to know where their next sale is coming from. If it takes six people on a bike to make one sale, they need to be working on multiple bums on bikes in a month. We know that out of 192 inquiry suspects, 96 are qualified. Only 48 (50%) suspects will then be interested in a test ride, and only 24 of those will be very

interested and will actually perform a test drive. These are now prospects. It's a numbers game, with different prospects at different stages of the cycle at all times. Keep an eye on your numbers, work through the pipeline, and you'll meet target."

Sales tracking process

It's a six-month sales cycle though, which makes a sales tracking process crucial – without it, there'd never be prospects in all stages of the cycle, and sales would not be constant. For every step of Reid's sales tracking process there are four steps. If all four are not ticked, then the prospect is not at 20%, 50%, 80% or 100%. The sales rep must go back and ensure each step is followed. (See resources below).

"If you're not making target you need to go back to the pipeline and see why. The problems will fall into one of three categories. It's either a time issue (a blank diary means you're unemployed as far as I'm concerned), or a courage issue (you're not asking the right questions of your prospects) or a self-discipline issue (you're not following the systems step-by-step).

"In sales – and anything in life and business – success comes when good practices are so engrained they're a habit. A successful sales rep always knows where their next sale is coming from, and that takes discipline and follow-through. To instil accountability in my team, each sales rep fills in a weekly self-appraisal document where they rate each step of the pipeline. They need to be honest because it's checked by the store manager and me, and sales targets are an easy way to check their answers – everything can't be good or excellent if they aren't meeting target, for example. Once they acknowledge where a task or line item has been done poorly, they can take ownership of that failure and we can put an improvement action plan in place.

"My team call me Anal Andy because I hammer the detail into everything we do. It's all about the follow through. For example, a salesman must never tell me, 'He's thinking about it.' If a prospect says that, the response is: 'Sorry sir, I obviously haven't done my job properly. What do you need to think about? Share the problem with me. What's our next action?' Selling must be proactive, and you don't know your next step unless you understand your client's needs. Always ask questions: What are you buying, when do you want to buy it, how are you paying for it? Based on these answers you will automatically know what your next action step is as the sales rep, proactively guiding your prospect through the sale." **EM**

SALES PIPELINE DAILY DOs			
	Suspect Be proactive	Prospect Where is my next sale	Close the sale Know the exact status
Enthusiasm	Daily must-do activities » Five friendly calls per day » Follow-up names from expos » Phone for referrals » Farm old Individual Buyer Enquiries (IBEs)	Where is my next sale » Complete sales tracking forecasting document » Ensure correct 20/50 status » Work SMART* » Eliminate HOPE** » Ensure the demo and proforma is genuinely performed	Know the exact status » Confirm payment method » Licence requirements » Be specific with the status of the deal » Again, don't HOPE » Finish each task at a time
Energy	» Meet and greet – engage in external social activities » Flyer drops » Follow-up internet enquiries		
Attitude	» Ensure test drive appointments are confirmed		
Resilience	Did I perform a test drive today?		
	Daily review » Review quality of five calls » Review daily suspect and prospect board » Review IBE entries	Weekly review » Review sales forecast » Did I sell a bike this week? » Why not?	Closed sale check » Bike PDI and delivery » Finalise sales pack for pay out » Ensure funds are in the bank Obtain referrals!
Plan			

SMART*

Work SMART

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time Frame

HOPE**

Reid hates the word 'HOPE', as in, I hope I make that sale...

Hopeless
Orderless
Procrastinate
Excuses

RESOURCES

Where's my next sale?

According to Reid, you need to be in control of the sale. His team follows this simple process.

APPLY THE 3Bs:

- » **Buttons:** What is your next specific action per prospect?
- » **Belts:** Diarise and include contact details ie. your actual action
- » **Braces:** Update daily prospect document

• **Important: If you don't do all three, the lead could slip away.**

ALWAYS BE CLOSING:

- » **What** does the customer want?
- » **When** does the customer want to buy?
- » **How** does the customer choose to pay?

• **Be careful: An action must not be an outcome. What's the correct action that will lead to the outcome?**

UNDERSTAND THE URGENCY
Do the deal!
Ask for the business; if not, why not?

Example of a pipeline document

PROSPECTS ONLY		SALES PROBABILITY	
20%	50%	80%	100%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual buying enquiry	<input type="checkbox"/> Deposit paid, trade in	<input type="checkbox"/> Invoice paid	<input type="checkbox"/> Full payment received
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Client has been to showroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Allocate stock/chassis	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance pack submitted
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lessons/test drive/demo*	<input type="checkbox"/> Cash or finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Licence confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/> Reg and licence complete
<input type="checkbox"/> Pro forma, quote to client	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike licence yes/no	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving lessons	<input type="checkbox"/> Scooter delivered

* If only three are ticked, sorry, this lead is back up to qualified suspect only – stop bull*#@ing yourself, you're not at 20%.