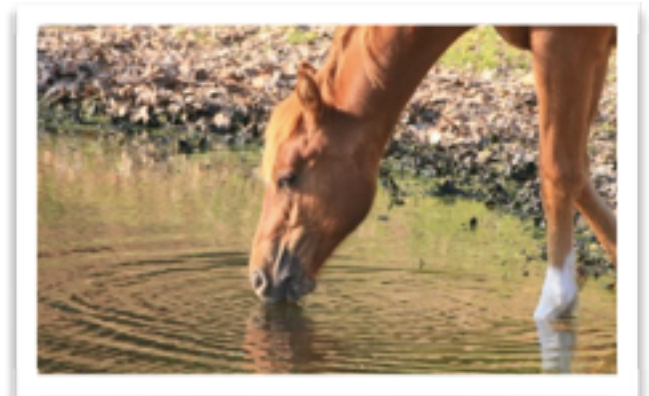


You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

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Gianni Anchois talks about what happens when sales teams seem to be anything but thirsty.



What happens when your sales team is not thirsty?

Sure, sales compensation is usually largely tied to actual sales. However the definition of “a sale” has changed through the years. Not so long ago, sales was measured on orders. This was the good old times (if you were in sales, that is) when you could just wait until the very last hours of the last day of the quarter to bring in the magical signed order, cash your commission and start planning your next vacation to the Maldives or Acapulco. Only at a later stage management would painfully discover that, in many cases, it could take months for the company to be in a position to actual invoice those orders, and longer still to book the associated revenues.

Measure twice, cut once

So the obvious solution was to measure sales on revenues. I guess we are all familiar with the sort of discussions that this new metric brought in.

Sales complaining of inability to book revenues because of products failing to ship, undelivered services or failure to meet service level agreements, and so on. All problems, by the way, many companies are still facing today. Then came the latest trend: measure sales on revenue and margin. Now, this opened up a huge discussion around cost of sales, cost of fulfilling (including, in the case of

products, manufacturing and shipping) or, for services, delivery cost. Still, we would expect that at least sales should still feel thirsty right?

Who are you calling proactive?

Well, actually you'd be surprised to discover how many sales reps, especially those assigned to enterprise class clients, do not always show the degree of proactivity that thirsty people should show. So we often end up in a situation where it doesn't really matter if marketers or business developers bring fresh clean water to sales, they still won't drink. Just like a wanderer in the desert, they might not realise how thirsty they are. In extreme cases, they will not even feel any stimulus of thirst. But fact is, failure to drink will cause dehydration and make them sick, sometimes beyond recovery. And with them, your company too.

The point I'm trying to make is that sales teams should be thirstier than ever. The battle for customers and revenues is fierce out there, and no company can relax. Every prospect your team is not touching is a lost opportunity, every dollar that clients don't spend with you, they will spend with a competitor of yours.

Here, drink from this firehose

One of the problems is that quite often, in the attempt to aggressively drive the sales teams, we

end up pointing a fire hose at them, and most often than not run the risk of drowning them all.

Think of the amount of data – sometimes information – marketers regularly throw at sales reps. Portals, corporate blogs, audio, video, newsletters, training sessions. Endless and convoluted emails full of URLs & pointers to more data. Fifty slides powerpoint presentations, font size 9.

Don't know what we don't know

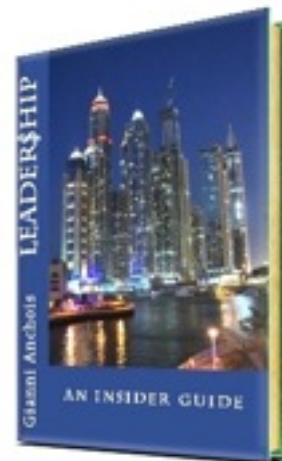
I think that most companies have a huge knowledge management problem. Mostly unrecognised, at best thinly disguised behind the production of a huge corpus of collateral material generated in industrial sizes. Because we can build and deliver a ton of

sales materials, we do. Rather than measuring what is really used – hence useful – we measure how much we produce. Expensive, inefficient and wrong.

Oh and by the way, the answer is no – notwithstanding what some might think, big data will not solve the sales-marketing problem. And will definitely not make sales thirsty, quite the opposite actually. If anything, we need better data. But that's for another article.

So when you complicate things and overwhelm sales teams like this, how can you possibly expect them to be thirsty? What techniques can you apply to make sure they come to your water pool and actually drink?

*If you liked this article, please check my new book **“Leader\$hip, an insider guide”**, available on March 1st, 2015 from Amazon.*



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