

In this issue...

- Sales strategy linked to overall business strategy
- Processes designed to maximise opportunities
- Goal setting and measurement that drive critical activities



Are you punching your weight in sales?

Creating and sustaining high levels of revenue has never been more important - nor harder. Few organisations have found answers which work consistently. Recent experience with a major financial services retailer provided some interesting lessons. This article provides insights into the key questions which need to be asked and answered.

“I cannot understand why we are not punching our weight in sales,” was the starting point for our conversation with the Head of Retail Banking. As a major European financial services organisation, the brand was strong, the products were good and there was no discernible reason why sales performance was 10-15% below the market average. Traffic was substantial in branches and contact centres. So, if the opportunities were there why were they not being exploited?

“The competitive data was undeniable. This bank was falling further behind every quarter.”

The bank had made frequent attempts to create the elusive Sales Culture and progress had undoubtedly been made: results could be good sporadically.

But, the competitive data was undeniable: *this bank was falling further behind every quarter*. What were the reasons?

We were engaged to conduct a holistic analysis covering these key questions.



Is the sales strategy clearly linked to overall business strategy?

Challenging business conditions mean regular, necessary changes to corporate strategy. Modifying sales strategies to reflect new direction requires being light on the corporate feet but is easier said than done. And yet, it is important to check that customer-facing staff are marching to the current corporate drumbeat.

In this organisation there was a desire to migrate customers to alternative channels in order to reduce costs and exploit the opportunities created by the recently refocused contact centres. But network

staff and managers were still working on the old model of satisfying needs at the first point of contact. They were not inclined to promote alternatives. Short term goals were being achieved at the expense of longer term corporate needs.

Once alerted, top management focused more of their own and field managers' time on observing and reinforcing channel migration activities. Getting the message over clearly meant top management changing their activities to ensure field behaviours lined up with corporate goals.



Are sales processes designed to maximise opportunities and satisfy customers' needs?

Integrating advertising, marketing, product development and selling efforts is a major effort for many organisations. Technology can facilitate better solutions but it is still common for all key front line staff to be out of the loop. When analysed critically, many processes and procedures create obstacle courses for customers and staff. Senior management owe their staff and customers easy-to-operate processes that foster and reinforce the staff and customer behaviour they desire.

From a customer view point, in-branch processes delivered a fairly smooth, efficient but anonymous experience in this bank. *From the staff point of view*, there was little clarity about priorities for sales or service.

Serving immediate requests, looking for further needs and dealing with genuine enquiries were all prone to randomness.

Motivated by a laudable desire to keep queues moving, staff were doing their best to reduce

transaction times. As a result, approximately ninety per cent of opportunities that walked into the branch, walked back out, unexplored. Thus, *from the bank's point of view*, business opportunities (i.e. real, unsatisfied customer needs) were visibly haemorrhaging.

Putting things right meant choreographing all regular customer visits, mapping out the activities and processes, *from the customer point of view* and giving every staff member a clear role.

All staff were taught how to decide and where to channel each customer request based on the customers' needs and time, the nature of the opportunity and the circumstances in the branch – *at that point in time*.

Everyone could assess precisely how to handle any routine transaction or more complex sales lead. The result was highly motivated, multi-skilled sales teams that delivered 30% better on sales results – and satisfied customers who appreciated more personal attention.



Do the goal setting and related measurement processes drive critical activities?

Most organisations set sales targets for product sales and referrals in branches and contact centres. However, when it comes to measuring and tracking against targets best practice is much less frequent.

Like many others, this organisation focused its measures principally on completed sales. Like most others too much was being tracked. League tables encouraged heavy emphasis on who did the most business last period. As a result, too little attention was paid to the more meaningful pipeline measures (enquiries,

initial interviews, completed applications etc.) and the interrelated ratios which predict future sales volumes.

Reports were redesigned and simplified. Sales managers were encouraged to focus much further upstream, diagnose leakage points and concentrate investigation and coaching time on the individual sales issues of each of their units. There is still a long way to go but true sales measurement (and related management) is now much more common.

“Too little attention was paid to the more meaningful pipeline measures.”



Do all communications with staff and customers reinforce clear, simple messages?

The number of newsletters, circulars, product updates and internal publications delivered to staff and customers has multiplied in most organisations. As have the plethora of channels available – paper, satellite TV, intranet, internet. Some of them are very good. But the cumulative effect of more colourful, better designed communications is not always better communication!

Our client wanted to streamline message, content, volume, access and usage. Customer and staff channels became one. We helped design and integrate digestible content that kept teams up to date daily. Through the corporate television executives reinforced company direction quickly and consistently. All media carried fewer messages – creating a clear focus on transaction migration.

For questions, comments or feedback about Setanta or additional copies of Insights please contact:
Caroline Wallace
T +44 (0) 20 8888 3319 F +44 (0) 87 0137 9259 E cwallace@setantapi.co.uk

Latest news...



Setanta is regularly involved with industry research, conferences, articles and reports.

Please check www.setantapi.com for the latest information.