

# “Implement! What do you mean, *implement?*”

*By Jim Naro, CustomerCentric Selling® Business Partner*

You're back in your office, having just returned from a morale building, fist-pumping session of sales training with your entire sales team. The question now becomes this: how do you build on the momentum you achieved during the training, ensure that the tactics are used successfully, and get a good return on your investment?

While implementation is not a simple task and may require more of your time now than you'd like to attribute to it, the rewards justify your investment and payback comes much sooner than you would think.

### ***The proof is in the numbers.***

After training his team on CustomerCentric Selling®, I spoke with Michael Richardson who I have worked with in the past and who has implemented sales training several times. He is currently the Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing at an information services company, where he has been since 2002. Here's a sampling of the results he has been able to achieve after six months of implementation:

- When he first joined the company, his sales team was at 60% of quota. After implementing his sales training program, the team's productivity rose to 95% of quota.
- His pipeline (in dollars) grew by 68% and the number of deals grew by 100%, much of which he attributes to his new sales process.
- His top performers were at 75% and 88% of quota initially – they're now at 124% and 122%, respectfully.
- 90% of his team improved their productivity.

Michael's philosophy, much like that of CustomerCentric Selling®, is that unless a company continues to train and manage their business according to the methodology, the initial investment in the training is wasted. The sales force won't accept it as standard operating procedure, they won't use it, and there is no derived benefit.

### ***The benefits start immediately.***

Since Michael has had such great success with sales training methodologies, I asked him what he thought the biggest benefits of implementation are for sales managers. Here are some of his thoughts:

- Once the sales training process is in place, the entire organization is speaking the same language, from sales to marketing to operations to executives. Both sales person and manager speak the same language, providing you with a common ground that allows you to manage more effectively.
- As a manager, you gain much more control over forecasting and sales cycles than you ever had before. You can identify more readily when something will close and your forecasting accuracy increases immensely.
- You can also manage your pipeline better, for both short-term and long-term opportunities. The process that you follow will help your reps qualify better and focus on deals that are “winnable” so the ratio of wins to losses increases.
- Once your sales training has been implemented, a sales manager now has the tools to recognize and head off potential performance issues. If a rep isn't filling a pipeline 90 days out, you can easily recognize that and you won't have any surprises as the sales cycle proceeds. You'll be able to work with the under performing rep and head off potential problems.

You can also determine where your sellers are most productive – whether it's prospecting, qualification, negotiation, proof steps, or closing. Michael discovered by looking at a pipeline report that someone on his team didn't have any experience with closing. He built a great pipeline, but had just passed leads before. Michael was able to work with him to increase his close rate.

Michael feels that implementing the sales training greatly contributed to the success of his company's revenue growth and that tools and processes such as

pipeline management, sales process management, sequence of events letters, and action plans are key. Simply put, Michael said, "It's all about controlling the sales cycle and making it more predictable."

***The best advice: Be relentless!***

I asked Michael what advice he would give fellow sales executives who had just put their people through CustomerCentric Selling® Training or a similar methodology and it was this: *be relentless!* Relentlessly manage your people using this methodology, because if you don't believe in it and if you don't manage your people to the process, they are not going to adopt it. Michael also added that while implementing might be a time consuming task to start, it's well worth it once you're up and running. Moreover, Michael's numbers certainly support that statement.

He also wanted to pass along this thought: make sure you have executive support because things might be worse before they get better. You're going to use this methodology to relentlessly clear out your pipeline and you're going to get a real wake up call. You'll find that there are things in the pipeline that shouldn't be there, but then, you already know that, don't you?

Remember how his pipeline grew? It's almost impossible to achieve those results without full implementation of the methodology. It's worth it in the end and the proof is in the numbers.

***Where should you start?***

If you're ready to implement, here's what I would consider the top 5 things you should kick off right now. They will take a little time, but they're the initial steps that are needed in order to get your people on the road to success.

**1. Territory Reviews**

Start scheduling weekly individual "Territory Reviews" and do this for at least 90 days. Make this an event that no one is exempt from. This is your opportunity to coach your sales people on the "how" to do in order to be successful and not just the "what" to do.

**2. Pipeline Analysis**

Have your reps grade their existing pipeline according to the process steps you are asking them to adopt.

Make sure they take an honest, hard, realistic view. Remember that this is not about being right or wrong, it's about everyone using the same process for selling. This is your opportunity to get them started on speaking a common language.

**3. Identify the Top Opportunities**

Mutually identify the top 5 – 10 opportunities and have your reps prepare tactical plans to convert them to a status in which decision-makers have agreed to evaluate your products and/or services. Use role plays here to help sellers be prepared to ask good questions to identify prospects goals, reasons, solutions, and obtain necessary measurements and metrics.

**4. Document the Process**

Ask your reps to document the results of their sales calls using a Sales Control Letter and a Preliminary or Evaluation Plan. This provides them with a powerful communication tool for keeping in alignment with prospects and gives you something objective to review when coaching the seller on the opportunity.

**5. Create a Development Plan**

Determine the health of each salesperson's pipeline and help them create a business development plan to fill their pipeline to obtain revenue goals.

And lastly, call us. If you get stumped, or need some assistance in implementing, we can help. You've invested wisely in the training and we're committed to seeing you be successful and achieve with numbers just like Michael.

**Jim Naro is an implementation expert dedicated to helping his clients extend their training investment into a successful, revenue-producing working process. You can reach Jim at 603-881-7712 or email him at [jnaro@customercentric.com](mailto:jnaro@customercentric.com)**

