

# Looking for revenue growth:

## —Where is the Sales Department?

Good question. Where *is* the sales department? During the boom of the late 90's you couldn't miss them. With an assured swagger and non-stop chatter of a prize-ring champion, the sales department exuded confidence with a—well, sort of, top-of-the-heap bravado. Why not? Sales revenue rose, forecasts were beaten and pricing held firm. Well, times got tough. So, where did all that swagger and bravado go? How could a little itty-bitty thing like an economic recession bring down such a confident hulking resource?

Customers' finance departments are finally loosing their cost control lock-down. With fingers crossed, new business spending is now awakening.

It's right about now that we need the sales department to get out there and help sell revenue growth. But the sales department is no where to be found. With head count reductions, unrealistic quotas and hostile product managers, the sales department is officially missing in action. Gone is the swagger. Gone is the bravado. Okay, yes, maybe, the high-flying sales people needed to be taken down a notch or two—admittedly a lot of sales volume was function of the economic bubble and not great selling skills. But, harsh criticism and staff reductions have taken their toll. There is nothing sadder than a de-moralized sales department.

Great sales organizations share these traits: pride in their company's products, a keen aspiration to help customers succeed and a positive can-do outlook. Right now, it's hard to find sales departments performing at the top of their game.

But, enough is enough. The sales department needs to get up, shake off the recession blues and start selling. Here is a check list for kick-starting the sales department. 1) Recognize that not all business is good business. Re-organize the sales force around high potential customer segments. 2) Look to the future and not the past. Demonstrate sales leadership and stop whining. 3) Clean up the sales jobs to increase selling time to increase productivity. 4) Tell finance you need additional funding to grow the top line. And, 5) sell to your customers' aspirations—make their success your success.

Oh yeah, a little swagger and bravado would be welcomed right about now.

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