



Revenue BootCamp: Five Drills for Business Success Today

**Debbie Depp, President, the Fenemore Group, and Lee Levitt,
Managing Director, the Acelera Group**

December 2002. Year-end to one of the worst years in recent memory. *Nobody* sold *anything*!

Perhaps this is just a bit of an overstatement. The economy hasn't come to a complete stop, so *somebody* must be selling *something*. To find out how, we convened a group of senior sales and marketing professionals at a recent Revenue BootCamp to ask how they're doing the following:

- Connecting with the "best" prospects
- Communicating the value proposition
- Improving sales performance and productivity

Our goal was to help discover the sales and marketing activities that they could take away and employ immediately...and this group certainly had some great ideas.

If this group was any indication, not everyone is sitting around crying in their tea about the lousy economy. We all know that the best time to invest in a business is when times are tough and competitors have cut way back. A few brave souls are out there plugging away.

This group may be investing in their businesses...but they're not looking to score big...they're simply looking to continue to build a solid base of business through effective sales and marketing activities.

What should I do now?

- **Target fewer prospects.** *Wow* is this counterintuitive, but it works. As you spread yourself more thinly over a broader range of prospects in more verticals, you lose leverage. If you've never dealt with a CIO of a hospital before, how do you establish credibility? On the other hand, if you can cite your experiences with five other hospital installations, you've got a chance of getting them to pay attention.

It's all about the risk/reward tradeoff. Your prospect isn't thinking of you as a product or service provider, but as the potential career-busting decision. Choose wrongly and *they* may lose their job. You just lose a sale or a customer. As you focus you reduce their perceived risk.

Put this strategy to work and you'll find that you're uncovering more prospects that want to talk with you. Do it well and you won't miss the quantities. In the 1990s, successful selling was all about playing the numbers...engage with enough prospects and you'd sell something to someone. Today it's all about quality. Find more ways to touch your ideal prospect on a regular basis.

- **Connect your company's solutions to your customers' business drivers.** More than ever, customers are looking for trusted advisors rather than product hawkers. If you're *selling*, you're losing. If you're asking questions and probing for pain, listening to your customers, you have a chance. Here's a tip – *customers don't care about your product*. They care about the benefits your product offers them. So stop telling them about your product and start asking them what business issues they're facing...done right and they'll assume that you have a solution to their pain.
- **Test, test, test.** Take nothing for granted. One Revenue BootCamp attendee indicated that his company evaluates the performance of the corporate website on a quarterly basis, and over the past year or so has removed a lot of non-essential content. Less is more.

Measure results on a program by program basis. Are you really getting value from your branding campaign, the radio spots on NPR, the visibility at the local trade show, the telemarketing or direct mail campaign? How would you know? Establish a system for tracking the total costs of these programs and the results. Measuring the results will force you to put some good sales processes in place. Sure, selling may be an art, but it needs to be supported with effective processes.

- **Give up the price game.** In this difficult economy, it's "easy" to *try* to win a deal on the basis of price...but even if you do win a deal you lose. You've just positioned yourself as the loss leader. And most of the time the prospect is just playing you against the competition. Let someone else be that sucker.

Few companies can win at the price game...for everyone else it's *differentiation* or *service*. And everyone has to play the same game...we've seen too many instances of companies positioning themselves as the "high-value" provider, and then, out in the field, the sales person is bidding at cost (or below) to win an account.

- **Think outside the box.** In this age of instant complete information, Internet auctions and who knows what else, you have to think about different ways of doing things. We know of one professional services firm that won a good sized contract because they *didn't* return a prospect's initial email inquiry – instead they picked up the phone and established a personal link with the prospect.

A BootCamp attendee described his process of holding a lunchtime “trade show” at their client sites...bringing in their engineers to schmooze with the client's engineers. The end result is deeper customer relationships and the identification of new opportunities...with the cost being not much more than a tank of gas.

Good luck out there...and remember, the economy is only as bad as you think it is. Someone has to sell something...it might as well be you!

For more information on how the Acelera Group (<http://www.aceleragroup.com>) can help you to market your technology product or service offerings, please contact us at 617 737-7100 or at info@aceleragroup.com.