



Notes from Lisa M Cathie  
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### **Networking for a Successful Year-end**

Can you believe there are only five business days left until the holiday season begins? It would be great if we could delay them, but since that's not realistic neither is thinking that most sales teams are going to meet their year-end goals by the end of November.

Employee burnout begins to kick in at this time with goals to meet and higher expectations around the corner. Employees also expect expense budgets to remain flat and their productivity and revenue goals to increase, as well as expecting that their incentive plan will become a little less lucrative for the upcoming year. As a result of managing multiple priorities and simultaneous events coupled with employee vacation and sick time, there aren't many days left for productivity. This is a call to action for management, as now is the time when your sales force needs to be motivated and coached like never before.

Along with their regularly scheduled meeting agenda, employees will be attending holiday and year-end mixers, galas, charitable events, and board and committee meetings. They'll also be out on holiday "visits" or business calls to spread good tidings. Many of them have never been coached in "subliminal marketing" in order to make their networking efforts productive. As a result, tis' the season for time management and effective networking advice.

Here are a few ways to help your team work smart from my Effective Networking Workshop:

- Consumers "buy" based on emotion, which is caused by anxiety. At this time, customers are spending more money than they care to and are worried about their financial future. Coach your employees not to shy away from having a personal conversation with their customers about their money and how they can help them.
- Coach employees to give prospects/customers a "reason," to call them or to accept their meeting. This is a subliminal technique related to an event, topic, or image, set off by a trigger that helps the customer/prospect to remember you later.
- Help your team create a business calling & networking strategy specific to November/December. Do a workshop/conference call, or incorporate this discussion in your one-on-ones.
- Build value and build the partnership: This is the time to reflect and to thank customers for their support of your business. Use the time wisely and ask customers for an appointment so you can reciprocate. You want to sit down with them now to help them plan for 2008 (which may not only help you now, but will provide a productive January). Be sure to use a "contract" concept for the meeting and record the events for follow up in your CRM system.
- Have some fun – keep it simple. Use your environment to enhance the customer experience and promote a good working atmosphere for employees too. Be creative.

A strong finish includes building the pipeline for next year and a strong workforce is what it will take to create and sustain momentum. 2008 should be the "year of the employee," so

performance management, retention issues, productivity, and morale should all be on your key priority list.

Human Capital is underestimated at the VP level and below in most organizations and the area for the greatest opportunity. Investing in Human Capital next year doesn't mean spending an inordinate amount of time and money. It means conducting a needs assessment, further customizing your training program, and teaching managers how to work smart while keeping their sales force motivated.

If you are worried about the competition gaining market share due to contributors that are more difficult to manage, such as: the right product mix and location, keep in mind the most important controllable factor - **good relationship builders**. Don't let the competition "gobble up" your greatest resource – your employees, while they are out there networking on your behalf. Include investing in Human Capital for 2008 by incorporating motivational training, team building, skills-based training, and redefining roles & responsibilities to mirror your organization's goals and objectives. A highly motivated sales force and service delivery team should be a top priority for 2008.

In the interim, I hope that your November networking is productive and rewarding, and wish you a Happy Thanksgiving.

Lisa

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