Building a Platform for Sales Success

Our sales force attended the McCrory & Company workshop about six months ago. We were struggling with several key issues in our sales organization. The first was our inability to communicate our business value—that is, to show that we actually solved a business problem for our customers. We were landing sales with large accounts, but we struggled to understand the REAL reasons customers were buying. Therefore, we were having trouble helping our clients understand the long-term value we had created, which hindered our ability to get repeat business with the client.

Secondly, we were pitching our product on "great ideas,"not on sound business return on investment. This fact, compounded by a poor market and constricting budgets, caused our projected sales to fall through at the last minute. As our proposals moved to the executive suite for approval, they were cancelled, delayed, or shelved because they had no sound reason for moving forward.

The class did not fix the problem—it showed us we had a problem and equipped us with tools to embark on a long adventure fixing it.

Another underlying factor for the fallout was our inability to identify the decision-makers in a prospect organization. Because our proposals lacked business justification, we realized that we were wasting time with people who were evaluating projects from a point of view that did not recognize the biggest reason for the company to buy our product. We needed to shift to selling to decision-makers who agreed up front on the value our service could create for their organization.

Fourth, we struggled as a company to communicate internally, with no common set of terms that would allow Management and Sales to understand where, why, and how we were closing business. We found that Product Development created products based on what *they* thought the client would want. Managers optimistically projected business because they needed to close the business, even though the proposed sales lacked the fundamental business value to have justified that optimism.

After the McCrory & Company class we were able to begin to understand what we were doing wrong. The class did not fix the problem – it showed us we had a problem and equipped us with tools to embark on a long adventure fixing it. Our executive team had several meetings where we identified who we sold to and why. What business problems do we solve for our clients? We mapped this information out in a series of meetings that went until early morning.

We then targeted prospects that fit the criteria we had developed. We looked at contacts and leads who could get us to decision-makers quickly. We crafted our messages to speak directly to the business problems we thought our target prospects might have. After spending a great amount of time analyzing prospects using a tool we learned in the class, we found we were gathering a lot of data for our proposals, which we now call a Business Case.

Our internal meetings are now much more productive. We evaluate all of the prospects against a yardstick of the critical sales cycle milestones. I am proud to say that our pipeline has shrunk, while dramatically improving in quality.

In terms of production, this effort has enabled us to complete several large contracts that have placed the firm 50% ahead of our first quarter sales projections. More importantly, we have built a quality pipeline providing us the confidence to project solid quarters for the rest of the year based on Solution Selling pipeline evaluation criteria.

We are still working on the implementation of the principles we learned in this class. McCrory & Company has helped us to begin to address and solve some key problem areas, and has helped us build a sound platform for the future sales success for our company.