

“ ” OPINION ...on sales

Role reversal in winning sales

I BELIEVE THE ROLE OF THE FIELD SALES person is diminishing.

A lot of their traditional sales activities can today be handled by an internal sales/account handler.

A field-based sales person is an expensive resource and should be targeted at developing new business from customers who have not bought from your business before. Their role is to develop those relationships until they get to a point where they buy from you for the first time. Once they have done so the field sales staff should hand over the customer to the internal teams at the business so that the business can manage and maximise the potential of the customer from that point.

The person who is going to build the strongest relationship with the customer will be the account handler who talks to the customer on a regular basis as the work is progressed. It is the account handler who should be trained to identify and exploit further opportunities with existing customers, not the field-based sales person. If there is a good relationship with the customer the phone is a fantastic communication tool. It is highly cost effective and environmentally friendly.

There are significant implications from this:

- Field sales need to be good at identifying new business, ie hunter gatherers rather than farmers of existing customers.
- I would suggest they are paid more commission on bringing new customers to the business but less on what they then transact subsequently.
- The role of the account manager/client services executive is key to the success of the business. Not only does the business need them to be good handlers of day to day business with good attention to detail, they also need excellent communication skills and the commercial 'nous' to identify and exploit opportunities as they arise. They may well need training and development to do this.

The successful printer in the future will have the best account management and customer service team, not necessarily the best field sales operators.

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