

Modeling the Club's Sales Efforts After Great Sales Companies



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"Everyone Lives By Selling Something!"

Robert Louis Stevenson

What do we really mean by running the club like a business? A previous article (*BoardRoom*, January/February 2014) suggests running each club department the same way, with the same tools and processes – the way the best companies that only deal with that specific discipline (restaurant, sales, merchandising, etc.) are run.

As many clubs have multiple sales functions (membership, tournaments, banquets) long term success is achieved by emulating great sales companies and adapting their successful processes to your club.

And we do so here by looking at characteristics of great sales companies such as Northwestern Mutual, Google, Microsoft, FedEx and Marriott (Selling Power's 50 Best Companies to Sell For).

The criteria for Selling Power's ratings include customer (*member*) growth and retention; hiring and compensation; sales training and enablement, and company (*club*) recognition and reputation.

Customer (*member*) growth and retention: A great sales company provides the tool to manage and monitor the productivity of its sales force. Are you regularly and frequently measuring your membership metrics including, of course, your club's admission, attrition and net change rates, but also all or most of the following as appropriate for your club?

- New prospects contacted and added to prospect file
- Follow-up calls/conversations with existing prospects
- New membership applications and checks received this week
 - Sales closing ratio
 - Time spent selling
 - Networking functions/civic/community events attended
- Member calls to ask for referrals
- Member visits to ask for referrals

- Corporate member calls
- Corporate member visits
- New member orientation
- New member 30 day calls

A great sales company provides tools and systems to manage the customer "pipeline." Sophisticated CRM (customer relation management) tools (web-based CRM software) are available to automate the entire sales process, and a great sales company performs follow up research to constantly measure sales performance.

Hiring and compensation: Great sales companies hire true sales people. True sales people have a different "DNA" and require different "care and feeding." They need to be recharged regularly and suitably compensated through a salary, commission and bonus compensation plan. There should be an opportunity for rewards commensurate with success that exceeds projections.

Is your sales compensation plan in line with your local market – and is it an effective motivator? Are your sales people held accountable for SMART goals? Is your sales team appropriately recognized for its successes?

Sales training and enablement: Great Sales Companies have initial, on-going and refresher training and practice. Memberships in sales training organizations and attendance at relevant sales and marketing seminars and conferences are also provided.

Club recognition and reputation: Can you objectively assess your club's reputation in your market place? How does the community perceive you? Have you measured this in your annual membership survey? What are your sales staff hearing? Can they share negatives without "the messenger being shot?"

Is your club realizing recognition according to your club's brand position? If desired, do you have a mechanism to assure appropriate recognition and publicity?

Great sales companies drive revenue through a variety of sales practices:

- Sales and marketing is viewed as a strength for of the club.
- They understand who they are and the composition of their marketplace.
- They regularly update their brand position statement.
- Their products, pricing and services are competitive with the market and provide a “point of differentiation.”
- They support the efforts of the club to reinforce its “brand.”
- They effectively market all revenue generating areas.
- They use all “social media” appropriately for their unique “brand.”

- They have an effective sales strategy.
- They understand the value of yield management and demand creation.
- They use products and services packages that are in line with the overall strategy of the club for each sales center.
- They perform follow up research to constantly measure their sales performance.

Having your club’s sales department(s) function in the same manner as a great sales company will assure your club’s long-range financial viability. **BR**

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act, others will follow, particularly when those acting are naturally influential. Ideas are more often shared when they are of “Practical Value,” and “Stories” are the medium of remembering. We have a natural tendency to convert information into personal stories, so originating information in story form helps make the information seem more memorable and useful.

MAKE IT INTERESTING

Good communication will address the issues that the reader or listener want in the manner that suits them best. If we’re not communicating about what people are interested in, then they won’t pay attention.

It’s our job to make the message interesting. The member who wants fast, clear information is looking for a tweet or text. If there must be text, give them the ability to choose exactly what they want to read - be specific in the subject line of an email, and utilize STEPPS in concentrated form (maybe only one or two parts are possible in a particular message).

The member who wants information from the newsletter wants to take their time with the information, and may be more interested in the volume of activity. Story creating is important for these longer communications. In either case, the content needs to hit the receiver with information that they need early on, or the receiver will lose interest.

There are many methods for conveying messages in a dynamic and engaging manner. Videos are becoming very

popular for everything from promoting events to teaching members how to repair ball marks.

Videos are exceptional opportunities to be creative and fun, in a short period of time. For old-line clubs, the locker room bulletin boards are the mechanism of choice when it comes to delivery and volume of information.

However, many clubs have advanced to the digital bulletin board, which can update itself automatically, yielding a great volume of messages in a short period of time. GM Toby Tomko at Hickory Hills Country Club in Missouri reported that members were very apprehensive about using digital signage.

But after Signera produced a suitable frame for their display, members were spending several minutes in front of the display, reading about the day’s activities and watching videos on a range of topics. “The members are drawn to that sign every day. We have also recently begun using it the day of a wedding to put a montage of pictures from the bride and groom’s families up scrolling. They love looking at them and their guests love it also. BIG hit!”

When you want something to be memorable, consider the ingredients of STEPPS, and use as many forms of media projection as possible, according to the users’ requirements. Your member may still decide to stay home and watch “Rock of Love,” but at least they’ll remember what you communicated! **BR**

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Report, the latest product of this collaboration, was published in July. The 2014 Compensation and Benefits Report will be released this fall.

In our real-time world with the immediate need for answers and solutions, club management professionals and their clubs have benefited greatly from the evolution of the survey process and reporting. The dynamics

have changed and empowered members to access the data they need any time. **BR**

For more information, please visit www.cmaa.org/surveys.aspx for more information. Sarah Bal is the director of virtual education and research for CMAA. The Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) is the professional Association for managers of membership clubs. CMAA has close to 6,500 members across all classifications. Our manager members operate more than 2,500 country, golf, athletic, city, faculty, military, town and yacht clubs.