

## In hiding?

LOUISE LAVERY explains why every staff member should think like a salesperson...



When it comes down to it, the only discernable difference your customers see between you and your competition is your people. It is vital that you look beyond your sales team to determine who else in your organisation has a key role to play – your 'hidden sales force'. Functions including IT, marketing, and customer service all have valuable contact with customers, but how do you make a happy customer a more valuable customer?

The first step can be getting your hidden sales force to appreciate the impact they can have on a customer relationship. This does not require hard sales techniques but involves showing an active interest in the customer, how they work and why they do things in that way.

By understanding the relative importance of each role within your hidden sales force, key areas for attention and improvement can be identified, such as questioning, fact finding and competitive awareness.

Here are a few TACK suggestions to harness the power of the hidden sales force.

### Tips for sales managers

- Identify who makes up your hidden sales force and understand how they interact with your customers. Who are the most important members and how can you gain their support?
- For major accounts, how can key non-salespeople be incorporated into account planning and development?

### Tips for sales professionals

- Integrate rather than isolate yourself from your internal network. Develop a mindset and attitude towards working with a wide team of people and sharing knowledge
- Share your interest in the customer to make him more real for others, so they understand their 'piece in the puzzle'.

Finally, research reveals that today's customer will only give you approximately 45 minutes to sell the benefits of your product or service. Your customer's time is a precious commodity, and your time is valuable to your business so these tips will help to use this time wisely.

What we are suggesting does not have to involve a complete change programme for the business. The customer will soon get the message loud and clear that you are not only focused on providing a good service but that everyone in your organisation really wants and values his business. ■

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