

Selling in Turbulent Times

by Joe Guertin

Helping Newspapers Become Sales Streetfighters

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WHY ADVERTISE IN TURBULENT TIMES

Whenever there's an economic slowdown, some advertisers run for shelter. I know. I worked with them through several downturns and recessions, and I've seen the result.

Advertisers who cut back out of fear or panic are only likely to cause themselves further harm! **Business Week magazine** has tips from marketing guru Steve McKee for maintaining advertising through tough times. Check it out.

WHERE WILL YOU BE IN SIX MONTHS?

Scenario #1: your sales are off big time! Gloomy faces and a lot of wailing about the economy fill your office. Closed-door management meetings have everyone on edge. Your biggest personal concern is paying bills.

Scenario #2: your sales numbers are up. People around the office are calling you a genius, although there's more than a trace of envy in them. Your biggest personal concern is where you'll go on vacation.

Too extreme? No, it's not. I've seen quite a few average salespeople start to see amazing results when they make some major adjustments to their actions and attitudes. Author Anthony Robbins likes to say *itake massive action* (emphasis on MASSIVE). That means doing *whatever it takes* to grow sales when all signs seem to point down. It might mean making more calls. It might mean asking tougher questions to better understand customer needs. And, while a simple thing like attitude might not seem like it would be a difference-maker, studies show that it does. If you've got a positive mental attitude (real, not contrived), it rubs off on others and has been proven to be subconsciously attractive to other business people. Conversely, doom and gloom people can be a turn-off. Customers and prospects don't want to hear about our problems or worries.

Opportunity is still here, but getting to it requires making changes in mindset and action. You can't sell today like you did one, three or five years ago. Success in turbulent times comes from doing what it takes, not taking what comes along.

LITTLE THINGS HAVE BIG IMPACT

One of the selling traits that will give you traction in turbulent times is one of the simplest. Do the little things that make you stand out from the competition as someone who really cares about customers.

A few examples:

- Send hand-written *thank you notes* after meetings or detailed phone calls
- Send them an article of personal interest
- Remember important dates (birthdays, anniversaries)
- Call and thank an *influencer* after a sale is made

So don't neglect the little things. They'll help you stand out, get noticed and be seen as the kind of hard-working, detail-focused person they *want* to work with!

BUSTING LOOSE IN 2009

Got goals? That's great. Got a specific, day-by-day plan to get there? These days, you have to. Selling isn't what it used to be and big-time success is reserved for Streetfighters, and Streetfighters have a plan!

The Business Plan is an outline, a blueprint that says "here's where we are, here's where we want to go, and here's how we'll get there" step-by-step.

Your plan should start by answering these questions:

- 1) Which accounts will spend with me in 2009, how much will they spend, and what am I doing to assure that?
- 2) Who are my "target prospects" for 2009, what is their potential, and what is my plan for getting in the door?
- 3) How will my time be spent "in the office, on the phone and in the field?"

There's more that goes into a good sales business plan, and we'll cover those elements in the coming weeks because a detailed plan "executed with *imassive action*" (see above) will have a dramatic, positive influence on the new year.

ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

Just had to throw this one in "as a part of their on-going efforts to make us better communicators, the language experts at Oxford came up with the Top Ten Most Irritating Words and Phrases.

Here, for your review and consideration, are the Top 5:

- 5 "with all due respect (great way to start an in-your-face critique)
- 4 "at this moment in time (as opposed to what?)
- 3 "I, personally (as opposed to "who?)
- 2 "fairly unique (it's either unique "or it's not)
- 1 "at the end of the day (don't get me started with that one)

Here are two of my own:

1) "Breaking News" (now a morning news staple) even if it's focused on a cat stuck in a tree). It's got all the impact of a slug of curdled milk.

2) (on a first-time phone call) "How are you today?" (you don't care) and they know it.)

KEEP ON STREETFIGHTING

Finish the month strong and have a great Thanksgiving! In the meantime, let me know if you have any questions, or if I can help your company get off to a strong start in '09.

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