

Sales Execution Schizophrenia - Juggling a Diverse Product Mix Effectively © - Jim McLean

Healthcare sales and marketing executives and managers are increasingly finding themselves carrying a wider and deeper bag. Within the bag may be a mix of disposable, lower priced reusable, capital purchases, and service contracts. More and more of us are finding ourselves responsible for the success of a product line where the individual components of the line have different decision makers, decision influencers, and are purchased within the context of very different customer decision making strategies.

This results in a nightmare for all those from the newest salesperson to the most seasoned senior manager.

As a result, the following concerns are commonly heard:

“I have some reps that are good in capital sales, some who are good at disposable sales, but very few who are achieving sales targets in both categories.”

“My sales team is shying away from selling our new product because they break out in hives at the thought of explaining the software, or carrying on a conversation with IT.”

“I am struggling with the relative coverage emphasis to put on hospitals, clinics and physician practices.”

“Our service contract business is not meeting expectations. Our reps seem to have trouble selling an intangible item.”

“Morale is suffering because our reps find it difficult to make their number in all categories.”

When a company is faced with juggling diverse selling circumstances due to product line diversity, here are some questions to ask:

“Have we really examined how the nature of each of our products impacts on the best way to promote them?”

“Have we identified the specific sales processes and behaviors that are required of the sales force to achieve success in each of the categories in which we participate?”

“Have we effectively communicated to the sales team the processes they must follow, by product category, in order to succeed with each?”

“Have we educated our sales team about new call points so that they will feel comfortable in approaching and engaging them?”

“Are our people flexible enough to utilize two or more selling approaches in order to succeed in all categories?...If not, do we need to create specialist sales functions to handle different product categories within our line?”

“Have we considered that the beliefs and behaviors our sales force has learned in selling successfully within one category may actually get in their way within another?”

“Have our hiring criteria and job descriptions been updated to take into account the changes in our selling environment and product offering?”

“Do we need to divest ourselves of certain product lines in order to avoid diffusing our efforts?”

There are no easy answers to these questions. The answers will be different for every organization. However, failure to ask the questions and inaction in acting on the answers is a recipe for continued failure in those categories which are not performing, and a hindrance to optimizing success in those which are.

Once the answers appropriate for a company’s business situation and resources are determined, the following actions are necessary to achieve in all product categories:

- Revise the hiring profile for new representation
- Revise the job descriptions of each function on the sales team
- Develop specific objectives, methods and measurements of success for each product category to drive sales activity and promote accountability
- Develop customized training that identifies the selling system and behaviors most appropriate for each product category
- Establish line sales manager competency in coaching each selling system
- Create an incentive system that rewards for sales achievement across the product line

Succeeding in multiple product categories is difficult, but not impossible. It requires in-depth situational analysis, precise planning and a flexible sales team to implement the plans

Jim McLean
Consultant
Resource Management International, Inc.
Dallas Office:
5808 McKinley Lane
Richardson, Texas 75082
USA
Tel.: 972-918-0763
E-mail: jmcldal@aol.com
Website: www.4rmi.com

©Copyright Resource Management International, Inc. 2005