

PETER STARR suggests five post-covid questions salespeople should now put to themselves

The coronavirus crisis has changed the world in a way that few people could ever have predicted. Not one business will be unaffected by it. Some will be winners, some will have holes in their profit margins and will pull through, some will be gone forever. But the challenge that remains for salesforces across the world is the same as before the crisis. Sales is the lifeblood of every single commercial organisation. Sales, with marketing, attracts, engages and gains commitment from existing and new clients who pay the money that enables our businesses to survive and thrive.

And in the world that emerges from this pandemic, more responsibility than ever will bear down on sales functions.

With this responsibility will come extra scrutiny. From frontline sales staff to the senior sales leader, there will be renewed targets, more activity and interrogation of KPIs, and quite possibly less resource to do the job. There may well be restructuring, job uncertainty and lower than expected salaries or commissions.

Yet you will still be expected to turn up, put a big effort in and hit some big numbers. The fact you are reading *Winning Edge* suggests you are serious about selling, and up for the challenges ahead. If so, here are five questions you must ask yourself:

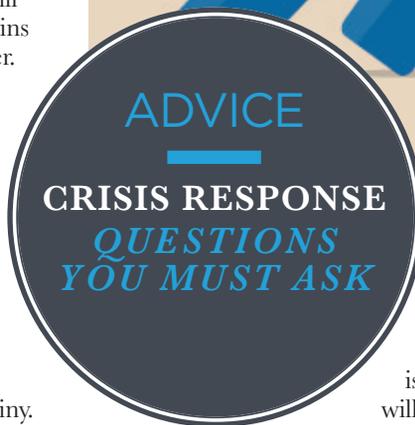
1. WHERE IS MY ENERGY DIRECTED?

Fundamental to sales success is motivation and mindset, which drives our personal energy. Are you recharged from enforced lockdown and ready to go? Or are you in a pattern of long lie-ins, short working days and extended Xbox play?

Get yourself mentally prepared and excited about the path ahead. It will be tough going for sure, but it will also be laden with potential financial and career success if you are ready. Review your personal “energy management” so that you can deliver the sales activity you need at the peak of your energy within the day.

2. WHAT ARE THE HANDFUL OF KEY TASKS I MUST DO EVERY DAY?

Consistently solid sales performers are consistently solid in their good professional habits. These will be individual and super-aligned to what drives their goal performance. It may be around prospecting, networking, KPI activity or personal mental and physical health. So, ask yourself what the four or five tasks are that, if you complete them properly, mean you will have a great day?



3. WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY CUSTOMERS?

Now is the time to get really close to your customers and show empathy. Are they an essential service that has been maxed out and is exhausted? Have they been on furlough and will return to normality relatively quickly? Are they in a desperate situation with uncertainty about the existence of their business? Understand their world and then ask yourself...

4. HOW CAN I HELP?

Social focus is on helping and togetherness, rather than greed and selfishness. A bullish sales approach may lead you to lose that customer forever and earn you a bad reputation too. Get your messaging and intent right to build trust and long-term credibility. Don't assume they won't buy anything and therefore not even ask, but be considerate, supportive and authentic in your messaging and intent, and you will get the right balance.

5. WHAT'S OUR MARKETING MESSAGE?

Sales and marketing too often work in silos. Now is the time to ensure alignment between your personal messaging and the company marketing message. Your customer may be in a world of uncertainty and turmoil, with a huge amount of noise in the business media with differing advice and choices to “come out of this stronger”. Give the customer clarity, certainty and confidence in your product or service approach by re-enforcing your value proposition through all channels.

To summarise, the companies and salespeople who come out of this crisis best will be those who are agile and adaptable to their customers' needs. They consistently understand their customers' world and clearly align their products and services to the customers' needs in the here and now. Doing what you've always done may not be enough. Rethink your sales approach and strategy and help ensure your organisation is one that thrives.



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