

# Forget Your Title & Focus on the Job

*Learn Why Job Descriptions are Secondary—  
What Matters is Selling and Making a Profit*

Somewhere along the line we got sidetracked into believing we had to focus on our profession. We forgot what people such as engineers, scientists, accountants, product managers, vice presidents, lawyers, technical/customer support personnel and even presidents were supposed to do. We got so wrapped up in our own status in the organization, our own feeling of self-importance, our title; we forgot what our real job was—selling products and services and making a profit. That means:

- When a customer problem or question comes to you, you try to answer it. Or if you can't, you go directly to the people who can provide the answer to ensure the customer gets assistance and a satisfactory answer.
- When a phone call or e-mail (internal or external) comes in, you return the call or respond within an hour if at all possible. Or you ensure someone else handles the query if you are on the road. You leave no query unanswered before you leave the office at the end of the day.
- You spend at least 10 to 15 percent of your time with your field sales force calling on customers and/or prospects to find out why they purchased or didn't—your company's products/services and what they like/dislike.
- You visit the dealers that sell your products/services to see how your promotional materials and the products, as well as your competitors' are presented.
- You talk about your projects, programs, activities with senior management and staff in terms of market response/reaction, impact

and sales.

- You time your product announcements and rollouts so they coincide when the product/service will actually be available—in a solid form for sale.
- You spend time trying to determine what the customer wants, needs, and not what you think you want to design, produce and ship.

If you think that those things are not your area of responsibility or your concern, you are wrong! Selling, being responsible and being responsive is your "total" job.

## Losing Touch

A recent report we read on e-customer relations made us realize we are losing touch with our real job. It is little wonder that customers business and consumer dislike the buying process so much. It made us realize that the companies that are just a little bit better focused on the selling (and support) process produce better results and often it doesn't take that much to be a lot better.

In the late 70s and early 80s, Buck Rogers of IBM was the epitome of the salesman's salesman. His consistent uniform—dark blue suit, white shirt, red tie and red pocketchief may seem a little dated today, but the fundamentals he preached and practiced are as sound today as they were back then.

In his mind everyone in the organization was a sales person. The janitor, the engineer, the lawyer, the PR person, the lab rat, the installation/service technician were all part of the IBM sales team.

The Internet didn't change that. The customer support department didn't change that. The specialties didn't change that. However, our feeling of the importance of specialization and departmentalization and compartmentalization changed that focused customer approach.

The e-Gain customer relations study mentioned earlier, polled 300 U.S. and Canadian companies in various market sectors. The inquiries to the companies (sent as e-mails) expressed a keen intent to buy one of their high-value products or services. The study found:

- 41 percent of the companies never responded.
- 39 percent sent an answer within 24 hours.
- 15 percent sent an acknowledgement that they had received the inquiry.
- 17 percent responded with an accurate, complete answer.
- 6 percent didn't have an email contact.

## Your Role

Don't shrug off the figures by saying "well that is the sales department for you." Rewrap the inquiries in terms of the inquiries you receive. Do you think the results would have been any different? Does your company list easy-to-find key company contact information on its website, direct e-mail addresses or 24-hour phone numbers? Do you answer every inquiry even from suppliers, prospects or customers halfway around the globe that have nothing to do with your area of responsibility? Do you follow-up to make certain they are supported properly?

*"Selling is cool. Selling is fun. Selling is good for your company's long-term success and profitability. It is as true for engineering, accounting, legal, product planning, marketing, accounting, manufacturing and public relations as it is for the sales department."*

Ask yourself, do you treat e-mails like paper mail, handle it once, handle it immediately, take the appropriate action and move on; view incoming e-mail as talking to a person face to face; respond promptly and courteously; or do you simply ignore the individual?

If you answered no to most of these questions you are not doing your job. You might think that sales is not part of your job, but it is a major part of your daily responsibilities on the job and even at home.

For example, you might have taken a technical jargon and put it into words ordinary people could understand; advised your management what the ramifications might be of some policy or program you didn't feel was in the best interest of the company's reputation or future; explained the reasons for an aggressive product launch with your marketing and communications department; pitched and negotiated a better price and delivery schedule with a supplier; made a presentation to engineering (or marketing) on a new product or service you wanted to see added to your product offering; or even convinced your spouse that buying a new HDTV was a wise move.

For the most part, if you are good in your chosen field or profession you are selling all the time. You are selling your ideas, words, ability to look at problems and opportunities from every angle and your reputation.

Some of you could be uncomfortable with this, then don't call what you do selling. Instead, call it persuading, influencing and negotiating. Then wrap it all with a superb title. But understand the basics of solid sales efforts. That way you can get others to adopt your point of view or idea, get them to respect or agree with your opinion so they can help you achieve what is best for your company, its products/services and the market at large.

### Final Words

Buck Rogers mantra is as true today as it was in the early 80s. Selling is cool. Selling is fun. Selling is good for your company's long-term success and profitability. It is as true for engineering, accounting, legal, product planning, marketing, accounting, manufacturing and public relations as it is for the sales department. **WQP**



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