

Turn Your Call Center into a Sales Center

By Randall McKee

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Let's assume increased sales are the first priority for your company, compared to customer acquisition. Let's agree that your call center agents care for your customers. Let's also agree that your "Average Order Value" (AOV) could use a lift. Finally, let's agree that your customers are willing to spend more because they love your products and services. They like you.

Unless you have a boiler room full of sales junkies, increasing AOV can be a challenge. Why? Because, if we're honest, we have to admit that many veterans are burned out and new hires are tentative at best to up-sell or cross-sell, not having gained the confidence that comes with time and familiarity. Here are some ideas to get your new sales efforts started:

For upper management:

- **Administrators need to provide sales leaders with the tools agents need to succeed:** Train them if they don't know how to sell, and create offers for your consumers to make the sales easier.
- **Administrators need to both show and tell all staff members why increased sales matters:** Don't scare them with financial issues, but let agents know how increased sales will benefit the entire company and them as well.
- **Make sure your sales leaders are motivated:** Performance-based incentive given in a timely fashion makes leaders sing; if they don't grab on to it, they are not your sales leaders.
- **Deliver a new culture and re-brand your sales force:** Make sure they understand that this is not a "project" with a finite ending; this increased sales effort is a new direction for the company. "We always have a special offer" is your new battle cry.

For the call center:

- **Hold monthly sales meetings to set and discuss sales goals:** Explain not only *what* but also *how* sales goals fit with corporate goals; for example, "If we can do *this*, it will mean *that* to the company."
- **Hold weekly product interaction sessions to build confidence in the entire line of options:** Knowing the options makes up-selling and cross-selling natural from a suggestive approach.
- **Post sales results by agent ID daily:** No names, please; instead, allow your agents to set personal goals. As nonconfrontational competition sets in, show and trend the results over each month.
- **Use financial and/or non-compensation incentives weekly to make reward timely and relative to efforts:** Don't just consider individual and team competition; try a quarterly "all hands" bonus when overall goals are met.
- **Support your strugglers with timely call monitoring and coaching:** Point out where opportunities were missed while this is still fresh in your agents' minds, and help them set specific goals; they will be rewarded when improvement shows.

Aside from increased sales, what you will gain is variable, but you may learn who does not fit into your organization. You might learn what your customers really want from you, and you'll hopefully find out what is most important to your company.

Before you start any effort toward increased sales, make sure you have an incentive structure that works for your company, and set aside resources to ensure that they are delivered as promised. Make sure your corporate goals are realistic and attainable and that everyone has a full understanding of the program before its launch.

I'll never forget the manager who ran up to me and handed me a fifty-dollar bill on my first sale, and he'll never forget his manager who made sure he had that fifty in his pocket!

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