

Preparing Sales Professionals for the NEW Economy...

By Ernie Chen

Whether we like it or not, the emerging new economy will not be controlled by physical assets which is used to determine wealth in the old economy. It is no longer those who own more land that matters, but those who possess knowledge and intellectual capital. An example of intellectual capital is the human capital, where knowledge resides. The question is: Will our sales force be ready for such challenges? Will they survive in a competitive economy? What do the new organizations look for in sales professionals?

Globalization waits for no man and survival is on how competitive you are and the organization you belong to. The difference lies on how innovative and creative your organization is and how they manage intellectual capital to enhance sales targets to ensure the competitive advantage.

Traditional selling is no longer enough and let alone our sales management that is yet to encourage creativity in their approach. Many organizations are challenged to produce creative customer focused sales professionals who can contribute to organizations of the new economy. Students graduating with a basic degree are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of customers. One needs to be equipped with the 4 key skills and competencies of a customer focused sales professional to compete favorably in the market place. This will be the differentiating competitive advantage for sustainable growth for any organization and the sales professional himself or herself. A sales professional's value will be determined by how well he or she leverages on these core competencies and skills sought after by such organizations.

Customer focused organizations will look for sales professionals who have the ability to think strategically, is creative, has knowledge responsibility and has a solution focused mindset. The focus of sales professionals in the new economy is to develop the "Know-What", "Know-How", "Know-Why" and "Care-Why" to exceed customer delight. A forward thinking organization will prepare their customer focused sales professionals to have in depth knowledge (Know-What) of the products and services in which they sell. In addition, the customer focused sales professionals will be trained on the advanced skills (Know-How) required to further enhance their relationship selling skills. Many organizations succeed in providing the knowledge and skills required to sell that are externally driven. However, these are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the new economy. The customer focused sales professionals must be internally driven to have a positive attitude (Know-Why) and habitual practices (Care-Why) to excel in their respective industries.

The new challenge has begun for individuals and organizations to embrace the customer focused sales environment.