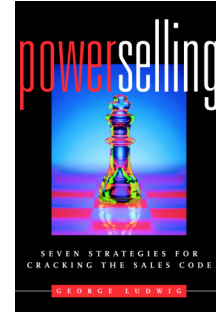


For Immediate Release

For more information
or an interview with George Ludwig,
please contact Dottie DeHart,
DeHart & Company Public Relations,
at (828) 325-4966 or DSDeHart@aol.com.



The Fourth Quarter Fix for Frantic Sales Managers: Three Strategies to Help You Turn Around a Losing Game (and Save Your Own Hides)

Anxious about making your sales numbers before the end of 2008? Don't be. Sales strategy and peak performance expert George Ludwig lays out some strategies for helping your team hit your revenue goals before the clock runs down.

Chicago, IL (September 2008)—The fourth quarter is here, and it's a time that makes most sales managers anxious even in a good year. Factor the tumbling economy into the mix, and anxiety morphs into sheer terror and panic. No wonder. If you're behind on your numbers as you enter the first quarter—and if achieving your company's revenue goal by year-end is mandatory for your organization and your own survival—you rightly realize that the next few months are “make it or break it” time. But according to sales strategy and peak performance expert George Ludwig, it's not too late to turn things around.

“Sales leaders, like football coaches whose teams are behind at the start of the fourth quarter, must retool if they want to win the sales revenue game,” says Ludwig, author of *Power Selling: Seven Strategies for Cracking the Sales Code* (Kaplan Publishing, ISBN: 0-7931-8571-8, \$19.95). “Managers must adapt to the current economic downturn and find the smartest route to score big and score fast.”

Ludwig likes to cite the dramatic turnaround in what was hyped as the biggest NFL regular season game of 2007. The New England Patriots were trailing the Indianapolis Colts 20-10 with only four minutes left on the clock, but coach Bill Belichick and the rest of the Patriot team were able to turn things around by scoring two touchdowns, which brought them a well deserved 24-20 victory. If the Patriots can do it, he insists, so can your sales team.

“Sales leaders can also turn things around, score big in the fourth quarter, and win the revenue game even if the scoreboard shows you’re losing by a big margin, if you focus, drill, and deliver in three fundamental areas,” says Ludwig. “One, make sure your sales team has a positive psychological mindset. Two, laser focus how and where your team will spend their scarcest resource: time. And finally, coach your team to skillfully execute the critical sales ‘best practices’ necessary to still win the game.”

Q4 Quick Save Strategy #1: Make Believers Out of Them

- **Give salespeople your best “I have a dream” speech.** Pull everyone together (in person is best, but use the phone if necessary) and talk from the heart about your belief that the game can still be won. This is where you must convince people that you can lead them to victory. Your speech must highlight all the specific company and marketplace beliefs that are necessary for success. This speech doesn’t need to be more than ten minutes long, but it must speak to the emotions and values of the team in a way that fosters commitment.
- **Reinforce the message with some one-on-one coaching.** “Sales managers must encourage individual salespeople to kick some serious booty and take no prisoners in their pursuit of business,” says Ludwig. “Look for the good in your salespeople, catch and reward them doing things right, and keep the fourth quarter a period when people feel absolutely superb about themselves.”
- **Fire them up—but don’t fire them.** If you have a salesperson (or people) whose performance is dismal, don’t get rid of him or her (or them) just yet. Plan to take the issue up in the first quarter of 2009 and don’t discuss it at all during the fourth quarter. Right now you *must* keep the positive energy at a peak level and have your salespeople as emotionally committed as possible in order to stack the deck in your favor so the company can sell, sell, sell in Q4.

Q4 Quick Save Strategy #2: Be a Time Management Master

- **Sort out their selling funnels and create a short list.** Ludwig says the sales management team, with the involvement of their salespeople, must evaluate each individual’s sales funnel at the beginning of Q4 to determine which opportunities he or she should pursue. Come up with a short list by looking at factors like:
 1. What’s the size or profitability of the sale?
 2. What’s a realistic evaluation of where the potential sale is in the sales process and the probability of closing it by year-end?
 3. What resources and actions are necessary to close the sale by year-end?
 4. Are there any specific adverse customer behaviors as a result of economic conditions that may preclude them from being a hot-targeted prospect?
 5. Are there any previous buying patterns the target has demonstrated as it relates to price, value, and purchasing urgency that might affect the opportunity?

“Once the short list of opportunities for every seller has been developed, have your salespeople prepare a brief strategy position (an assessment of where you are in the process) for each of the opportunities included on their short list of targets,” advises Ludwig.

- **Aim for the fruit closest to the ground.** Consider a Q4 selling promotion targeted toward your current customers. In hard economic times, customers want to make safe choices with their limited funds, so they look to companies and products they know and trust. This is a good time for the sales department and marketing to team up and offer one or more specific price promotions targeted to hit the sweet spot of your current customers who are in the best position to purchase by year-end. It also costs less and is considerably faster to sell to existing customers than it is to acquire new ones.
- **Grease the skids with quick communiqués.** One way to save precious time in Q4 is to reach out to your customer and prospect database, especially your identified targets, using a variety of time-saving communication tactics. Email, snail mail, faxes, and telephone will all complement your direct sales efforts and keep you top of mind, which is extremely helpful when trying to close business as quickly as possible.

Q4 Quick Save Strategy #3: Coach 'Em Relentlessly

- **Stick to your salespeople like glue.** Now is not the time to let salespeople fly free, insists Ludwig. Instead, the entire sales management team (C-Level too) should be co-traveling and coaching salespeople right up until year-end. They should be there not only to encourage salespeople, but to also make sure that the company’s specific sales “best practices” are being executed with the customer at every interaction. “Coach and teach salespeople to improve key skill sets and you’ll help make sure every sales call ends with as positive an outcome as possible,” he says. “Sometimes this involves a diplomatic intervention to help advance a sale that would otherwise be stalled or stopped.”
- **Help them cut reluctant prospects loose.** If you think a salesperson is courting someone who probably isn’t going to sign on the dotted line this year, it’s up to you to help him or her disqualify the target. Salespeople are by nature optimistic and so it often takes a gentle, caring sales coach to nudge them to move on to another target with a greater probability of closing in Q4.
- **Keep the “best practices” checklist in front of your salespeople.** The “best practices” sales managers should focus on when they co-travel and coach salespeople vary from one company to the next. Still, says Ludwig, the following list outlines the most common “best practices” necessary for accelerating an individual sales opportunity as rapidly as possible toward closure:
 1. Is this really an *ideal target* for Q4 closure?
 2. Has the salesperson done the “due diligence” to be prepared for advancing this target to closure in Q4?
 3. Has the salesperson identified all key buying influences?
 4. In complex selling environments, has the salesperson cultivated a customer “coach” or “champion”?

5. Has the salesperson identified the pain or desire for gain the target is experiencing to a degree that closure can be facilitated within 90 days?
6. Is the salesperson prepared to open every sales call in a customized manner for each target that will generate curiosity and create a desire by the target to want to advance the sales process toward closure?
7. Does the salesperson have a list of well thought out questions designed to expand the relationship, establish credibility, diagnose the pain, and advance the sales process leading toward a Q4 closure?
8. Does the salesperson present and prescribe the product or service benefits in a way that leads to mental and emotional buy-in by the target?
9. Does the salesperson present and prescribe the product or service in a way that creates a sense of urgency by the target to proceed?
10. Does the salesperson repel and overcome objections in a way that doesn't delay the sales process?
11. Does the salesperson always seek commitment and closure to advance the sale to the next logical step?
12. Did the salesperson get the purchase order, sale, contract, etc.?

“The bell is about to sound for the fourth quarter, and sales revenue touchdowns and a game victory are both doable, even in this recessionary economy,” insists Ludwig. “In fact, there’s something about having a tight deadline that energizes people and helps them focus. Good salespeople love a challenge. Harness their competitive spirit and channel it in the right way and you’ll be amazed by what your team can accomplish by 2009.”

###

About the Author:

George Ludwig is a recognized authority on sales strategy and peak performance psychology. An international speaker, trainer, and corporate consultant, he is currently the president and CEO of GLU Consulting. He helps clients like Johnson & Johnson, Abbott Laboratories, Northwestern Mutual, CIGNA, and numerous others improve sales force effectiveness and performance.

Though it's George's strategies and processes that help corporations increase productivity and performance, it's his tremendous energy and dynamism that spark the transformation. Again and again, clients remark on his amazing ability to unleash human capacity and inspire men and women to break out of their comfort zones. The result is a whole new type of salesperson.

His customized presentations teach achievers to make stunning advances in their lives. From helping salespeople realize cherished dreams to helping corporations exponentially accelerate revenue streams, George Ludwig leaves audiences and individuals empowered, emboldened, and clamoring for more.

George is the best-selling author of *Power Selling: Seven Strategies for Cracking the Sales Code* and *Wise Moves: 60 Quick Tips to Improve Your Position in Life & Business*. He's also a columnist and frequent contributor to *Entrepreneur magazine*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *Selling Power*, and numerous business radio programs. Having gained a reputation as a thought leader in his industry, he is frequently interviewed for trade publications and newspapers.

About the Book:

Power Selling: Seven Strategies for Cracking the Sales Code (Kaplan Publishing, ISBN: 0-7931-8571-8, \$19.95) is available at bookstores nationwide and from all major online booksellers.

Kaplan Publishing, a Kaplan Professional Company, is the nation's premier trainer and information provider for business and financial leaders committed to profiting from breakthrough ideas. Kaplan Professional provides licensing and continuing education training, certification, professional development courses, and compliance tracking for financial services, legal, IT, and real estate professionals and corporations. Kaplan Professional is a unit of Kaplan, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of The Washington Post Company (NYSE: WPO).

For more information, please visit www.georgeludwig.com.