

Greater Philadelphia Economy Gaining Momentum – Be Part of the Comeback with a Healthy New Business Pipeline

By Vincent Scire, vice president of Greater Philadelphia, Xerox

Experts expect the Greater Philadelphia region to begin an economic recovery in the upcoming months – meaning the time to prepare your business for a rebound is now. According to Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Rob Wonderling, Philadelphia is in the midst of several initiatives that will ensure a robust recovery, and a recent report of the leading indicator for Greater Philadelphia points to recovery during the final months of 2009.

Local customers may begin to see a return to the positive as momentum gathers, but hard times will be fresh in their memories and cost saving priorities will not disappear overnight. In addition to delivering reliable solutions that save, sales representatives need to provide an excellent customer experience to create a trusting environment for current and new clients.

There are many ways to provide outstanding customer service, so sales departments need to find ways to connect with clients and prospects on several different levels. Below are tips to keep your business pipeline healthy by differentiating your organization from the competition:

Go above and beyond selling a product or service.

While selling products and services is essential to an organization's bottom line, there is more to a company than just what is sold. Core issues, such as sustainability and corporate social responsibility, make up the culture of a business. Give your organization a personality, so your customers can relate to you and identify on similar issues.

How do you find out what issues are important to your customers? Just ask. It is a simple question to show you care about their overall business goals. If customers are interested in creating a more environmentally friendly workplace, talk to them about what your organization is doing on this front and how you can help them achieve this objective.

Continue to innovate.

“Why avoid financial bankruptcy only to face technological bankruptcy down the road?” Those are words from the CEO of Xerox and ones we uphold throughout our sales organization every day. Despite the economic slowdown in technology spending, investing in the ongoing development and creation of products and services will attract the attention of current customers who are looking for more efficient and cost-effective technology. Cutting-edge technology also will differentiate your organization from competitors when potential clients are evaluating vendors. Being stagnant in your offerings not only hinders ongoing communication with customers, but stifles the drive of your sales force that thirsts for creative and exciting technology to discuss with clients.

Communicate in new ways.

The way the workforce communicates is changing. With the prevalence of social networks in the enterprise such as LinkedIn, Instant Messenger, and Twitter, sales organizations must be able to reach younger and more tech-savvy customers and prospects through these channels. For example, by joining relevant groups on LinkedIn that discuss key technology or social issues in your market, you will learn about industry events going on where you can network with prospects while building relationships with other industry enthusiasts through online conversations.

With the disparity of ages within an organization's sales force, ranging from Baby Boomers to Generation Yers, it is important to communicate with everyone in your organization about the tools outside of traditional e-mail and phone calls to interact with customers.

Deliver on what you say you will.

It seems obvious a vendor should uphold the terms of customer contracts and service level agreements, but too often this is not the case. Many sales organizations get caught up in the sale and then fall short on the delivery. While it is important to realize a customer relationship constantly is evolving and needs adjustments along the way, achieving results is key to success for all parties.

By having an excellent client delivery model within your organization, you can leverage customer success stories and engage current customers as references with prospects.

Maintain a positive attitude among your employees internally.

All of these tips can only be successful if you have an internal culture that motivates the sales force. By creating a positive sales environment through a positive attitude from management toward employees, ongoing training and career development opportunities, and recognition for high performance, your organization will be able to appreciate and support the company's new business efforts.