

# On The Mark

Marks & Associates Specialists in Training and Marketing Consulting For Financial Services Firms

Sales and Marketing Ideas That Work

Issue 2 - 3

## If Your Sales Training Is Really Good, Why Aren't You Selling More?

Ten of the most common mistakes in sales training are presented below. Sales training is expensive in terms of time and budget. It is important to get it right the first time.

### 1. You can learn to sell by watching someone else.

Skills are mastered by practice, not by example. The difference is grounded in understanding that training is not education. Education teaches new material. Training changes behavior patterns. Without practice . . . face-to-face role-playing . . . it is almost impossible to obtain the skills necessary to be successful in the real marketplace. The focus must be on actual performance, not just classwork. A trainer's commitment and involvement must extend beyond the primary classroom instruction.



### 2. You can learn how to sell by watching video tapes.

Think about the last time you had to sit through a series of video tapes. How long did it hold your attention? The world's record is about 15 minutes. Video tapes can be an effective means of teaching new material. In other words, they are good at education, but not training. Without having an expert instructor present to correct errors on the spot, there is not much hope of changing people's behavior patterns or helping them to see how they might have taken advantage of a particular situation.

### 3. You can learn how to sell by listening to product or operations managers talk about their products.

The world's record for a salesperson staying awake in a product session is around 30 seconds. Not even as long as the video tapes is it? Product and operations managers know their stuff. In fact, that is the problem. They are so enthusiastic about teaching all the details about their products that the sales staff "zone out" almost immediately. Sales people need to know how to sell the products, not every detail of how they work. The product training you give

a sales person is very different from what you would give anyone else.

### 4. Sales technique is sales technique, and a good instructor does not have to have a "real business" background in order to be able to teach your staff how to sell.

Business is very detailed and can be complex with its own thought processes, quirks and language. If an instructor has not sold in real-life situations for many years, there is no real hope that they are going to relate to your people. Worse, they will not be able to gain their respect.

### 5. Giving your people a good two-day session will set them on the right course and "you can take it from there."

Training is about learning new skills and the only way to master new skills is to keep working with the material and learning more about the process. No trainer can teach enough in a two-day session to change your staff into good salespeople. Training must be on-going. A good trainer has a series of courses and practice sessions that build on each other and help mold the sales staff over a long period of time. By spacing the courses out over time, you give the staff the chance to practice what they have learned before moving on to new issues and skills.



### 6. You don't need to role-play. People get enough practice calling on live prospects, and that is a more realistic situation.

No med student begins by trying to actually operate on live patients. You must practice inside the firm, and when you are ready - that is, you have learned your products and their benefits, then you go after live "patients." People complain that they do not like role-playing. They feel awkward and say that it is not like real life. They often claim that they do much better on real calls. Think about that for a second. The reason they do not like it is because it tends to show their weaknesses and errors. They are NOT better in the real

Marks & Associates

E-mail: [larrymarks@earthlink.net](mailto:larrymarks@earthlink.net) Web: [www.larrymarks.com](http://www.larrymarks.com)

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marketplace, it is simply that no one other than the prospect sees them screw-up. The place to correct errors is in the classroom or during a coaching session where the only thing spent is time, not a good prospect.

### **7. My people can learn by watching me sell on joint calls. They don't need a classroom setting.**

It is true that during a joint sales call a manager might catch a subordinate in an error or missed opportunity. However, by the time the call is over and the manager can finally discuss it with the salesperson, the moment is lost and the salesperson likely does not remember the issue. Selling in front of your boss is not a low pressure activity. It is scary, and most people are not at their best the first dozen times they try it. Role-playing before the call raises the same issues and allows the manager or trainer to stop the role play to give corrective advice. Besides, who do you think does the majority of the talking on a joint call? The boss or the subordinate? Is this really an opportunity for the subordinate to learn?

### **8. "My door is always open. If they need help, they will come to me."**

Are you surprised at how seldom anyone comes to you for help? One of the reasons managers tend to shy away from working with their subordinates is that they are afraid that they will expose their own weaknesses. Another is that they may not have the coaching skills to really help. A good trainer understands this and develops methods to allow everyone to learn in a safe environment.



### **9. I am a good sales person and as the manager I don't need to sit through the training.**

This statement is the equivalent of telling your people that the training is really not all that important. You are either committed to selling more or you are not. You cannot talk about a sales or marketing culture without having every manager attend. Classes can be set up with peer groups or with a vertical orientation across job titles, depending on the individual situation, but the managers must attend.

### **10. We are using a training firm and are happy with them.**

That's great, but are you getting the sales results you hoped for and are your senior people learning the management skills they need? Berl Ives once said, "Friends are not necessarily the people you like the most, they are simply the ones that got there first." That can be the case with training companies as well. Are your trainers meeting your current needs? Are they bringing you fresh ideas and showing you how to improve your sales or do they simply execute programs designed by others?

## **Marks & Associates**

Is a consultative sales training and marketing consulting firm specializing in customer-focused programs that maximize a bank's ability to attract and hold highly profitable business. Led by Larry A. Marks, a pioneer in the field of bank training and professional marketing, Marks & Associates uses real-world banking knowledge, sales experience and marketing expertise to develop sales training and marketing programs that get results -- fast!

Marks & Associates takes a consultative, diagnostic approach with all seminars. We believe that consultative selling and marketing are more than simply the art of persuasion. A consultative approach aims at convincing people or organizations to solve their problems by focusing on the product benefits that are most attractive to them, not the sales person.

We show bankers how to use problem-solving techniques to uncover, investigate and solve a company's needs and problems. This approach works with both credit and non-credit products, and puts the banker and prospect in the position of partners rather than in the more adversarial buyer-seller roles.

Marks & Associates offers sales training programs that are customized to your bank's products, sales force and marketplace. Our seminars include Consultative Selling, Building and Managing Key Relationships, Sales Management, Negotiation Skills, Cash Management, Presentation and Proposals, and Trade Show Selling. In addition, we develop new seminars to meet our clients specific training needs, and design multimedia applications to support our training activities.

It takes a well-developed, comprehensive marketing strategy, including product packaging, materials design, direct marketing, advertising, public relations, multimedia applications, trade show selling, sales management as well as sales training, to maximize a bank's ability to attract and retain customers. We use our banking knowledge and marketing expertise to help your bank put that whole package together.

At the strategic level, Marks & Associates helps you assess your bank's strengths and weaknesses, set marketing goals and objectives, and develop strategies and tactics that support those goals. Tactically, we work with you to design, conduct and analyze market research; collect and digest competitive information; develop and schedule marketing activities, such as direct mailings, newsletters, customer seminars and advertising; write and produce marketing materials, such as brochures, pamphlets, articles, and Internet sites; improve internal communications between product management, marketing support and line officers; and develop sales tracking and follow-up systems.

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