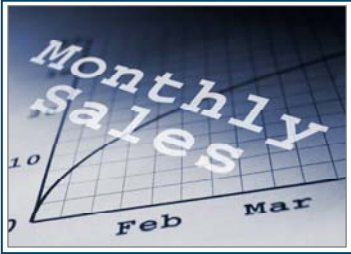


## Salespeople as Entrepreneurs

by Ken Evans



*The most successful salespeople are serial entrepreneurs. They view their territory as their franchise and their job is to grow it. But how do they generate consistent revenue gains year in and year out? By planning...and working the plan. They drive for long-term growth funded by month-to-month and quarter-to-quarter execution of their territory-level business plan.*

Thinking more like business people and less like product pushers, entrepreneurial salespeople develop a territory strategy that enables them to spend more time with customers who recognize and reward value-added services. Managing their territory like a business, they develop a territory strategy that is supported by a tactical action plan. They focus their efforts around their accounts, prospects, and opportunities therein.

A look at the fundamentals of a business plan for a company will help you migrate your thinking to a territory plan.

- ▶ Where have you been over the last year?

Revenues

- Growing, flat, or shrinking? Why?

- What is happening in your industry?

- What are your competitor's results?

Margins

- Growing, flat, or shrinking? Why?

- What are your competitors' results?

Wins/Disappointments?

- What drove those outcomes?

- ▶ What is the environment for your key customers?
  - Chaotic or stable? What are their business drivers?
  - What do they think about you? Are you considered a commodity play, or do you add demonstrable value?
- ▶ What does your backlog look like? How are you doing against plan?
- ▶ What does your pipeline look like? What are your targets for your quantity, quality, and balance?
- ▶ What assets do you employ to create the revenue engine?
- ▶ What does your cash position look like? How about accounts receivables?
- ▶ Given this analysis and your conclusions (no more than five), what are you going to do about it? What are your key milestones and accountabilities by quarter?

This brief analysis captures the snapshot of your business. I did a similar analysis upon being named CEO of a distribution company to get my executive team and my board aligned.

Salespeople with territories need to do the same—with a few nuances. The end result of analyzing and planning around your key accounts and opportunities is a developed strategy for the mix of customers and prospects within your territory. We call it a revenue sourcing plan.

Let's take a look at the following sections of a territory plan that always have legs.

1. **Territory gap assessment** – The purpose of this thinking is to continuously be aware of your customers' and prospects' challenges so you better understand their business drivers and initiatives, and can align with them.
2. **Goals** – Set goals around your products and services, market segments, competition, trends, and profiles of your key accounts. Think about specific growth strategies that will maximize your chance of achieving your goals. What products sell the best? How much growth can you expect from your existing customers? How much new business do you have to write?
3. **Metrics** – What are the key sales statistics or metrics that you can track proactively to ensure that you are successful this year? In addition to monitoring the financials, how is your sales productivity? Are you maximizing your efficiency and effectiveness?
4. **90-day milestones/actions to create opportunity with existing customers** – Where does your business come from? Who are your best and worst customers? What are your average order sizes by customer segment? Who are your targets? What are your best next actions?
5. **90-day milestones/actions to find new logos and sources of revenue** – Who are your top prospects? How many prospective new customers do you have? What activities (number of calls, meetings, etc.) do you need to undertake to reach a transaction?
6. **Top opportunities requiring your focus in the next 90 days** – Are there industry verticals where you consistently win? Are there common business issues you solve? Are there common buyers? What are your most impactful business cases? Be sure to look at your sales trends to uncover and close all the available opportunities in your territory.
7. **Resources required to help you get this done** – Identify the help that you need, whether the resources reside internally, externally (a partner, for example), or within a prospect or customer.

The next step is to enroll a coach (probably your boss) who will add insight to your thinking. Schedule a quarterly review with him/her—before he/she asks for it. This will make your plan better. The clarity that comes from analysis of this data specific to your own territory will tell you where to apply your energy rather than just declaring, "I am going to sell more."

The magic of a territory plan is in sharing it with your sales teammates and your manager. Doing this will keep you motivated; without it, you risk a flagging entrepreneurial spirit. It's optimum to update your territory plan each quarter based on ongoing planning activities.

Most salespeople are competitive by nature and work hard to win. Using a territory business plan helps you plan for your own success based upon your income objectives and data specific to your own territory so you can manage your own business better.



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