

INSIDE

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The Canterbury Sales®

The Sales Crisis - Firm Evolution, the Permanent Sales Crusade and the Killer Angels

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"What doesn't kill me makes me stronger." – Nietzsche

Started with a superior product /market offering, a firm generates years of significant profitable growth opportunity. The hungry sales team – usually entrepreneur-led – fuels rapid, perhaps exponential growth.

Then, the firm hits a brick wall, stagnating. Analysis reveals the cause – new generic competition or changing customer demand. Ownership concludes the sales team is a "bunch of order takers," waiting for the phone to ring.

There could be some truth here. Often sales team members modify their selling presentation and campaign, over time, to the "easiest to close" prospects. If the team ever had business development skills, they have now atrophied.

And the phone isn't ringing.

Widespread sales stagnation in this recession has these consequences:

1) Many firms won't survive; 2) The survivors will get stronger, smarter – leading to future growth.

A new, potent product/market offering would resolve the sales crisis. But is the firm organized to deliver the next successful offering, to overcome the evolutionary hurdles?

The Evolutionary Hurdles

The classic evolutionary challenge for the entrepreneur/founder is to "let go." At its inception, the firm required an entrepreneur to conceive and lead the crusade. With success, the firm needs evolution, organizing for and installing professional management. The domineering founder often precludes this, with a hand in every decision,

multifying both team growth and the firm's structural evolution. The founder has to let go.

Typically "letting go" results in this standard structural differentiation: VP Sales, VP Manufacturing (Operations), CFO. The firm functionally specializes to achieve consistent best practices and to attract "A" performers who need independence. The founding passion isn't necessarily present, but the firm is managed more efficiently, and on a path for solid continuous growth.

Depending on the product life cycle, this business model continues effectively for years, even decades, until interrupted by an external crisis, generally a substantial loss of sales and/or profit. The cause – typically new, aggressive competition and the declining product life cycle – catalyzes organizational evolution (or demise.)

The current recession's impact has caused a widespread need for structural evolution.

The Evolutionary Sales Crisis – The Permanent Sales Crusade

For the "professionally" managed firm, the founder's creativity and passion are glaringly absent in difficult times. The firm must encode the potential for evolution, even revolution, in its DNA. One approach develops and distributes these qualities in key departments, including new product development.

Another essential realm is sales. To prevent firm demise, the sales team needs constant innovation and development to: (1) help extend declining life cycles, funding future initiatives; and (2) lead the charge on new business initiatives.

The firm needs a permanent sales crusade culture. The key is: (1) continuous training to motivate, inspire and educate the team; and (2) one-to-one coaching, following training by the seminar leader – when the team is open to change and innovation.

This structure catalyzes necessary, short-term change.

Many firms don't realize they need a specialist to handle this evolutionary crisis. Others wrongly think they have this capacity and therefore never properly install the sales crusade.

The Problem of the Killer Angels

Michael Sahara's *Killer Angels* provides an incisive leadership analysis, describing the Battle of Gettysburg and Robert E. Lee's reliance on his generals to effectively execute his plans.

A similar reliance on business leadership often generates these outcomes:

1) Very strong controls; 2) An inability to provide necessary innovation and evolution.

This latter problem occurs when ownership expects the VP Sales to provide the necessary selling system, sales training and sales development. The VP Sales generally doesn't have the necessary skills.

This is a "final frontier" challenge for all companies – to maintain effective controls, yet allow for necessary evolution, particularly within sales.

For as we all know, nothing happens until somebody sells something.

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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 17 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, *Urgency Based Selling®*, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at www.bombadillc.com or by calling him at 201.415.3447.