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Generating Traffic

Jeff Shore, Founder & CEO of ShoreSelect

One thing that marks today's real estate environment is a distinct lack of traffic through the sales offices across the country. In some markets a traffic count of five in a week is normal, but for many more this is a new phenomena and it is wreaking havoc on the mindset of new home sales professionals. We can talk about sales technique until we're blue in the face, but our chance of success definitely goes up when we talk to more qualified prospects.

The problem in many markets is that sales professionals have come to believe that access to qualified traffic is some sort of entitlement, that it is the sole responsibility of the homebuilder to drive traffic and the sole responsibility of the salesperson to convert that traffic.

Salespeople in many markets realize that this strategy will get you slaughtered on your sales pace. Moreover, the very mindset of entitlement will convince salespeople that they are victims if the company does not provide them with the traffic they need to generate sales.

These salespeople are then left with a built-in excuse as to why their sales are off of plan.

Of course, there is a corporate responsibility to promote a presence that will draw traffic to the community—I think that is a given. But where does the salesperson's responsibility come into play, and what is reasonable in regard to asking them to do their part in traffic generation?

I propose a program that is easy for the salespeople to grasp and easy for the sales manager to monitor. Hold the sales professionals responsible for one task: "Every single day you are required to drive one unit of traffic for tomorrow." One. A salesperson can get his or her hands around that objective; it doesn't seem so difficult. A sales manager can hold the salesperson accountable for that one task. Either a new traffic unit showed up, or it didn't.

The upside? Well, self-generated traffic is far more likely to purchase than a drive-by visitor. So not only will your traffic rates shoot up, but also your conversion rates should increase. Everybody wins!

Jeff Shore

Founder & CEO, ShoreSelect

A self-proclaimed new home sales "junkie," Jeff delivers quick-witted, hard-hitting seminars that electrify sales teams with passion, discipline, and relentless positivity. Jeff's fine-tuned sales technique and 20 years of experience make him the "go-to" guru for the most difficult markets.

The former National Sales Director for Kaufman and Broad (now KBHome), Jeff began his homebuilding career as a sales representative in Northern California in 1987. Thriving in a tough market, Jeff honed his craft as a salesperson and sold in excess of 500 homes. He quickly moved up to Vice President of Sales and Marketing for a 1000+ unit homebuilding division, where he oversaw a staff of 35. Later he served in a corporate position, creating training programs, coaching managers, and directing sales strategy.

Jeff is the author of three books, including *Outstanding Sales Meetings* and *Deal With It! Mastering 21 Tough Sales Office Situations*, which has sold more than 5000 copies. His most recent book, *Tough Market New Home Sales*, is the indispensable guide for thriving in a challenging market.

Training Focus: Why Will the Customer Wait for You?

Jason Forrest, President of ShoreSelect

Sales Manger: So, tell me which customers you're working with right now.

Salesperson: It's been a tough week. I have the Scotts, but they have a house to sell first. I have the Turners, but they're waiting on their parents to see the house first. I have the Schultzes, but they're waiting to see how much they'll get on the sale of their rental property. I have the Brewers, and they're waiting to see if they'll get their Christmas Bonus. I have the Wards, and they're waiting for her divorce to go through. And lastly, I have the Kerrys, and they're saving up enough down payment money.

Does that sound like a familiar coaching conversation that you have had recently? If there are circumstances that you and your salespeople believe are keeping those customers from purchasing, then what are you doing to make sure they choose you when those circumstances are resolved? How do you know they will wait for you when competitors are wooing them? Let's look at an example from another industry to see why customers would wait for a product even when other options are available.

On October 22, 2008, AT&T reported that 40 percent of their iPhone sales were coming from people who switched from their current carrier.¹ Let's say that you are one of those 40 percent who are going to switch. You stand in line for your new iPhone for two hours. You get to the front of the line only to hear the dreaded news that the store has run out of iPhones. The salesperson tells you that, if you come back in five days, they'll have more in stock. You're upset about the circumstance, but there's really nothing you can do, so you say, "Thank you," to the salesperson, and head out the door.

On your way home, you start to wonder if you should just stick with your current provider. But then you remember that your goal was to get a better phone, and your current provider doesn't have any phones that meet your needs. As you're thinking this, you pass by another cell phone provider. (I can't give you their name for legal reasons, but the name starts with an S and ends with a T.) Their sign in the window says, "Check out our new iPhone Killer!" You're intrigued, so you step inside. The salesperson shows you all of the cool features of the iPhone Killer. Their phone isn't as cool as the iPhone, but they have it in stock, you can get it today, and it is clearly better than your current phone.

So, what do you do? Do you buy it today? Did that salesperson convince you to choose them, rather than wait five days for the iPhone or stick with your carrier?

The reason that 40 percent of buyers chose the iPhone over their current carrier was because they believed it was the best phone for them on the market. The iPhone was so on-target in accomplishing what they were looking for in a new phone, that even after waiting in a two-hour line only to find out that they were

out of stock, and even after being wooed by competing carriers and their phones, they said "I am going to wait for the iPhone—it is the absolute best phone for me, and when the circumstances turn to my favor, I will choose that phone." And 40 percent of those buyers chose to buy it even though it meant canceling their contract with their current provider.

How does this relate to selling homes? It relates because you may have a portfolio of prospects who have circumstantial reasons that are forcing them to wait for a home. If this is the case, then how sure are you that they will wait for

your home? Because they say they really like your home? Is it possible that they say that to other builders too? Have you ever had a customer tell you that they liked your home, but they just needed to get past some circumstance before buying it, so you said "OK" . . . but then you never saw them again?

If you are living in the United States, and you have been selling homes for longer than a week, then the answer is a strong **yes**.

So, consider this: Are you selling to the customer that your job is to help them find the best home in your community or the best home in their market?

Don't assume that once they fall in love with your home, you are good to go.

To accomplish this, ask questions early in your discovery process with the customer:

- How long have you been looking for a home?
- How many homes have you seen?
- So far, which builder or home is your favorite?
- Why is it your favorite?
- Since you're still out looking, what was it about that home that told you it still was not the best home for you?

Then, use that information and go find the best home for them. Once you help them find the best home in your community, say, "Earlier today, you told me that your favorite home so far was the Benbrook plan over at XYZ Homes. How does this home compare to the Benbrook in fulfilling your mission of finding the best overall home for you and your family at this time in your lives?"

If they tell you that the Benbrook is still their favorite, then find out why, realign, and find a better home for them. If they say that your home is their favorite, ask them why. Then you will know that, so far, you have the best home for them. In this situation, they still can't purchase because they have a circumstance that is holding them back. However, you now have a higher probability of them not being wooed away by your competitors.

Last point: every time you follow up with a customer, you need bring this concept back up—find out where you stand in their home search. Why? Because a

customer's needs and wants can change. They might walk into another Sales Office and find a different home that they like more than yours. You need to know that so that you can show them what else you can offer them at your community. Don't assume that once they fall in love with your home you are good to go. You must keep them emotionally convinced that your home is the best home for them at this time in their lives.

¹ **Strong Wireless Gains, Sound Operational Execution Highlight AT&T's Third Quarter; Results Led by 2.4 Million iPhone 3G Activations, Rapid Wireless Data Growth.** Dallas, Texas, October 22, 2008. "Third-quarter activations of the iPhone 3G totaled 2.4 million, approximately 40 percent to customers who were new to AT&T. AT&T's iPhone exclusive has delivered high-value subscribers with ARPU (average monthly revenues per subscriber) approximately 1.6 times higher and churn rates significantly lower than the company's overall postpaid subscriber base." *AT&T's News Room*, <http://www.att.com/gen/press-room?pid=4800&cdvn=news&newsarticleid=26227>. Accessed Oct 2008.

Sales Meeting Exercise: Why Will the Customer Wait for You?

1. Start off the meeting by introducing the concept of circumstances:

"Sometimes we have circumstances that keep our customers from choosing us. For example, they might tell you that they're waiting to save up their down payment money, or they're waiting for their current house to sell, or they're waiting to see if they get a Christmas Bonus, or they want their parents to see it, first. Basically, they tell us their circumstance, and they tell us that they can't buy today, but when those circumstances get resolved they will choose us. Then, several weeks later, we find out that they ended up choosing our competition. Has that ever happened to you in your career?"

[Wait for their response.]

"I'd like you to please call out at least one customer that you've had in the last three months that you believed would buy from you when their home sold, they raised enough down payment money, their divorce settled, or when their friends or relatives came to see the home—but they ended up buying from someone else."

[Wait for every salesperson to call out at least one example.]

"So how do we stop this from happening? How can we sell to our customers in such a way that protects them from being 'wooded' away by the competition? I read an article recently that talks about this very concept, and I'd like to share it with you."

2. Read the article from the *Sales Strategy Journal*, starting at: "On October 22, 2008, AT&T reported that 40 percent of their iPhone sales came from people who switched from their current carrier."

[Before the meeting, you may want to practice reading the article aloud. Remember to read with enthusiasm, and to frequently make eye contact with your team. This will help to keep them engaged while you read.]

3. After reading the article, pass out a sheet of paper to each person, and then ask them the following questions.

"Now what can we do with this information? How can we put these concepts to use? Let's take some time to think about that."

"First, I want you to call out the name of a customer who has told you that they want your home, but they have a circumstance that's delaying their decision. It can be a current customer or a past customer. Go ahead, start calling them out."

[Allow your team to respond until each salesperson has answered.]

"When this customer is being wooed by other salespeople, what reasons do they have to wait for you and your home? Why is your home best for them? Think about that, and then jot your answer down on the sheet of paper that I gave you."

[Give your team about 1 to 2 minutes to write their responses. To help them stay on track, you can repeat some of the questions as they write.]

"Now, look at your answers. Are they mostly generic? An example of generic would be, 'The customer wanted my home because it was a three-bedroom open floor plan, and it was only 20 minutes from their office.' OK, well are you the only three-bedroom open floor plan that's 20 minutes from their office? Probably not, right? So if that's all you know about your customer, then they are in jeopardy of being wooed by your competition."

"So what do you need to do? Well, you need to think about what you have said and done to woo the customer. How have you sold them emotionally? So go back to your answer, and add on to it by writing your response to this next question..." *Continued on page 4*

"How did you prepare, or how have you prepared, this customer to view your home and community as the best home and community for them?"

[Allow about 1 minute for them to think and respond.]

"If you were able to answer that pretty specifically, then there's a good chance that you have already begun to sell that customer emotionally. And that's great. This next exercise is going to show you how to take it to the next level. And if you had trouble answering that question, then this next exercise is really going to help you discover how you can improve and increase the power of your presentation."

"Here's what I want you to do. I'm going to ask you some more questions about how you're going to take today's information and use it to your advantage. Write your answers down, and when we're done I'd like us to talk about them."

"OK, here's the first question. The customer is on a mission to find a home and community that will improve their life. How are you going to understand your customer's mission more completely and more quickly than the competition will?" *[Allow them about 1 minute to write.]*

"Next, how are you going to *solve* their mission more completely and more quickly than the competition will?" *[Allow them about 1 minute to write.]*

"Lastly, what are you planning on doing for customers that they won't find anywhere else? In other words, when your customers are being wooed by other salespeople, why would they want to wait and return to your community?" *[Allow them about 1 minute to write.]*

4. Open up the discussion so that your team can share their answers. If you have a white board, feel free to jot down some of their responses / key ideas. Encourage them to take notes.

"All right, let's talk about these answers. Talk to me about the first question. What are some ways we could understand our customers' missions more completely and quickly than the competition will?"

[Wait 5 seconds for someone to jump in. If no one speaks up, then call on one or two salespeople. If this spurs on additional input, then welcome the contribution. Thank each participant for sharing.]

"Next, what are some ways we could *solve* our customers' missions more completely and quickly than the competition will?"

[Wait 5 seconds for someone to jump in. If no one speaks up, then call on one or two salespeople. If this spurs on additional input, then welcome the contribution. Thank each participant for sharing.]

"Finally, what are some examples of things that you could do for customers that they wouldn't find anywhere else? When our competitors are wooing our customers, what is it that will make them want to wait and return to our community?"

[Wait 5 seconds for someone to jump in. If no one speaks up, then call on one or two salespeople. If this spurs on additional input, then welcome the contribution. Thank each participant for sharing.]

"Great job, everyone. I hope you came away from this discussion with some ideas on how you can improve your skills in selling emotionally."

5. Give them an application assignment.

"Now, before we wrap this up, I want you to put all of this together and tell me what you're going to take away from this lesson. Think about everything we've been discussing, and then come up with one example of how you are going to sell to your customers in such a way that will ensure that they can't be wooed away by the competition. Take a few moments to think about that, and write it on your sheet of paper, and then when everyone's done I want you to take turns sharing your example."

[Allow them time to think and write their response. When it seems that everyone is finished, open the floor for sharing.]

"All right, who would like to go first?"

[Wait 5 seconds for someone to jump in. If no one speaks up, then call on a salesperson to get the ball rolling. Continue until everyone has shared. Be sure to thank each person for sharing.]

"Excellent! I challenge each of you to give those plans a try this week, and then come up with even more ways to sell emotionally. You'll begin to see how it impacts the effectiveness of your presentation, as well as your relationships with your customers. As you improve more and more, you'll see an increase in the number of customers who choose you over the competition."

6. End the training session with a motivational conclusion.

"Remember, you can't assume that once they fall in love with your home that you are good to go. You must keep them emotionally convinced that your home is the best home for them at this time in their lives. We may be the best builder for fulfilling their mission, but if we don't help them to see that, then we risk losing them to a competitor for a better deal. So let's make a commitment today to selling emotionally, and to helping customers discover how great our homes are. Let's show them how we can improve their lives better than anyone else can!"

Two Must-Have Traits for Sales Leaders in a Tough Housing Market

Jason Forrest

While coaching several sales leaders in 2008, I have discovered two distinct sales character abilities that set great coaches above the rest. That is, there are two traits that the best coaches have, and that the average or poor coaches struggle with or lack. The first trait is the ability to understand their primary role as a coach, and the second is the ability to overcome their fear of conflict. Let's examine these traits together, beginning with the ability to understand your role as a sales coach.

Trait #1: Successful Sales Leaders Understand their Role as "Coach"

A sales coach is just that—a coach of the sales process. For many managers and even executives, accepting this role is a struggle because they fear that if the student has more experience than they do, then they will have nothing to teach them. The result? Because these leaders continue to trip over the fear that they are inadequate teachers, or lack all the answers, they fail to challenge team members in various areas of their performance.

You cannot allow this fear to sabotage your team's success. Let me help you change the way you see yourself, and then your actions will naturally follow suit. First, stop comparing yourself to your team—being "better" than them is irrelevant. Instead, begin to view yourself as someone who can offer a different perspective.

For example, golf coach Butch Harmon trained Tiger Woods for many years. (Yes, even the best have coaches.) If Butch Harmon played Tiger Woods in a round of golf, there's no question that Tiger would win. Does that mean that Butch was incapable of teaching Tiger anything as it related to the game of golf? Absolutely not! Most athletes out there are far better than their coaches. However, without their coaches, they would not have the outside perspective, instruction and motivation needed to attain their maximum level of performance. Successful coaching happens when a coach accepts their responsibility to develop and enhance the athlete's performance, regardless of whether or not their performance is superior to the athlete's.

Coach from a Playbook

To carry out your coaching responsibility, there are two distinct methods of teaching that you can begin to use: teaching from the playbook, and teaching from the customer's perspective. Let's start with teaching from the playbook. Do you have a company sales process that your people have been trained to use? Have your salespeople been to a training event recently? If not, don't worry, you're still OK. You can still create a playbook using a sales book as your guide. I've listed a few of my recommendations at the end of this article.

When coaching with a playbook, only focus on one skill or technique during each

coaching session. And while coaching the technique, keep it simple by following this classic three-step process:

1. Tell them what you're looking for.
2. Show them what you're looking for.
3. Have them show you.

When coaching the playbook, your goal is to have them compare their actions to how the playbook says to do it. (Any worries you had of the salesperson comparing their experience to yours will be removed because your conversation becomes about the playbook, and not about you.) So first ask them if they agree with what the playbook says before having them compare their actions to it. It is much harder to convince them that they need to change if they don't first agree on the playbook.

Focus on the Customer's Perspective

The second distinct way you can teach the salesperson is by focusing on their performance from the customer's perspective. Ask the salesperson to stand in the customer's shoes. If they were the customer, would they be convinced to buy from themselves? They need to ask themselves, "Was that the best I could have done in that situation?" And here is the standard you should give your salespeople: "The customer's mission is to find a home and community that improves their life more than their current home, and more than any other home on the market. If the customer has an experience with you and with six other salespeople, would the customer say that you did the best job of selling the home by first understanding their mission, and then fulfilling their mission?" If the answer is "no,"

then why not? Which area of the sales process needs to be improved: understanding the customer's mission, or fulfilling the customer's mission?

As you use these teaching methods, remember your primary role. You are a coach of the sales process. You are the Butch Harmon in your team's lives.

Trait #2: Successful Sales Leaders Overcome their Fear of Conflict

Rich Tiller, author of several books including *Motivation from the Heart*, told me firsthand that coaches must get over their fear of bringing up conflict. Why did he say this? Because without conflict, there would be no change. And later that week I heard Jerry Jones, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys, say something very similar. I was watching a sports documentary series that focuses on a pro football team and their pre-season training. As Jerry Jones spoke to his coaching staff, he emphasized the one trait that separates NFL coaches from the average coaches. He said that great coaches understand that tough conversations are the catalysts that speed up the growth process. *Continued on page 6*

Successful coaching happens when a coach accepts their responsibility to develop and enhance the athlete's performance, regardless of whether or not their performance is superior to the athlete's.

Continued from page 5

Two Must-Have Traits for Sales Leaders in a Tough Housing Market

As I spoke to sales leaders this past year, I noticed that great coaches were the ones who could handle conflict. So in order to succeed in tough markets like 2008, the second trait that must be improved upon is your ability to face the fear of conflict in your conversations with your salespeople. Let's look at a few examples of conflict scenarios and how they can be used as a catalyst to speed up your team's growth.

Scenario 1

The salesperson says, "None of my prospects are qualified." Really? None? In this situation, you need to ask questions that will give you objective answers.

1. What process did you use to decide who isn't qualified?
2. Let's go through every registration card from the last 30 days to determine how many could not qualify.
3. Do you know their gross income? Do you know their monthly expenses, current rent or mortgage payment, how much money they have in their savings account or 401(k), or if they have gift money from their relatives, bonus money from their company, or equity from the sale of a home?

You may feel like you're grilling your salespeople, but this is your opportunity to teach your team that there may be more qualified prospects out there than they think. Your coaching will help them to win more sales.

... great coaches
were the ones
who could handle
conflict.

Scenario 2

Your salesperson says, "Every customer asked what my incentives were before I told them." Do you take their word for it, or do you jump in to really understand what is happening? You could say, "I'm going to spend one day shadowing you this week to see if

we can put our heads together and figure out the best way to handle that situation."

Then, when you're on-site with the salesperson, make note of the circumstances that are present when customers ask, "What are the incentives?"

- At what point in the sales process do they bring it up?
- Who brings it up?
- Is there something that the salesperson is doing to encourage their customer to ask the incentives question? For instance, I find that when we ask questions that the customers don't know the answers to, then they will always bring up price, deals or incentives. Example:

Salesperson: "So, what kind of home are you looking for?"

Customer: "Depends on the price." Or, "I'm not sure. . . what kind of deals or incentives do you have?"

- Track the total number of customers during the day and see if you can make some conclusions that will help you coach your salesperson. For example:

Five customers came in on Saturday. All five talked about incentives.

Customer 1: Salesperson told customer about incentives before customer asked about them.

Customer 2: Asked about incentives without being provoked. They're looking for a deal, for sure.

Customers 3 and 4: Asked the incentives question after the salesperson asked, "What kind of home are you looking for?" Their responses were, "It depends on the price," or, "I'm not sure, what kind of incentives are you offering right now?"

Customer 5: Brought up incentives about halfway through the second home tour, when it felt like the sale was stopping. There was an awkward silence, and it seemed like the customer was trying to fill that silence by making conversation and asking, "So, what kind of end-of-the-year deals are you offering?"

Share your findings with your sales representative and come up with some action steps such as:

1. At the end of every day, write down how many people ask the incentives question. When did they ask it, and what was the circumstance that brought it up?
2. Track the questions you ask that keep provoking the customer to ask about incentives. Then, create different questions that will get you the answers you're looking for.

Scenario 3

A salesperson calls in with an offer. What's the conflict here? Well, after discussing the offer with you, some salespeople will leave and simply tell the customer that their manager either accepted, countered or rejected the offer. Why is this bad? Because while you and your salesperson were discussing the offer, your customer had time to reflect on their home search. They were thinking about your competitors' homes and the deals they were offered at those communities. So if your salesperson returns to the customer and they just focus on the numbers, they fail to remind your customer why they made the offer on your home in the first place. That is not the most effective way to present the counteroffer back to the customer. Your home becomes just another home in the mix, and if your offer doesn't match up to the other offers out there, the sale is in jeopardy.

Handling an offer is a moment when some of the best coaching can take place, yet most managers don't seize the opportunity. Instead of talking with the salesperson to see how effective they were in their sale, managers may only ask questions that are circumstantial in nature. Has the customer been pre-approved? How much are they going to put down? Do they want to make any changes? Yes, it's important that

you cover that stuff when you're talking to your salesperson, but the deal should not be the focus. You are more than a Deal Manager—you are a Sales Manager.

If the deal becomes the focus of your conversation, it will remain the focus when the salesperson returns to the customer. You must combat this by managing the sale—you must coach your salesperson to present the offer by selling emotionally and closing circumstantially.

Let me explain what that means. When it comes down to it, people buy homes to improve their lives. It's an emotional decision. Did the salesperson understand the customer's needs, and show them how the home will satisfy those needs? Does the customer believe your home will satisfy their needs better than any other home out there? You need to find this out so you can determine how you should coach them for their presentation of the offer. Here are some questions you can use:

1. What is the customer's current situation?
2. What other competitors have they seen?
3. Why do they like your home more than 40 other homes they have seen?
4. Why is your home better than their current home at this time in their life?
5. If they don't buy from you, then who else will they buy from?

After you discuss these questions, identify points of information that the salesperson can use in their presentation of the offer. For example, they may love the home because it has four bedrooms for their growing family, or it's 20 minutes closer to work. Their competitor may have a similar plan, but yours is the only one that can go on a lot with a gorgeous view. After you've discussed the emotional side of the sale, then make your decision on the offer.

After you've made your decision, you need to ask the salesperson, "How are you going to present this deal to the customer?" As I said before, some salespeople would just tell their customers that their manager either accepted the offer, countered the offer, or did not accept it. This is not effective. This is your opportunity to be a Sales Manager, not a Deal Manager. You must quickly coach your salesperson on their presentation so that they have the highest probability of winning the sale. Instead of focusing only on the numbers, they need to continue to sell emotionally—they need to remind the customer how the home will improve their lives—and then close them circumstantially with the deal. When the customer is emotionally sold on the home, the value of the deal or incentive increases in their eyes.

Later on, during your next coaching session with that salesperson, you can debrief and discuss the sale. This conversation will uncover the reasons behind the success or loss of the sale, and identify key areas of their performance that require further coaching. Ask your salesperson:

1. Can you describe the sales process you took them through?

2. When was the first time you met them, and how many times did you interact with them since the moment they first saw you?

3. What could you have done to speed up the decision-making process?

Help your salesperson to recognize that the answers to these questions identify key factors that led to the win or loss of the sale. Then, use this information to coach them towards improvements in their performance. Your goal is to give them the best possible chance of winning the next sale.

Hopefully by now you see that the moment of the offer can be the jumping-off point for a dynamic coaching conversation. In tough markets like 2008, coaching your salespeople to sell the offer emotionally and then close circumstantially will win sales from the competition. The more you coach them through this, the better their presentations will become—not just during the offer, but in the entire sale leading up to the offer. When your salesperson is successful in selling emotionally, they arrive at the offer with a great deal of leverage. They give you the upper hand at the bargaining table, and that will help you in tough markets, as well as bring you great success in the good markets.

* * *

These were just a few examples of the conflicts that surface in your sales office on a weekly basis. There are many conflict conversations that you must have with your team if you want them to change their actions. And it is the change in their actions that will, in turn, give you the increased sales that you desire. Take five minutes right now and list out all the conflict questions or situations you are avoiding that you need to stop avoiding.

You are more than a Deal Manager—you are a Sales Manager.

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Two Must-Have Traits for Sales Leaders in a Tough Housing Market

Look at your list of current conflicts, then make a commitment to handle one of them this week. Write down your commitment in the space below:

Summary

Remember: The best sales coaches out there understand their role as “coach,” and overcome their fear of conflict. If you want to outsell your competition without having to increase your incentives or increase your traffic rate, then you must master these two vital traits as a sales leader!

Sales Books that will inspire your playbook:

Tough Market New Home Sales, Jeff Shore

Deal With It, Jeff Shore

Creating Urgency in a Non-Urgent Housing Market, Jason Forrest

Selling with Momentum, Richard Tiller

The Inner Game of Selling, Ron Willingham

The Perfect Storm for Sales Management Demise

Jason Forrest

This October I was on a coaching call with a Regional Sales Manager who is not making his region’s monthly sales goal for his company. Let’s call him James. James was managing about 30 community salespeople, and he had three specific problems he was dealing with:

1. he was not making his monthly sales goal;
2. his boss was not convinced that he was doing everything he needed to be doing in order to make his sales goal;
3. he is in the 2008 housing market.

This is what I call the Perfect Storm for Sales Management Demise. If you are in sales management, you can’t have all of these forces against you. One of the forces is troubling enough, but when you have all three, you’re faced with a ticking time bomb for needing to dust off that resume and hit the streets.

What I have observed is that it’s what you do about the situation that is most important. You see, even though James might not be the only one in 2008 that isn’t meeting his monthly sales goal, the higher-ups may not give him much grace if he doesn’t handle this situation properly. So here is my advice if you’re also

falling short of your sales goals as a sales manager. You can’t change the market, so you need to either A) meet your goals, or B) convince your boss you are doing everything you need to be doing to make your goal.

Here are ways to convince your boss you are doing everything you can:

1. Ask your boss what he/she believes are the most strategic activities you could be doing to generate sales. Don’t wait for your boss to tell you—just ask. I am not saying to go into your boss’s office looking defeated. Go in saying what you have been doing up to this point, and then ask him or her if they have any suggestions. (If you are a boss reading this, then have your sales manager read this article.) Then implement those suggestions.
2. Create a monthly, weekly, and daily plan of what you are doing to reach your sales goals. (I know it seems like a lot of work, but you need to stay focused to get through the slump.)
3. Each week, submit an end-of-the-week report that lays out what you did that week to generate sales. Don’t worry about making the report look pretty. Just list out in bullet points what you did each day that week.

4. Review your weekly report with your boss at least every two weeks. In this meeting, share what you think is working and what needs to be adjusted. Be specific and offer solutions to the problems, not just a list of the problems. For example, don't just say that the salesperson at Pine Ridge just won't make it. Instead you might say, "The salesperson at Pine Ridge is not making his numbers. This is what I have had him do to correct it, and he did not do it. I decided to find a replacement for him so I had HR set up four interviews for sales candidates tomorrow. I commit to having a replacement within 14 days."
5. Promote victories, no matter how small, as often as they happen. These victories can consist of your salespeople's actions and improvements as well as the positive results themselves. You might feel awkward, like you're bragging, but when you're behind in your sales numbers it's not bragging—it's reporting progress.

One final thought—in whichever ever plan you commit to executing, go all out!! Be confident, not arrogant, that you are doing what you need to do in order to be successful. In many cases, if people around you don't feel that you are confident in what you are doing, then they will also lose confidence in you as a leader. So don't let the perfect storm rob you of your confidence. Be the sales leader who can help your team weather this storm.

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Sign up your team for the Creating Urgency Sales Blitz!

The *Creating Urgency Sales Blitz* is an activity-based sales event that empowers your salespeople to schedule appointments with qualified prospects on the day of training, resulting in a pipeline filled with new opportunities by the day's end. This day will be spent exclusively with Jason Forrest, author of the July/August **NAHB Sales and Marketing Ideas Magazine recommended read, *Creating Urgency in a Non-Urgent Housing Market***. Jason Forrest will personally coach your salespeople on handling current prospects and creating emotional urgency.

"In over 13 years of attending sales training events, the *Creating Urgency Sales Blitz* is the ONLY one-day training event that has given us immediate crystal-clear results from the training event to the bottom-line. **We had an unbelievable 117 appointments created during the day.** I had never seen my salespeople so excited and ready to practice what they had learned."
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Jason Forrest

President, ShoreSelect

Jason Forrest is an accomplished sales trainer, consultant and coach to the executives and managers of the homebuilding industry. He believes that true sales training changes not only companies, but also people's lives as they learn how to reach their full potential.

Homebuilders rave about Jason's ability to challenge sales counselors to be their very best. The former National Director of Sales Development for MDC Holdings/Richmond American Homes, Jason has extensive experience in new home sales and sales management. He holds an MBA in marketing and a degree in psychology—a perfect combination for dealing with tough markets.

Jason is a regularly featured speaker at the Pacific Coast Builders Conference (PCBC®), the Midwest Builders Show® & Conference, and SMC's across the county. He is the author of *Creating Urgency in a Non-Urgent Housing Market*. Together with Jeff Shore, he is the co-creator of *Leadership Selling™* and *Leadership Selling™ for Coaches*, the most in-depth training curriculum in new home sales.

Remember:

If you read this Journal, and choose not to apply what you've learned, then you will be no different from those who have not read it.

We cannot complain about the market if we are not doing everything possible to improve our chances of winning sales.

We are the X-factor, the trump card. We are the part of the sales equation that has the power to overcome market circumstances.