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## Top Three Sales Mistakes Most Companies Make

Because of the optimistic nature of sales operations, most decisions appear to be “no-brainers” that will bring the business to the next level. However, most companies make sales mistakes that limit their growth. Since every aspect of the business is tied to the top line, the disappointing results can make management feel like they’ve got an anchor tied to their backs. Fortunately, these errors are easy to avoid. Below are three of the most common mistakes companies make in regard to their sales strategy.

### **MISTAKE #1: Hiring a “Rolodex”**

The most common mistake that I’ve seen among emerging or rapidly growing companies is hiring salespeople strictly for their contacts. Please don’t misunderstand - a strong and trusting network is a very beneficial asset. However, hiring a sales professional with a vast network but lacking fundamental selling skills is like owning a Ferrari without an engine – it looks impressive, but it won’t get you very far.

The best businesses clearly define the requirements for the position before starting the interview process. By developing the appropriate combination of talent, experience and contacts, you will stay focused on the right candidate for the role. It is very easy to get blinded by the vision a “Rolodex candidate” can paint. However, strategically designing the requirements of the position in advance will give you the discipline necessary to hire the right candidate and avoid this most common pitfall.

### **MISTAKE #2: Trying to be all things to all people**

Many companies list 10 - 15 “markets served” by their offering. Even if a company’s solution is ideal for multiple industries, spreading installations around several markets delivers virtually no residual benefit to the business. However, if a company’s next five installations are in one industry, they become more efficient on each site, clients will talk to their peers and create a buzz, and the business becomes accepted as an “insider” – making the next 10 orders much easier.

An effective strategy is to define one to three markets to pursue. A proven method to deciding on your ideal markets is to determine which industries have an urgent need that is easily solved by the unique benefits of your product or service. If the list is larger than three markets, use factors such as your core competence, funding availability, current installations, and long-term stability as factors to reduce the list.



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**MISTAKE #3: Selling features rather than benefits**

The influx of technology into many industries has created an overload of “feature-selling”. Sadly, this messaging has fallen on deaf ears. Every marketing message and demonstration tool must answer the biggest question the client has: “so what?” If your message doesn’t deliver a simple answer that means something to your client, then you will fail – regardless of the superiority of your technical specifications.

To overcome this common blunder, build sales tools to reflect how the solution will benefit the client - the marketing collateral, presentations, demonstration resources, and capture mechanisms. Create a culture and continuing education program that relentlessly keeps the client’s needs as the target. With your clients as the focus, they will immediately understand the value of your solution.

As we’ve all seen, it is very easy for a successful and intelligent business to make one or all of these sales mistakes. However, with awareness, proper planning and regular discipline, avoiding these pitfalls can be easy. Without the weight caused by bad hires, scattered focus, and poor messaging, that anchor will disappear and growth will no longer be a struggle.

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