

VALUE-ADDED SELLING IS A TEAM SPORT

In value-added organizations, serving customers is a team sport. Some teams succeed while others fail. Successful teams offer value-added solutions that satisfy customer's needs while contributing to their company's bottom line. These companies offer team members the opportunity to feel like they are an important part of something bigger than themselves.

One problem that plagues distributors is the silo effect. This means that one department operates as an independent entity in spite of other departments. When the parts department views itself as unrelated to the service department, the service department views itself as unrelated to the parts department, and both of them fail to see how they connect to the sales effort, they are suffering from the silo effect.

You know that your distributorship suffers from the silo effect when you hear people use terms like "us" versus "them." Sales is not the enemy. The warehouse is not the enemy. Management is not the enemy. Customer service is not the enemy. The factories you represent are not the enemy. You are all on the same team.

Teams fail when ...

- Selfishness or personal interests overshadow the team's efforts. Hoarding vital information weakens the team spirit and its effectiveness. When one department hoards information to the detriment of another, it sabotages the company's efforts. Selfishness also happens when one team member is more focused on creating a job for himself than creating value for the team.
- Team members sharp-shoot or discount another's ideas. It is easy to criticize another person's idea. It is an act of teamwork to support it. You are either building up your teammates or breaking them down.
- You attribute motives to another person's behavior. It is difficult to know what is in another's heart. Second-guessing a teammate's motivation is a waste of your energy and hurts the team dynamic.
- You lose sight of the mission. This is called *mission creep*. When you find your team wandering aimlessly, you are experiencing mission creep. You have lost your focus. The primary mission of distributors is to make a difference for the customers, not just a deal. When you lose sight of this mission to bring value to the customer, mission creep has set in.

Even successful teams struggle at times. How they deal with struggles, obstacles, and temporary detours determines whether they will be successful in their efforts. With all the competition your company faces on the street, you do not need competition within your walls. You and your peers are on the same team. You are not the enemy. When one team member fails, the team is weakened. You are only as strong as your weakest teammate. How you support each other defines the character of your team.

Teams succeed when...

- There is mission clarity. Everyone on the team must understand the mission, know what is expected of them, and be committed to that mission. When team members embrace the mission, it becomes a unifying goal for the entire team.
- There is balanced participation by everyone on the team. The failure of one person on the team to pull his or her load means that others must pick up the slack. On the other hand, all team members pulling together is a powerful source of energy.
- When everyone contributes to the decision process. Team members want to feel that they are an important part of the process. The result may not be a committee decision, but everyone feels some ownership via their participation in the process. This builds commitment to the ultimate decision.
- There is a team attitude or a team environment. This means that individual team members must be willing to subordinate their egos for the greater good of serving their customers. Your company may sell products, but you serve customers.
- There is a mutual trust and respect for other team members. Trust is the currency of all great relationships. Respecting fellow team members builds this trust. When people trust each other, like each other, and want to work together, they figure out the rest.
- There is a problem-solving environment. This is where you are focused on fixing the problem, not the blame. The most important thing to accomplish is the resolution of a problem, not finger pointing at each other. Stay mission-focused.

The sales force may sell the first experience with your company, but it is the total experience that brings back customers. Customers spend more phone time with inside sales and customer service representatives than face time with outside salespeople. This constitutes a true team sale. It is not *my* customer or *your* customer; it is *our* customer.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is a professional speaker and author of twelve books. Tom is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 2010), the book that started the value selling revolution. For more information on Tom's presentations, training, and products, visit his website www.TomReillyTraining.com or call his office, 636-537-3360.