



SALES COACH

Don't Overdo It

Reps can create unrealistic expectations by over-servicing accounts

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Q: *I'm often asked by sales managers how to respond to sales reps who make this statement: "Boss, I know I need to keep growing my business, but I am so busy servicing my accounts, I don't have time to prospect like I used to."*

—Brad Roderick, executive vice president, InkCycle

A: A sales rep with a lot of business is a good thing, if that's truly the case. If it's not the case, you might have a person who is over-servicing his or her accounts or is in a prospecting slump.

Sales reps who over-service their accounts tend to have a high need for approval. This is a double-edged sword. These reps tend to be well-liked by their clients, which is a good thing. Yet, too much of a good thing can be bad. In other words, they inadvertently enable bad behavior and unrealistic expectations from their clients. What started out as exceptional client service becomes normal in their clients'—and their own—eyes.

To turn the tide, we need to distinguish between current clients versus new clients. Let's start with the new clients. We have a Sandler rule that states: Never make a move without a commitment. This means, before I go over

and above in client service, I need to make sure what I'm about to do is really important to my client. Otherwise, my client may choose to save the favor for something else more meaningful to them. In the real world, there are a limited amount of favors.

For example, let's say your normal delivery is five days. Your new, large client asks, "When can you deliver this shipment?" Your sales reps might feel tempted to offer a quicker shipment. Instead, they would be better served to ask, "When do you need it?"

Often, this new client does not have the same sense of urgency your sales rep does. By getting the shipment there in five days, your sales rep has set a realistic expectation going forward. This will allow the sales rep more "bandwidth" to add more accounts with less stress.

With current clients, the unrealistic delivery has already been set. So we need to transition them to more realistic expectations. We can still ask the same question above; however, we are more likely to not like the answer. Yet, we might be surprised with the answers we get—allowing your sales rep more flexibility.

If over-servicing isn't the reason for decreased prospecting, your sales rep might be in a slump. Maybe he or she has had a string of unsuccessful prospecting calls or is out of shape when it comes to prospecting. The key is to schedule uninterrupted time to prospect every day along with accountability for how many new prospect attempts he or she will make.

Q: *Our sales managers perform both "hunter" and "farmer" roles. What good guideposts*

exist for when to hire a full-time farmer to provide optimal customer service while the hunter provides steady growth?

—Ross Conner, CEO, GroupSource

A: If your hunter is truly gifted at producing new business, I would suggest you gradually redirect 10–15 percent of his or her less profitable business to a really good farmer every year. Okay, I can hear the collective sigh of some of you reading this.

Listen, and listen well. Your gifted hunters will love you for this. They think in terms of abundance. This allows them to do what they do best: produce. Great producers know this allows them to make more money for themselves and for you. This additional revenue will allow you to hire more farmers.

If your hunters don't love you for this, they just told you a ton without really telling you. What they aren't telling you: They are "at-leasters" at best, in terms of their ability to produce more business, and they have a scarcity mindset. An at-leaster personifies the sentiment, "I don't want to be the best because that's a lot of pressure, but at least I'm not the worst."

To be clear here, I am not suggesting you fire someone who thinks this way. I am suggesting you right-size your expectations for that person to produce and/or hire someone who can accomplish your expectations.

Lastly, the competencies for a great hunter are different than those of a farmer. In my experience, there are a lot more good farmers for hire than good hunters. So if you have great hunters, help them get an "A." **KCB**