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Management Strategies for Building the Bottomline

Which Comes First — The Sales Job Design Or The Sales Job Description?

The sales job design. Too often, distributors put the cart before the horse and create a sales job description before ever going through a sales job design process. And that's a mistake, warns Mitchell Roye, managing director of The Cambridge Group. "The design process takes marketing and sales objectives, customers' needs, the selling environment, as well as the company's strategy, into account. The job description is a brief summary of the job role, and the end product of the design process."

In fact, distributors can create more effective job descriptions after they go through the sales job design process, he stresses. "A well-orchestrated design process can result in improved sales performance, and jobs that support both company goals and customers' needs."

Who's in charge depends on the company culture

The people initiating and leading the job design process will vary from company to company and industry to industry. Unfortunately, comments Roye, many small distributors (less than \$10 million in sales volume) usually don't have a formal design process in place. They tend to react to what their competitors do, what their largest account wants or, worse, they remain static in a changing marketplace. "It's not uncommon for the head of a company to add more job responsibilities to an existing sales job, creating a situation of multiple and, sometimes, conflicting objectives. At the least, the job is not clearly defined."

Within large companies the approach tends to be a very broad, formalized team process and, according to Roye, is often led by someone from human resources. Team members include representatives from sales, finance and administration (or legal), as well as from various business units, labor unions (if unionized jobs are up for review) and general management.

For small- to medium-sized companies, the

approach to sales job design often depends on their culture. For example, if a company is administratively driven, human resources, administration or finance may guide the process. If it's sales-driven, the sales group may be in charge. "There's no right or wrong way," stresses Roye.

However, he does suggest taking a team approach by including senior managers representing sales, marketing and human resources, with an oversight review process by legal and top management.

Job design covers these key areas

The sales job design process takes many key elements into account, says Roye. Here are 12 the design team should address:

1. What market and customer segments are you seeking to serve? Which customers are you going after?
2. How will that market and the various customer segments be served by the salesperson? How will you be selling to them?
3. What is the customer's buying pattern or style, unique needs or requirements? How does this differ by market segment and/or customer?
4. What are the sales cycles like within the market — every week, every month, etc.?
5. What is the intended sales approach for the proposed job? Will the candidate act as an initiator or simply react to customer needs?
6. Who is the customer contact? Will salespeople be calling on corporate executive buyers or local buyers? And will the people they call on be the ones making the final decisions (e.g., corporate decision vs. local buyer)?
7. Going one step further, what position does the buyer hold? Are there multiple buyers or influencers who have a say in the process? Or, will salespeople be dealing with traditional purchasing people?
8. Will you be leveraging or working with others to get to the customer (e.g., a co-op buying group)?
9. Have you examined the desired field sales

behavior you want before determining the actual job description? For instance, do you need someone focused on account maintenance vs. new business, account win-backs or even sales training?

10. Have you created corporate or divisional performance measures that drive sales behavior?

11. What reporting systems does your company have in place to facilitate easy tracking of the actual sales job?

12. What type of people do you want? Have you created an inventory of desired job skills and personality traits for the job?

After this process is completed, the team comes up with the required sales jobs such as geographic sales reps, account managers and sales managers. The next step is to look at the inventory of skills and personality

traits developed for those jobs and to match them up with available resources. "Companies typically make the mistake of developing their sales jobs around the people they already have inhouse," states Roye. "Instead, they need to develop the required jobs, then fill them with the right people."

Sales job design and job descriptions need to be flexible, warns Roye. "They should always support the distributor's goals, strategies and tactics. They should take into account changing market trends, channels, competitors and customers." He recommends that sales jobs be reviewed annually to make sure that they're in sync with the company's goals.

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