

## IT Sales - Capitalizing on the Information Technology Upswing

In recent years, The Information Technology sector has largely been seen as a major forerunner for the overall economy: hence, when the IT Industry is stagnant or declining, harder times are ahead. And when IT spending is on the rise, better times are coming.

This is more than urban legend – in today’s world, IT is essentially the pulse of what is happening. So it’s with little surprise that the recent surge in the IT sector is welcome news (especially to those working in IT.) And the effect is exponential - many other industries are recovering, and will require assistance on technology/project work. So we could say that [IT Staffing](#) has and will be a helping hand in the recovery process. And it’s almost certain that IT sales will likely follow suit and grow as well. Which brings me to [IT Salespeople](#).

With any organization, sales are the engine that drives... well... everything. The sales team brings in the revenue that makes development possible (although developers will argue that without them, there is nothing to sell. Touché, and we’ll certainly visit the development role in a future article. But alas, this one is for sales.)

It’s been my experience that many times, IT companies focus heavily on the tech aspect (as well they should), and sometimes push sales to the side a bit. I can understand that – after all, IT companies create new products and solve problems more than anything, and to many an IT professional, the tech should really sell itself. But, we all know that’s just not so. Regardless, the sales teams for these companies are very often left behind, and typically an afterthought. However, the tried and true advice reigns here: when there is an upside swing in your industry, you want to ride it all the way from the bottom up to the top.

So my article here, as it pertains to sales and salespeople, is really twofold: the first thing I want to mention is not to look at sales as the endgame, and instead really embrace it. It’s like the stock market – when prices are down, you buy. Thus, RIGHT NOW is the time to hire that superstar salesperson, [sales manager](#), or both. As we emerge from the dark days of 2008-2009, you want to be able to hit the ground running, thus, getting that rock star sales team in place today (and not when everyone else is also looking) makes perfect sense.

### **However, just hiring isn’t enough:**

To really benefit from bringing on these new all-stars, they need to be fully trained in your product. One complaint I have heard from IT companies is that they receive negative feedback from end users not understanding how to properly use their newly acquired “solution”. There is only one explanation for this: proper end user training was not offered, or just not sufficient. This is largely because the salesperson knows enough to sell, but not enough to train.

This is where your salespeople can really make a difference. Today, a handshake, a manual, and a help file as the salesperson says goodbye aren’t enough. In small to medium sized companies without a dedicated “training” team, a salesperson who can actually service the account is looked on as an extremely valuable resource to your client. And the really good salespeople are very capable of doing this (another reason why you want to hire *now*, mind you.)

That’s a perfect segue into my second point, which is to offer a few tips to help your salespeople ensure client satisfaction (and increase your referrals from testimonials ten fold!):

- Building Customer Relationships through consultative approaches is almost always looked upon favorably. Your salespeople should be akin to an advisor or "IT consultant", proposing solutions that are pertinent, instead of rattling off services that are irrelevant to the potential client. This is done by asking relevant questions and LISTENING to the responses that are received.
- Be selfless. If a salesperson is focusing solely on making a sale, then they are doing the client, yourself, and your company a major disservice. Prospects want to know how you can save them time, make them more profitable, and/or make their operation more efficient. They do not want to hear a long list of features, how great you or your company is, or anything else that does not help them solve a problem. Again, this harkens back to encouraging a consultative approach from your salespeople.
- Put in place a standard sales process, and envision potential sales as tangible items on a conveyor belt; track every single step from start to finish. As the conveyor belt moves along there may be bumps along the way, some may be minor but others may be enough to knock the sale off of the belt, losing the sale. By knowing where these major bumps are, you can put your finger on where your sales process falls short, and correct it.
- Make sure your [salespeople](#) know your product/service inside and out, *and actually know how to use it in a business setting*. With many new technologies coming out, and the average client significantly more technologically savvy, your salespeople really have to do their homework, and be well-trained. If your salespeople really know what they are talking about (and can articulate it to a client), they can establish themselves (and your company) as a credible source of information, which is helpful when developing relationships. In short, your clients are more likely to return if they know that YOU know your stuff (and have their best interest in mind).

These are just a few tips that I have come across from speaking with IT salespeople, their colleagues, employers, and clients' everyday. I hope you find them useful.

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