

Strategic Sales and Marketing Planning

Part I: Developing the Plan

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It has often been said that, "Things are created twice; first in vision, second in reality. That which you cannot envision cannot be attained."

Strategic sales and marketing planning is one of the most critical components in today's business world. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most widely misunderstood components. There are two key aspects of strategic planning: building it, then executing upon it. Sadly, few companies do both well. I have experienced instances in which a company devises a brilliant strategic plan which is comprehensive, realistic, and well conceived. I have also seen plans that have been well communicated, reinforced, measured and controlled at the tactical level. Rarely have I seen companies that both build and execute well. Those organizations that do both well consistently outperform those that only build or execute the plan.

The vast majority of sales organizations do not have a tactical, written sales and marketing plan. Generally the sales plan consists of revenue targets, absent strategic initiatives and tactical, measurable activities. Establishing a tactical plan with timelines and accountabilities will enable you to sustain profitable growth within target markets, reduce customer attrition and maximize revenues. There are many reasons why strategic plans fail, among them:

Failure to understand the customer	Poor communications
Failure to obtain employee commitment	Over-estimation of resource competence
Under-estimation of time requirements	Failure to coordinate
Failure to follow the plan	Inability to focus

You must "reverse engineer" your goals to create an integrated sales and marketing plan. Successful managers begin by aligning their business objectives with their sales and marketing goals and in the end create short term tactical performance metrics and