Q: HOW DO I BUILD A WORLD-CLASS SALES TEAM?

By Judy Guido

A: The one point all Green Industry folks agree on is the importance of sales. Let’s face it, sales is the engine that drives your business and your salespeople are the drivers. As the competitive landscape continues to grow more fierce and becomes increasingly more difficult to create a competitive advantage, it’s imperative you have a strategic sales plan in place to attract, grow and retain a world-class sales team. That team is your competitive advantage.

How does a company develop a world-class sales force? Successful sales organizations focus on four key areas:

› strategy and process;
› talent and training;
› customer relationship management; and
› sales management.

The first steps to success begin with the owner (who’s often the sales manager and is generally unqualified and unhappy doing so), sales team and key field personnel collaboratively designing a sales strategy based on an accurate analysis of their market dynamics and skill sets.

The next step is ensuring the sales strategy is communicated accurately to the entire team. It sounds simple, but this important step is overlooked more than 80 percent of the time. Professional sales and operational talent are attracted to companies that can prove they’ve done their homework and have a road map for success. Everybody wants to feel they’re a part of a winning team with an intelligent vision.

It’s imperative to create a sales culture that’s understood and respected by the entire organization. Too often, sales is seen as the enemy, especially by operations. Those companies that have a sales-centric culture and collaboration between sales and operations are market leaders. Aligning sales and operations is a key component in world-class sales organizations. Make sure your plan includes tactics fostering both groups working together while sharing accountability and rewards. The Green Industry is competitive enough, why make it any more difficult by creating internal challenges and obstacles that may sabotage the company’s success?

Next, match your core competencies and unique value proposition with your customers’ needs. This is called customer segmentation and qualification. It seems like common sense, but aligning customer needs with your offering and qualifying and assessing the potential value of customers happen much less than you think.

Account planning is another important step. It includes identifying your geographic footprint (the areas where you’ll conduct business) and the specific industries and market segments poised for growth (or that are underserved) within your geographic locale. Then you must assign your sales
The four building blocks of sales success are: strategy and process, talent and training, customer relationship management and sales management.

Planning pointer

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