Keep Your Sales UP in a Down Economy

SALES shebang

FOREWARD

What's the one thing you'd tell sellers to focus on in today's uncertain economy?

That's the question we posed to the top sales experts who came to the 2008 Sales SheBang, a conference for women in business-to-business sales. Of course, these creative sales strategists had a million ideas they wanted to share with you, but we held them to "just one."

So that's what you'll find in this *Keep Your Sales Up in a Down Economy* ebook - one big idea from each of these experienced, successful sales pros. Please feel free to share this ebook with your colleagues too!

Jill Konrath | SheEO | Sales SheBang
Editor, *Keep Your Sales Up in a Down Economy*

2008 Sales SheBang Sisterhood

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FOCUS On What You Can Control

by Jill Konrath
Author of *Selling to Big Companies*

Times are tough right now. That's the reality of our sales environment. Decisions take longer, companies order less and opportunities evaporate into thin air. Making the situation even worse, the likelihood that we'll be back to a booming economy in short order is slim.

During times like this, it's tempting to slip into "woe is me" thinking. We take perverse consolation in commiserating with our colleagues who are struggling just like us and wishing the bad times away.

But the truth is, the more time we spend focusing on the deteriorating economic situation, the worse things get for us. Putting our attention on these negative conditions saps our energy, causing us to lose creativity and momentum – which only puts us further behind.

As far as I'm concerned, there's only one viable option right now – focusing on what you can control.

This doesn't mean being blind to the situation we're in. Nor is it about false optimism. Instead, it's a quiet acceptance of the conditions you face, followed by a decision to figure out the best way to deal with it.

What's Within Your Control

If you take a look at what's within your control, you'll find you have many more options than you might think. Here are three strategies you can implement immediately.

1. Find new ways to fill your pipeline.

   During tough economic times, you need more prospects in your pipeline. This may mean more cold calling, phone calls or emails to prospective customers. But, if you get creative about it, you might:

- Put on events such as seminars or webinars with your colleagues.
- Co-market with other companies in related businesses.
- Set up strategic alliances with sellers who call on the same decision makers as you.

These highly-leveraged activities can attract even more people to your company than you might normally get from typical prospecting activities. Plus, you're not having to do it all yourself.

2. Enhance the quality of customer interactions.

Let me be blunt. Nearly 90% of the sellers I know can significantly increase their sales effectiveness by improving their sales skills. If you're in the top 10% of sellers who have honed their skills to near perfection, you can stop reading now. For the rest of you, let me suggest the following:

- Spend more preparing for your meetings. Do your homework on the company. Learn about their issues and concerns. Figure out how to align your offering with what they're trying to accomplish.

- Sharpen your value proposition. If you can't clearly articulate how your product/service can help your prospect reach their objectives, it's no wonder you're having trouble selling.

- Develop provocative questions. Use your questioning skills to engage your prospects in a business-oriented discussion that's highly relevant to their needs.

How do you get better at this? Invest in your own personal development. Learn from experts. Ask your colleagues. Analyze your own sales calls. Read books, listen to CDs, attend webinars.

3. Increase your productivity.

Start using the new Sales 2.0 technologies to minimize the time you spend on non-productive tasks. Use Jigsaw, Netprospex, LinkedIn, ZoomInfo, Hoovers to find names, create lists or research firms.

Services like InsideView, Google Alerts or Yahoo Alerts can be used to notify you of events that can shorten your sales cycle. Sales Genius enables you to launch personalized and trackable email campaigns that give you incredible insight into your prospects' behavior when they receive your messages.

Some of these options are free; others have a low monthly fee. Since you only have a finite amount of time, it's imperative for you to maximize it. That's why I suggest you investigate these technologies now.

This should get you started! But should you hit a roadblock or find yourself slipping back into the doldrums, stop and ask yourself, "What's in my control?" Keeping your focus there enables creative solutions to emerge – and ultimately, keeps the sales coming in the door.

About Jill Konrath

Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, is an internationally recognized sales strategist who helps sellers crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and win big contracts. She's a frequent speaker at annual sales meetings and industry events.

Her Selling to Big Companies website is filled with resources to help sellers take their business to the next level. Jill is also the **SheEO of the Sales SheBang**.

Check out the Sales SheBang now!

SCREAMING LOUDER Won't Help!

by Ardath Albee
Marketing Interactions

When the economy trends down, it's challenging enough to address people's uncertainty and concerns. Buyers tend to hunker down and avoid anything that isn't already a project in progress.

Often, in our tendency to respond to this perceived dip in interest, we up our instances of email communications, thinking that if we can just get them to pay attention, we'll be okay. This high-volume repetition of your message is akin to "screaming louder." It's actually perceived as monotonous, annoying and makes people click the delete key even faster to avoid you.

The best course of action is to restrain yourself and create a campaign to deliver high-value content that helps calm your buyers' fears because you've offered useful information they can put into action.

We all stumble in times of uncertainty, but your ability to remain calm and in control will transmit to your buyers and elevate your value to them. The more relevant your messaging, the more opportunities will open up. Business doesn't stop just because the economy takes a hit…or two.

The reality is that for most people, hunkering down seems like the best choice. But, that simply opens paths for their competitors to take over. By lending them the strength of your ideas and the certainty that things will come around, you're making an investment in your future. And, you're showing them the importance of continuing to move forward in trying times.

Think of your new campaign as a "Hero" campaign and set out to make each of your buyers become a hero to their companies because they've taken action gleaned from the insights included in your email communications.

Here are a few steps to take when you create your Hero campaign:

- **Choose** a variety of topics you're familiar with and can easily provide relevant insights that will help your prospects improve the job they're doing today – without necessarily buying anything.

- **Create** a frequency plan and design a series of 4-6 communications you can send out over the next few months. Hold one article in reserve as a special offer.

- **Research** your topics and then write your messaging and content from a purely helpful perspective. Make this campaign all about them dealing with tough times. Make the articles short and meaty – no more than 250 – 500 words.

- **Monitor** your send and make follow-up calls to build on the dialog you started with all the leads who've responded to more than one of your emails. Offer to share that special offer article that you've held back as something special – just for them.

The outcome of this type of campaign will pay you back in huge returns.

First of all, your credibility will escalate in your buyers' minds. When everyone else is desperately trying to sell, you're offering helpful advice and insights they can use. Secondly, business doesn't stop. You'll be top of mind when they need to move forward. And, with your status as a trusted advisor, they'll turn to you first when they're ready to buy.

About Ardath Albee

B2B marketing strategist Ardath Albee helps companies significantly increase their marketing momentum by generating more and better leads for their sales organizations. She helps them capture the attention of web site visitors, and build engagement with high value content till they are "sales ready."

Are You Losing Them in the First Two Minutes?

by Anne Miller
Metaphorically Selling

When President Ronald Reagan was shot and no one knew if he would live or not, then Secretary of State Alexander Haig went on television to reassure people. Hysterically shouting, "I'm in charge! "I'm in charge!" all Haig communicated was that he most definitely was NOT in charge of anything, let alone himself. Instead of inspiring confidence, he only heightened everyone's fears.

Similarly, in this roller-coaster business market, your clients need to see certainty, confidence, and control from you, not hysteria, desperation, or incompetence. And that combination of presence and professionalism gets communicated in the first two minutes of your meeting.

Experiment.

Be yourself. Imagine you are planning a big annual sales conference and you are interviewing speakers (like me).

Which of the following two openings would be the most engaging?

Opening #1:

"Mr. Client, thank you for seeing me to talk the about various programs I could do at your annual meeting which would help drive sales. May I ask you, how many people will be attending?" (You: "About a hundred.") Tell me a bit about what you have in mind for this event." (You answer.) "What kinds of programs have you done in the past?" (You answer). And so on.

Opening #2:

"Mr. Client, thank you for seeing me to talk about various programs I could do at your annual meeting to help drive sales. Having worked with ten firms in your space, I know how important these events are and given your recent acquisition, this event will be even more important.

Opening #2: cont.

Since companies are unique in terms of their staffs, their objectives, and their past programs, why don't we go over the specifics of what you're seeking and then I can propose some relevant ideas. Afterwards, we can take it from there. How does that sound?" (You, "Fine.") "You've had a great year last year, particularly with your new account, XYZ. What kind of meeting are you looking to run this year?"

I'll give you a hint: Opening #2 Wins By a Long Shot.

There are four differences between the first and second opening.

- I established credibility for myself ("having worked with…")
- I demonstrated I did my homework ("your recent acquisition..")
- I set an agenda that made sense (so that the client knew the direction of our meeting and that it would end at a logical point).
- I obtained agreement on that agenda (promises conversation rather than interrogation).

Those four points established me as a business person talking to another business person who has an important decision to make, rather than as a vendor who is grilling a prospect with self-serving questions.

Make What You Say, Pay

People have limited time, but many options. Choose your words and opening strategy carefully, so that your first two minutes can become the beginning of a solid long-term relationship.

About Anne Miller

Anne Miller is a leading sales and presentations expert who has helped thousands of sales people sell millions of dollars worth of business for firms like The Blackstone Group, Yahoo, Goldman Sachs, and Time. Featured frequently in the business media, her latest book is *Metaphorically Selling*.

The No-Fail Popcorn Sales Theory You Need NOW!

by Kim Duke
The Sales Diva

Have you been watching, reading or listening to television, newspapers, magazines, blogs & radio?

...and are all the doom and gloom getting you down?? Can you can feel your stomach getting into a knot every time you even think about it all?

I think it is time to introduce you to...

The Sales Diva No-Fail Popcorn Sales Theory!

Go back, back, back into the recesses of your memory of how THEY USED TO MAKE POPCORN. (Hint: it didn't involve Jiffy pop, a microwave, campfire or a hot air popper)

What were the tools? (I can ONLY eat popcorn made this way!)

A stove, a pot with a lid, oil, popcorn.

When you make popcorn - you put the pot on the stove, heat the element, add the oil, then add the popcorn, PLOP goes the lid and then you wait.

What's the first thing that happens??

NOTHING.
NOTHING.
NOTHING.

And then??? A lonely little POP.

More waiting. Then another 2 or 3 little POPS.

Then you start shaking the pot slowly (so nothing burns) and then

POPPETY POPPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOP

POPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOP

Finally you dump out the pot, add butter and salt **(YES!)** and start another batch.

I have just described the sales process.

Stop listening to the doom and gloom, lady!

It doesn't do a thing for you and causes you to make rash decisions. Or worse - it causes you to do **NOTHING** as you're paralyzed with fear. **PLUS** - it doesn't have to be doom and gloom for **YOU**.

Instead I want you to get proactive and start making some SALES POPCORN.

You need to have many popcorn pots on your **SALES STOVE RIGHT NOW**. You need to be planting seeds, making connections, have proposals out there with the right companies and people. You need to be watching those seeds, giving it some time, shaking the pot a bit and making sure that nothing is burning!

Are YOU Making These Sales Popcorn Mistakes?

- You plant some seeds (network, meet with clients, send out an ezine, etc).
- Then you get impatient and keep lifting the lid off the pot or adjust the temp mid-way.
- You ignore your customers who have been loyal to you through good times and bad.
- You only have one SALES POPCORN pot on the stove.
- You only have a few SALES POPCORN seeds in the pot.
- You use stale popcorn seeds that need to be pitched out.

ENOUGH ALREADY! I've got a wonderful secret for you. You **CAN** make **LOTS** of

ENOUGH ALREADY! I've got a wonderful secret for you. You **CAN** make **LOTS** of money during good times **AND** bad.

But you need to know your customers. What they want. What is affecting them. You need to be creative. Flexible. Proactive.

Why? Because people and companies will **STILL BE SPENDING MONEY** - they are just going to make sure that they are choosing **WELL**.

I don't know about you but I still have a home, dry cleaning, car, groceries, travel, clothes, make-up, activities, movies, expenditures, fun...y'know....A LIFE? You can't just **QUIT** when the going gets tough.

You just get smarter. And your customers are the same way lady. So get out your Sales Popcorn Pot and get POPPING!

So there.

About Kim Duke

Kim Duke, **The Sales Diva**, provides savvy, sassy sales training for women small biz owners and entrepreneurs. Kim works with clients internationally, showing them THE Sales Diva secrets to success! **Sign up for her saucy and smart FREE e-zine and receive her FREE Bonus Report "The 5 Biggest Sales Mistakes Women Make"** at www.salesdivas.com

Check out the Sales SheBang now!

Keep Customers, Kill the Recession

by Colleen Francis
Engage Selling Solutions

Finding new customers is never a simple feat. With a recession upon us, the task becomes downright nasty. But don't let that depress your targets! There's an easier way to boost sales and profits in bad times or good.

How? By convincing current clients to send more business your way. And nothing shouts "stick with us" better than exceptional customer service.

Given the immense benefits of customer retention, it's shocking how much energy some firms put into winning new clients. If you think new clients are the best clients, consider how much keeping good customers can benefit your business:

- Higher profitability. It costs more to find a new customer than to keep an existing customer. How much more depends on your industry, but it's estimated that landing a new account costs 5 to 20 times more than selling into an existing relationship.

- Bigger revenues. Every time you lose a customer, it takes time to find a replacement. Meanwhile, your top line suffers.

- New business development. Reputation is central to your new business development campaigns. It's hard enough to open new doors without the stigma of a poor or non-existent reputation. A solid reputation and enthusiastic referrals from long-time customers are the tickets to fast growth.

Clearly, customer retention deserves all the attention you can give it - even at the expense of your efforts to attract new clients. To improve your customer retention, and create an environment where your customers will want to act as references, participate in case studies and purchase additional products or services from you, it's crucial that you constantly monitor and measure your customer service practices to determine what works and what doesn't.

Here are some of the best practices of firms that excel in client retention:

- Measure your current status. A device I discovered a couple of years ago is the "third-party interview." Customers often will not tell you directly the things you most need to hear. However, they won't be so reticent - or flattering - when a third party asks them for feedback. Consider hiring one of the many consulting companies or telemarketing firms that will conduct customer satisfaction surveys on your behalf.

- Provide superior service. Find out what your competition does and out-service them. This may include implementing a 24-hour toll-free help line, building a value-added Web site, publishing a product newsletter or delivering customer education seminars. Hire top-quality people for your customer service organization, and empower them with the training and responsibility to deliver great service. How will you fund these initiatives? Consider diverting some of your new business development budget to customer retention.

- Know your customers. To serve a good client well (and to decide which clients deserve the best service), you have to understand how they operate, who makes their decisions and what is their strategic direction. Your salespeople can collect this information by writing up account plans for your largest or most profitable accounts (those in the top 30%).

  Include a review of the client's industry, the client's revenue projections, how you are positioned in the industry, threats to your position, a plan to expand within the account, your most recent customer satisfaction results, a plan for building and maintaining executive relationships, etc. Ask your salespeople to review the plan with your executives to get additional insights on how to maximize the opportunities presented.

- Show appreciation. Recognize your top customers with client appreciation parties, gifts, personal notes and so on. Don't treat all customers equally: follow the 80/20 rule but do send a handwritten thank you card to ALL customers thanking them for their business and their support this year.

- Adopt your customer's goals. Customers will value you more if you're fundamental to their success. For example, if you're a manufacturer that sells to retailers, give those retailers tools that can help them sell your product to their customers, such as point-of-purchase displays.

Selling successfully in today's tough market is critical to your company's long-term success. Focus your sales and service efforts on existing customers, and selling becomes a lot easier.

About Colleen Francis

Colleen Francis, Sales Expert, is Founder and President of Engage Selling Solutions. Armed with skills developed from years of experience, Colleen helps clients realize immediate results, achieve lasting success and permanently raise their bottom line. Start improving your results today with Colleen's online newsletter **Engaging Ideas** and her **FREE** 10 day intensive sales eCourse: www.EngageNewsletter.com.

Check out the Sales SheBang now!

5 Tools That Make Selling Easier

by Debbie Mrazek
The Sales Company

In selling, it's all about doing what you know each and every day. Rome wasn't built in a day and your sales quota won't be either.

Whether you are a veteran climber in the sales field or a newbie traveler, the same steps that make one person successful work for others too. Just realize that it comes down to this: You just have to do more of what you know works and less of what you know doesn't work. When you begin doing more of the things that work, it will become easier and easier to do those things. And, no matter what your situation, when you begin moving, things will seem much easier than they feel when you are *thinking* about doing it.

Here are five tools that will make the whole trip easier:

1. Sales Forecast – This is your road map that will allow you to navigate with ease. Unlike other sales professionals who try to manage all the client data in their head, when you create a sales forecast, you'll begin to see new opportunities and new paths emerging from your efforts. Visit www.the-sales-company.com to get your FREE forecast.

2. Sales Itinerary - You get 168 hours per week. What are you doing with yours? How long does it take for you to meet with a client? How many clients can you meet with each week? Are there ways you can improve the way you spend your time? How can you do more with less? Manage this, and you'll not only increase sales, but you'll increase freedom as well.

3. Sales Backpack - What's in your backpack? A good attitude? A can-do spirit? A list of sales techniques that really work? Be sure that when you pack, you bring the very best tools that work for *you.* We all have our ways of selling - be sure to do what works best for you.

4. The Landscape – If you went on a trip, you wouldn't charge out without doing a little research, would you? The sales landscape is all about knowing who you are, who your customers are, what they expect, what they want and what you can do to give them what they want. The landscape is the world of expectations and knowing it is a surefire way to increase sales!

5. Traveling Companions – When you realize that you don't have to do everything alone, the journey will be a whole lot more fun. Who can you network with or 'buddy' with to help them while they also help you? What complementary services could you combine with your service or product for bigger results?

When you plan for the sales trip, selling becomes much, much easier. The top 1% of sales pros know that it's not about taking fancy compasses and the latest gizmo, it's about knowing the lay of the land so that no matter what situation you may find yourself in, you know you can not only survive, but you can thrive!

About Debbie Mrazek

Debbie Mrazek is the founder and principal of The Sales Company, a sales acceleration company dedicated to entrepreneurs. Get Debbie's Special Report, **How to Hit The Sales Sweet Spot for Bigger Profits** at www.the-sales-company.com and learn more about her new book at www.TheFieldGuideToSales.com.

In Tough Times, Check Your Parachute

by Jill Harrington
Potential2Performance

In a weak economy three things are certain:

1. Priorities shift.
2. Sales opportunities you've worked on for months shrink or disappear.
3. New opportunities surface.

Too many sales professionals are blindsided or thrown off their game when “sure deals” disappear. Ever happen to you? Others fail to identify new opportunities, because they are desperately trying to hang on to old ones that are fading away.

Sales success is all about alignment with your customers and in tough times this is crucial. This means you have to get out of your own head and into your customer’s. Stop trying to simply close the deal on the table and focus on opening a dialog that clearly identifies the shifting interests and priorities of your customer.

I experienced this firsthand just the other week. After months of discovery meetings and discussions, I met with our client’s Chief Sales Officer and his leadership team to present recommendations for their 2009 sales force development strategy. Since the original scheduling of this meeting, a lot had changed. The company was struggling to meet their revenue targets for the second half of the year, and they'd been forced to layoff a number of key managers that morning.

The “tension” was obvious as soon as I entered the boardroom. The Chief Sales Officer was distracted and his team was subdued. Sensing this, I reiterated the intent of our meeting, and offered to shelve our original agenda in favor of talking about what was most valuable to them right now. The dynamic of the meeting shifted. While I had planned to do much of the talking, I was now mostly listening.

Afterwards, I walked away with a very clear (albeit different) picture of what was

needed to support this sales organization, and a commitment to move forward in an alternate direction. The opportunity that surfaced, while a little smaller than the original in dollar value, has greater long-term strategic value. For that reason, I see it as a win for both of us.

So what's the bottom line? In tough times:

- Really do your homework before entering client meetings. Update yourself on what's happening in their market place and stop to think what the implications are for your customer, and for your customer's customers.

- Enter sales calls with an open mind. Be curious. Go in with the right questions rather than assuming you have all of the right answers.

- Be aware of the probability of new /shifting priorities and be open to co-creating solutions with your customers that may look different to what you traditionally have in mind.

Recently, I read a great quote that describes perfectly how sales professionals should be reacting to the freefalling economy: **"Your mind is like a parachute. It functions only when it's open."** So when you're feeling that all your current opportunities are slipping through your fingers and your sales are plummeting, take a moment to make sure your parachute is open. That's how you will be able to see new opportunities when they appear.

About Jill Harrington

Jill Harrington, President of Potential2Performance, shifts the thinking and actions of sales individuals and organizations to align them with how today's buyers buy, and to assure extraordinary personal and organizational results. She has contributed to the business growth and profitability of clients from a diverse range of industries and has supported the success of thousands of sales professionals around the world.

Show Your Clients the Money!

by Kendra Lee
KLA Group

Are you wondering how to close opportunities lingering in your funnel?

While these are admittedly challenging times for many, I still see lots of sales being made. So what are those sellers doing differently? They're showing potential clients the financial justification behind their decisions.

In today's economy, executives need your help to discover the monetary value behind their decision to work with you – for themselves and their board. They want to be confident they are doing the right thing. And if you can **show them the money**, you'll close the business.

Now is the time to master financial questioning with your clients. And you don't have to have a Masters degree in accounting to do it!

One IT seller I was working with couldn't get his prospect to close even though the prospect's computer system crashed twice a month like clockwork. The prospect felt the pain for the multiple hours the system was down, told the seller he really wanted to fix it, but couldn't bring himself to open his wallet to do it. It just wasn't in his budget and business was too slow.

In good conscience, the prospect didn't feel it made good business sense to invest in fixing a problem that only happened a few times a month.

With my coaching, the IT seller worked with his prospect to identify the impact the downed computer system was having on his business. He questioned his prospect about:

- Revenue his business wasn't able to generate when the system was down.
- Customer dissatisfaction when they couldn't schedule appointments.

- Duplicate work that occurred across the staff.
- Lost invoicing when the system didn't recover properly.
- Employee dissatisfaction when they couldn't do their jobs and had to work overtime.

The seller examined every financial impact he could think of that the downed system was having on his prospect's business. He helped his prospect realize that the status quo really was costing his business much more than a consistent service contract would! When the prospect saw all the money he was wasting, he signed immediately.

This seller didn't need an accounting degree to ask financial questions and show his prospect the money that could be saved. So how can you do it with your opportunities?

- Think about all the issues resulting from your prospect's business issue and the impacts they could have on the bottom line.
- Use your questioning skills to help the prospect determine which impacts are most important to their business.
- Document your findings in your proposal to provide the financial return your prospect needs to justify and sell the decision internally.

Now you can show your prospects the financial gain they'll get by moving forward with your recommendations. You'll find yourself selling in spite of the current economic environment, and your client's business will reap the rewards.

About Kendra Lee

Kendra Lee is the author of ***Selling Against the Goal*** and president of KLA Group. Specializing in the IT industry, KLA Group helps companies rapidly penetrate new markets, break into new accounts and shorten time to revenue with new products in the Small & Midmarket Business (SMB) segment. Ms. Lee is a frequent speaker at national sales meetings and association events. To find out more about the author, read her latest articles, or to subscribe to her newsletter visit www.klagroup.com or call +1 303.773.1285.

Developing Core Strength:
Get Comfortable Feeling Uncomfortable

by Danita Bye
Sales Growth Specialists

Change is happening at a faster pace than ever before in our history. When you've built a successful career around your core strengths, this shifting is unsettling. However, to retain your lead, embrace change, stretch your comfort zone and get uncomfortable.

Start by assuming that everything you do can be done better. Next, do something you feel is beyond your capabilities....every day. For example, talk to someone whom you think is more intelligent, experienced or "above your pay grade." Your heart will race. Your mouth will dry up. You'll sweat. Embrace it all…see these as physical signs that nature is telling you that you're on the right path.

Whenever I feel vulnerable, and I often do in my male-dominated business world, I put on my I've-got-my-act-together mask, thinking that this mask will protect me. However, my inner voice urges me not to pretend, but to authentically "face the fear" and "kill the dragon." But, what does this seemingly sound advice look like in practical terms?

I've developed two disciplines that work for me.

- The first is to inspire myself in overcoming my natural tendency to let fear rule. Every morning as part of my morning routine, I review a card that says, "I thrive on being uncomfortable, for this is how I discover my untapped giftedness and talent."

- The second practice kicks me into overdrive. This attack campaign is visual. I make a tick mark in my planner every time I do something that causes my heart to race or my hands to sweat. It's a physical tracking of my success in facing fear and developing my core strength.

Fear is a powerful emotion that sabotages success. According to life coach Ti Caine, we need to reclaim our power over fear to eliminate it. That's why I decided to skydive a few years ago. I forced myself to face what I perceived as a huge risk. For a long time after that, other fears seemed minor, and I felt empowered.

So, what makes you want to run away? Is it a certain person, situation or conversation?

Whatever it is, step into it. You'll be impressed with your accomplishment, and that confidence will help you sharpen your competitive edge by tapping your incredible

About Danita Bye

Danita Bye, founder of Sales Growth Specialists, works with company leaders to strengthen their sales management processes and sales systems. As a result, their sales teams surpass revenue targets, grow margins and increase market share even when facing economic or competitive challenges.

Check out the
Sales SheBang
now!

Building Your Social Capital Portfolio In Tough Times

by Lynn Schleeter
Center For Sales Innovation

"It's who you know that counts" is still a relevant business adage, but in today's tough times, it's one that should be stepped up a notch: It's who you know *and* what you know about them that counts." That's called building your social capital portfolio. Social capital is an investment that always appreciates, unlike 401 (k) portfolios, even in an uncertain economy. This non-financial investment is all about leveraging relationships to create value, get things done, achieve goals, and drive results.

Building social capital is based on making **"deposits"** in order to make future **"withdrawals."** In every relationship, there is something that's "exchanged" in return for something else. Every time something is given based on another's needs, a "deposit" is made in the giver's account, which offers the opportunity to make a "withdrawal" from that person at a later time.

On a regular basis, consider how to make "deposits" in the lives of your important contacts. Examples include providing an introduction, setting up an appointment with a key person, promoting someone's expertise to a third party, or inviting an individual to an event where she can meet new prospects.

Building a network of business and personal contacts is a highly productive way to access information, ideas, leads, business opportunities, financial capital, power and influence, emotional support, goodwill, trust, and cooperation.

That's why it's important to analyze your network:

Is it small, homogeneous, and internally focused?

A tight network creates a higher level of trust and cooperation, yet can be redundant.

Is it large, diverse and externally focused?

An open network focuses on more entrepreneurial opportunities, however the

downside can be mixed messages and conflicting expectations. What is the network's composition of age, ethnicity, education, and gender?

After doing your value diagnosis, focus your efforts to deepen existing connections as well as increase your connections in certain areas. Power is in your social capital. Therefore, write down the type of information and people you need to know and create a game plan to increase the power of your network.

When are the **"deposits"** you've made sufficient for you to make **"withdrawals"** from appropriate individuals? This individual decision is based on the strength of each relationship over time. Look to your network when you need it most. Leverage "withdrawals" by working strategically in a tight economy to gain new opportunities through referrals and face time with decision makers.

If you want to create a strong network that you can leverage in the future to get results:

- Decide who is a natural bridge to valuable information from both inside and outside your target organizations. Connect with them.
- Make sufficient deposits before withdrawals.
- Commit to one lunch/coffee a week with a contact to grow your social capital bank account.
- Leverage your network for new opportunities.
- During any slowdowns, increase your outreach to grow social capital.

Social capital is highly valuable because it can't be imitated or transferred. You own it! It's your personal sales resource and way in the door. The results you will get from a great network are worth the investment takes to build one!

About Lynn Schleeter

Lynn Schleeter is director of the Center for Sales Innovation at the College of St. Catherine, which is the nation's largest undergraduate college for women. The Center for Sales Innovation is a national resource for women in sales offering academic programs, professional development and research.

Jumpstart Your Sales in a Stalled Economy

by Nancy Bleeke
Corporate Resource Development

A tough economy may seem like an improbable time to move current and prospective customers forward to a sale. Yet, it can actually be a great time…if you position yourself as a strategic consultant so customers realize they should not wait.

A good sales process focuses on a **wants** and **needs** assessment before introducing a solution. A great sales process focuses on wants, needs, opportunities, challenges, fears and risks! Re-read this list – it includes challenges, fears, and risks. Your market is facing these realities today. Your value increases when you think strategically with your customer and can help them answer tough questions they may not want to think about.

To strengthen your strategic value:

FIRST look at your customers' needs in a different light that includes the challenges, fears and risks that your customers will be facing. Answer the following questions as preparation. If you don't know an answer, research what is going on in their specific industry or company.

- What challenges are they facing now that they weren't the last time you spoke with them?
- What "realities" are a part of their immediate future?
- What are the risks to them purchasing – or not purchasing now?
- What opportunities might they miss?

THEN develop open-ended questions that will get them talking about these areas. (Notice how none of the following example questions are directly about your product or service.)

- How is the unstable economy affecting your business?
- What are you facing today that you never thought you would?
- What are some of the measures your organization is taking to maximize the rest of this fiscal year?
- The last time we spoke, you mentioned that you were under a tight budget, how are you accomplishing your cost containment?

FINALLY restate the "What's in it for Them" (WiifT) of your solution:

- If your solution will save them money in the long run, "You mentioned that you have to tighten your budget. We can help you with this. Our xxxx will save **YOU** $xxx in this next month. How will that help your cost containment?"
- If you can minimize a risk, "As you look to maximize your profitability for the remaining fiscal quarter, our solution will allow you an ROI of twice what you invest. This will help **YOU** meet budget."

Recently a client who uses our Call Reluctance assessment asked to discuss it with me. I assumed they were going to cut out this "expense". But I changed my mindset and prepared for a great, strategic discussion. I learned they needed to increase productivity quickly. They had not thought about using the assessment information for managers to coach and increase individual productivity. They are now moving forward to train these managers.

Don't get caught in default thinking such as, "No one is going to buy **now**". Set yourself apart by being strategic, staying positive, and being prepared with questions and information that are helpful to them **TODAY**. Then you **will** jumpstart your sales.

About Nancy Bleeke

Nancy Bleeke, the SalesProInsider, helps organizations "Build performance, profits and people." Nancy provides sales training courses, coaching, the **Timely Tips** e-zine and her blog to share her expertise in building 5-25% sales increases in just 6 weeks!

How to Strategically Earn Referral Business - Make a Plan & Take Action

by Lori Richardson
Score More Sales

New business is dramatically easier to bring to closure when you were referred in by someone the prospect trusts.

Referral business is also nearly always more enjoyable – it typically requires fewer "hoops to jump" because of that trusted connection you were referred in by.

Most sellers, however, do not follow up enough on qualified opportunities. Often, they don't have a process or a plan.

To take advantage of referrals and land this easier and higher value business:

- Start with the end in mind. Envision how many "power" or alliance partners you'd like for now. I'd recommend initially identifying between 2 and 5. Later add as many as you can manage.

- Work to identify who you would like to share and refer business opportunities with, and think broadly plus creatively. Could it be an industry counterpart in another part of the country? Companies whose services happen before or after yours? (Think: image consultant with cosmetic dentistry, photographer, or professional clothier.)

- Put these names, along with all their contact information into your CRM system - just like you would with a sales prospect, because you are going to nurture these relationships too. This is where most of us fall short - we don't value and nurture strategically identified referrers and alliance partners - we just often turn to them when we need them. If you make an effort to continuously nurture your potential referral sources, you'll immediately see more opportunities.

- Plan how often to contact this new power team of yours. Monthly is great for most industries - but even doing a physical mailing quarterly or twice annually will be a good start. Mail something of value, and focus on helping their business grow, not yours (yet).

- Make a process to regularly "touch" these partners of yours. Get to know them and what they are working on. Try a mix of e-mail, hand-written notes, coffee gift cards, phone conversations, and in-person meetings if you are located in the same general area. Think ahead and make this easier by doing things like printing out a sheet of mailing labels for each of your power team members. When the labels are on hand, you are more likely to use them. Buy holiday cards months in advance - have a couple people over and ask them to help you with return address labels or in hand-addressing envelopes. Make it fun!

- Really learn about your referral /alliance partners and find ways to be of great value to them. There are always needs out there - you just need to find out what they are. If nothing else, send them movie passes to their local theater and suggest they have a "night off" on you. The key is to stay in contact with your partners in a friendly and useful way.

By putting a strategic team like this in place, you will suddenly have more "feet on the street" than you ever thought - and they are not on your payroll. Treat potential referral sources well, and watch business strategically grow.

About Lori Richardson

Lori Richardson, president of Score More Sales, writes, talks, trains, and consults about sales effectiveness. Her past roles in sales leadership and as a consultative rep in high tech sales help her clients increase their sales. She brings a lifetime of stories and experiences to her high energy, interactive presentations. Lori also writes the “sales coach” blog at AllBusiness.com.

It's All About Value

by Brooke Green
The Ultimate Sales Chick

In today's tough economic times, it's never been more important to be able to articulate your value. All too often, we think that customers just want our products or services. And we think that our value is all tied up in those products.

But in reality, they want US - our unique ideas, our insights, our knowledge and our spirit.

Have you ever asked yourself "How do I matter to my prospects and customers?" In the context of your life experience, professional history, and the problems you've solved for your clients, you really do matter. In this day and age, you need to matter more.

What you'll discover is what differentiates you from your competitors and ultimately, what makes you shine. If you don't know what that is, how could you ever expect your prospect to believe it?

Most sales people will revert back to "my product" vs. "your product." It's too difficult to identify and communicate the personal value they bring to the sales process. When they do that, however, they're talking their product as a commodity. In tough economic times, commodities don't cut it. You have to be a value, a resource.

So, YOU have to be the differentiating factor - it's your interpretation of the customer's pain--your human diagnosis --that makes the difference. It's your experience, your questions, your process - it's your interpretation of the data. There is a human element that a machine can't fix.

Use the following exercise to get clear about your value:

> TRENDS: What are the trends that your prospect faces in the running of their business (department)? Trends cause pain. You fix pain. It pays to know trends. These trends could be macro/industry or trends within their company.

PAINS: What kinds of pains/problems do you help people solve? Do you have a list? No? How can you be a problem solver if you don't even have a menu of the kind of problems you fix?

POSSIBILITIES: Selling is emotional. What's more emotional than dreams? How can you help create future possibilities for your prospect? If you sell a solution, then you solve problems. And if you solve problems, you advance your client to a new future. Shouldn't you know what that might be?

STORIES: Most sales people overlook stories. You have a wealth of stories through your experience and inside your company. In the next week, start writing about a project that went well, or a customer that became overjoyed at your solution. That becomes a story you can tell as you talk about your value.

You must trust that when you clearly define your value and **how** you go about delivering that value, more people will be attracted to **your** unique solution. This gives you a competetive advantage because very few salespeople have taken the time to be clear about what they bring to the table. If you do take the time, you will stand out.

About Brooke Green

Brooke Green is a coach for Caskey, an Indianapolis firm specializing in training and developing B2B sales teams. She is also the host of The Ultimate Sales Chick, a podcast dedicated to helping professional women in business. Brooke focuses on her client's **THINKING** vs. their **SKILLS** and **BEHAVIORS**.

Check out the Sales SheBang now!

Hopscotch Your Way Through the Slumps

by Susan Zimmerman
Mindful Action Planning

Isn't it frustrating how just when you thought you'd finally gotten in the groove of your sales cycle, it all changed and went topsy turvy on you? Not surprisingly, when sales slump, so does your spirit. When times get tough in the economy or in your target market, however, you need to stop stressing and focus on shining up your inner gem!

What do I mean by this? How in the world do you shine up your inner gem? It's simple: go find the sparkle inside that makes you unique and wonderful. An easy way to do this is by asking yourself what lit up your day when you were about six years old.

One sales rep, I'll call her Kelly, didn't miss a beat to that question. She yelled, "Hopscotch!" Kelly said she simply adored the charted squares and triangles and delighted in the motions as she progressed along. It was the action, not the reward that kept her going.

In her current life, however, Kelly was in a sales slump, getting discouraged and scared. I asked what she paid attention to the most – her sales or her activities leading up to them. She said it was her sales commissions that were preoccupying her.

I asked her how much she would have liked hopscotch if she ignored the joy of the hopping motion and was only ever reaching for a score. Her answer made her face light up. She chirped, "That would have taken all the fun out of it!"

Using hopscotch as a metaphor for her current sales life, Kelly began to keep track of her "hops" in a new way. She envisioned each call, contact, or mailing as a hop. The joy of low tech tracking became her new tool. She drew a hopscotch chart on a blank sheet of paper and began ticking off her sales activities on the chart daily. Each time she made a hop, she consciously told herself, "This is fun!"

Perhaps you can guess what happened. Her activity ***in*creased** and her slump ***de*creased**. Instead of aiming her emotional energy on her declining commissions

due to a downturn, she focused on the inner sparkle of the game. Her natural joy of positive motion brought renewed enthusiasm to her work, and her prospects responded favorably. This, in turn, heightened Kelly's ability to sharpen her additional sales skills and perform more effectively at all stages of the sale.

We all have infinite gems in our life experience and our natural personality. Tapping into a positive memory (a gem) can get us back on track when we've been derailed. Make a connection between an activity that builds you up and a current work challenge that is bringing you down. The benefits of a new perspective will help both your inner and outer sales process.

Everyone has a completely unique mosaic of life stories that motivate and invigorate them. Revisit your best memories and you'll likely find new resources right inside your own mighty brain and soul. By learning to process your stories back and forth, you'll discover a treasure chest of tools that will release your inner sales sparkle!

About Susan Zimmerman

Susan Zimmerman, author of *The Power In Your Money Personality* has been helping people achieve financial and emotional prosperity with her company, Mindful Action Planning, for over 20 years. As a licensed therapist and chartered financial consultant, she helps her clients make mindful personal and business decisions that align with their true values and goals.

Check out the Sales SheBang now!

Mindset Matters

by Tonya Signa
Signature Marketing Services

Sales people and business developers experience a lot of rejection during their lead generation efforts, even more so in this current economy. Business expectations and challenges have never been greater than they are right now. Our prospective clients are having difficulty accessing cash and freeing up capital for new initiatives, contributing to longer sales cycles and uncertain growth.

All of this can lead to a vague free-floating fear that paralyzes us into inaction and allows self-doubt to emerge. One of the cold, hard facts about sales is that you can't sell to everyone. And, when you are ready to sell, buyers are often not ready to buy.

So, how do you keep a positive outlook in the face of so many "no's"?

You take control of the one thing you can control – your mindset. The first hurdle to success happens right between your ears!

What I have found is that "tough times" is a perception as much as it is an economic reality. Although I can't do much about the economy, I can certainly make sure my mindset is one of abundance and success.

When you hold positive outcomes predominantly in your mind, you will find that options will present themselves to lead you down the path to the results you want to achieve. Conversely, dwelling on the "tough times," will cause you to attract alternatives that will keep you on the low road.

I see this frequently when I coach new sales people on prospecting for new business. If they believe they are no better than a telemarketer interrupting someone's dinner, that belief undermines their persistence. Then they become one of those sales people who make three unsuccessful calls and give up. Since they believe sales are hard to come by, doing the work to cultivate new opportunities becomes much more difficult.

Conversely, when I coach sales people who know in their heart that they are a reputable person with integrity representing a beneficial product, the results are completely different. Those sales people are coming from a place of service and confidence. They are seeking opportunities to help clients with their challenges, and that's really a noble endeavor and absolutely needed in any economy.

This is the mindset you should cultivate as a salesperson. Having the confidence that you're a beneficial helper will set you up for success. Now more than ever, your customers need someone on their side offering insights into their problems.

Even in a time that is as difficult as ours is now, those with a mindset of abundance, optimism, and service will outshine and outlast those without every time. Mindset matters – so choose yours wisely and consciously each day.

About Tonya Signa

Tonya Signa is President of **Signature Marketing Services**, a boutique firm specializing in business development and lead generation services. Visit her website at www.signaturemarketingservices.com to download a brochure and learn more.

Check out the
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now!

Top Tips for Selling in Tough Times: Get Your Cold Calling Signals Straight

by Leslie Buterin
ColdCallingNetNews.com

Luke, my husband, and I are taking a “Love and Respect” marriage class. Don't mind telling you we are having a blast and learning a good number of things along the way!

One day, the instructor pointed out that men and women can say the same words, yet mean entirely different things. Because, women speak pink. Men speak blue.

He explained that a woman will say, "I have nothing to wear" when she means she has nothing new to wear. A man on the other hand says, "I have nothing to wear" and means everything he owns … is dirty.

As the laughter quieted, I thought of you. Yep, you. The professional who cold calls.

Here's why.

There is an unintentional disconnect between sellers who cold call and decision makers who receive those calls. Too many cold callers hear in “red” when their prospects are speaking in “green.”

Turns out timid cold callers hear, "We’re not interested" when prospects are saying, "Give me a reason to invite you in for a meeting."

Don't think that's happening to you? Read on.

Your colleagues, who are afraid of hearing "no" use social niceties as a way to ask for permission to proceed with the conversation.

They do their best to “chat up” the gatekeeper and decision maker with phrases like, “How are you?” “How are you doing?” “Is this a good time?”

Prospects (you know, the Top Dogs you're trying to meet) don't have time for idle chit-chat. They respond with pointed questions like, "Who the heck are you?" and "What the heck do you want?"

Submissive cold callers filter those questions through "red" and believe the cold call has come to a screeching halt. Their head trash sounds like, "Aaahhhg! My prospect is asking questions rather than engaging in social chit-chat! I don't have a snowball's chance of getting an appointment."

Listen in on the prospect's thoughts for another picture entirely. They're thinking: OK, you caught my attention. Now, speak slowly so I can:

- Catch who the heck you are.
- Understand what the heck you are calling about.
- Decide how much time to allow for a meeting with you."

That's where sales pros gets their signals crossed and hear "no" when their prospects are saying "tell me more."

Make sense?

Hope so. Because the sooner you learn the differences between your "red filter" and your prospects' "green filter" … the sooner you'll get high-level appointments; your shot at reaping top-dollar rewards; and (who knows) you may even get clean, new clothes!

About Leslie Buterin

Leslie Buterin, author of *Secrets to Scheduling the Executive Level Sales Call* is a cold calling expert and new business development coach. She began her career in staffing & financial services. Today she shows company leaders, sales executives, business owners and sales professionals worldwide how to get in to see high-level decision makers.

TeleSales Tip -
Lean Forward and Listen

by Lynn Hidy
UpYourTeleSales.com

One behavior most people never focus on is **listening**. In telesales, however, listening is the most important tool you have! Remember over the phone you don't get to "cheat" by looking at the person to determine what they mean vs. what they're saying.

The challenge is to jump off the gerbil wheel! You may be going thousands of miles per hour, but regardless of the questions you ask - if you're not listening, you're not moving forward toward your goals. Take one hour, every day this week and use the phone as your LISTENING tool. Save time for yourself and the suspects, prospects, or customers on the other end of the phone by LISTENING to what is going on in their business.

Very often salespeople ask questions without the intention of listening to the prospect's answer. Instead, the intention is to hear the words needed to indicate a potential sale - an appointment - meeting the call objective. At other times, salespeople aren't listening, because they are too concerned with their internal dialog to listen to the other person.

Today, start a conversation with a prospect about how the economy is affecting their business and LISTEN - not to just the words.

Focus on what you can learn about:

- The prospect's level of concern about the economy.
- The prospect's role in the company.
- The company itself.

Make sure you listen to the tone of their voice, what they aren't saying, and what is going on in the background.

To get the best results, use the same body language you would use in any face-to-face interaction. Smile, wave your arms, stand up to make a point when you're talking - believe me, the person on the other end can hear it. Plus, lean forward in your chair and listen!

When you're calling:

- Yes, take notes.
- No, don't offer "solutions" when you hear something your product or service can fix.
- Yes, ask more questions about what the other person is saying.
- Yes, at the end of the call indicate what you HEARD that makes you believe working together or never talking again is the best "next step".
- Yes, make your last question about getting "next step" agreement (even to never talk again).

Always remember that just because it's simple doesn't make it easy. Listening isn't something most people practice daily. So get off your wheel, pick up the phone, lean forward and listen today!

About Lynn Hidy

Lynn Hidy, founder of UpYourTeleSales.com, is an expert at creating profitable telesales sales people and organizations. She knows you can make six figures over the phone - she has done it! Working with Lynn, you'll learn to create a phone experience where your prospect will forget you aren't actually having a cup of coffee together.

Health Equals Wealth

by Wendie Pett
Wendie Pett Enterprises

In a time that is financially unpredictable and nerve-racking for many, it is now more imperative than ever to keep your health in tip top shape. The stress level that individuals, families, and companies are carrying can lead to illness and depression.

People are working harder, sleeping less, and putting themselves last when it comes to personal care and attention. I would like to encourage you to take the time and energy you deserve to dedicate to your health. It's essential for your business in tough times.

When you are healthy mentally, physically, and spiritually then you will see this reflected positively in your business. Others want to be around positive health-conscious individuals because a person's health is a reflection of their business and core values. If you're healthy and happy, you will see a ripple effect on those around you who desire to catch your same attitude and success.

Did you know that people can actually hear health over the phone? The way the person on the other end breathes, responds, or smiles comes through loud and clear on the other end. The healthier you are physically, the stronger and more confident you will feel when calling prospects, and your prospects will respond.

So how can a busy sales person easily improve their health in stressful economic times?

The simplest way to start improving how you feel is to journal. Start today and writing down your physical activity, mental thoughts, foods that you eat, time that you spend on daily “to-dos,” etc. You get the picture.

Anyone that I have ever coached or trained has only seen results by journaling their habits. Those that did not journal could not visually see the areas in their life that required change for positive growth. Journaling is a great accountability partner and

patterns that are sabotaging your potential for success. You will discover more about yourself and be able to modify your behavior so you are able to perform at your best.

Your health is the nucleus of every component of your life. Improving your health will not only improve how you feel, it will spill over into other aspects of your life as well. When you feel good, you will have an easier time meeting your professional goals and interacting with others – which is essential for a successful salesperson. That is why health is the key to wealth.

About Wendie Pett

Business owner, mother, author, and fitness expert, Wendie Pett, teaches the balance of mind, body and spirit through her **Visibly Fit™** program. She appears regularly on nationwide television and is featured in the Total Wellness Newsletter reaching over 2.5 million readers monthly. Wendie is the author of ***Every Woman's Guide to Personal Power***.

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now!

The Top Four Reasons Sales Managers Fail

by Colleen Stanley
SalesLeadership, Inc.

Many people have heard the phrase, "**not every salesperson makes a good manager**." So where is the gap and what makes it difficult to transition from sales to leadership?

In my experience, there are four main reasons that managers fail to accomplish their goals.

1. They have an inability to transfer skills.
   Sales managers often get promoted to sales management because of their ability to prospect and win business. Unfortunately, great selling skills are of no use or value to the organization if you can't transfer the selling skills to your team. In the words of Jack Welch, former CEO of GE, *"When you take on a leadership role, It's no longer about you, it is about them."* In other words, it doesn't matter how good you are at sales, it only matters how good you can make individuals on your sales team.

2. They have "Living in the White House" syndrome.
   It is easy for sales managers to catch the 'white house' syndrome and lose touch with reality. (How much is a carton of milk?) Sales managers camp out in the white house (the corporate office), getting caught up in the minutia of reports, meetings and fire fighting. They forget the real reason they were hired as a sales manager was to train and coach the sales team. Training and coaching is not accomplished in the white house. It is accomplished by riding with your sales team and calling on the real world; your prospects and clients. The cushy chair in corporate is more comfortable, but going along in the passenger seat is always more profitable.

3. They are a field manager or a corporate manager, instead of an all-around manager.
   In my old world, I had seven sales managers reporting to me and quickly figured out there were three types of sales managers; field manager, corporate manager and all-around manager. Field managers stand staunchly by their team defending all actions and refuse to understand or endorse corporate objectives. The corporate manager is interested only in moving up the corporate ladder, leaving their sales team without a voice in the corporation. The all-around manager 'gets it.' This manager achieves the hard balance of presenting the sales team's issues to senior management while communicating and enforcing corporate objectives to the sales team.

4. They don't have a duplicable sales process.
   An NFL coach always has a playbook and requires each one of his players to study, learn and execute the plays. The professional football player is not allowed to run their own playbook, regardless the number of years they have been playing ball. Sales managers, on the other hand, often lack a playbook and give the excuse, "Well, I hire people with sales experience." The result is a sales manager trying to manage 20 different playbooks filled with old and ineffective plays.

If sales managers avoid those top four ways of failing, they will have much more success getting good results from their salespeople.

About Colleen Stanley

Colleen Stanley is president of SalesLeadership, Inc. a sales and sales management training firm. **SLI** works with small to mid-size firms to develop high performance sales teams. She's a monthly columnist for the **Business Journals** and author of ***Growing Great Sales Teams: Lessons from the Cornfield***.

ABOUT THE SALES SHEBANG

Sales SheBang is the premier professional development resource for women in sales. We're committed to helping women succeed in this challenging, yet highly rewarding career. We also spotlight women sales experts to increase their visibility and impact,

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- Attracting More Customers, by Jill Konrath
- Secrets of Referral Selling, by Joanne Black
- 67 Tips for Presenting Like a Pro, by Anne Miller

Coming Soon:

Watch for announcements about our **Virtual Sales SheBang** this spring and our **2009 Conference** in the fall.