

### **3 Times Quota**

Jim and Nicole each earned over \$300,000 last year – more than three times the next highest paid sales person in their company. On a team of twelve reps, Jim and Nicole are stars. They have landed the most prestigious accounts, and gained access to prospects that no one else could reach. You can imagine that there is more than a little jealousy towards their success.

The rumors of their success run rampant: they have the best territories, they get the best leads, they were given the key accounts, they are the President's favorites. As much as the rumors occur, they are all false. On paper Jim and Nicole are the same as everyone else. They received the same training. They have similar industry backgrounds and sales expertise with the team. They had to find all of their own customers. They receive the same leads. They do not get special treatment. Jim and Nicole stand out, because they are great prospectors.

Lead generation is a constant discussion in any sales organization. Let's face it; even movies are made on the subject. Who hasn't seen the classic Glenn Gary, Glenn Ross scene when Alec Baldwin ripped into the sales team stating, "These are the new leads. These are the Glenn Gary leads. And to you they're gold – and you don't get them! Why? Because to give them to you is just throwing them away. They're for closers."

Jim and Nicole's organization is not Glenn Gary, Glenn Ross, they actually provide the sales team leads – lots of them. The firm buys cleansed lists every year, and the accounts are equally distributed among the team. In addition the firm has a targeted awareness program that generates regular call-in traffic. In every region, the sales people are presented with warm leads to chase and close. The sales people spend 60% of their time prospecting these leads with a goal to close one account per month.

Jim and Nicole are the exception. They do not accept leads generated by the company. They find them distracting. The two reps have taken a much longer view of their territories, and have narrowed down their prospects to 300 or so companies they would love to work with. These are the prospects they have been contacting consistently over the past five years. Jim and Nicole discovered early on that they could chase every lead in their funnel and still never earn \$100,000. They were spending an inordinate amount of time closing small deals. By changing their prospecting focus, they chose to only hunt the big deals. Three large deals a year would allow them to exceed their quotas.

Prospecting is a real grind when you are just looking for someone who is ready to buy right now. In this situation, it is simply a matter of luck to be at the right place at the right time. Yet if you knew that by calling on a key account for two years would deliver 50% of your quota next year, wouldn't you invest the time and effort to land that account? Of course you would! Now, if you figured out all of the companies that could deliver such big numbers and only called on them, what would happen to your sales performance? Probably the same thing as Jim and Nicole: three times the earnings of everyone else.

Chasing the big game requires a strategy, a well cultivated database and consistency. Before making your first call, take a step back and look at your territory. You can't

simply pick up the phone book, or open up your CRM, and start calling every company on your prospecting list. You need to understand what makes an ideal prospect.

Don't stop there. Continue by clearly articulating how your product or service delivers value; why one of your big prospects would buy your company's services; what events or situations would motivate them to shop for a solution; and how they shop and evaluate for similar solutions. You would hope your sales manager or the company would do this for you, but quite often they too don't know. Take the step and be proactive. Don't wait for sales management to catch up with you.

Once you have the criteria for where you can land the big deals, a list of ideal prospects, and why you have the right solution – it is now time to prospect. In this modern sales world, no sales person should attempt such a targeted prospecting effort without the support of a CRM database. Whether you are using Salesforce.com, ACT! or some other equivalent product, it is a "must have" sales tool. A CRM database will allow you to profile each of your prospects, and then track and direct your activities as you build a relationship. You will track each conversation, profile every contact in the organization, identify circles of influence and map out an account management strategy. By leveraging the power of your CRM database you can record and intelligently target each of your customers until they are ready to buy.

Chasing the big game is not for everyone. It requires consistency and fortitude. Large purchases do not just happen because you called once. It requires a long term sales effort that proactively builds relationships throughout the account, and develops rapport to the point you will be the first call when the prospect is ready to buy. If you are calling on the same company repeatedly over two, three or even four years you have to make every interaction count. Every time you engage the prospect, focus on building credibility and delivering value. Manipulative sales tactics never work.

What Jim and Nicole do is not rocket science. They carefully select their accounts, attack them intelligently and work consistently to bring them onboard. Too often sales people and their managers get focused on the here and now, and the end result is a never ending complaint of "where are the leads?" Unfortunately the desire for an immediate sale causes many sales people to work tactically rather than strategically. By taking a step back to choose your big game, you can focus all of your efforts on acquiring quota-busting customers.

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