MBA 645: Personal Selling and Sales Management

Course Description

Nothing happens until a sale is made. Almost every business plan assumes a certain amount of sales but that assumption is the tipping point. The entrepreneur and the manager must not only understand the sales process but also embrace the fact that the ability to sell is the single most critical success factor of any enterprise. This course provides students with an overview of the theory and practice of personal selling and sales management. Students will have the opportunity to get a feel for a variety of sales issues and learn the practical ins and outs of how to sell products and services to a sophisticated marketplace. The course will also address how to build and manage a sales force, by covering topics such as building compensation systems, assigning territories, and assessing sales performance. The class will consist of a mix of short lectures, practical exercises designed to hone your sales skills, and presentations by guest speakers with extensive sales experience. I expect you to read all the assigned materials and do the needed individual research and thinking for the assignments before the course start on Friday, so that you can effectively contribute to the class discussion and to your team projects.

Course Materials

- **Readings List 1** – you need to buy from HBS. Go to: [http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/access/13975125](http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/access/13975125)
  
  You need to register with the website and then you have immediate access to my course. The price of this packet is about $12.

- **Readings List 2** – **posted in Moodle** (available for free)

Grading

- "Sell Yourself” individual presentation 30 points
- Team sales proposal presentation 40 points
- Class participation 30 points 100 points

Readings:

Make sure you [read all materials by Friday](#).

**Reading List 1**: buy from HBS; go to: [http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/access/6215463](http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cb/access/6215463)

- Personal Selling and Sales Management, HBS Note
- Sales Force Management and Measurement, Darden Business Publishing Note
- ENSR International, HBS Case

**Readings List 2** (in Moodle - look under Readings)

- How to Make Your Case in 30 Seconds or Less. Harvard Management Communication Letter, Jan2002
- Is selling today an art or a science? Puget Sound Business Journal, 2008
- Seven steps on how to sell yourself to get a new job. Puget Sound Business Journal, 2010
- Real World Selling Situations and Some Possible Solutions
• Behind Every Successful Manager Is a Great Inside Sales Job. Harvard Management Update, Dec2001
• Ending the War between Sales and Marketing. Harvard Business Review, Jul/Aug2006
**Individual Exercise: Sell Yourself**

This exercise helps you develop an effective elevator pitch for your greatest asset – yourself. More generally, it broadens your understanding of the process that salespeople use to sell products and services. You need to prepare for this exercise before class on Saturday.

1. Interview someone knowledgeable in your field of interest, a potential employer ideally. Your goal is to discover what criteria matter most to that employer when making hiring decisions and how they measure those criteria.

2. Think about how you meet or fail to meet those criteria and how you would sell yourself. To help you do this, read carefully “The Sales Process”, pages 2-4, in “Personal Selling and Sales Management”.
   a. Based on your interview with a potential employer develop a list of skills and characteristics that the employer considers important
   b. Develop a list of your strengths (compared to other typical job applicants) based on your personal characteristics, skills, previous job experience etc.
   c. Compare the two lists above and plot them in a matrix with the vertical axis “Importance to customer (Low/High)” and the horizontal axis “Ability to provide vs. competition (Low/High)”. You should be able to list items in the three relevant quadrants of the matrix: “Advantages” (High/High), “Objections” (High/Low), and “Irrelevant Strengths” (Low/High).

3. Based on the matrix and the reading “How to Make Your Case in 30 Seconds or Less”, **prepare an approximately 2-3 minute long sales pitch of yourself targeted to your employer**. Your objectives are to attract the employer’s attention, raise his/her interest in your competitive advantages (if necessary, also deflect a main possible objection), and make him/her desire to get to know you better (e.g., an invitation for an interview). You will present this in class on Saturday morning. Also, **turn in a sheet of hand written notes (typed Ok too) with your name, a brief employer/job description, and your matrix of advantages, objections, and irrelevant strengths.**

Please consider Phil Matteson the employer if you have an interest in Halliburton or a similar company, or if you do not have a specific employer in mind. He will also play the role of the employer for the presentations on Saturday (but we all will evaluate the effectiveness of your sales pitch.)
Team Sales Proposal

Writing and presenting a sales proposal is part of a salesperson’s normal responsibilities. Salespeople plan out the sale process in advance through the use of written sales proposals that are provided to clients prior to making the sales call. This accomplishes two functions: it forces the salesperson to formalize the advanced planning of the sales call (what has to be done before going face-to-face with the buyer) and it focuses the dialogue between the buyer and seller on the value proposition from the very beginning, thus laying the groundwork for an effective buyer-seller relationship. You and your team will be assigned to sell a specific product to a specific type of customer (TBA). More information will be provided in Moodle and in class.

Case Analysis

Make sure you read the case ENSR International before class on Saturday and attempt to answer the questions on your own so you are prepared to negotiate the solution with your team and participate in the class discussion. Turn in your written notes - I will consider them toward your class participation grade (bullets OK, no need to write a report)

In order to make your case for which of the proposed solutions you favor and why, you should thoroughly analyze the following aspects of the situation described in the case:

1. The buying and the selling process. Is this a tough service to sell? From what aspects/areas do the complexities of this selling process arise?
2. Nature of the customer base. Based on the case exhibits 8, 9 and 10, perform an analysis of the firm’s customer base and the underlying problems in its sales process. E.g., can the firm survive on “big fish” only?
3. The firm’s organization structure. Discuss the geographic orientation and the locus of the selling responsibility. Who should do the selling – what are the pros and cons of having dedicated salespeople or sticking with the seller/doer approach?
4. The compensation plan. What are the compensation plans for the CMC Managers and for the other Seller-Doers and what problems do you see with these compensation plans? What seems to be the ideal client/project for the CSC Manager and what problems arise from this?
5. Based on your analysis of the above points, what solution do you propose? Discuss the pros and cons of the three basic solutions proposed in the case and then make your recommendations for a specific solution (it can be a combination of the ones proposed in the case, or a modified solution, or something entirely new, but justify it).