



out simple. Keep it simple. Expand after initial success. Minimize “bells and whistles.”

Key steps to the **quick attack** selling process include the following:

- Step One: Identify the Selling Opportunity
- Step Two: Select the Team
- Step Three: Develop the Plan
- Step Four: Equip the Field
- Step Five: Track Progress

Step One: Identifying the Selling Opportunity

When evaluating the array of “sales force initiated” selling opportunities, consider the following questions:

- What is the *specific* selling opportunity?
- Is the opportunity in a traditional or *nontraditional* market for the business?
- What is the “lead” product that addresses customer requirements?
- Are there “complimentary” products and services within the business offering that also address the selling opportunity?
- Who are the major competitors?
- Do these competitors focus specifically on the market or do they have a strong presence by default?
- Why should the business enter the market? What is the competitive advantage?

## Quick Attack Sales Effectiveness!

By Andrew Ortyn, ortyn@precisioncatalyst.com

### Have you listened to your sales force lately?

Have you challenged your cross-functional teams to identify **quick attack** sales opportunities that will drive profitable sales growth with your *existing* products and services, your *existing* business investment?

If not – you may be missing out on significant short term growth opportunities!

#### Examples . . .

**A manufacturer of construction equipment** rallied its sales force around a **quick attack** sales program titled “10 in 16”. The goal was to field ten profitable *application specific* sales opportunities in sixteen weeks. SWAT teams were assembled; program elements were developed; within sixteen weeks, the field sales force was profitably selling *existing* products and services into a range of previously *untapped* market segments ranging from feedlots, logging, forest fire containment, “oil patch”, pulp and sawlog processing, and others . . .

**A soap manufacturer**, selling to distributors in the commercial marketplace, struggled to improve upon 3% margins at Operating Profit. A **quick attack** sales opportunity revealed an existing soap product with minor packaging modifications provided an ideal offering as a pet shampoo serving the retail market channel. Without disrupting existing distributor relationships, the business was able to successfully penetrate a new market with an existing product, delivering double digit margins at Operating Profit.

**A specialty chemicals product manufacturer** serving the business-

to-business marketplace acquired a “branded” but declining line of chemical cleaning products. A **quick attack** sales initiative identified an opportunity to take select products from the overall product line and market these items *direct* to a chain of retail outlet stores serving building contractors. Within 120 days of program implementation, customer service representatives were taking phone orders for product shipments at substantially higher price points than realized through the traditional distributor network.

#### The Point . . .

**While new product innovation is essential to the long term success and profitability of any business**, there are often unexploited opportunities to maximize the profit potential of many businesses, using their existing investment profile.

### The key challenge lies in profitably harnessing the inherent entrepreneurial nature of the sales organization. . .

The key challenge lies in profitably harnessing the inherent entrepreneurial nature of the sales organization. . . . the team interacting with customers on a day-to-day basis.

This article proposes a path to meet the above challenge by providing guidance and discipline in quickly identifying and profitably exploiting market specific selling opportunities *with “existing” products and services*.

This **quick attack** sales process is characterized by **simplicity** and **short cycle times** from idea generation to market implementation. Start

- What level of plant involvement – if any - is necessary to configure the product(s) to market requirements?
- What is the incremental unit sales volume and profit margin?

Saying “We will sell boatloads!” or “Profits will come with volume!” do not constitute acceptable responses to the above questions. A good sales representative who is close to the customer will typically have good answers to many of the above questions, *simply because they are in the market every day*. **Capitalize on this knowledge**

## Quick Attack Sales Effectiveness! . . .

and assist with “quick” analysis (i.e. profit analysis), when necessary.

### Step Two: Select the Team

When choosing the sponsoring team that will exploit the **quick attack** selling opportunity, keep it small. Avoid bureaucracy! Team members will generally include the following:

- Field sales person – “External” contact; someone who is in front of the customer every day; knows the market; knows the specific selling application
- Technical product person – Plant representative; someone who can translate customer needs into product delivery within the context of existing plant and equipment
- Marketing person – “Internal” contact; individual responsible for shaping the elements of the marketing and sales program (promotional materials, website redesign, etc. . .)
- Promotion agency contact – Person responsible for creating and executing the various materials of the marketing and sales game-plan (i.e. Sales collateral, etc. . .)

### Step Three: Develop the Plan

The key here is to clearly define the market opportunity / sales objective, highlight the profit contribution associated with the opportunity, identify key milestones, and establish accountabilities. With all **quick attack** sales opportunities, it is strongly recommended the entire team visit customers – TOGETHER. Repeat . . . visit customers – TOGETHER! Joint visits promote teamwork, generate common insights, speed decision-making, and let customers know the business is serious about addressing their specific needs.

### Step Four: Equip the Field

Remember Step One? *Identify the opportunity.* Review this with the field

sales team. Establish a common link for how the effort was started. Review results from customer interviews. Share the learning.

Discuss important elements of the **quick attack** sales program (i.e. Email blasts, sales brochures, posters, customer lists, etc. . .). Identify how these elements address customer need.

Establish next steps with the field sales team . . .

- What market areas will be covered by this program?
- Who will train distributors (if needed) in these markets?
- When will training occur?
- Who will be responsible for executing program specifics (i.e. customer contact, direct mail, product demonstrations, etc. . .)?

With every **quick attack** sales program, urgency and accountability will promote excitement and momentum throughout the organization.

### Step Five: Track Progress

Once the sales team begins executing a **quick attack** sales program, tracking progress is critically important. Without adequate tracking – it is very difficult to improve upon mistakes, highlight successes, or understand program payout.

Generally . . . the tracking process will include the following:

- How long did it take to roll out key elements of the **quick attack** sales program (i.e. number of weeks)?
- How well did the sponsoring team respond to sales requests during the sales rollout?
- How well did the **quick attack** program elements (i.e. sales brochures, etc. . .) represent customer needs?
- The bottom line - did the sales effort generate incremental *profitable* sales volume?

Assuming initial sales success, the business will then be in a position to capitalize on the **quick attack** selling opportunity - expanding the effort to additional markets or adding other products or services to the introductory offering.

**Have you listened to your sales force lately?** If not - think **quick attack** sales effectiveness!

### **About the author . . .**

Andrew Ortyrn is a founding principal of Precision Catalyst, a management consultancy focused on helping organizations establish the critical links between their people, customers, and business profitability. A frequent speaker at executive roundtables and business conferences, he is the author of numerous articles on market positioning and its relation to business profitability. Mr. Ortyrn holds a Masters in Management from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management where he studied marketing and business policy. He holds a B.B.A., magna cum laude, from the University of Notre Dame. He is a Certified Public Accountant.

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