

Measuring Effectiveness

As you know, the sole criterion for measuring marketing effectiveness is profitably improved sales performance. If you don't set expectations for measuring outcomes—which means measuring sales ratios and trends—you won't really know to what degree your marketing efforts are successful. You may feel good creating flurries of activity, but you may not be doing well from them...at least not as well as you might like.

Measures are important for making comparisons. We know this is true, for example, when we finally decide it may be best not to chase every opportunity to make a sale. One wise agent says that for her, the important difference between marketing and selling is in the reminder *that there is a commission in every sale but not necessarily a profit in every commission*. Some sales are just better off jingling in someone else's pocket. In marketing, measures and measurements are critical.

When you get down to the level of the individual sale, however, where your one-on-one selling skills take over for the one-on-many marketing skills you employed to attract individual prospects from among your target groups, measuring effectiveness is difficult. Some people say it is impossible to do objectively, except to measure premium sold, commissions earned, and closing ratios. For the most part I agree that measuring sales effectiveness objectively is difficult, but it is not impossible. And sales ratios are not—and should not be—your only measures. Practitioners who focus only on the bottom line usually stay there.

My objective as a consultant is not to become too finite measuring the effectiveness of selling skills in each sales interview,

but simply to assure consistency of purpose and continuity of effort from one sales interview to another. As Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, "Foolish inconsistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Consistency has a lot to do with the long-term effectiveness of your marketing effort because it demonstrates your marketing integrity. When you walk your talk, things work out in the long run. When you don't, they don't.

Loose Lips Sink Sales

Many agents ad lib themselves into mediocrity, claiming that their successes are the result of their superior salesmanship, usually based on the gift of gab. These self-proclaimed sales experts age chronologically but never seem to mature with their markets, realizing only too late that their markets have passed them by. Their buyers become savvy and start requiring more information and education before they will make a decision, and they often also require being treated differently as well. The gift of gab as the basis for selling becomes a liability for many salespeople, and they adapt their styles to the changing needs of their markets or suffer severely. As I've observed in past columns, today's maturing consumers want to collaborate—not have to negotiate—with their professional advisors.

The Sales Rater

The Sales Rater is a tool that helps keep your selling efforts in tune with the relationship marketing you want to do as a routine in your practice. It is a straightforward measuring device for assessing your selling skills and habits on a case by case basis.

I've asked several highly successful sales persons, managers, and trainers from

financial services and other industries to evaluate and critique the Sales Rater, and the consensus is that it is accurate and complete. (See the Sales Rater at the end of this article.)



To use the Sales Rater, simply answer all ten questions after each sales call you care to rate. After you score yourself, consider whether you want to work on increasing your overall score or improving a particular facet of your selling routines.

When you use the Sales Rater to evaluate your own performance, be accurate. Self-assessment can be tricky. But, your goal is performance improvement, so be honest about what you can do better, and fair with yourself about what you already do well.

Do You Need It?

A common fallacy among sales people is to reverse the indicators when evaluating performance. That is, if your bottom line is good, you assume your skills must be up to par. This is not necessarily true. You may be on a lucky streak (which you cannot discount in selling); you may have hit a favorable economic period; you may have the hot product of the moment. The fact is, when sales are good, you still need to know whether the trend is attributable to your abilities or to other factors as well. And another fact is, you should always attempt superior sales performance, no matter how good your bottom line. It helps keep you competitive, even when other forces mitigate against your success.

Feel free to copy the Sales Rater for your personal use. The more you use it the better able you will be to improve and keep your sales performance well tuned and running smoothly.

Sales Rater

a checklist for improving results

Use this review form to rate sales performance and uncover areas that need improvement and coaching. Rate the sales performance on the following items, using the traditional 1-10 scale below. Higher scores indicate superior performance.

Very Low Low Average High Very High
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Score

	1. How effectively did I plan the opening interview? To what extent did I consciously and conscientiously review available information about the prospect and devise a strategy for conducting the interview?
	2. How well did I prepare my prospect for the interview? To what extent did I explain the benefit of thinking about a topic or gathering up documents for the interview? Did I ask my prospect to prepare?
	3. How well did I open the interview? Break the ice; explain the purpose of the call; establish the credibility of myself and the company(ies) I represent? Did I put my prospect at ease with my ability to solve problems in his or her particular situation?
	4. To what extent do I lead with questions, rather than statements? I know that the one who has the power is the one who asks the questions. Were my questions prepared and rehearsed, or did I “wing it?”
	5. How well did I demonstrate I was really listening to my prospect, and hearing what s/he was saying? Did I show understanding; take notes; reiterate important points s/he made; respond well to comments and questions? Was I demonstrably responsive?
	6. How well did I prepare for this interview? Did I rehearse and/or roleplay what I thought might be important aspects of this presentation? Did I create a strategy for leading my prospect to a logical, beneficial conclusion to buy; applying my knowledge of the steps in the buying cycle? Or did I rely on my wit and wisdom in the selling process?
	7. How effectively did I use visuals in my presentation? Did I “show” my prospect my concepts and proposal, or did I merely “tell” my prospect what I wanted to convey? Although I know a picture is worth a thousand words, did I apply that knowledge in this case?
	8. How well did I think through my prospect’s questions before answering? Did I ask clarifying questions to isolate real issues and objections from stalls, alibis, lies and excuses? Or did I just respond to every question as if it were an objection?
	9. How persistent was I trying to consummate the sale? Did I keep asking decision-making questions that were compelling, or did I back off too easily and give up my leadership role in the process? Did I fail to give my prospect enough opportunity to buy into and purchase the solution to the problem?
	10. To what extent did I follow up on this sales call? Did I call or write to thank this prospect and agree on the next <i>steps to be taken</i> , or did I leave that entirely to my prospect? Did I impress this prospect with my business-like orderliness and attention to detail, or did I leave things uncertain to any degree?
	Total Score: Review this and each sales call, looking for both improvement in my overall score and a good blend of skills in each critical step of the sales path. I should work to build upon my best skills, and build up those that need improvement.

Note: Work to increase the average score (Total Score divided by 10) as well as each part of the selling process. When I do joint work with others, I should ask for input and listen to how that person also rates me in each category. I should avoid overreacting by being offended or by believing everything others might say about me.