

“Resurrecting Your Closing Ratios”

By Michael S. Miller
President and CEO
Primo Solutions, LLC

It's fierce. It's competitive. It's about always winning and never losing. It's about always being number one. It's a way of life. It's what we have come to expect. What am I talking about? Well, it is certainly not the Super Bowl or the World Series. I am talking about every day in the life of a salesperson. It's not good enough to just hit our goals – we need to exceed them every day, week, month, quarter, and year. We are not getting awarded for the highest closing ratios – we are being asked to move even more residents in. It never seems to be good enough.

As managers of our sales force, we look at ourselves everyday in the mirror and ask the same question, “What am I going to do differently today to get those numbers higher than they were yesterday?” The common answers are:

1. We will reduce our lunch hour to a “lunch half-hour.”
2. We will make more cold calls.
3. We will send more emails.
4. We will find more referral sources.
5. We will hire more sales people.
6. We will send out more marketing materials.

I think you get the point. We could come up with many more ways to increase our closing ratio. These “ways” are the same old style of selling that was used back in the 80's and 90's. I am not saying they do not work – they just do not work alone. You have to sell

differently. It has been proven over the years that the more activity you have, the more deals you will close. However, we are dealing with a different generation of people. These are the Baby Boomers. Statistics show that Boomers represent 28% of the population today. In 1997, Bill Geist wrote that a Boomer turns 50 every 7 seconds. Ten years later, these same people are turning 60, and ten years from now they will be turning 70, and so on. So, we should not be focusing on just the old ways of selling. It is time to sell different.

When you are selling your community, the Boomer is expecting to be sold differently than if they were buying a car. This is a life changing event for them, and we need to make it a life changing experience for them. In order to do this, you have to go back to the grass roots of sales training – not the old way, but the new way. People buy on emotions and back it up with facts and logic. Therefore, we need to sell to the emotional side of the prospect. We need to introduce a sales process that is built on a foundation of building rapport, and allows the sales person to step through the process and remain in control. It's about listening. When we start listening, we will start caring about the prospect, and our main intent will be to help the prospect work towards a solution. There is a saying that “people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.” We show we care by really and truly listening.

The challenge we face in today's world of selling is the same challenge we have always faced. We spend thousands of dollars a year on training, and we are never sure if our sales people are implementing the process. So, how do we fix this problem? The fact is, you cannot expect what you do not inspect. The solution has been around for years and years - Mystery Shopping.

Mystery Shopping is the practice of using trained shoppers to anonymously evaluate products, customer service, sales, and etc. It goes by many names such as Secret Shopping, Performance Audits, Anonymous Audits, Telephone Checks, and In-Person Checks. It is not a "Big Brother" program designed to catch the sales person doing "the wrong things." It is designed to point out the areas of opportunities and to fine tune the strengths. Every industry is conducting mystery shopping. Mystery Shopping is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. However, a mystery shopping program is not effective unless the results are implemented into a training/coaching program.

During your next sales meeting, ask your sales people if they do a good job of building rapport. Ask them if they always ask for the close. The majority of them will answer yes. Next, I challenge you to implement a mystery shopping program. You will be surprised of the results. I cannot tell you how many of my clients have said, "I cannot believe they are not doing this. We have trained them over and over and they have assured us they do it." However, I can tell you how many clients have come back and said that mystery shopping has changed the way they sell and closing ratios are getting higher and higher. All of them have said it. There is a saying that the best time to plant a tree is yesterday. The best time to implement a mystery shopping and training program was yesterday. All Aboard! The train is leaving and you need to be on it. It's time to take the status quo of closing ratios and resurrect them to a new high. Take your seats, buckle in, and enjoy the ride!

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