



Preparing for the Challenge of the Holidays



It's not too early to begin thinking about the challenges of selling in December. Remember, not only do you have the end of December to consider, but you've also got the Thanksgiving holiday in November to complicate things.

Don't give up on selling in December just because of the holidays. It is true that it becomes more challenging because people's attention turn to family and other non-business pursuits of the heart. However, proper forethought and planning can still make December a profitable month.

I've personally closed some very large multi-million dollar deals between Christmas and New Years. They're not easy, but they are doable if you plan ahead.

Additionally, that week between Christmas and New Years can be a very productive time for you if you think about it and leverage the slower than usual pace that is generally present that week.

Food for Thought for December:

- Some prospects will have budgets that expire at the end of the year and money left to spend - Do you know who they are?
- Some prospects will have product/service needs but no budget left - Can you get creative with delivery or payment terms to take advantage of that year end challenge?
- People are generally in a good mood as the holidays approach
- If things do slow down for you in December, can you leverage that 'jolly spirit' by taking time to either say 'thanks' for their business, and/or ask for referrals, reference letters or a success story?
- When sending cards and gifts - make sure they arrive before the 14th
- Customers are either trying to close out the year themselves or they are already turning their attention to next year - Do you know which is which, and can you use December for planning sessions for next year?
- And speaking of next year - If you don't have a lot to close between now and the end of the year, why not turn your attention to getting a jump start on 2008 yourself? What could you be doing in December to get that first deal closed in early January? The whole year is better when Q1 gets off to a great start, right?



Closing Business in December:



If you are trying to close business by the end of year, remember, many decision makers (particularly high level ones) will very likely be out after the 14th this year. Make sure you are targeting that date as your 'end of month' if necessary. At the very least, your deal must be done in everyone's minds except for the crossing of the 'Ts' and the dotting of the 'Is' by then. If you can't get the deal totally done by then:

- Know and confirm the decision making process in detail, including knowing all of the players that MIGHT need to be involved, such as finance, legal or the board.
- Know who the decision maker is
- Know where the decision maker will be if you'll need a signature or an 'okay'
- Know how you're going to get the documents to the decision maker if necessary - no assumptions
- Make sure the decision maker is in the loop and expecting your package
- Know the decision maker's personal contact info, as well as their administrative assistants - just in case
- Have a 'coach' on the inside to help when 'Murphy' shows up and something changes at the last minute - assume this will happen
- Make sure the decision maker has YOUR personal contact information - you'd sure hate to blow this deal because the decision maker couldn't get a hold of YOU
- One last detail - make sure you also know all of the above regarding your internal resources necessary to close the business. Don't get surprised on Monday, December 31st (if your company will be open that day – if not it's Friday, the 28th) when your prospect asks for another change in the contract and YOUR people are no where to be found to approve it

Leveraging the time between Christmas and New Years:

- Take time to review your performance for 2007 - What did your ratios look like, what are you going to change/improve to meet next year's higher goals (you know they'll be higher, don't you?)
- Set your goals for 2008
- Some people DO work that week as well, so make some time to get on the phone to set some appointments with hard to reach people - Don't assume no one is there - And by the way, fewer gatekeepers will be there!
- Schedule quality time with customers who will be working - you'll get greater mind share when they're more relaxed - find out before the 14th, though
- And one last suggestion - MAKE the time to spend with your family and recharge YOUR batteries

