



## Join The Club, Get the T-Shirt



More than 33% of all sales professionals working out there today have never sold or managed a sales team through a recession.

That fact is enough to drive any un-seasoned sales rep or manager over the edge. I never think of myself as being antique, but the truth is I'm working my way through my third recession and feel nothing but optimism.

In retrospect, I've sold, managed sales teams and steered companies through the worst of business climates and can tell you this: If you keep your emotional intelligence and fear in check and show your customers or prospects the value you bring to them, you will emerge the other side stronger and richer for it.

Even facing the stark reality that we're all in this together, the fact that your customers have seen a double digit drop in sales activity (10-20%) means they still are at 80 to 90% of where they were.

Dealing with worried customers and sales managers is enough to make anyone sprout wiry gray hair. Sales managers are stressing about stressed sales reps and bosses breathing down their necks. It's enough to make anyone take up sobbing as a pastime. Observing the psychological side of people, I see situations blown out of control and exaggerated or folks still in denial.

One of the toughest aspects of this mess is deciding what is legitimate and what is exaggerated or imagined. I've shared conversations with sales reps where they're scared stiff that if they can't meet targets they will be fired. Then what? "How will I find another job?"

All this stressing only serves to diminish your ability to perform. How can anyone who is pushing himself or herself over the edge with worry possibly function at their optimum? And believe me optimum performance has never been in higher demand.

If you look at the situation from the other side of the mirror you will see that recessions open many opportunities through the downward driven prices and the competition flailing around in disarray. Pull your head out of the sand or pity-party for a moment and take a look around. Things may not be as bad as they appear on the surface.

You may have to work harder; sharpen your skills, make a few more calls and turn the heat up on your prospecting regime. Order-takers will be the most challenged. It will become painfully evident who can really sell.

You will need to exercise more patience with customers and deal with the fact that this year's results will be less stellar than last. Those willing to accept that they will need to change their style and attitude to fit the economic climate will emerge victorious. If you are too rigid, you will become a casualty.

I recently read about a technique called the "ABC method" for dealing with uncertainty and negativity. Here's how it goes:

A. On a piece of paper write down how you feel. "I'm worried, my sales suck and I think I might get canned" or "I'm 50% behind quota and I'm staring at month end" or "I'm a loser and can't sell".

B. Now look at what you wrote and decide what is causing you to think exaggerated thoughts and negative ideas. "I'm a loser."

C. Now look for arguments to disprove the exaggerated feelings. "I'm already half way to my target. I'm not a loser."

Granted recessions are not for the "faint-of-heart". However, you can do it. You can emerge on the other side victorious and just think you will then be a member of the "I Sold Through the Recession and Lived to Brag About It" Club. (I think you get a T-shirt.)

One final thought to keep things in perspective; you could have Obama's job.

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