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Lane on Sales - Strike Now

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As we have been meeting with and talking to clients and friends in the U.S. marketplace we continue to see similar symptoms in their sales forces:

- The team is comfortable, not hungry, even though the company misses goals;
- Sales to new accounts are way down or nonexistent;
- Competitors dropping prices at the slightest prompting potentially spoiling the industry;
- Sales training budgets at or near zero; and
- Perhaps most damning – fatalistic mood that “we can’t win in this environment”.

However, we see this as an opportunity. Even established companies, in this environment, can have what amounts to a first mover advantage. Right now while things are looking down and many competitors are feeling weak, winning firms, even old, established firms, are reenergizing themselves as though they were brand new. Firms that bounce back right away are looking so different from the general malaise condition in the marketplace that customers can’t help but respond.

These firms are looking at their sales forces to start with and determining are these people worth investing in? The especially savvy firms are doing this with standardized tests that predict sales performance potential. Once they have the right people on-board, they compensate and incent them based upon firm growth goals. Using the tests results, they make strategic investments in upgrading sales skills. Finally, they monitor performance, and adjust training, compensation, assignments, and even staffing levels in response to actual performance.

The key here is to attack this situation with verve. New energy is needed in most of the sales forces we encounter and the firms that provide that energy will find that they can simply walk away with market share the weaker firms think they should have.