

Introduction

I remember a time in the not-too-distant past when many sales managers in high-tech industries had an easy job just tracking sales, updating forecasts and giving out awards to their overachieving sales reps. Many technology markets were new and the demand was much greater than the supply. Those were times when sales people could earn a living picking up purchase orders every week without really having to *sell*.

Perhaps times like those will roll around again – but don't bank on it. In most industries today, competition is fiercer than ever, and customers are more knowledgeable and more demanding. Sales people need to be credible, convincing and capable. Sales managers need to be effective coaches, strong leaders, and competent managers. They need to understand the challenges faced by their sales teams and be there to help them succeed. There is no room for passengers, or for klinks.

A klink is an inept manager with limited management skills, no leadership talent, and the ability to get almost everything exactly wrong. Klinks have always been with us, but in today's highly competitive environment they are more of a liability than ever before.

No one has to be a klink. Sales managers and team leaders can choose to be SMART instead. People can choose to do better – but only if they know that there is a better way, and if they know the traps to avoid. I wrote this book to try to help corporate sales managers who want to lead successful teams, sales reps who aspire to be sales managers, and executives who are responsible for recruiting sales managers.

Everything in this book is based on my years of experience as a sales rep, as a sales team leader, and as a sales trainer in the world of telecommunications and computer software, hardware and services. But the messages are relevant to anyone who is involved in business-to-business technology or solution sales at any level and in any industry. I started out as an engineer, not as a sales person, and I admit that at first I didn't really appreciate how vital a role sales people played. As a sales person, I soon found out that being in sales was more challenging and frustrating than I had imagined. But I also learned that sales can be exciting, interesting and worthwhile.

To be successful, businesses need effective sales people. To be effective, sales people must have good leaders. What qualities does a good sales team leader need today? Having toiled over twenty years as a sales professional, I believe I have some answers to that question. And that's why I wrote this book.

Stu Schlackman, July, 2004