



CRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE SALES STRATEGY

Driving success in people, process and product



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I'm a big fan of the show *The Profit*, where billionaire entrepreneur Marcus Lemonis seeks struggling small businesses across various industries and offers his expertise, guidance and financial investment to help turn them around. In this show, Marcus challenges failing business owners to pay attention to three things: people, process and product. ►

Before I get too far, let me state that relationships are key, whether it's the people working with and for your ministry, those you're serving or those you're trying to reach as a new guest or donor. While some may hear "sales strategy" and think there's no "ministry" involved, my experience couldn't be further from the truth. I view every customer as a ministry opportunity.

Selling may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's important to recognize that we all play the role of customers at some point. Crafting an effective sales strategy is crucial for your camp to thrive in today's landscape. In this article, we will explore key elements of a successful sales strategy within a camp context, building around the pillars of people, process and product.

People

The right people and engagement can make or break your sales strategy. Consider the points below and see how your team aligns.

Relationships count

I'm wired to analyze metrics and dashboards, and yet, I find my most impactful moments in ministry come from bringing delight to our campers and church leaders. From complimentary family stays at camp to treating pastors to lunch or dinner when I'm in their city, every "customer" is a ministry opportunity!

Several times a year, I receive text messages from a local pastor sporting his "Cho-Wear." He pastors one of the largest youth ministries in Houston, and upon his first visit to Cho-Yeh, he complimented me on my Cho-Yeh-branded Patagonia jacket. When he arrived for his first winter retreat with us at Cho-Yeh, he mentioned my jacket again, and to his delight, I responded by handing him a box with his very own jacket.

This simple jacket has created a bond and friendship between us, and it brings me so much joy every time he sends me a photo of himself in that jacket from all over the world.

Every spring, Camp Cho-Yeh staff hand-deliver a bag of our famous Cho-Cookies to every summer camp family. Baking, bagging and hand-delivering over 20,000 cookies is a labor of love, but we believe it truly strengthens our relationship with our camp families.

Consider how you can build into new and existing relationships in genuine ways, and you may just cultivate a customer for life.

Identify your key target and team

Understanding your target audience and aligning your team with the right personnel is essential. Simply put, people who are "anti-sales" should not be the ones trying to win campers or groups. The people who answer your phones, emails, texts or online chats should understand what it's like to be the parent, pastor or leader on the other end.

Your approach should include getting each of your teams to identify the key customer, or "persona," that they are trying to reach. Who is that person and what is the felt need your ministry can meet?

For example, our retreats team's key persona is the youth pastor and we staff that team with people who have a background in church ministry. Our summer camp team targets moms, and our team of remote camp moms are available to answer questions for prospective summer camp mothers.

Speed of response matters

In a world where customers expect quick responses, speed is paramount. According to a study by InsideSales, your team is 100 times more likely to connect with a web-generated lead if you reach out within five minutes of the online inquiry (compared to waiting even 30 minutes).

Ditch the automated phone prompts or long online interest forms and be quick to have human conversations about the power of camp. You'll be pleasantly rewarded when your customers say, "Wow, I wasn't expecting to hear from someone so fast!"

Be problem-solvers vs. problem-pointers

Building a team of proactive problem-solvers rather than passive problem-pointers makes a difference. A phrase I've often heard when stepping into organizations that have plateaued is, "I've been saying this for years ...". This is a prime example of a problem-pointer. Imagine if each of your camp staff individually owned organizational problems? Rather than saying what should have happened, champion a culture of people that will say, "Here's what we're gonna do."

Know your customer

Deep customer understanding is a cornerstone of effective sales strategies. Research by Deloitte reveals that companies that utilize customer analytics are more than twice as likely to outperform their competitors in sales growth and profitability.

Your campers, parents and group leaders should be able to easily give you feedback, and from there, you should be sharing this honest feedback with your teams. I often find myself starting many conversations with our staff with the phrase, "Put yourself in their shoes," to help our team consider what it's like to be a parent or a decision-maker for a retreat group. ►

People

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Quick Tips for Successful Sales

4 tangible tactics

1. **Prioritize accessibility over automation.** While automation is beneficial, ensuring accessibility and personalized interactions remain crucial. A study by Accenture reveals that 83% of customers prefer dealing with human beings over digital channels for complex issues. So, answer your phones and be readily accessible via text, chat or DM; email is the last level of communication.
2. **Always have a next step.** Guide customers through their journey by providing clear next steps. If you're on the phone, don't end a conversation with, "Let us know if you have any other questions." Guide a next step by saying, "What time works for you tomorrow for us to get you registered?" Sales teams that incorporate a well-defined call to action experience a 50% increase in conversion rates, as stated by HubSpot.
3. **Keep scores visible.** Visualize your key metrics for all to see. Our team has a recruiting dashboard in Google Sheets that's accessible to the whole organization. Everyone can see how many people we're trying to recruit and how many we've recruited. This transparency helps build trust while driving performance.
4. **Let your value speak.** Instead of letting price be the primary focus, emphasize the unique value your camp offers. Too often, camps simply read off a price sheet or dates-and-rates chart to customers on the phone. If you consistently find price to be a barrier for your people, explore giving them payment options or offer coupons or promotions to ease the burden. Empower your staff to be able to offer options that will delight the customer.

Process



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Process

Keep your customer and team on track with smart processes.

Map your customer journey

A well-defined customer journey allows you to identify touchpoints and optimize interactions. What does it look like from beginning to end, from when someone calls your camp for the first time to when they drive out of the gate? I love doing this because it helps our team determine if there are too many steps in our processes and remove pain points.

According to a study by Forrester Research, companies that prioritize customer-journey mapping and invest in understanding their customers' experiences are likely to see an increase in customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention. Specifically, the study found that:

- 73% of customers are more likely to continue doing business with a company after a positive customer journey experience.
- 65% of customers feel more valued as a customer when companies proactively address their needs throughout their journey.
- 82% of customers who had a positive customer journey experience are more likely to recommend the brand to others.

Adopt a customer-centric approach

Design processes with the customer in mind, not just the employee. Often what is easiest on the staff results in a poor experience for the customer. I often challenge our staff to “be the customer” when thinking about the experiences we want to create. Being able to tell a camper parent or retreat leader, “I know what it’s like ...” means you’ve taken a customer-centric approach.

Maintain mission alignment

Don’t lose sight of your mission. It’s easy, if you’re like me, to get caught up in data and results. But all those metrics are meaningless if your staff teams lose sight of your *why*. Research conducted by Gallup reveals that organizations with a strong mission and purpose experience 41% less absenteeism and 17% higher productivity. Take intentional time when you have your staff together to remind them of your mission. ►

Product



Product

There's a saying in the business world that the product is the marketing. If you don't have a great product, it's nearly impossible to effectively market it. But in our world, we can view our "products" as life change, lifelong memories and eternal impact. When your product is that powerful, you want to make sure people know about it.

Quantify goals

Setting clear, measurable goals is essential for driving success, and it's also important to keep your team's eye on the transformative impact that your camp is striving to make.

Your goals can be measured in number of first-time campers, number of returners, number of camper days/nights or number of decisions for Christ made at camp.

Years ago, I set an audacious goal to double our day camp attendance in one year. We wrote that number at the top of a big white board and each time we hit a benchmark, we rang the bell in our office to celebrate. Everyone knew the number, knew where we stood and was overjoyed when we hit it! Winning teams know what they are striving for, and you can't win if you don't know the goal.

Celebrate team wins

Recognize and celebrate team achievements regularly. Silos are a reality of any organization, and that's OK! Take time to highlight what each department of your camp is doing well. Here's a simple way to say it: "Because of the hard work of (insert person or team name), the product was (insert win or achievement), which helped us achieve our mission to (insert mission)."

Showcase your results

People should be able to read and see impact immediately upon their first encounter with your camp. From Google and Facebook reviews to Instagram stories and Reels, it should be easy for everyone to see the impact your camp makes on lives. According to a report by Nielsen, 92% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know, while 70% trust online reviews from strangers.

Tell compelling stories

Harness the power of storytelling. According to a study by Stanford University, stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts alone. Encourage your team to share stories with people who are interacting with your camp. For me, simply telling another parent that I send my own children to camp immediately helps them see me as a partner and ally.

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At the end of the day, your camp must have a strategy in place. We have the joy and privilege of "selling" the incredible "products" of life change, lifelong memories and eternal impact. At Camp Cho-Yeh, our whole team knows our mission, which is ultimately the driving force behind our strategy, that we exist to be a place where Jesus Christ transforms lives through meaningful relationships and outdoor adventures. ■



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