



# Time Management, Now More Than Ever

Dave Brock, Partners In EXCELLENCE

**Dimensions of EXCELLENCE™ is based on the four dimensions of performance and organizational excellence. These are the foundation for our development programs oriented to achieving performance and organizational excellence in sales, marketing, and customer service.**

**These white papers provide concepts and ideas based on the application of these principles of these programs and our work with our clients. We welcome your comments and observations on these topics.**

I never thought I would write an article about time management for sales and marketing professionals, frankly I thought it was a boring topic. In today's business world, everyone is time poor. People have too much going on and work long hours. Do the long hours really produce results? Everyday, the reality of how sales professionals spend their time is astounding! Consider this:

- In assessing the sales effectiveness of a very large organization, we found the sales people were spending about 14% of their time in sales related activities. That includes all time with customers selling, all time spent preparing for sales calls, responding to new opportunity related questions, and related selling activities. Where were they spending the rest of their time? Over 40% of their time was spent purely on internal activities: management reporting, administrative activities, more management reporting, internal meetings, and more management reporting. It seemed that each different product group constantly requested reports, not realizing the impact these requests had on the sales people. Sales people were spending their time responding to these different requests, not selling!
- Working with a major systems integration company, we discovered the sales people were making an average of 2 sales calls/meetings per week on customers. 2 SALES MEETINGS PER WEEK!!! What's wrong with this picture?! The sales people were working hard, but on what? This is not just a problem with this client, unfortunately we see similar things with many other sales organizations.

These are just two examples, we see more every day. It is not a question of working hard. Every professional we meet is working hard. 65-70 hour work weeks are not uncommon. Look at any professional's schedule and you will see meetings back to back. Try to take people out of their territories for a few days. In sales training workshops, we see real panic on the faces of sales people, how are they going to ever catch up on the work they aren't getting done?

## Working Smarter

One of the keys to increasing sales productivity is not working harder, but working smarter. Sales management needs to carefully assess how their people are spending their time. In the case of the first example cited, the implementation of a SFA system helped reduce reporting activity by over 15%--doubling the time available for sales related activities!

**Action Item For Management:** How are your people spending their time? Survey your people, periodically:

- How much time are they spending in meetings with customers addressing new sales opportunities? (These meetings can be telephone or face to face meetings.)
- How many of these meetings do they have a week?
- How much time are they spending preparing for these calls?
- How many of these meetings are with new prospects (within current customers, or with new customers)? How many of these meetings are with current customers?
- How much time are they spending in meeting with current customers on customer service/satisfaction issues? These are important meetings, but too much time could be an indicator of problems.
- How much time are they spending in internal meetings, not related to new sales opportunities? What are these meetings accomplishing?

**For more information on our products and services, contact:**

**Partners In EXCELLENCE**  
22715 Barlovento  
Mission Viejo, CA 92692  
PH: 949-305-7146  
FAX: 949-305-7164  
Email: [info@excellenc.com](mailto:info@excellenc.com)  
[www.excellenc.com](http://www.excellenc.com)

© 1997-2003 Partners In EXCELLENCE, All Rights Reserved.

- 
- How much time are they spending doing internal reports? Who is asking for the reports? Are they really necessary? Are they being used (Guess what, much of the information people are asking for are not using the results.)?
  - How much time are they spending in meetings? What meetings? Are they appropriate?
  - How much time are they spending in training?
  - How much time are they spending in travel? To/from customers, other travel?
  - How are they spending the remainder of their time?

Some basic stuff, but unfortunately, we aren't paying attention to it. Look at the time drains your people face and start activities that take their time away from selling and supporting customers. Consider implementing tools to help doing this. Effectively implemented, SFA systems can dramatically reduce time spent on internal reporting.

Next, look at how your people spend their time with customers. Are they using that time as effectively as possible. As an example, we find sales people tend make two times the number of sales calls than are really needed. Much of this is the result of poor planning, calling with the wrong people, ineffective sales opportunity strategies, pursuing low probability sales opportunities, and many other things. Make sure your people are being as effective as possible in every activity with customers.<sup>i</sup>

### **Working Harder:**

Now the bad news, working harder helps too! Unfortunately, I run across too many sales people, that while busy aren't doing the right activities. They spend a lot of time calling on their customer friends, they welcome the time spent on internal meetings, they find numerous ways to spend their time doing things other than calling on customers.

I'm not sure why this has happened, some of its complacency, some sales people are succumbing to the non-productive time drains, often, they have no idea how many calls they should be making a week. There are many reasons. However simplistic, it's time to look at sales activity levels.

**Action Item For Managers:** You need to set expectations for sales activity levels. Set goals for the following:

- How many new prospects/customers should be contacted each week?
- How many meaningful meetings should the sales people have with customers each week? (Talking to the receptionist doesn't count.)
- How many telephone contacts should your sales people be making each week?
- On average, how many sales opportunities should each sales person be pursuing at a time? (How many do they have in their funnel?)

Sounds a little like big brother! I never thought I would make these recommendations, I am not trying to develop a "sales sweatshop," but unfortunately I see too many sales people making too few calls. Start setting goals for these, and watch your business volumes grow. Once the activity levels are at the right level, then focus on developing their effectiveness.

<sup>i</sup> For more information, refer to our article: [Stop Winging It To Reduce Your Sales Cycle By 50%, Guaranteed!](#)