

Using the 2010 Miller Heiman Sales Best Practices Study with Clients and Prospects

2009 was a challenging year that most sales organizations are eager to put in the past. But there are lessons to learn from 2009 to help make 2010 and beyond successful.

Right now, we should be:

- Challenging executives with thought-provoking questions
- Providing specific best-practices that will have an impact

The focus for 2010 will be revenue growth. Given the extensive cost-cutting that took place in 2009, companies can no longer “cut” their way to earnings.

2009	2010
Cost cutting	Top-line revenue
Layoffs and closings	Re-orgs and consolidation
Quarter to quarter	Growth target
Cautious spending	Cautious spending

Hypotheses of what sales leaders are facing:

- Having cut all beyond the fat, driving sales is now the only option to show profit
- Expectations that a recovering economy means immediate increase in spending are unrealistic. Customers are still cautious about their spending.
- Leaders want to know how to get sales managers to drive results – sales force and front line manager productivity

We need to be disciplined about demonstrating our sales process with decision makers. Show them that they need their teams to sell using our methodologies because they work.

The following are examples of Valid Business Reasons, based upon the 2010 research, to use in conversations with clients and prospects.

Topic: Companies stopped doing many of the sales best practices that had previously proven effective for them.

Sales performance results were obviously down across the board last year, but the results of our just-released annual sales best practices study showed a decline in the application of sales best practices as well. Those who held steady on these best practices, a group we identified as World-Class sales organizations, were more likely to see growth in every metric included in our study such as:

- a. Close rates
- b. Quota achievement
- c. Customer retention
- d. Qualified leads

There is more to discuss about best practices from the study. So you can implement the tools that will help sales managers coach salespeople to quickly identify the specific actions needed to close deals in their funnel.

Topic: Existing Account Growth/Retention (Relationship Management)

My clients experience the 80/20 rule when it comes to their customers. It's common to have a small number of accounts that drive a significant amount of revenue. Protecting these corporate assets is more important than ever before given the volatility in economic markets. We just announced the 2010 results of the most comprehensive study in the world as it relates to best in class sales organizations, and the results point to areas of differentiation. Like...

- Jointly setting long-term objectives with strategic clients
- Building and nurturing dialog and relationships with the highest executive levels
- Collaborating across departments to manage strategic clients

Topic: Getting to executive levels (Opportunity Creation and Opportunity Management)

A. Economic uncertainty and budget restrictions have driven decisions higher in most companies. It's changing the buying process and leaving many sales organizations ill-prepared to adjust their sales strategies. We've been working with many clients in your space recently to improve the likelihood for securing time with senior executives. Additionally, our just-released sales best practices study revealed that World-Class sales organizations are two to three times more likely to:

- Have formalized executive-to-executive selling programs
- Gain access to key decision makers in a large deal
- Be very effective at selling at an executive level

We can share details about these best practices and any others from the study you'd like to learn to help your organization improve win rates and accelerate deal flow this year.

B. Selling in this New Economy leaves salespeople more vulnerable than ever to spinning their wheels on deals that will never close. It is imperative that an organization focus on those opportunities most likely to result in profitable business. The recently released *2010 Miller Heiman Sales Best Practices* study reveals that World-Class sales organizations are three times more likely to:

- Have a consistent approach to prospecting
- Have alignment between sales and marketing as to what customers want and need

The result is more qualified opportunities to pursue and better close rates. I'd like to schedule some time to share with you the sales best practices that successful companies deploy to get results during challenging times.

Topic: Pricing Pressure

In this economy, it is understandable that salespeople will resort to heavy discounting to win new business. Our recently released *Sales Best Practices Study* revealed that World-Class sales organizations are over three times more likely to agree that *when they give price concessions they get comparable value in return*.

And, they are more than a third *less* likely to see the need to discount in order to win.

Customers don't make decisions on price alone. Are your salespeople able to effectively uncover the real challenges your customers are trying to solve? This is an essential part of differentiating your solution and minimizing pricing pressure.