

Hunter Vs Farmer

Have you ever convinced someone to buy something? How did you do that? Did they ever want your advise again? Did you continue to have a good relationship with them? Are you still in contact with them?

Just some of the questions that come to mind when you actually think of the art of (war) selling. So how does one sell? Different industries, different styles and different demands, it really boils down to what works for you and what works for your product.

Sales technique's that work for management consulting won't necessarily work for hotel sales. Although both sales managers may be targeting the same discerning client/guest, the knowledge and understanding of the prospects and his requirements will be very much different. The prospect has to be educated about how much his business will benefit from a consulting service, whereas, he may already know that there is a new Park Hyatt in Goa but only needs to be told of the facilities and services that are available for his pleasure , experience and indulgence.

So, even though there are many sales methods and techniques, the choices are narrowed as you hone into your market and what its needs and expectations may be.

With that said, let's look at some of the idiosyncrasies of the Hotel sales market.

Fast moving towards and becoming two sides of the same coin in hotel sales are the Regional Sales / Commercial Sales teams and the National Accounts / Relationship Sales / Top Accounts / Key Accounts Teams.

So who leads this wolf pack? Will it be the person who ensures that business cycle and existing accounts productivity continues to grow and provides account retention (in other words) the defense line, when opponents or competitors try to break key accounts from you.

Or will it be the lone ranger / the sniper / the hunter / the offence line which will identify new business and break competition accounts and finally hand them over to the retention team to service.

Who provides the meal for this family? Hence who deserves to lead it?

Key or National Accounts and its love affair with the boy next door (The Farmer):-

Once an account is qualified in terms of potential and is broken by the hunters it is then handed over to the farmers who then act as gatekeepers to service this account on a weekly, biweekly and for some even daily basis, these Key or National Accounts are normally qualified by their potential of huge amounts of business to the hotel company (in terms of Revenue and yield these accounts are usually qualified over the 25 lakh worth of business in a year mark)

So it becomes important that the manager, besides having the basic traits of a good sales person, also has these extra special qualities to ensure continuance of this love affair with your hotel

- **The 2 P's** –Two very important traits for Key Account Managers are patience and perseverance, with sales cycles for hotels extending from weekly to taking months or even a year or two in advance, patience and drive keep him working the account. These qualities also are essential when he is dealing with varied personality types in the same account, listening patiently as guests and contacts in the account talk and influencing them to indulge in your hotel are valuable qualities.
- **H (ear)** - Listening is perhaps the strongest most important quality of all. A good sales manager must have the ability to listen to the customer's needs, complaints, feedback, interests, and anything else they want to talk about. With his job emphasis on retention and expansion of the account, if this person does not listen very closely to the customers needs, and then take that information and turn it into an offering, he won't be able to establish the long term relationship that is necessary in key account selling and you will surely lose the account
- **Pleasant and Adaptable** - A warm smile and handshake always go a long way at a sales call, simply having a cheerful personality helps make inroads into many guest doorways and relax many a tough situations. This person easily deals with any type of guest personality, from the uptight to the boring or jovial.

Regional Sales team - The Hunters-with their .38 James Bond style Walter PPK:-

Pure hard sellers and self made businessmen share many personality traits. Both normally excel because of their enthusiasm for what they offer in terms of product or services and their bullish attitude that mostly takes them to the end of a deal.

These are the men separated from the boys, the dirty rotten gangsters who believe that all is fair in love, war and business. They walk into markets with the intuitions of a hyena, the speed of a cheetah and the bite of the mamba, attacking competition and all new business to grow revenue for the hotel.

Five essential skills that the hunter possess ...

He / She can

- Keep the **attention** of the prey / prospect through talk, personality style/demeanor, tongue or any other possible business prospecting methods.
- Give birth to **interest** in the hotel by the prospective guests.
- Fire the **desire** of the prospect for the hotel by using curiosity, brand appeal, service standards, features and even letting them sample the hotel or in business terms test-drive the hotel.
- Build **belief** by using statistics/comparisons / testimonials and examples and referrals of happy campers.
- Create **results** and encourage the prospective customer with their ability to customize to his needs and creativity to close the sale.

Surprising as it is, did you know that it costs more than five times as much to get a new customer as it does to keep an existing customer, and 80 percent of most hotel business is given by 20 percent of its accounts.

No doubt that it is tough out there, so where do we go from here, both managers control a fair share of the pie and both are masks of the same brand and yet each one is incomplete without the other.

The skill set that earlier made sales people successful during the early 90's boom in India is not necessarily the skill set that will help them succeed in today's competitive blood bath.

Not everyone, farmer or hunter can make the transition, some will pick up the tools of the new skill set and embrace the transition, other's will simply not be capable of doing that.

It will always be those managers who can adapt and customize their skills according to the changing times and situations that will be able to lead business because like it or not **change alone will always be the only constant.**