

WELCOME TO THE
INAUGURAL ISSUE
OF OUR NEWSLETTER

"Opportunities multiply as they are seized." — Sun Tzu, author of the Art of War

After nearly 30 years in the corporate world I have elected to seize the opportunity to form my own consulting company - Earle Durham and Associates. We are a Sales Management Consulting firm, with an emphasis on the business-to-business marketplace. My vision is to assist our clients in significantly improving their "Sales Force Effectiveness" as measured by

- ✓ *Accelerated revenue growth*
- ✓ *Improved profit margins*
- ✓ *Reduced sales and marketing expenses as a percent of revenue*

So who are the "Associates"? Over my career I have had the honor and privilege to develop an extensive network of business associates – customers, suppliers, industry experts, co-works, channel partners, manufacturing representatives, recruiters, and yes even a few consultants. Many of these business associates have become my closest friends. Partnering with these very talented people through an informal network allows us to provide a broader range of services to our clients. In coming issues of our newsletter I'll take the opportunity introduce associates, asking them to provide an article of interest in their areas of expertise.

In this month's edition I'll introduce you to our new business. In our featured article I challenge you to "Seize the opportunities" as the global economy rebounds from our current recession.

My goal for these newsletters is to provide relevant information and ideas that our clients and associates can utilize to continuously improve their team's "Sales Force Effectiveness". I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. I welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas for future editions of our newsletter.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from you soon,

Sincerely,

Earle

EARLE DURHAM AND ASSOCIATES LAUNCHES WEBSITE

Concurrent with launching our business we have launched our website at www.EarleDurhamAndAssociates.com . Our website goes into more details of the services we offer and provides links to some of our recommended associates businesses. We will also provide links to our newsletters and blogs. Come check it out.

Special thanks to Cory LaViska of [A Beautiful Site](#) for his help in getting our website up and running.

INTRODUCTION TO OUR SERVICES

Here's a listing of the services we provide. Please see our website or contact us for additional information.

- Assessment Audits
- Assist manufacturers (foreign or start-ups / spinoffs) in establishing an Americas sales organization
- Optimize Sales Channel - Direct, Manufacturers Representatives, or Hybrid sales team, what's best for your organization
- Optimize your Distribution Channel
- Implement or optimize your Strategic Account Program
- Review and optimize Sales Force Compensation Plans
- Optimize your existing CRM / Project tracking system or as appropriate selecting and implementing new system
- Due diligence via assessment audits of acquisition candidates
- Assist Manufacturers Representatives and Distributors with supplier qualification audits

FEATURE ARTICLE

Are you and your Sales Team positioned to “Seize the Opportunities” as the global economy rebounds?

During these tough economic times many companies have gone into the survival mode:

- Making significant cutbacks, including their sales channel
- Delaying product launches
- Consolidating manufacturing sites and reducing capacity
- Consolidating product lines
- Consolidating and / or changing vendors, in some cases replacing those who have gone out of business

Recently I've heard a few analysts predict that May will be viewed as the end of the current USA recession once the final numbers are reported. Hopefully they mean May 2009!! Whether or not you believe that the recession has ended, all of us should be preparing to take advantage of an increase in business opportunities as the economy rebounds.

Personally I'm doing that by launching my new consulting business. What are you and your customers doing to get out of the survival mode and back into a growth mode?

Harvard Business Review surveyed readers in January 2009, and found that more than one-fifth of 1,024 respondents admitted that their trust in suppliers had been shaken over the past 12 months.

Here are a few ideas to consider so you can seize and multiply your opportunities:

Shore up your customer relationships

- Have you clearly identified your strategic accounts, and have done everything possible to ensure that your customer values the relationship as much as you do! When's the last time your management team has had face to face meetings with your strategic customers?
- Are you sure that your customers are not part of the 20% that have lost trust in their suppliers? If so take corrective actions now by finding out what the problem is, fixing it and making sure they know you did by closing the loop!
- If you aren't part of the 20% great, then seize the opportunity to take share from your competitors who have lost that trust! This may be a great way to expand your product or service offering.

Recession is defined as a period of general economic decline; specifically, a decline in GDP for two or more consecutive quarters.

Reevaluate your target market segments

- Take a close look at your strategic accounts and market segments. Have there been any significant changes; shifts in market share, mergers, bankruptcies, or other financial turmoil? If so what adjustments have you made in your strategic plans, product offerings, services and sales alignment?
- Has there been a significant shift in your targeted market segments? Are there once strong players who have lost market share? Do you need to change the focus of your sales team to target new players? Is your relationship as strong with them as with the traditional players? If not what are you doing to gain account penetration at these new accounts?
- Are you ready to expand into new geographies or market segments? If so have you clearly identified the key customers and the sales channel required to penetrate these new accounts?

Reevaluate your distribution channel

- All of the same questions apply here as above for strategic customers and target market session.
- In addition you also need to take a close look at your channel partners to see if they are still meeting your partnership needs: proper inventory, pricing strategies, and are you getting the mind share of their sales team?
- Is it time to consolidate your channel? Or do you need to add partners to support underserved market segments or geographies?

Take this opportunity to upgrade your sales talent

- Have you assessed your sales talent and is there a need for an upgrade? Can you make the required changes while building stronger relationships at your strategic accounts?
- Do you have the resources to seize the opportunities? Or has the economic conditions forced you to make cutbacks?
- This is a great time to hire top talent; will you react before your competitors?

OUR PROCESS

We utilize a flexible process of Engagement, Assessment, Recommendations, Implementation and Measurement of Results. Go to the process page of our website for more information.

- **Engagement** – meet with your management team to get a very clear understanding of the vision, goals and expectations of your sales and marketing organizations. Also, to understand the perceptions of the current gaps in performance and opportunities for improvements.
- **Assessment** – (typically 2-3 weeks)
 - Interview key stakeholders – sales team members, channel partners, customers (current and potential as possible)
 - Review available data – sales reports, product mix, customer concentration, sales funnel metrics, market share
 - Review financial data – expenses ratios, profit margins, profitability by account
 - Review business processes and tools – business tracking systems in place and effective, ability to assess where sales people are spending their time, strategic account program in place.
 - Review sales compensation plan – does it align with business objectives, is it effective in driving results?
 - Overall evaluation – Do your customers value the service being provided by your sales organization?
- **Recommendations** – we review the information gathered during the assessment process and will generate a recommendation report looking for areas where we can make the largest immediate impact on improving your “Sales Force Effectiveness” as measured by:
 - Accelerated revenue growth
 - Improved profit margins
 - Reduced sales and marketing expenses as a percent of revenue
- **Implementation** – at this stage we work with your management team to determine the implementation plan. When plan is agreed upon, project timeline, action plans etc will be developed and monitored till project is completed.
- **Measurement of Results** – No project is complete until we can measure the results. Are we seeing the productivity gains we forecasted, if not what corrections are required? We will work with you to make sure the metrics are in place and tracked.

BONUS OFFER

As we launch our new venture we are offering a **free one hour telephone consultation** session.

During this session I'll conduct a phone interview with you and / or your staff to assess your current status and to identify areas that would warrant further assessment through our assessment process.

Contact us today at 919-995-5796 or Earle@EarleDurhamAndAssociates.com to schedule your session!

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

I hope you find this newsletter valuable, but if you ever choose to opt out simply email Earle@EarleDurhamAndAssociates.com and I'll remove you from our mailing list.

On the other hand if there are others that you would like us to add to the mailing list, simply forward this to them and have them log on to our [sign up page](#).

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