Most companies conduct an annual performance review cycle, invite their employees to fill out a self-evaluation, and dispense money to those who receive high-performance evaluations. However, modern research indicates that if you want real performance, passion, and loyalty, you have to break the performance management myth and rewire how you get employees to their highest level of productivity.

Outdated and still overused is the compensation-based, annual goal setting performance management process. The performance management cycle where the manager tries to connect the individual’s goals to things that need to get done. These goals may or may not be connected to a big company initiative because most often or not executives have a hard time nailing down the company’s direction. If execs do nail the direction of the company, they have an even harder time communicating the goals and objectives without a lot of lofty words and spin. In the event they do accomplish both – setting company initiatives and also communicating them – they struggle even more with aligning those goals to organizational processes, structure, and org charts. Each year when companies try their very best (with the best of intentions), it has been my experience that they spend six months of the year trying to create, align, reorg, and reassign tasks, and another six months of the year trying to document, communicate, and get employees on board. In the meantime, their more agile and adaptable competitors have been concentrating on new business, nimble processes, and taking care of not only their customers, but also those of the competition.

Re-engineering a performance management-based culture to focus on innovation, agility, and new thinking is no easy task. Most companies would have to re-engineer their compensation practices and also their human resources departments to create a performance management system based on customer, accountability, passion, agile processes, and aligned talent. Companies who have built their compensation practices on customer satisfaction (internal and external), accountability, and innovation have excelled because they are focused on the customer and on new ideas. It can be done.

Nike rescued 13 million used plastic bottles, melted them down, and wove them into polyester. Then they created high-performance jerseys (eight bottles per shirt) worn by nine teams during last summer’s World Cup. The company also released the Environmental Apparel Design Tool, which helps industry designers make environmentally-friendly decisions. Groupon is revolutionizing the coupon market. CEO Andrew Mason himself is a person of uncommon candor: “I feel like a lot of companies invest a lot of energy and money in trying to figure out who their customer is and how to be just like that, and it never comes across as genuine. The companies that I like to do business with are – even if you find them a bit strange – genuine and real.” Groupon’s culture is an unusual amalgam of The Second City humor, traditional newsroom (a few hundred employees have done time at one or the other), and good old-fashioned salesmanship. (Fast Company, 2012)

It is absolutely critical, though, that companies finally stand up and realize the amount of unprecedented change that we all experience and somewhat may have become immune to. I know we are sick and tired of hearing about change, adaptability, agile project management, and flexibility; however, the truth of the matter is that we live in a new world that is accelerated with new information, new opportunities, and changing and challenging technologies. And yet, we refuse to change some of the fundamental business practices like performance management that just don’t work anymore. It’s like using an analog phone in a digital world. In the words of Carlos Ghosn, chairman and CEO of Nissan: “It is uncomfortable, but what makes our job interesting is that it’s not routine. I can’t imagine two
...if you want real performance, passion, and loyalty, you have to break the performance management myth and rewire how you get employees to their highest level of productivity.
years down the road I’ll be doing the same thing I am doing today. I’ll have to adjust. Every generation needs to learn how to relearn. With the electric car, we’re hiring electricians and special-materials chemists, and we’re telling our staff we have too many people with other skills. We say, you’re going to have to adapt to the new technology. It’s not easy, but it’s not impossible. What you’re learning today is good, but tomorrow you’re going to need something else.” (Fast Company, 2012)

A replacement system for the outdated performance management system is not going to be an easy or quick fix. It is so embedded in most cultures that it will need to start with a culture shift away from traditional top-down, management-dispensed reward and hiring systems. The fundamentals that companies need to lay as a foundation for switching to a new performance-driven culture based on the customer, innovation, and ideas include:

» **Hire and Fire Fast:** Companies really have to take out the “old school” thinking from their companies, even if it requires getting rid of someone who has been loyal and has helped build the company. If that person resists change and continues to require “same ole, same ole” based on what they know, senior leadership needs to act and act quick. Secondly, hire fast and take a risk on a person who has the capabilities and distinguishing factors; don’t hire someone the same as the majority of the previous hires. Mason (the CEO of Groupon) is a music major. We often get caught in the trap of having to hire the person with the most experience; what about the person with the least experience and the most passion and new ideas.

» **Build an Accountability Project Management Culture:** Give employees raises based on successful project completion. If they have successful projects and have held themselves accountable for moving the customer forward, the company forward, and revenue forward, it may be that they are given a raise four times a year. If they have failing projects and people struggle to work with them, give them a chance to improve (most often it is attitude not skill set), and then cut the umbilical cord. This is business, and there is a time to take care of your good employees and a time to sever the entitled employee who is not delivering results.

» **Reward Risk and Failure and Assign Consequences to “Sameness”:** If someone tries something new, accepts accountability for failure, and teaches someone else how not to repeat his/her failure, that person should be rewarded. If they are consistently misjudging the situation and failing, they should probably be redirected. I would rather manage someone who is trying and trying than manage someone who is resisting and resisting and showing all the usual signs of “sameness”: It’s someone else’s fault, it is so hard, the customers won’t understand, it will never work here, we will run ourselves out of business, etc., etc.

We can’t keep doing what we have been doing; we all know the definition of that (insanity). Changing a management-driven culture to a culture of innovation, risk, hard decisions, and accountability will help you win in the future.
Pitch the paper clips.

Go beyond the electronic file cabinet and experience the amazing efficiencies of Paperless ERP from MetaViewer. From AP to AR and HR to the CFO—everyone can share the efficiencies of 100% paperless transactions. MetaViewer gives you paperless invoice and order capture with OCR, automated workflow, real-time visibility and full Microsoft Dynamics® ERP integration. In Paperless ERP, nothing compares to MetaViewer. So pitch the paper clips and visit www.metaviewer.com.
DOING WORKS MUCH BETTER THAN MERELY TELLING

Indeed, the very best, most workable marketing and sales training actually is guided practice. Not content per se. Especially not memorizing and then regurgitating product specs. Not a zillion PowerPoint visuals. Not “wowee, ain’t our training cool because it’s online and social.” Rather, guided practice…the “doing” that helps sales and marketing people actually perform.

In business, product and company education merely gets them ready. But if that is all you provide, you will get a bell curve of performance, which raises the question, how many “C” marketers or salespeople can you afford?

Conversely, training gets them going! Once you establish the required performance level and the verbs/behaviors that enable it, you can and should train to those criteria. Always provide for rehearsal/practice. Reps who cannot meet performance requirements are called gone. Reps who perform to standard are called keepers. Reps who excel are called experts or stars.

IMPLEMENT THE RIGHT KIND OF TRAINING

You have four options, and each has dramatic cost, performance, and results implications. Here’s how to choose:

No Training. Cheap, but very expensive. Yet some individual managers, and some entire companies, believe that because they “only hire pros,” training is not necessary. (Let us be thankful that doctors, air traffic controllers, the military, and our favorite sports teams believe otherwise.) We all know the performance and revenue effects of no training. Here’s another downside: nowadays, the no training approach invites lawsuits by terminated employees who claim the reason for deficient performance is they were not trained.

Casual. Typically, casual training means on-the-cheap, on-the-job with other reps. This often results in poor practices and bad habits being sustained and spread. Casual also means the manager who trains “when I have time.” The worst sort of casual is when training is optional, which translates to “take all the training you want but do it on your own time and pay for it yourself.”

Half-hearted. This may be the most common: companies provide training content and materials but there is no practice or reinforcement. And many times, topical product training is the only training; skills training is not included. The other form of half-hearted is where reps attend a half-day public seminar, then hit the phones or the street, and are expected to “blow the sales doors off” immediately.
Genuine. Management endorses, enforces, and participates in an ongoing, structured process. Not only do the reps get training and materials, but also practice time, support, and continuity. Genuine training generates “motivation by inclusion,” builds the reps’ confidence, and enables them to earn more by marketing better or selling more. Also, with genuine training, reps usually stay with you longer, enhancing stability and reducing costly turnover.

MAKE TRAINING A PROCESS, NOT AN EVENT

Most professions require ongoing training. Airline pilots, surgeons, attorneys, accountants, and your own computer technicians all have to retrain and re-qualify often to keep their standing and advance their careers. So how come some marketing and sales organizations believe that training is something to do only once?

It’s much better to plan and budget for ongoing training that parallels your business growth curve and the intended career development path of your reps. Do not rely solely on training from hardware and software manufacturers; they have their own marketing and selling perspectives which may or may not match yours. Also, conduct quarterly progress reviews and semi-annual refresher, reinforcement, and/or advanced programs.

DOES TRAINING REALLY PAY OFF?

Absolutely! For one of our clients, the combination of training plus tenure produced three times the sales lift versus reps who had tenure only. Plus, “Sales & Marketing Management” magazine reports that “top level salespeople spend 29.6 days a year honing sales skills and product knowledge. New reps, 73.4 days.” How about yours?

Michael A. Brown is president of BtoBEngage in Austin, Texas. His company has provided guidance and training to many high-tech firms, including Microsoft and several Partners. You can reach him at Michael@btobengage.com or 800-373-3966.
**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE A WINNER!**

Congratulations to Wanda Rowden of Team Technology for winning our Summer 2012 contest.

Now for the next round of the Word-A-Ganza! Posted below are 25 words that relate to the topics and themes included in this issue of The Partner Channel Magazine. These words can be found in the grid horizontally, vertically, diagonally, backwards, and forwards. You can submit your completed word find to us for a chance to win a $10 gift certificate to Starbucks so you can enjoy future word finds over a latte or cup of tea.

Simply scan and email your completed word find to Jenny Davis at Jenny@thepartnerchannel.com or mail a copy to The Partner Channel, 1045 Broadway, Fargo ND 58102. If you don’t want to write in your magazine, contact Jenny and she’ll email you an electronic version of the same word find.

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*word-a-ganza*

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As a group of marketing professionals, we hear a lot of myths on a daily basis about marketing. Some we find to be plausible, and some are painstakingly false. We are here to help you decode the top five common marketing tools that have a lot of mystery and speculation surrounding them. We will break down each tool by looking at uses, myths, alternative uses, and benefits. Let’s get started!

MARKETING TOOL #1: TELEMARKETING

Common Uses:
- Calling into existing lists or newly purchased lists with the objective of generating new business

Myths:
- Telemarketing does not bring in enough qualified leads.
- The leads generated should be ready to close within three to six months or telemarketing has not done its job.

Alternative Uses:
- Call to invite prospects to webcasts or events, clean up lists, and/or build an email marketing database via surveys or customer satisfaction calls

Telemarketing Decoded:
What do we say to these myths? Phooey! We have seen telemarketing work and work well. As with any marketing activity, telemarketing requires you to have a strong offer that is relevant to the audience you’re targeting. It is also vital to remember that at the base of all your marketing activities are the lists that you are marketing to. By using a telemarketing team, you can clean up your lists, determine if there are new contacts at the firm, find out if the prospects on your list are right for your product, find prospects to nurture, and yes, even sometimes find that rare company who is ready to make a purchase. As to myth #2, telemarketing will likely not find the prospects that fall into the three to six month sales timeframe, especially on a new list. While it is plausible, these leads are more likely to come from prospects that have been nurtured through multiple marketing and sales activities. Bottom line: give telemarketing a try, and start cleaning up your marketing lists.

MARKETING TOOL #2: BLOGGING

Common Uses:
- Short articles to post on a company blog site or a group blogging site

Myths:
- Blogs should generate leads.
- Blogs should have search engine optimization (SEO) benefits.
- Blogging is flexible; I can post whenever I want to.

Alternative Uses:
- Video blogging, technical blogging, and event blogging

Blogging Decoded:
The myths listed above are both true and false. Let’s begin with the false: “blogs should generate leads”. While blogs can generate leads, that is not their purpose. Their main purpose is to be educational and contain keywords that will drive prospects and customers to your website. It shouldn’t be a
sales spiel but rather an opportunity to talk to prospects and customers in a conversational and informal tone. Blogging makes you more approachable (and perceived as knowledgeable) so that when prospects are ready to buy, they’ll come to you. The other two myths (#2 and #3) are true, but only if certain requirements are met. For example, including relevant keywords and links will give your blogs SEO benefits, enhancing the ranking of your company’s website. And blogging is also flexible, meaning that you can post whenever you want to, but you can’t expect to gain the SEO benefit as bloggers who post every day using effective keywords and links. Bottom line: blogs are a great way to set your company apart as a business expert in your community and industry, and they can increase traffic to multiple pages within your website...if done right.

MARKETING TOOL #3: CASE STUDIES
Common Uses:
A customer story can be used on your website or as a handout
Myths:
» Case studies can only be used as handouts and downloads.
» Once a case study is done, it is final.
Alternative Uses:
Blogging, social media outlets, use quotes within other marketing materials, newsletter feature, and video case study
Case Studies Decoded:
It is pretty common for most companies to use case studies as a handout at an event, in a sales meeting, or as a download on their website. While those uses are good, there is so much more that a case study can do. Once you have a case study created, you should be casting this story out as far as you can. Use your other marketing tools and resources to do this. You could (a) write a blog post about your case study, (b) post it to your social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Facebook, and/or (c) feature it within your monthly newsletter. You can also take it a step further by (d) adding a short video clip of the person(s) interviewed giving you a complimentary testimonial. And (e) don’t forget to use some of the great quotes you have from your clients within other marketing materials or on different pages within your website. The key is to not let your case studies go stale. If you have a case study that is more than two years old, consider re-interviewing your customer and freshening up the content to extend its life. Remember, when you read reviews of items you want to purchase, you look at the newest ones first. Bottom line: case studies are truly marketing gems. Make sure yours are polished and ready to go!

MARKETING TOOL #4: EMAIL MARKETING
Common Uses:
Announcements, newsletters, and event invitations
Myths:
» Email marketing is free and should be used frequently.
» People don’t read marketing emails.
Alternative Uses:
Promotions and reinforcement of other marketing activities
Email Marketing Decoded:
The fact of the matter is, while email marketing may be much more cost effective than some other marketing alternatives, it is not free. It takes time to come up with the right offer and messaging for your audience as well as time to design that email. On the opposite spectrum, the myth that people do not read marketing emails can be both true and false. The foundation of any marketing campaign is a good list. This is especially important in email marketing. If you are sending email to people you haven’t met, you are most likely spamming them. You cannot expect them to want to read your email when they have no idea of who you are. Your lists are the key to success. Be sure to continually add and update your lists in order to receive the optimal response from your email marketing efforts. Bottom line, email marketing is very beneficial when it is combined with other marketing elements such as telemarketing, direct mail, webcasts, events, etc.

MARKETING TOOL #5: DIRECT MAIL
Common Uses:
Promotions and event invitations

Check out the many uses for a case study as illustrated in this infographic: www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/customer-case-study-creation
Myths:
» Direct mail is costly.
» Direct mail is not effective anymore.
» People throw away mail.

Alternative Uses:
Newsletters, client communications, and lumpy or dimensional mailers

Direct Mail Decoded:
While using direct mail can cost more than other marketing alternatives, it is something that can give your overall marketing a boost. With many companies spending less money on direct mail, this could be your opportunity to stand out from the crowd. Now, we cannot “decode” the myth that people will throw away mail, that much can be true, but if you have the right message, a strong offer, and the proper list to send mail to, you are stacking the odds in your favor of making it into hands versus garbage cans. Mix things up a bit in your marketing by sending out a hard copy newsletter and client communication once a quarter or take a select list of qualified prospects and send them a dimensional (lumpy) mailer with an offer to attend an event or receive a special offer. Note that a dimensional mailer could include a small giveaway item or gift card that is then packaged into a box or padded envelope. Dimensional mailers are often more effective at being noticed by your recipients. Bottom line: direct mail should not be left out of your marketing budget and planning. Stand out and get noticed.

SUMMARY
We understand that it is often hard to decipher the best marketing tool or combination of activities for your company to use. I hope we have shed some new light on marketing tools that you may have put on the back burner. Remember that while new marketing ideas may enter our marketing plans, it is always a combination of multiple tools and activities that are going to get you the best results.

Need help decoding your marketing? Michelle Glennie and the team at The Partner Marketing Group are master decoders. Check out the products and services designed for technology Partners at www.ThePartnerMarketingGroup.com. You can contact The Partner Marketing Group at Info@ThePartnerMarketingGroup.com.
**ISV PROFILE**

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**WEBSITE:** www.axtension.com

**ESTABLISHED:** 2008

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**WHERE IT ALL BEGAN**

AXtension is a spinoff of Pulse Business Solutions, a reseller that specializes in Microsoft Dynamics AX, to develop standard functionality to fulfill the requirements of its clients’ vertical needs. This standardized functionality resulted in easier implementations and tailored solutions to suit customers’ needs.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

AXtension sells indirectly through Microsoft Dynamics AX Partners, and while its products can be sold individually, the products can also work together and are stronger together, creating vertical solutions including:

- **AXtension® Enterprise Content Management**, AXtension’s best-selling product, is a document management solution that bridges Microsoft Dynamics AX to SharePoint.
- **AXtension® Invoice Processing** handles invoices in Microsoft Dynamics AX more efficiently and ties into Enterprise Content Management to process invoices, using the workflow and authorization capabilities of Microsoft Dynamics AX, and stores them in SharePoint.
- **AXtension® Visual Project Planning** manages projects, resources, and materials in an easy-to-use graphical way and is like adding Microsoft Project to Microsoft Dynamics AX.
- **AXtension® Kitting** allows users to combine different items into a single bundled product, managing the inventory levels and pricing from within Microsoft Dynamics AX.
- **AXtension® Advanced Production** helps users get better insight into production and shop floor control and is used widely in manufacturing environments.

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**The Partner Channel (TPC): Why do Partners like working with your company?**

**Sandra van Leeuwen (SVL):** Oftentimes industry solutions mean more money added to the offer and a more complex implementation. Sales aren’t more complex with our solutions as our products are completely standardized and easily brought into a project. The alternative to working with us is Partners doing their own customizations, which they then have to maintain. When Partners work with us, they can demo the solution from day one and deliver it to the customer quickly for a reasonably priced product with high ROI.

Our Partners say that it’s fun to work with us, and we like being part of a community that loves working together.

**TPC: And speaking of that community, your company won the Microsoft Dynamics Outstanding ISV of the Year award this summer. Congratulations!**

**SVL:** Thank you! It’s funny because we thought we were nominated for ISV of the Year for Western Europe, and then that category came up, and we were not listed on the slide. We were really disappointed, thinking we didn’t win anything. Then at the end of the ceremony, Doug (Kennedy) came back to the stage, announced the Outstanding ISV award, and we won! It was amazing, and we celebrated with some nice champagne afterwards.

It’s important for us to win an award like this as we work really hard to make our solutions ready when Microsoft has a new release, we certify all our solutions through the Certified for Microsoft Dynamics program, and we attend every Microsoft Dynamics event.

We felt we had an amazing year and winning this award was the icing on the cake. We hope that our Partners are able to benefit from this as well.

**TPC: What’s next for your company?**

**SVL:** We’re working on our next releases, which are coming out at the end of the year in conjunction with the next release of Microsoft Dynamics AX. We’re involved in TAP (Microsoft’s Technology Adoption Program) to ensure our solutions are ready and that Partners will see benefit from our release.

We’ve seen that Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is picking up, and our main focus will continue to be on selling more and being successful with our Partners.
“We are in the project business, running hundreds of projects at one time. We have a lot of people and a lot of heavy equipment in the field, and the ability to view where equipment and personnel need to be is really important. One of our goals is to increase the utilization of our equipment by managing it more efficiently. Automating this very manual process was a huge efficiency gain for us.”

– Brian Seymour, IT Director, Keller Foundations
find myself these days in the midst of many new managers. I’m thrilled to be learning from their innovative new approaches but perplexed at how easy it is for even the most creative of these new-thinkers to fall under the spell of worn-out-but-still-somehow-convincing management myths. After seeing one after another of my eager colleagues fall prey, I decided to do my part by busting some of the most common management myths.

Caution: If you see yourself in some of these scenarios, don’t feel bad. I’ve fallen under the spell of these strangely powerful myths, too. The antidote is knowledge, so please read on.

**MYTH:**
Employees can’t handle it when things change, so it’s best not to tell them about in-process decisions until all the details are worked out.

Wrong! Employees handle hundreds of ambiguities a day, ranging from small and manageable to large and unwieldy. What they can’t handle is repeatedly being told that “management is working on that” when they ask about big issues that impact everyone in the company. We all know there are some conversations that must be held behind closed doors. However, managers often keep the doors closed too long. People, hearing nothing, will fill in the blanks with scenarios far worse than any reality could yield. So, while good-intentioned managers try to protect their teams by holding back on communications, they’re actually turning up the dial on confusion, frustration, and even disillusionment. It’s best to keep the doors open as long as you can. And who knows, perhaps you’ll find innovative solutions on the other side!

**MYTH:**
Without SMART goals your people will do dumb things.

Wrong! SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) work best in environments where nothing much ever changes. In the midst of rapid growth and churn, forcing your team members to commit too early to specific tasks with arbitrary deadlines can present a bigger risk than encouraging them to “go with the flow.” An important skill to hone is
the ability to quickly weigh pros and cons and make smart decisions within rapidly changing landscapes. If you must measure something, measure that. The trick is to choose a small number of key initiatives that need to keep moving while everything else bumps and churns around them.

Regular open dialogues about what you do and don’t know will help propel forward motion. Sure, the ride will be bumpy. At least everyone will stay (mostly) between the rails.

**MYTH:**
Managers need to be feared to be effective.

Wrong! Sure, fear can be an effective motivator, but only for a short time. For example, I fear seeing “out of range” listed next to the numbers on my annual physical results, so I force myself to go to the gym. But, that fear only works for the two months on either side of my check-up. To keep my gym bag from collecting dust in the corner, I need to find positive motivators like better sleep patterns, increased energy, and decreased constriction in the waistband area. The same is true in the office. Fear of losing your job or missing out on a key assignment can be a necessary kick in the pants, but it can’t sustain consistent performance motivated by positive results like solving customer issues, contributing in a collaborative team environment, and being trusted by peers and superiors. Employees who constantly fear retribution tend to be overly cautious, hesitant to make decisions, and unwilling (or even unable) to take risks. Essentially, they shut down, which forces the manager who leads by fear to stay in autocrat mode. It’s literally a vicious cycle. It’s best to use the carrot far more than the stick by finding out what motivates your team members and helping them achieve those positive results.

Now, it’s your turn to be a myth buster. Once you start busting management myths, you’ll see many more that should be put to the test. Some will stand, strengthened by your scrutiny, while others are toppled in favor of innovative approaches. Either way, you’ll be wiser about what be myth and what be the magic of finding what works for your unique situations, however unconventional your approaches may be.

For help busting management myths that might be hindering your team members, contact Tracy Faleide at Tfaleide@hotmail.com.
Closing the Book on CLOSING

story by CHARLES H. GREEN | illustration by DAVE SWANG

Let’s pull out all the stops on this.

Aggressive, constant closing is just about the worst thing most salespeople can do. Closing kills more sales than it gets, and it ruins future sales by squelching relationships. If you still have those old “50 Closing Strategies” books gathering dust, get rid of them. If you still believe in ABC – Always Be Closing – I want to convince you once and for all to stop it.

And sales managers, please read on: because at every quarter’s end, when you exhort the troops to bring the numbers in, all you’re doing is telling them to close. And you are constructing a circular firing squad when you do it.

I’ve had a few things to say about this in the past, not just about closing, but about the paradox of selling, and about why so much in sales these days works to defeat trust, hence defeat sales. As Yogi Berra said, you could look it up.

DON’T TAKE MY WORD THAT CLOSING IS BAD:
TAKE KONRATH’S AND RACKHAM’S

Jill Konrath is a highly-respected author, sales consultant, and blogger. She’s even less ambiguous than I am: “I will never, ever train people on closing techniques if they sell to the corporate marketplace.”

In Neil Rackham’s perennial bestseller “SPIN Selling”, he describes results of research on closing for both low-priced and high-priced goods:

» For low-priced goods, training sellers in closing techniques resulted in slightly shorter sales times and a slightly increased rate of sale (76% vs. 72%), meaning a slight improvement by increasing closing techniques.

» For higher-priced goods, training sellers in closing techniques also resulted in shorter sales transaction times – but it also resulted in less sales – 33% vs. 42% before being trained in closing.

In other words: closing may increase efficiency and slightly improve your results if you’re selling copy paper or low-cost add-on products (“you want fries with that” is actually a good use of closing; take note, McD’s counter folks).

But if you’re selling any kind of professional services, or most anything over a few hundred dollars, the better you get at closing, the less you sell! Oh well, at least you get shot down faster!

Rackham’s data is from a few decades ago. Do you think closing techniques have gotten more effective, or less effective, in today’s times? Yup, that’s right.
THE REAL CULPRITS: SALES MANAGEMENT AND THE TRAINING INDUSTRY

Salespersons have their own battles to fight. But their job is made immeasurably harder by those who design the sales environments.

Ask yourself which business strategy works better: one that is executed consistently over a long time period, or one that is given a new endpoint every few months? It’s the same with relationships – business or personal.

In personal relationships, we talk about people who are commitment-phobic or are players – those looking only for one-night stands. In effect, those are what the quarterly insistence on cleaning up the numbers makes your salespeople.

Following is a quote from a sales training newsletter I recently received:

“Charles, with only three days to go until the end of the month (and end of the first quarter), it is time to push hard to exceed budgets.

This month we focused on planning and preparation, but it is now time [sic] for all your hard work to pay off. As it is time to close, we have put up a small selection of articles on our homepage to help you.

Members can log in and search for thousands more articles and resources, including over 40 more articles all on sales closing.”

Presumably somebody buys this stuff. But let’s be clear about what it is: the intellectual version of crack. It urges you to give up on long-term plans and relationships and subordinate them to the siren call of the “here-now.” Worse, it is entirely self-centered, urging the seller to bend the client, and particularly the client’s wallet, to the will of the seller.

Here’s how Rackham puts it: “When salespeople are under pressure to produce short-term results and are being told to get the business this month by whatever means necessary, they pressure customers, and this creates suspicion and mistrust.”

Exactly. So if you’re a sales manager in a business that isn’t small-dollar and ancillary, and if you’re pushing your people to step up the closing at quarter’s end, then you are creating suspicion and mistrust, which ruins sales in the medium and long term.

Who cuts off their nose to spite their face that way? Besides crack addicts, I mean? Never mind. Just stop closing. In its place, substitute constant striving to improve results and relationships for your clients. If that feels too vague, then use Konrath’s suggestion: focus on the Next Logical Step.

You’ll sell more. And sleep better, too. 

Partner with OneNeck to deliver Microsoft Dynamics AX in the cloud to your customers

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Putting the Pieces of Enhanced Partner Resources in Place!
The mission of the Partner Connections groups is to support the endeavors of Microsoft Dynamics Partners by providing education, professional development, collaboration, networking, knowledge sharing, and advocacy among the Microsoft Dynamics community. Get engaged with your Partner Connections group at one of our upcoming conferences!

**AX Partner Connections @ Summit**
October 16, 2012 • Seattle, WA
**AXUG Summit**
October 16-19, 2012 • Seattle, WA
**AX Partner Connections PreGAME @ Convergence**
March 17, 2013 • New Orleans, LA

**Microsoft Dynamics GP Technical Airlift**
September 11-14, 2012 • Fargo, ND
**GPUG Summit**
October 16-19, 2012 • Seattle, WA
**GP Partner Connections PreGAME @ Convergence**
March 17, 2013 • New Orleans, LA

**CRM Partner Connections @ Summit**
October 15, 2012 • Seattle, WA
**CRMUG Summit**
October 16-18, 2012 • Seattle, WA
**CRM Partner Connections PreGAME @ Convergence**
March 17, 2013 • New Orleans, LA
Shooting for the Stars
A blog should be at the center of your social media marketing efforts. Just like the planets revolve around the sun, your online activities should be centered around your blog. If your blog is fading, your other marketing activities will dim along with it. So, how can you make your blog shine?

Think about the blogs that you read. What makes the great ones stellar? Chances are they have some of the following characteristics: they are informative, easy to read, visually engaging, interactive, and viral. If you’re not getting the response you’d like from your blog, or if you just want to take it to the next level, let’s explore five areas that can help make your blog shine.

**RELEVANCE**

The most engaging blogs are the ones that are current and keep up with relevant content. Posts that focus on product releases and updates, industry trends, and issues that relate to your target audience are going to be the best. Your blog should aim to help and educate its audience, offering something they can take away. Readers appreciate information they can do something with, and they will return to your blog if you consistently offer posts that are not only relevant, but also useful. A great blog is one that can really strike a balance of not being too self-absorbed while also providing solid, useful content to the reader.

**EASY TO READ**

Writing great content is only part of the battle. You need to also ensure the way it’s presented is readable. Aim for a clean blog template with easy navigation, and make sure you have the ability to tag and categorize your posts so that if readers want to learn more about a topic, they can easily locate other relevant blog posts.

When posting, break up large paragraphs for easy reading. Avoid wordiness and keep the posts to 500 to 750 words. Use bullet points as a succinct way of illustrating your ideas. Create headings for different sections so readers can easily scan the post. Finally – and this should go without saying – proofread your posts for spelling and grammar accuracy. Typos and errors are not acceptable and are significant turn-offs for readers. Remember, to generate response, include a call to action with an offer in your post.

**VISUAL**

The old saying is true: a picture is worth a thousand words. Images accompanying your post draw readers’ eyes in and give them a visual representation of what they are about to read. Include images within your posts such as graphs, screenshots, embedded videos, slides, etc.

**ENGAGING**

It is extremely important to generate as much conversation and discussion as possible in your blog. Great posts should generate discussion, so don’t forget to ask for feedback, thoughts, opinions, and comments from your readers. Once the discussion starts, respond promptly to comments and questions. Also, there are many readers who may enjoy your posts but just don’t have the time to comment. These readers may be willing to “like” your post or be willing to answer a quick poll.
GO VIRAL

Now that you’ve got great, engaging posts, remember to create connections between your blog and other social media outlets. Viral blog sharing is by far one of the most effective ways of gaining a readership and building a community. Encourage readers to subscribe to your RSS feed and email notifications. Include social media buttons (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, reddit, Digg, etc.) with each post to make it easy to share posts. Always promote new posts with an intriguing Tweet, LinkedIn note, and Facebook status update; don’t forget to include a link to the blog.

Be sure to use relevant keywords throughout your blog post so that it can gain as much online exposure as possible. Choose which keyword or phrase works best for your blog and incorporate it throughout the post. Be sure to put your main keywords at least once in the first paragraph and once in the last paragraph, and attempt to include them within your blog post titles.

GETTING STARTED

So, where do you start? Well, new bloggers starting from scratch can set up their blog site and start compiling a list of blog post topics. You can never have too many topics, so start brainstorming and make a calendar of when to post.

Current bloggers should critically examine their blog to see how they’re doing. Are you generating comments? Why or why not? How can you make your blog more conversational and interesting? Are you doing everything you can to cross-promote between other social media sites and your blog?

Making your blogging approach relevant, professional, visual, conversational, and viral will change your blog from mediocre to absolutely stellar!

Jennifer Culbertson is owner of Looking Glass Marketing and specializes in working with Microsoft VARs and ISVs to build and execute marketing strategies that drive results. With her 19 years of marketing experience within the channel, coupled with her understanding of Microsoft Partner needs, she can help take your marketing to the next level. For more information, contact Jennifer at Jennifer@lookingglassmarketing.com or call 614-453-5927.

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**Five Minutes with Denise Schillaci, President of The Resource Group**

*How do you like to spend your free time during fall?*
I like getting outdoors and travelling to visit my three children around the States. The weather is beautiful in Seattle during the fall, making it a great time to enjoy hiking and backpacking.

*What do you most enjoy about your job?*
I enjoy making things work, finding new ways of doing things, and seeing the successes amongst our 25 employees and 200 customers.

*What is the best business advice you have been given?*
“Listen to your best advice.” Another recent favorite piece of advice is “pausing to go faster.” When you pause and get organized, you will be in the right place to provide great service.

*What are some effective marketing strategies that work to promote your company?*
The most effective strategies for us are good service and referrals. I also like providing content and how-to videos on our website if someone is looking for information after hours.

*What do you look most forward to while attending The Partner Event?*
I really like the people in Fargo and look most forward to seeing old friends and catching up and also networking with other attendees. It’s a great way to get us out of the office, pause before it gets busy, and do some planning. The timing is also great as it really creates some fall excitement in our office.

**Thank You for Your Membership!**
Thank you to the many Microsoft Dynamics Partners who have joined The Partner Channel’s Community. For information on The Partner Channel Membership Program, please contact Jasmine McNellis at 701-526-3531 or Jasmine@thepartnerchannel.com.

**Members Only Tips and Tricks Conference Call**
Every two months, The Partner Channel hosts a conference call for its members. Each 30-minute call has a specific focus to help continue the success of your business. Calls take place the third Tuesday of every other month at 11 a.m. CT. The call-in number, topic, and presenter information are sent via email prior to the call. Contact Jasmine McNellis via the information shared below if you want to participate.
The following Microsoft Dynamics Partners are celebrating their membership anniversary with The Partner Channel this quarter:

**2003 NOVEMBER**
» Rockton Software

**2004 OCTOBER**
» AIM Technologies
» InterDyn LANAC Technology
» Open Door Technology Inc.

**2005 SEPTEMBER**
» Socius 1, LLC

**2007 NOVEMBER**
» Balance Point Technologies, Inc.
» Sierra Workforce Solutions

**2006 SEPTEMBER**
» Corporate Renaissance Group

**2006 OCTOBER**
» Martin and Associates

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Chris Dew of eOne Integrated Business Solutions and Jesse Byam of Etelligent Solutions are ready for a swim. What would you title this photo?

Email your caption to Jenny at Jenny@thepartnerchannel.com. Submissions will be judged on creativity, relevance, and sense of humor. The prize for this contest is two (2) tickets to your local cinema.

Keep it clean folks, because in addition to printing this edition’s winning captions, we’ll also print all the other entries we receive.
Thanks for playing last quarter’s contest!
Our winner is Victoria DeBarge of TRI-COM CONSULTING GROUP, L.L.C.: If we find out WHO has taken more than their allotted water ration, we will chop their hand off like so.

Our runner up was the great Terry Carlton of Integrity Data:
Jane: “I’d put one of those ‘slashy’ thingeze right there. Maybe two of them.”
Other lady, thinking: “Good luck with that, you’d better stick to marketing.”

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TECHNICAL CONFERENCE 2012
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Take advantage of this unique chance to see how Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 can help provide you with innovative solutions for your business.

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Visit our event website at: www.microsoft.com/dynamics/DynamicsAXTechnicalConference
Congratulations to Ed Wilk of iCepts Technology Group, Inc. for finding the hidden logo in Tracy Faleide’s “Let Me Hear Those Three Little Words” article on page 28 of the Summer 2012 magazine.

The submission rules for this quarter’s contest are the same – log on to www.thepartnerchannel.com/magazine, under “Find the Logo Contest” to let us know where you think the logo is located. A winner will be drawn at random and will receive a cool gift that’s sure to point you in the right direction every day!

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Here’s a list of places where our logo usually appears, thus making them null and void when it comes to this contest:

- Front cover
- Table of contents
- Photo caption page
- The end of each article
- Any graphics that have the TPC logo as a main element (note: the hidden logo may be located within that graphic, but it’s not going to be plain-as-day!)