

WATCHMAN

SECURITY & SAFETY TECHNOLOGY - NEWS - INDUSTRY LEADERS - EVENTS - LEGAL ISSUES

FROM THE PUBLISHER

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No Good Deed....

By: Jerry Lenander

I recently had a longtime security industry colleague drop by the beautiful Black Hills in South Dakota (Mt. Rushmore and Fuzzy Cos). We have known each other for 30 years, and while I don't work with the organizations that brought us together, we have maintained a friendship.

The discussion turned to the times I had worked with vendors and installing companies who were entering the industry. My approach was to encourage people to participate, to attend conferences and meetings, as a means to network with peers and suppliers. He spoke of one company whose principles had mentioned my efforts on their behalf many years ago. It appears I had introduced them to people who became partners or in other ways helped establish their company.

They are now a successful global company with outstanding reach in the market. The payback to the organization I served was being perceived as contributing to their success. They will benefit the group with attendance, sponsorship, advertising and an incredible amount of good will.

We do good things every day, the right things all the time, and sometime wonder if there is a return on that investment of time and courtesies. There is.

It made me think of the others I had worked with, providing newly unemployed individuals with access

to the organizations. Helping connect users and suppliers. I encourage you to be the good ambassador for your industry, help a friend in need, and extend a greeting and welcome to those entering the business.



TOP RIGHT DRAWER

Make Sales Part of Your Company's DNA

By Kevin O'Connor



It all began for me in the security industry in 1982: I was a college student who also worked the graveyard shift at a local Sonitrol central station, grinding for my living expenses like most college students do. At the time, I believed there was a means to an end with that as I had aspirations of becoming a police officer.

After hitting my two-year mark with Sonitrol and just as I was completing my program in school, the Branch Manager of the central station approached me to offer a position in sales. I had absolutely no interest in pursuing a career in sales as I had a very negative view of the profession, but he convinced me to think about it and give it further consideration. I solicited advice from the people I trusted most and after careful consideration I decided that, at twenty-one, I was young enough to try something new. If it didn't work out, I could always pursue my original career path into law enforcement.

After several years of working for a few dealer companies as either a sales rep or in sales management, I moved into a traditional sales role with Ademco, who was one of the oldest and most well-established manufacturers in the industry. Utilizing my prior experience with dealer companies, I had an inherent understanding of what was important to a dealer's decision-making process when partnering with a manufacturer.

At that time, most manufacturers offered sales training for dealers which mostly focused on the product or service, with little to no attention on helping a dealer's sales team understand how to *sell* the said product or service. Ademco was a manufacturer that not only made great products, but just as importantly also knew the power of properly supporting their dealers to know how to properly offer them back to the end-users.

Through this model, I observed overwhelming success within Ademco's dealer network. There was a multi-layered system to support dealer's sales efforts through a



Top Right Drawer, continued on page 3

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TOP RIGHT DRAWER

Top Right Drawer, continued from page 1

commitment to train their people on more than just the products and services we offered. Ademco understood that a company can have the best products or services in the market, but nothing happens until something is sold.

My time at Ademco also provided the opportunity to work with, and for, some of the best salespeople and leaders in my career. In the mid 90's, Ademco hired Ben Cornett to run the sales organization. It would be an understatement to say that his leadership was transformational for me and so many others. Under Ben's guidance, our entire company adopted a culture where everyone was in sales. Sales was no longer viewed as only a department in the company, but an organizational philosophy.

Our culture changed from one with silos across the business to one where everyone supported departments company-wide with the mission of serving our customers. This culture helped us build on our position as a leading manufacturer with significant growth in the late 90's into where we were ultimately acquired by Honeywell in 2000. We continued to leverage that momentum as part of Honeywell, with a continued focus on our culture and retaining the organizational philosophy of sales. After the acquisition, Honeywell was universally viewed in the security industry as a dominant force within the arena of the large manufacturers. Looking back, this was the time where my career was most positively impacted because of the extraordinary leadership displayed at the top, notably by Ben Cornett.

In the security and life safety industry there are many organizations who adequately place importance of a sales philosophy being part of every department. Unfortunately, there are also some which still view sales and their salespeople as a necessary evil. The industry has continued to change and evolve over the years, but the most successful companies are the ones that value and invest in their people to ensure that everyone is engaged in both sales and supporting the customer. If you look at your company, are your people the best at representing your mission, values and culture to prospective and existing customers?

If you can't immediately answer yes, then it's important to look at the following:

- Do you have the right people?
- Do your people have the tools and resources they need?
- Is leadership focused and engaged in creating a sales/customer focused culture?
- Does your culture reward excellence or tolerate mediocrity?
- Do you invest in making your people better?

If you don't have the right people, it's important that you be honest and have a plan to put the right people in place. You may already have individuals in your organization that could move into a new role or take on new responsibilities and provide an immediate upgrade. Maybe you'll have to bring someone into the company

Top Right Drawer, continued on page 4



TOP RIGHT DRAWER

Top Right Drawer, continued from page 3

from outside that has the skills and attitude you need, but where will you find them? In the case of hiring salespeople, I always found that the easiest (and worst) approach is to hire a salesperson from a competitor. There can always be exceptions, but proceed with caution if you take this approach.

Always make sure that you are providing your team with the tools and resources that they need to represent themselves and your company in the best way possible. Customers today can go online to research and buy almost anything, so make sure that your website and social media are done well to make a strong first impression. When your people are interacting directly with your prospects or customers, make sure they have the necessary materials and training to look and sound professional.

Whether a small business or a large corporation, leadership sets the tone for an entire organization. As mentioned earlier, I have worked with, and for, some world class leaders in my career (and a few horrible ones), and there is no question that they played a key role in the success or failure of the company. Some company leaders don't have a sales or customer facing background, but the good ones understand the importance of surrounding themselves with people who will compliment them in that area. One of my favorite quotes about leadership is from Tom Peters: "Leaders don't create followers; they create more leaders". Make sure that you are creating leaders across your organization (not just in sales) and success will follow.

Rewarding excellence is so important in any organization and the companies that do it well and consistently are so much more successful than those that do not. Rewarding behaviors and results that promote customer satisfaction will help build a great company culture and a dedicated and loyal workforce. People naturally love to be recognized and appreciated and when you provide incentives across the business, it will help to drive the behaviors that build a great culture. Sales incentives also need to be structured to encourage the behaviors you want from your salespeople, so if you want your salespeople to generate their own business, you need to make sure you are rewarding them when they do.

Invest in your people and help them continue to improve and grow with your organization. Provide them with the training and support they need to get better and build confidence in their ability. Learn what is important to them by getting to know them as people and not just employees. When people feel connected to the business and feel the company cares about them, they will be more than employees doing a job. At Honeywell, we created a training program that was focused on sales, but we included marketing, engineering, finance, customer service, legal and all other functions in the training as well. It was important to send the message that everyone is in sales, and by bringing in people from all different functions it helped create a better understanding of what each group did and why it was important to our success.

The industry is fortunate to have some manufacturers in both residential and commercial that provide training to help build the sales and customer support skills of all your employees. There are also sales training companies in the industry, some that are regular contributors or advertise in this publication that are knowledgeable and understand your business. Utilize them as a resource to help you build a world class sales organization. Most importantly, take the time to learn and understand your business, ensuring the people representing you are committed to being your partner in success!

Kevin O'Connor spent 39 years in the security and life safety industry, primarily in sales and sales management with industry leaders in both the dealer and manufacturing segments. He spent almost 20 years with Ademco/Honeywell in sales and management roles, notably as President of the First Alert Professional Dealer Program and Vice President of Global Sales for Honeywell Security. After leaving Honeywell, he worked in the personal emergency response system (PERS) market as President of Logicmark for 10 years until his retirement in 2021. He is currently a full-time grandpa and enjoys spending time with his grandkids, doing volunteer work and stays connected to the industry on a limited basis as a consultant and advisor to security and PERS companies.



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