

BCN

BOARD CONVERTING NEWS™

An N.V. Publication

AICC Speaker Discusses:

Strategies That Lead To Sales Growth

by Jim Curley

Last week, representatives from more than 30 independent companies got a sneak preview of a major presentation at this fall's AICC Annual Meeting. Chet Holmes, who will address independent converters on October 8 in Baltimore during Corrugated Week, talked about four major elements in "How to Grow Your Company from 0-\$100 Million in Sales and Beyond."

"A lot of activity of sales teams is 'catch as catch can,' " Holmes said. Instead, companies that want to grow their businesses should employ the **Best Buyer Concept**. These prospects are "the ones you probably think are unobtainable, out of reach, beyond your wildest dreams. Let me assure you, they ARE within your grasp if you know how to approach them."

Holmes drew on his own experience selling ad space for a magazine. Out of more than 4,000 advertisers, only 167 were responsible for 95 percent of the ads. "I went after these with a vengeance," Holmes remembered. He'd sent these prospects a small item (a yo-yo, magnifying glass, etc.) with a clever message. Holmes sent each prospect two mailers a month, along with making four phone calls.

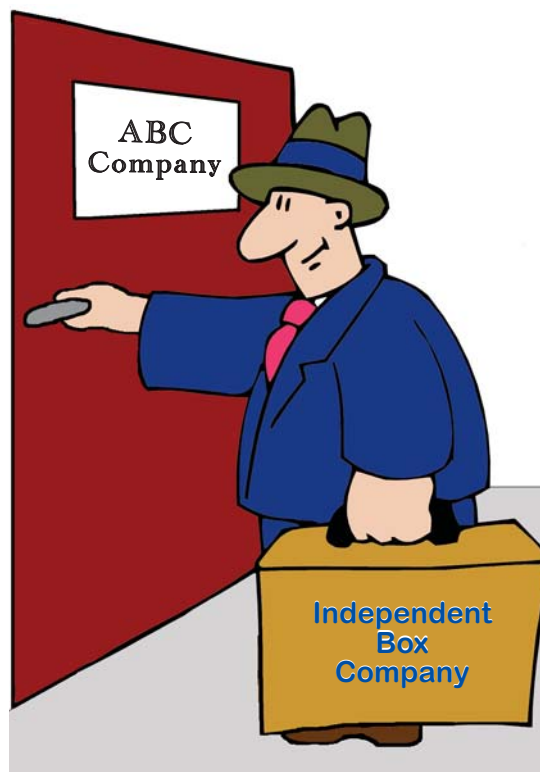
After four months, he had no sales. "Why? They're big. They take time [to make a decision]," Holmes explained. Still, he admitted there were whisperings in

his company's hallways doubting his abilities.

In the fifth month, things turned around. Xerox committed to 104 four-color spreads, and Holmes was "written up" in *Success* magazine for that achievement. In the sixth month, the floodgates opened, and 28 more prospects became advertisers. Sales growth became a constant. At the magazine, Holmes doubled his sales three years in a row.

"This strategy needs to be thought out in advance," he cautioned. "My philosophy is that if you believe in what you do, you have a moral obligation to do everything you can do to have the client understand that."

Persistence pays, he noted. After one rejection, 50 percent of salespersons don't ask again; after four rejections, 95 percent of salesperson are done. "It's only five percent who say, 'This guy should be a client, and I don't care what it takes [to make it happen].'"



What's Your Message?

Holmes pointed out that 20 years of research has shown that only 3 percent of prospects are ready to buy now. Combining those with the 7 percent of prospects who are open to a sale means that only 10 percent of prospects are likely buyers. Holmes said that you have to address all prospects with **Education-Based Marketing** that offers something

of value beyond what you're selling.

Holmes then asked his listeners to imagine that they were addressing all the buyers of corrugated in North America. These prospects would be in a giant stadium awaiting your message. "What would your 'stadium pitch' be?" he asked.

He suggested that only a message focused on your

The four aspects of successful selling Chet Holmes discussed at the teleconference are part of the 12 things he will talk about in Baltimore that will help AICC members reach their sales goals and grow their companies.



customers rather than your offerings would keep 100 percent of the folks in the stadium remaining in their seats. An appealing message of a boxmaker to prospective customers might be "The five major challenges that face everyone who ships products and how knowing these could be the difference between success and failure," he said.

When he was selling, Holmes researched the prospective customer's market then told the prospect, "There is stuff going on in your market that is going to affect your business in a big way. I'm going to be sharing that information with all your competitors. Would you be interested in hearing the same information?"

This pitch proved effective. "My ability to get appointments was 10 times higher than the guy who talked about his company's products," Holmes said.

The third aspect Holmes discussed was **Superstar Growth Strategy**. "Most companies don't hire [their salespeople] for psychological profile; they hire for background," Holmes noted. "I can tell you as a top producer that it didn't matter what I was selling; what

mattered was the psychological profile of the type of person that I was. I wanted to know more than anyone else and do research. I would sneak around and gather information about my clients.

"Companies didn't want to manage people like me, because we were a pain," he added.

When he became a sales manager, Holmes "decided that I would hire people who loved to cold call," he remembered. Among the qualities that an effective salesperson will have are empathy (a sincere interest in helping the client) and a high level of self-esteem, Holmes said. He explained the latter: "[These salespeople] become more effective when things get harder. Their background is irrelevant."

Resistance To Rejection

When he was hiring salespeople, he would ask a simple question over the phone, "Why would I want to even interview you?" Nine out of ten took rejection easily. A tenth, when faced with Holmes' statement - "I don't think you're a top producer," would respond, "What do you think makes a top producer?"

"People with a high level of self-esteem don't let you push them away easily," he said.

Leadership is the focus of the fourth aspect of a successful sales effort, **A Commitment to Mastery**.

"If you've been stuck at a certain level of sales for the past five years, believe me, it's not the company; it's not the product; it's not the service. It's the executive," Holmes said.

"Make a commitment to mastery. Mastery isn't about doing 4,000 things; it's about 12 things 4,000 times. Become a master at leading your company towards the successful goals you know you can achieve," Holmes said.

"We've doubled the sales of more companies than anyone else," Holmes said. He added that the four aspects of successful selling he discussed at the teleconference are part of the 12 things he will talk about in Baltimore that will help AICC members reach their sales goals and grow their companies.