

## Sales Machine

# Neil Rackham: Sales is a Research Job

By Geoffrey James

September 11th, 2009 @ 5:30 am

| Permalink

**Categories:** *Career Development, Sales Process, Sales Skills, Sales Tips, Watercooler*

**Tags:** *Job, Neil, Sales Strategy, Sales Force Management, Sales...*



I've frequently drawn on the expertise of the amazing Neil Rackham as blog-fodder. I was recently reviewing notes of the last time we spoke and ran across his thoughts on sales research. Neil believes that in today's B2B world, a sales job is also a research job. He insists that the ability to effective research is a key sales skill.

If that's true, somebody isn't getting the message. At the recent Sales 2.0 conference in Chicago, Lee Levitt of IDC revealed survey results that 25% of sales reps come to face-to-face sales calls completely unprepared, according to the decision-makers on whom they call. With that scary statistic in mind, here are Neil's three rules of sales research, along with three corollaries (follow-on rules) that proceed out of them.

- **RULE #1:** The test of whether a sales call will prove effective is whether the insight that's conveyed is so valuable that the prospective customer would normally be willing to pay for it.
- **RULE #2:** Prospective customers do not value information about products; instead they value information about the industry and the customer's competition, providing it is current and up-to-date.
- **RULE #3:** Selling a solution is more effective if the sales rep can clearly articulate not just the value of the product, but the value of doing business with your firm.

### THEREFORE

- **COROLLARY #1:** Novice sales reps must spend as much time researching the customer than actually calling on the customer. Experienced sales reps can spend somewhat less time on research.
- **COROLLARY #2:** To do this correctly, sales reps need convenient access to the Internet, and sales management that considers sales research as an integral part of the

job.

- **COROLLARY #3:** Companies that treat sales research as an afterthought will find it increasingly difficult to compete with companies that take sales research seriously.

**RELATED POST:** How to Research a Prospect...in Ten Minutes

**COOL NEW POST: How To Sell Like Jay Leno**