



THE LAST LINK

Closing the Gap That Is Sabotaging Your Business

by Gregg Crawford

EXCERPTS

Chapter 1: The Broken Link

When you think of the way a business runs, you might think of a chain—each individual link performing its duty, all pulled in the same direction by the same force. Each link represents a particular function of the organization. The corporate strategy is the force that aligns all the links and pulls them in the right direction, unified and working together to achieve common goals. Every link has a vital purpose and fulfills it, making sure the chain remains strong.

Chapter 2: Identifying the Gap

The sales organization is the crux of a strategy's success. It is the most common place where strategies fail, and more than any other link in the chain, the sales organization has the power to turn strategy into big gains or tragic losses. Each sale either furthers the corporate plan with best-case-scenario deal size, product mixture, profit margin, and contract terms, or represents a lost opportunity or even an unprofitable deal.

Chapter 3: Pivotal Agreements

Pivotal Agreements are agreements made with customers throughout the sales process that are connected to the financial metrics of your corporate strategy—and therefore to your company's strategic goals. They have significant, direct impact on the ultimate outcome of your sales process. Best results are attained using the 3D Model—data, dialogue, and discipline.

Chapter 4: Data

When the right data isn't tracked, made actionable, and put into the hands of the right people, sales go awry. To attain the results you desire, you need to think about your data differently. For the purposes of achieving your strategy, that means tracking the right data and getting it into the hands of the people who can move the numbers in the right direction.

Chapter 5: Dialogue

High-performing sales organizations focus their teams on preparing for and having the right dialogues and applying the often counterintuitive Dialogue Principles.

Chapter 6: Discipline

The highest-performing sales organizations are those that are clear about the requirements for creating revenue and optimizing margins, and consciously embed and reinforce sales and deal management methods that focus on the key agreements for success. These organizations not only embrace discipline as a value, they put the necessary structures and processes into place so that discipline becomes an operational norm.

Chapter 7: Linking It Together

If you're going to close the gap between your corporate strategy and the results you need, you've got to be able to execute your strategy successfully. Until everyone in your sales organization can consistently and proactively employ the power of the 3D Model—data, dialogue, and discipline—to obtain the Pivotal Agreements in each deal they are working on, you will not be able to achieve your goals at the point of customer interface.

Chapter 8: Aligning the Enterprise

You can bring your sales organization into alignment through six fundamental activities: (1) Build a mentality of “execution excellence” into your organization; (2) Create an execution blueprint; (3) Deploy the 3D Model; (4) Require discipline in the use of the tools and processes from *The Last Link*; (5) Communicate consistently and regularly with all parts of the organization; and, (6) Follow up—inspect what you expect.

Chapter 9: Adopting the Tools of *The Last Link*

Every strategy execution initiative is unique to its organization. However, using the principles in *The Last Link*—Sales Execution Plans, the Dialogue Principles, and the 3D Model for making Pivotal Agreements—to achieve your corporate strategy will close the gap in your sales process and yield the bottom-line results you are looking for.

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