

Perhaps the number one question we still hear is: "Should I separate my traditional sales force from my internet sales force?" In this article we give you ten reasons you should have only ONE integrated sales force. In this case, our definition of Integration is...combining all knowledge and talent into one Super Force. One team who can understand, integrate ...and make money utilizing ideas from the traditional media—and new media—sides of the fence.

1. Your Clients Do Not Need Another Sales Rep.

You already know this. The only thing more confusing about having yet another sales rep is having two from the same media outlet. Who does what? When my commercials need to promote my keyword, micro site or main site, which rep do I call for which part? Are they communicating with one another so my message is clear to my own customers? Take the guesswork out of this and give your station clients a break. Keep it simple.

2. Your Traditional Sales Rep Already Has a Relationship.

Let's not re-invent the wheel. Your current rep already has a relationship. Build upon that. Integrating new media is the PERFECT opportunity for your traditional rep to re-enter the equation and relationship with fresh new eyes...and as a result, earn a new level of respect from the client. Traditional media reps are a dying breed. In the near future, either you know more about new media and its relationship with traditional media or you will become obsolete.

3. All Traditional Media Reps Must Be Trained In New Media Anyway.

In order to compete in our ever-changing world of technology and communication, traditional media reps must be willing to learn more about new media (not all the details, just the possibilities). This need for education will weed out many players who simply don't want to do what it takes to change. Over the next few years, those folks will float from one media outlet to another, constantly seeking one who 'just wants to sell radio'...only to find, sooner or later (inevitably), that there are no more of those around...whether by choice or failure to evolve.

4. Your Clients Will Gravitate Toward New Ideas & Strategies.

Just as you are bombarded daily with gloomy traditional media sales figures and stories of increasing internet sales, your clients are receiving the same information. If you separate the two sales forces, pretty soon you'll find your clients gravitating toward the 'new' media department because it's new, exciting...and a place they know they need to be. The goal is to arm your traditional sales force with the knowledge it takes to be competitive in this changing environment. Take your best and train them properly. This is not a time to separate...it's a time to bring your brightest and best together...and give them the tools they need.

5. Knowledge Can Be Taught...Great Sales Ability Cannot.

No matter how you view it, you CAN teach an old dog new tricks...especially if the old dog understands that its food rations may be affected by its willingness to learn. It's my firm belief that you really can't 'teach' the natural abilities involved in rapport, trust and relationship-building. As most sales managers are hiring today with an eye toward a more technologically savvy salesperson (i.e. younger), they must understand that the natural sales ability should come first. The other stuff...we can teach if they are willing to learn. Again, they do not need to know the details, just the possibilities.

6. Trust the Reality of Natural Selection.

Your number one priority is to give your existing staff all the knowledge and tools they need to compete in this changing environment. If they choose not to learn, they must go...the future demands more. If they choose to embrace, foster that attitude with rewards. Those that exit should be replaced with new, fresh faces...with natural sales ability, some basic knowledge of technology and an eagerness to learn more.

7. Confusion Inside Means Confusion Outside.

Who calls on whom? Where is the line drawn? When the two departments work together, who gets paid what amount? And for how long? What about renewals? The real question...is it worth it to be confused every day? There's enough competition out there...you really don't need two people in your own building calling on the same client for what should really be ONE integrated solution to his/her challenge. It confuses the client...confuses the process...and creates animosity where there should be teamwork.

8. One Solution Means Separate Parts Working In Unison.

You may think it's easy enough for one sales rep to discuss a client's radio ad...and another to discuss internet components. However, our goal is to bring the client ONE SOLUTION to their problem. In many cases, that solution uses radio to drive listeners online to learn more ...whether it's online to the station site, client site...or micro site. That ONE strategy involves both sides working together. What should the commercial say? When should it run to create the most traffic to the site? When should it be changed to reflect new material? Once the visitor is online, do they see exactly what they heard about in the commercial? Get my point? You can assign two people this task...but this is really the job of one rep that should be well-rounded regarding the integrated marketing solutions your company has to offer today.

9. One Solution...One Sales Rep...One Leader.

Now that you understand our theory behind recommending one sales force, I'm sure you'd like to know what the Internet Department does. The Internet Department handles day-to-day tasks involving the station web site (extension of the station brand online), online communication with listeners (email database, e-newsletters, etc.), research and development of compelling content and creation/execution of integrated ideas for the sales department. There is generally one Internet Sales Manager assigned per station or station group (depending upon market size and interactive activity). Again, depending upon those same factors, each station/group will have web designers on staff to handle the many aspects of updating your station site(s) and executing any sales opportunities. The Internet Sales Manager's job is to assist (yes, attend meetings with) sales reps to discuss, create and/or pitch integrated ideas. He/she is there to provide leadership, guidance, ideas and the 'details' your sales staff does not need to know.

10. New Media Ideas Can Re-Open the Radio Door.

I've heard many instances where great new media ideas have re-opened a 'radio door' that was otherwise closed. Businesses think they understand radio..and most have pre-determined whether radio works for them. But new media is perceived differently today. They know they need it but they don't know how to use it and often feel they don't understand it. So when a new media idea rears its head, your reps will often find themselves back at the table again. Countless times integrated solutions have helped to bring back or increase on-air revenue. But that can only be done with reps who understand the power of BOTH. Another reason for your Super Force.

BONUS!

There are some cases where we do recommend hiring a 'contract sales force' (usually seasonal) for station/audience-based programs (i.e. bridal guide, college guide, etc.) that are either directory-based or provide small sponsorship/listing options. We recommend contract sales people or using a call center for these types of programs so your Super Force can stay focused on the big dollar integrated ideas that solve client challenges!