



For Immediate Release

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## **Report: Sales organizations' ability to weather current economic storm depends on four "people priorities"**

Boston, MA, November 5, 2008 – At a time when companies around the world are being buffeted by dire economic conditions, many of their sales organizations are ill-equipped to weather the storm due to surprisingly ineffective sales forces beset by people problems that limit their ability to perform, according to a research-based white paper by The Forum Corp., a global consulting firm that specializes in helping companies execute strategy through people.

According to Forum's research:

- Only about half of all salespeople have a solid understanding of their organization's strategy.
- Sales managers often lack the leadership skills needed to succeed.
- Sales people often lack the flexibility needed to respond to buyers' differing needs.
- And sales support systems often are at odds with the organization's sales strategy.

"The best plans and the fanciest systems will fail unless salespeople behave in ways that reflect the organizational strategy and sales managers cultivate a climate of high performance," said Ron Koprowski, executive vice president of Forum. "That's never been truer than today, as sales organizations around the world struggle to cope with the economic downturn. It all comes back to people performance."

Forum's research into sales force effectiveness identified four "people priorities" that, when addressed effectively, fuel greater sales organization performance.

- 1) **Strategy alignment.** The most effective sales forces are comprised of salespeople who can translate the strategy into their own activities and responsibilities. The strategy, and its implications for them individually and as a team, must be clear and understandable.
- 2) **Management matters.** Sales managers must be able to perform the dual roles of people manager and business strategist, and must excel in four specific areas that drive performance: coaching, crafting strategy, motivating people, and process discipline. This includes communicating the strategy in a clear and compelling way that enables salespeople to understand and act on it.



- 3) **Behaviors and skills.** Salespeople must be equipped with the skills needed to find, win and keep customers, particularly when those customers' needs vary widely, requiring differing sales approaches and skills. Of 19 individual factors of sales performance examined by Forum, skills for *finding* and *winning* customers were the strongest predictors of success.
- 4) **Climate control.** Climate – people's perception of the work environment – is critical to high-performing sales forces. Forum research shows that sales leaders and managers must positively manage four elements of climate – clarity, commitment, responsibility and recognition – that play a significant role in building a highly successful sales organization.

“With so many businesses struggling in the current environment and desperately trying to weather the storm, it's critical that they recognize sales force effectiveness as one of the key drivers of performance and see people as the lynchpin of sales organization success,” said Koprowski. “Having salespeople and managers who are strategically aligned and properly skilled will enable organizations to perform, even in the worst of times.”

Forum's overview on the topic, entitled *Driving Growth Through Sales Transformation*, is the second in a series of white papers that will look at the most important factors for engineering and sustaining organic growth. To obtain a copy of *Driving Growth Through Sales Transformation* or other Forum research reports on the topic of organic growth, visit [www.forum.com](http://www.forum.com),

#### **About The Forum Corp.**

Forum is a world leader in helping organizations execute strategies through people. For 35 years, its work has helped clients increase profitability, market share, revenue growth, and customer and employee loyalty. Forum combines experience and research-based insights in learning design, consulting, and facilitation to bring about changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enable employees to achieve and exceed the desired benefits of a strategic change, to reduce time to improved performance, and to sustain the change over the long term.



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