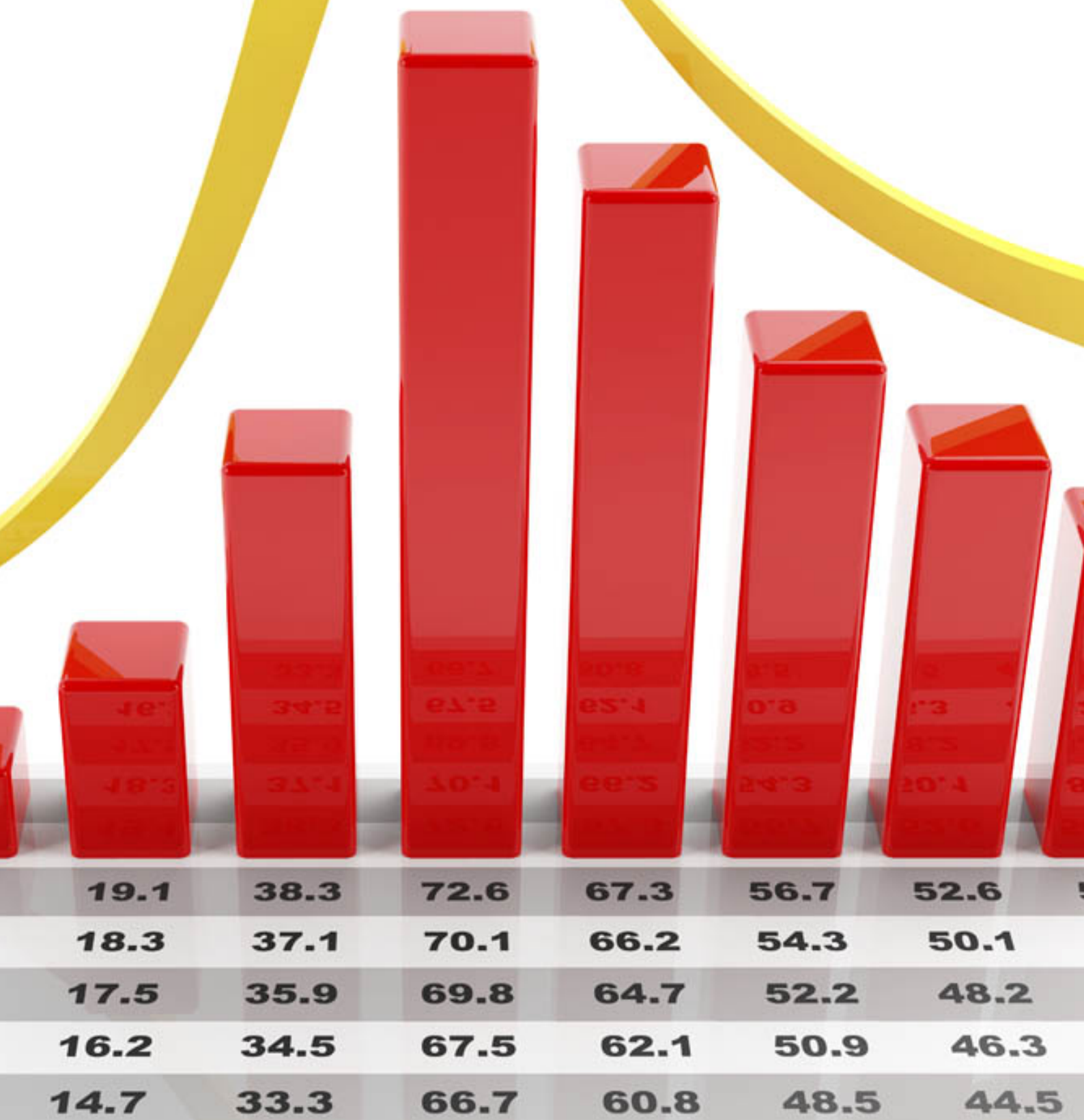


Managing sales patterns



What does your sales history look like? Most of the businesses that I meet with have the same sales trends and most accept this as normal for their industry. In some instances they may be right, but in general they are not.

Many industries will have seasonal spends where they are historically busier than other times in the year. But this does not mean that there are not other opportunities available in those quieter months, or other ways to control spasmodic spending patterns.

For an example I will use a business that I have owned in the past.

One of the areas we were involved in was printing (POS) point of sale material that meant that around September we became very busy, as retail stores needed their Xmas POS material.

We knew that there would be strong months for Sept, Oct, Nov & Dec, that Jan would be flat, as most of our clients were on holiday and that Feb, Mar would be busy as work was caught up and old budgets were spent before the year end of Mar 31st. April would be busy with new budgets, but May, June, July & Aug were unpredictable.

So what could we do? We could just accept it or we could try to make changes that would have us busy 12 months of the year. We chose to make changes and the important first step here was identifying patterns.

1. We performed a sales audit, breaking down our sales lines into business units so that we could track purchasing trends.
2. Once we had this information we then looked at the role of each salesperson and analysed their sales trends.
3. We then looked for products that could add value to what we were already supplying, to up sell or cross sell to existing clients
4. Identified new markets to sell existing and new product lines to that were outside our busy months in new and different industries.
5. Identify strengths and weakness in our sales area and compare what we could provide to clients as to what our competitors could, so that we could grow our market share.

These were some of the main areas that we worked on. The information that we discovered from this changed our company incredibly. Within 6 to 12 months we had doubled our sales revenue, we had focused marketing strategies as we became proactive instead of reactive as the owner I had stepped back and started working on the business not in it.

We understood sales patterns and discovered ways to improve the results.

Identifying Business Units for Revenue

Most of our revenue was made up of very similar product lines, but once we looked closely we were able to see specific differences that helped us predict purchasing trends. This helped with forecasting stock and staffing needs. It also identified other opportunities for further promotion. For instance, we were busy during Xmas, but not during other known seasonal times, but by offering incentives in these times we increased spend in these areas.

Trends of a Salesperson

Each salesperson I have had working for me in different industries has had individual strengths and weaknesses, some needed to be managed closely to get the best results, others needed to be given space and trust.

One of the most common sales trends you find though is the up and down effect. This basically shows that if a salesperson has been busy in June for instance, promoting and selling their products or services to clients and prospects then June may have a low sales result and July lifts noticeably as the benefits of that activity is seen.

However if the salesperson does not repeat the efforts of June, but instead falls into the "managing my sales trap" then August sales result is often flat, as the salesperson is out there again repeating the cycle. This happens in almost every industry and numerous businesses that I have met with. The solution is educating the salesperson and developing systems that allow the salesperson to move on and trust that their client will be satisfied with the help of others in your business.

Up Sell & Cross Sell

Perhaps made famous by McDonalds, "do you want fries with that? Or would you like to upsize?" but don't laugh this has made them millions.

We looked at what we were supplying and then looked at areas that we could add value to our sales by offering additional services and incentives or ideas to increase the original order value. We did this with integrity at all times. We looked to offer real value and real benefits to additional services or quantities. This was achieved by using the oldest sales method available, we talked and listened to our clients needs and started offering solutions instead of products.

Identifying new Markets

We discovered new markets that had needs for products and services while we also looked for additional products and services that suited our existing offer. By implementing this strategy we found opportunities outside our normal spending patterns, along with new opportunities with existing clients too.

Identifying Strengths & Weaknesses

We identified the strengths and weaknesses of our company and our competitors by eliminating our weaknesses and adding new strengths we were able to offer better solutions to the market. Our competitors had some unique strengths that we were able to adapt to our business to grow our market share.

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