

Photo Shoot on the Serengeti

by Walter McDonald

Have you ever considered signing up for a camera safari in Tanzania East Africa? It's famous for large numbers of big game species at home on the sweeping Serengeti plains! Just think about it. This is the classic tented safari made famous by such adventurers as Ernest Hemingway and Teddy Roosevelt. Here you are, arriving in the Arusha, Tanzania airport. You have practiced a little Swahili so you can try some local conversation. You know you want to see lion, zebra, gazelle, impala, leopard, buffalo, elephant, giraffe and rhino at the legendary Masai Mara National Reserve. On your agenda is an extensive 4-WD Land Rover trip out to the world famous Serengeti National Park, home of the largest concentration of plains game in the world. Here the great annual wildebeest migration includes literally millions of animals trekking across the great savannah in search of green grass and water.

You've also heard of a "lost world" of remote African ancestors discovered in an ancient collapsed volcanic caldera near the Olduvai Gorge. The famous Ngorongoro Crater is ten miles in diameter and 2,000 feet deep, the largest unbroken caldera in the world. And from the ridge, you will see one of the most spectacular panoramas in Africa, literally teeming with wildlife, including the endangered black rhino, lion, elephant, hyena and wildebeest. You might even see a wandering Maasai herdsman and his cattle. You know, that to get the most out of your adventure, you really need to do some research. To best see the wildlife you will need a qualified guide and outfitter. It will also be wise to have reservations at lodges such as the Mt. Kenya Safari Club, and air transport across the vast African wilderness.

Organizing and conducting a successful East African camera safari is not much different, in principle than organizing and managing a machine or product support sales territory. Just as having a trusted, competent guide helps ensure the safari's success, you must be your own guide in organizing and managing a prosperous sales territory. In sales territory management, the two most important skills are Deal Visibility and Deal Closure. Your success or performance RATE in each of these critical activities can be easily measured.

DEAL VISIBILITY RATE is the percent of deals you see that go down your territory. Strong Deal Visibility is the result of four essential selling activities. Just as in your safari you have to learn how to track and find the beasties, deal visibility includes these four skills:

- 1. Market Segmentation and Analysis, Seeking High Return/High Priority Targets
- 2. Territory Account Identification, Organization and Classification
- 3. Prospecting and Market Assessment
- 4. Territory Development Follow-up and Control

Deal visibility skills (and fortitude) enable you to pursue the big game (and persevere), despite the challenges of exploring in the bush. The objective is to "see" as much big game as possible, close enough for you to take aim and get your best photograph with at least your zoom lens. The better your deal visibility skills, the more big game (deals) you have opportunity to see. But, seeing the game (deal) and bagging your shot (closing the sale) are two entirely different sets of skills.

DEAL CLOSURE RATE is truly a different story. On safari it includes all of the technical skills needed to actually capture the shot once you have the wildlife in view. You must know your camera, lenses and filter equipment inside and out. You need to have the right film (or chip), and plenty of capacity. In territory sales, your Deal Closure Rate tracks your performance in those essential personal selling skills needed to persuade prospects to do business with you and your dealership after you have identified the opportunity:

- 1. Account profiling techniques.
- 2. Account qualifying procedures
- 3. Needs analysis and problem identification.
- 4. Persuasive presentations and demonstrations.
- 5. Marketing your Dealership's overall product support capabilities.
- 6. Utilizing financial tools and presenting appropriate rental options.
- 7. Handling objections
- 8. Good personal communications and follow-up
- 9. Getting commitments.
- 10. Enthusiasm, resilience, honesty.

In **DEAL VISIBILITY** you learn to search out, identify and zoom in on a large percent of the deals in your territory. This must be done early enough in the purchase cycle so you can influence the outcome. (The later you arrive on a deal, the lower your probability of success and the lower your margins, if you do win it.) The earlier you can identify a potential sale, the greater your prospects of success. The sooner you can work with the account on the needs analysis and problem-identification phase, the higher your sales margin (and, probably your rep's commission) on the deal.

In **DEAL CLOSURE** you exhibit the sales persuasion and personal communications skills essential to "woo" the account. Just as you must learn to avoid spooking the wild game, causing the herd to flee before you can squeeze off a shot, you must learn to work on a personal basis with your prospect to build his trust and confidence in you and your dealership.

Through appropriate probing and questioning techniques, you learn to identify production problems and opportunities for your machine or aftermarket service applications. You learn to help your prospect define his critical purchase criteria as well as his "hot buttons." You learn how your prospect will make the economic justification to buy, You make certain that your contact has both the authority to sign the deal as well as the funding to make it happen. You'll discover the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal and how you compare to competition. Finally, you must determine what obstacles (and prospect's fears) you must overcome to get the sale.

The most successful machinery and aftermarket sales reps in the industry work toward maintaining a deal visibility rate of 75-80% and a deal closure rate of 50-60%. At this success rate, you can expect to maintain a market share of 48% (.80 x .60). Mathematically, you can see the importance of the combined impact of visibility rate and deal closure rate. If your visibility rate was only 20% and your closure rate was 75%, your maximum market share would be only about 15%. (.20 x .75). Even with a closure rate of 100%, with only a 20% visibility rate, your maximum machinery market share could not exceed 20%!

Which of these two skills is more critical? In my opinion, both are essential. To attempt to do one without the other would be just as foolish as heading out to your East African safari without a well-planned 4-WD campsite route (that would absolutely assure you great views of the big game), or forgetting to load your expensive camera with adequate memory!

Use the following score card to check out your skills. What skills do you need to improve?

PERSONAL SELLING SKILL INVENTORY

Score each personal selling skill below on a scale of 1 to 10. Give a 1 or 2 if extremely weak in an area. If very, very strong, score a 9 or 10.

DEAL VISIBILITY RATE SKILL SET

SCORE

1. **Market Segmentation and Assessment** _____
Skill of assessing your territory to identify the most promising and productive customer segments (vocations) that offer the most opportunity.
2. **Territory Account Identification, Organization and Classification** _____
Skill of profiling large numbers of current AND prospective accounts to identify near term purchase potential, classification of current and prospective accounts into A-B-C importance categories and structuring an account contact strategy to optimize coverage.
3. **Prospecting and Account Analysis** _____
Skill of contacting A-B-C customers AND prospects according to plan, either in person or over the phone to identify equipment purchase requirements. **REMEMBER: you will never be able to drive your truck fast enough to identify 80% of the deals by personal territory canvassing alone. You must use technology to help you cover the territory: Phone, direct mail, Linkedin.com, bird-dogs, partnering with parts and service, trade association, sales referrals...**
4. **Territory Follow-up and Control** _____
Skill of pursuing emerging sales opportunities to be within shooting distance in a timely, orderly way.

CLOSURE RATE SKILL SET

SCORE

1. **Account profiling techniques** _____
Skill of identifying key players, fleet size and composition, equipment replacement cycle, financial status, purchasing preferences, competitive activity, key influencers, vital vendor selection criteria, etc.
2. **Account qualification procedures** _____
Skill of ascertaining if the account has sufficient need, buying authority and financial strength to consummate the deal.
3. **Needs analysis and problem identification—Thorough Diagnostics** _____
Skills of probing and listening, identification of problems/opportunities, equipment maintenance issues, and purchase decision criteria.
4. **Persuasive presentations and demonstrations** _____
Skill of demonstrating that your equipment and attachments, service and parts proposal is the lowest risk highest return alternative.
5. **Marketing your Dealership's overall product support capabilities** _____
Prospects who don't know your dealership are held back because of fear. They are fearful your dealership will not be there when they need you for warranty and, parts and service support.
6. **Utilizing financial tools and presenting appropriate options** _____
Skill of providing the prospect relevant alternative financial packages that best suit his needs and investment requirements.

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| 7. Handling objections | Skill of responding to questions and offering proof to diminish FEAR of doing business with you and your dealership. | _____ |
| 8. Good personal communications and follow-up | Skill of staying close to the prospect and maintaining the momentum of the deal. | _____ |
| 9. Getting commitments. | Skill of getting the prospect to take the steps needed along the way: credit application, used equipment appraisal, visiting your parts and service department, talking to happy users (customer referrals), spending time needed to properly identify real needs. | _____ |
| 10. Enthusiasm, resilience, honesty | Build it, Maintain it, or loose it. | _____ |
| TOTAL SCORE | | _____ |

NOTE: If your TOTAL overall score is less than 112 (out of 140), you should immediately begin an aggressive personal selling skills development effort. Remember, you are only as good as your weakest skill area. **EVERYTHING COUNTS!** The lowest score drags all other capabilities down to that level in terms of overall impact on performance.

Everything counts. It either helps you move closer to personal professionalism and sales expertise or, further away.

Good luck and good hunting.

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