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## Stop the sales blame game

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Are you looking for things to blame for poor sales — a bad economy, aggressive competition or a less-than-aggressive sales team? If we find something to blame, we don't have to change tactics. Truly successful companies are constantly asking, "What can I do today to improve sales?"

When 9/11 hit, Acuity Systems' clients announced major cutbacks — and training was one of the first things to go. When 50% of the company's revenue was lost, we decided to re-evaluate our customer base and expand services. Are you doing anything different to improve sales? If not, here are a few helpful tips:

- Make sales everyone's job. Everyone in your company plays a critical sales role and creates an experience for customers and prospects — from your receptionist to your backroom employees.
- Treat clients like prospects. Think of how you court prospects when you're trying to land their business. You uncover problems, offer solutions, stay in touch and respond quickly. You go the extra mile. How would your clients react if you treated them the same way?
- Sell more with less. Are your top producers hunters, farmers or fishermen? Do they aggressively hunt for new business opportunities? Do they have a good base of business that they farm? Or, are they "fishermen" just waiting for a sales bite?
- Evaluate your sales force. Get rid of those salespeople just sitting on the dock, keep your most productive farmers and give your best hunters the right tools, beliefs and management support.
- Get rid of your top producers. In most companies, top producers are not hunters — they've just stuck around long enough to inherit business. Are your so-called top producers aggressively looking for and landing new business?
- Use the crystal ball. By putting the right sales processes in place and taking into account your sales cycles, you can actually forecast what your yearly sales will be. We call this the "crystal ball." Do you have a crystal ball, or are you going to do what many companies do — set goals, evaluate them maybe once per quarter and complain at the end of the year that sales fell short?

Stop the blame game now! Take action, watch your sales grow and improve the future of your company.

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