

# RUSSEL BERMAN, SPARK ATM SYSTEMS

## WHAT IS THE GREATEST LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE YOU ARE CURRENTLY FACING?

Like most sales leaders, Russel struggles with finding enough hours in a day. "As opportunities expand in South Africa and beyond, I'm finding it more challenging to manage the limited time I have. My strategy is to groom a very strong middle layer of management to coach and assist the sales team and free me up to deal with the overall growth strategy," he says.

“Salespeople flourish when they don't have Big Brother breathing down their neck. Then they see sales as their own responsibility. I say to them “this is your own business and you can write your own pay cheque.”

## WHAT INCENTIVES DO YOU EMPLOY FOR YOUR SALES TEAMS?

"We've fine tuned this process," says Russel. "At the end of the day salespeople are motivated by cash. If they aren't in sales to make money, then I don't want them in my business. Also, there is an egotistical side to salespeople that is fed by recognition."

- The internal sales team has a monthly team target; if they hit it, they get lunch as a team wherever they want with an open credit card.
  - The external sales teams are offered incentive trips for excellent performance (this year they're going for a week in Namibia). Recently, this side of the competition has been open to internal sales performers too.
- Also, each time a deal is closed the cash cow bell is rung and the team blasts their vuvuzelas. "It's a bit of a circus,

but each consultant knows that the entire company is applauding their performance," he says.

## WHAT CRM / DATABASE SYSTEM DO YOU USE?

"We started off using an open source package called Sugar CRM, but it didn't capture everything we needed in terms of the sales process. We therefore developed our own CRM programme in-house that is tailored to our processes and market conditions and it has worked brilliantly."

## HOW DO YOU HIRE SALESPEOPLE?

Always on the lookout for candidates with experience in product selling, Russel hires salespeople who have a passion for being on the road and have proven themselves as hungry hunters with a winning attitude. Our HR manager maintains a shortlist of 2 good candidates in every province at all times. We give intensive product and systems training and regular coaching but the initial hire is based on attitude.

## ARE SALESPEOPLE BORN OR MADE

"They are born – without a doubt. It takes a special kind of individual to keep knocking on doors after numerous negative responses and keep pushing. You've either got it, or you don't."

## WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

"Surfing and fishing are my passions. I tried my hand at golf, but when my local club gave me the title 'The Gardener' because of all the time I spent in the trees, I decided it was time to get back to the ocean."

## WHAT THREE THINGS CAN'T YOU DO WITHOUT?

1. My BlackBerry
2. ESA and Boots & All on Thursday night
3. My Siamese cats Jaz and Mao



PHOTO: CLARE LOUISE THOMAS

Russel began selling websites for a local ISP 12 years ago. He then moved to selling financial services at one of South Africa's leading banks. Over the years he combined his sales lessons learned with a natural flair for leadership and he now leads the sales force at Spark ATM Systems. But it's not an office job. "I'm out in the field daily with my team. I know the challenges they face and I know the market conditions they sell in. You can't manage from your desk, it just doesn't work," he says. □

## Russel's fundamental rules of sales

1. The phone is your friend. Use it. Often
2. Ask for referrals
3. It's the numbers that talk, not the hours you work
4. Successful sales are contingent on the attitude of the salesman not the attitude of the prospect

## DEAL CLOSERS REQUIRED!

Spark ATM Systems, industry leaders in selling and installing convenience ATMs into retail, leisure and hospitality locations nationwide, is looking for sales talent. If you have a natural born gift to close deals then we want you to join our award winning national sales team. If you have 3-5 years FMCG, ATM, office automation, airtime vending or similar external sales experience then send your CV to [judy@sparkatm.co.za](mailto:judy@sparkatm.co.za) with the reference SALGUR0810.

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