

YOU MAY NOT NEED A SALES DEPARTMENT...

...not unless you want to improve results. We all know that it is not just the effort that counts in a sales operation, but the results of the effort. Certainly there are too many hotel sales people, and sales departments that are not productive. A number of factors create, and contribute to the situation, for example:

- **Poor recruiting and hiring techniques**
- **Lack of direction and supervision**
- **No motivation offered via management**
- **No sales plan or procedures to follow for staff**
- **Poor time management practices**
- **Other functions delegated to sales staff**
- **Poor staff communications**
- **Untrained sales staff**
- **Too comfortable offices**
- **Non-responsible management**
- **Low sales budgets**
- **No job descriptions for staff**

The solution to the problem is not for lodging owners or operators to accept the responsibility of being chiefs-in-charge of sales. Instead, they must establish objectives for the sales department, objectives that are results oriented.

For example, measurable goals for improved room occupancy, room revenue, and for food/beverage functions need to be established. Pie in the sky doesn't work; all goals should be realistic. The objective must be improvement. The measure of the quality of a sales team is its ability to improve sales, regardless of the obstacles that are in the way. The usual arguments from sales people for not improving sales come from a long list of "reasons why we can't get business":

- **Our country is in a recession; high unemployment**

- **Additional competition in the area**
- **Other properties cutting rates**
- **Many complaints on food service**
- **Highways have changed traffic patterns**
- **Product is dates; need refurbishing**
- **Too much change-over in management**
- **Staff not courteous**
- **Other jobs delegated to sales staff**
- **Meeting rooms not sound-proofed; bad lighting**
- **Poor parking for guests**

Etc., etc., etc., and the list goes on and on.

In reality, hotel owners and operators do not believe everything they hear...or do they? The items on this listing sound like plausible reasons for not getting business, but many of the problems are correctable by management. However, if both management and the sales department are convinced that business cannot be developed, then there is no choice but to save some money by getting rid of the sales department, and get business catch-as-catch can.