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Making Strategy Happen

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The Sales Professional's 2020 Hall Pass Has Expired

Career sales professionals know that January 1st marks a new set of expectations, a new start, the beginning to a new selling year. It is the classic kickoff for “What have you done for me lately?” when our results from the prior year are just that – last year’s results. Our budget or quota from the last year are a memory as we start anew with our goals for the year at hand.

But 2020 has been far from a normal year. Some sales people benefited greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic and had the best year of their career. (Don’t you wish you sold face masks and sanitizer this year?) E-commerce companies had a boom year as people hunkered down at home and ordered online. Restaurants with drive throughs enjoyed record lines as they passed perfectly measured orders through a window with no refills and no loading up on condiments and napkins.

For some though, 2020 was much more difficult. Funnels dried up and prospects became harder and harder to reach. Deals dragged out as prospects by the score said “We’re putting this on hold for now.” We embraced Zoom and Teams and all manner of virtual options as we tried to stay connected with our customers and prospects. And for some, they thankfully embraced the hall pass that was the virus. “How can we be expected to deliver results in the middle of this?” Things will bounce back as we get through this and as the vaccine rolls out. Hope springs eternal. But hope is not a strategy and hope is not a plan.

The best and the brightest realized early on that 2020 will shape sales as we know it for years to come. Just as schools and students are adapting to “blended learning,” we must adapt to blended selling. There will be many companies who see the current virtual environment as a very productive way to engage with their partners. There will be some who yearn to be back face-to-face. And there will be others who will choose to execute with a blended approach. As sales leaders it is our responsibility to head into the new year, the new sales campaign, with a strategic plan that understands today’s realities while preparing for what is to come. And it is our responsibility to make certain we deliver what is expected in 2021. Because our hall pass has expired.

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At ESG, we are supporting our clients through the complex projects we are all tackling during this time of change. We would [welcome the opportunity](#) to learn more about your current business challenges and determine where ESG can provide support.

—By Ed Carr, Senior Sales Leadership & Organizational Effectiveness Consultant, ESG

Based in Denver, Colorado, Execution Specialists Group (ESG) is a strategy execution-focused consultancy with extensive global experience engaging with client senior leadership to plan and deliver on complex post M&A integration and digital transformation objectives. Recognized by Forbes as one of America's "Top Management Consulting Firms" for the past five years (2016-2020), ESG clients include Advance Auto Parts, Bridgestone, Caesars Entertainment, Gordon Food Service, Office Depot/OfficeMax, Target Corporation, Whole Foods and more. To learn more about ESG, visit www.esgimpact.com