

SALES AND SERVICE Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

DECEMBER 2010

**Bad
Sales
Habits**

**Are
Salespeople
Obsolete?**

**Customer Insight
Differentiate Creatively**

**John R. Patterson
Consultant**



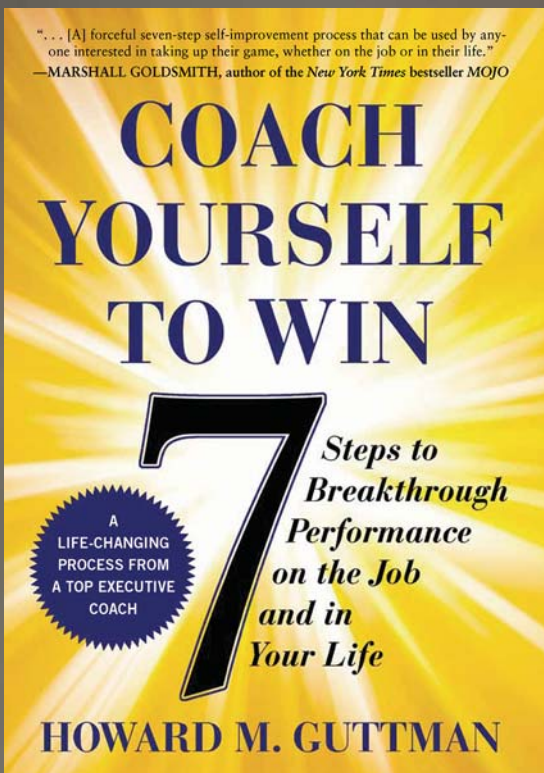
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Sales and Service Excellence

Volume 10 Number 12

The Magazine of Team Leadership

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SALES/CAREER

Are Salespeople Obsolete?

Yes, unless they shift their primary job functions.



by Richard F. Libin

SINCE TODAY TECHNOLOGY IS making information available to nearly everyone 24/7, do customers really need salespeople? Yes, but not like they have in the past. Traditionally, salespeople did two things for customers: communicate information and sell (many believed that if they didn't close the immediate sale, they'd never get it).

These two functions no longer provide value. Gone is the era of the salesperson that focused on selling as hard and fast as possible, regardless of the customer's needs. Gone are the days when the ideal salesman acted like Superman, with that winning smile.

Yet for many sales professionals, these functions—communicate information and close deals—remain their core approach, making them *virtually obsolete*. As a salesperson, if you believe these two functions make up your job description, you need to ask yourself if you have the ability to change.

Three Functions

Today, your job profile can be defined in three simple functions:

1. *Salespeople are responsible for help-*

ing customers find and select the right product or service. To do so, they must:

- Be 100 percent present and work with a single-minded focus for each customer. The formula for success is simple. When you give 100 percent attitude, effort, and performance in a positive manner, you will get the desired results. If you put your best foot forward, you have a better chance of getting what may have



been one or two missed opportunities.

- Ask probing questions to develop an understanding of each customer's unique wants, needs, and desires. It's not about what *you* think; it's about what the *customer* thinks.

- Listen, learn, and empathize with the customers, understand problems from their point-of-view, and discover small details in order to successfully guide the

selection process and find an exact fit.

- Help the customers try it on. Throughout the introduction and including a demonstration of the product, if applicable, the salesperson should guide customers as they experience the features that will satisfy their needs, wants, and desires. The salesperson should help customers build an emotional bond and fall in love with their product or service. *For example, I used to buy my suits from a guy named Ed. Each time I'd go in his shop, he'd say, "Good morning Mr. Libin, what's the occasion you are shopping for today?" He'd find a suit, I'd try it on, button the jacket, adjust the shoulders, pull down the sleeves, and fuss over it until I was feeling good about it. Then he'd say, "No, that's not the right suit for you for this occasion." He'd find another suit, repeat the process, I'd feel even better about it, and we'd close the sale. He created a "want" in the first suit, took it away, and created a stronger desire by finding the right suit for me. Price was never discussed.*

- Introduce customers to the rest of the "family," giving them a tour of the business or store, introducing them to everyone, not just the managers, and explaining that they are there to provide for their total needs. Begin to convert customers to long-term clients.

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2. If a salesperson is truly helping a customer buy, the customer will fall in love with his choice. Price, then, becomes a secondary concern. Unlike the past, price negotiations should always come last and take the least amount of time. This is not to say that price is not important. However, when time is spent on selection process, price becomes a secondary consideration for most customers. Price is only the primary issue when a salesperson sells price, or pre-qualifies a customer based on budget instead of landing the customer based on needs, wants, and desires.

Consider the following examples, based on a 60-minute customer interaction. In the *Traditional Model*, the customer spends an hour with the salesperson, of which 10 minutes is spent on selection and 50 minutes on negotiating price. This is a sure-fire formula for disaster.

In the *Model for the New Millennium*, the salesperson spends 50 minutes helping customers select the right product or service and only 10 minutes on price. Here the focus is on helping the customer make a selection. This approach brings the customer greater satisfaction at the time of the purchase. It delights the customer who will rave about his experience, refer his friends and family, and ultimately become a loyal client.

Price should be raised only after customers feel at home and have built a strong emotional bond with the product or service, the business, and the salesperson. Think about how clothing retailers work. A woman goes to a dress rack and flips through the dresses until one catches her eye; she holds it up, feels the fabric, and looks over the style. Only after she's identified it as the right dress does she look at price. That's one reason smart retailers mix the inexpensive and expensive dresses on the same rack. That's not to say that people don't buy on price; however, typically when people do, they are not happy with the result. The dress may have been a great deal, but it rarely, if ever, gets worn. If you buy the wrong product at the right price, chances are that the product will never be used.

It's the salesperson's job to make sure that the price fits the budget or that payments are acceptable and that customers believe the price is worth the value of product or service they selected. If the salesperson has mastered the first step, price will rarely be a roadblock to a sale.

3. *Converting customers to clients.* The salesperson's job does not stop at the close of the sale, yet most customers never get a call once they leave a store. That call is actu-

ally the start of the rest of the process, of building the long-term relationship. Why? For most salespeople, it is fear of rejection, not knowing what to say and not knowing how to say it. Follow-up calls are essential and can be successful if the following steps are used: 1) *Have a purpose*—understand the outcome you want from the call—know your mission. Is it a referral or additional sales, to make a friend or client, perhaps? 2) *Know what you want say*—script it out, "How do you look in your new suit? Did your friends and family like it?" 3) *Think about and plan how you will say it.* 4) *Be prepared for the customer to lead you down another path and to bridge back to their original idea.*

Consider this example: **Desired outcome:** referral/lead and relationship building.

What you want to say: Did your friends or family like your purchase? **How will you say it:** When did you first wear your new suit to work? (In this case, the salesperson knew why the suit was being purchased, which is part of his first job function.) What did your friends and colleagues think about it? How did it make you feel? Did anyone ask where you purchased it? Would you mind if I gave them a call? **Never ask a question unless you know what the answer is.** If you ask the customer "May I help you?" they will always answer, "No I am just looking." Instead, go up and introduce yourself saying, "Hi, I'm Richard." Get their name, and then say, "My job is to help you find the product or service that meets your needs." Ninety percent of the time they engage in conversation.

The goal is to **make the follow-up a continuation of the positive purchasing experience.** Starting a conversation that gets customers excited about their purchase all over again can lead to a referral for a friend who might want to do business with you. These are **the ABCs of selling**—always be closing.

Start with one essential first step: every day when you get out of bed, and several times during the day, say to yourself, "My job is not to sell, but to help my customers find the exact product or service that meets their needs; and in doing so, to make sure their experience is positive." Adopt the right attitude every day. Make this sentence your mantra; say it, repeat it and believe it. Only after embracing this precept, can you continue your journey of continuous learning that is required to face a world of continuous change, the new world of sales. **SSE**

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ACTION: Help customers find what meets their needs.



Unconditional Love

Nine strategies to win clients.



by Maribeth Kuzmeski

KEEPING CLIENTS HAPPY AND drumming up new business can be a juggling act, but it's necessary to keep your business profitable. I offer *10 marketing strategies* to keep your clients coming back—and inspire them to bring others with them.

The marketplace is crowded, saturated with businesses vying for the attention of customers and prospects. If you aren't doing something to *set yourself apart and create customer loyalty*, your business is in big trouble. You have to drive your clients wild!

Your clients are the key to keeping your business alive and thriving. If they are happy, they stay and refer others to you. So, concentrate on the connection between client referrals and the bond you form with your clients.

When you drive your clients wild, they'll want to introduce your business to others. Here are *nine marketing tactics for driving your clients wild*:

1. Become the media. One powerful way to gain exposure, boost your credibility, and get people talking is to get media coverage. This can be difficult to do regularly, as work can get in the way. And, you may be hesitant to put yourself out there because you can't control what the media says. One solution is to host your own radio show. In essence, you become the media, using tools that are available for free (see Blog Talk Radio at www.blogtalkradio.com).

2. Say hello (again) to seminars. They still work! From dinner seminars to referral-based seminars to presentations, seminars are a great way to get your message—and expertise—in front of your target audience. If you want your clients and prospects to know what you can do for them, you have to tell them. Getting in front of a group of thought leaders and decision makers is a gold mine. If you can prove to them how valuable your service or product can be to them, you can create a profitable relationship. Set up an event or offer yourself as a speaker for your clients' events.

3. Rake in the referrals (without ever asking). Improving your referral-generating skills is valuable, but most people would rather *not* ask customers for referrals. Try using two proven referral-

generating strategies that don't *require* asking: 1) *Don't miss the boat*: Plan an appreciation event, and invite clients who have referred others to your business. Hold an event that clients will want to attend again—so they'll be prompted to make more referrals. 2) *The Fuel Card*: How you thank clients who refer people can generate even *more* customers. Send them a small gift that they can use *right away*. If you send a \$20 fuel card as a referral thank-you, they'll use it right away, think of you, and recommend you to others. Referrals are a cornerstone to garnering new business; you can't afford *not* to have them.

4. Make a charitable connection. Try doing a fundraiser *for the charity*. They'll



be very grateful—and may even hand over a list of top donors to invite to the event—a list of potential clients! Invite current clients as well, and use the event to get in a little one-on-one time, creating a winning situation for everyone involved: you develop many new relationships with high-net-worth individuals, and the charity raises donations. It may turn into one of your best financial *and* personal investments.

5. Build a better (stronger) brand through awareness. Have a *strong brand* that can be described simply. A brand is *not* your logo, tag line, or elevator speech. It is what people say about you, how they describe you, your business, your staff, and your offerings. A strong brand will differentiate you, make your clients feel important, and bring you the referrals you deserve. The stronger your brand, the more credible and visible you are, and the easier it is for others to do business with you.

6. Take care of your community. Being an active member of the community establishes name recognition and positive awareness. When you give back

and develop a positive brand as a good member of the community, business naturally comes your way. Consider taking a role in your local Chamber of Commerce, sponsor a local charity or school, or volunteer at a town picnic. It's a great opportunity to meet new faces, to tell others about the work you do, and to support the community that, in turn, will support you. Don't overlook the clients and potential clients who may be right under your nose. Take the time to reach out to them. Your involvement will set the tone for how you are viewed, and build your brand.

7. Make waves on the World Wide Web. When a prospect or client searches for you online or arrives at your website, do they see what they want to see? Are their questions answered and expectations met (or exceeded)? Does it create a connection? You have seven seconds to make a great first online impression. Your website should have *three elements*: 1) *a clear, concise message* aimed at your target market. 2) *a call to action* to convert visitors into customers; and 3) *a thorough evaluation* to learn what key word they used, how long they stayed, and if they were repeat or new visitors (using analytics software) Use this data to improve your homepage and site.

8. Be a viral video star. Deliver messages to prospects and clients via video. Services like AdvisorTLC.com allow you to quickly and easily create and deliver personalized, emotional, and relevant video content to clients—and then email it. You can use video to deliver market updates, provide education, give referral introductions, transmit thank-you messages, and announce special event wishes and product information and updates.

9. Do something really out of the box. Today everyone's thinking *outside the box*, so you need to *brainstorm some far out ideas*—perhaps do something a little crazy or shocking to garner attention. Think about what would get *your* attention. For example, you might send a *Show & Awe box* to qualified prospects, delivered by private messenger. When a prospect gets a box like this, they can't ignore it! It's a real *out of the box* idea!

There are many methods for setting yourself apart and driving your clients wild. Don't try to do them all at once. *Pick one and try it for six months.* Execute it well. If it doesn't work, try a new one. Keep the ideas flowing and fresh, and make relationships a priority. **SSE**

Maribeth Kuzmeski is founder of Red Zone Marketing and author of And the Clients Went Wild! and The Connectors (Wiley). Visit www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com.

ACTION: Drive your clients wild.

Customer Insight

Seek creative differentiation.



by Chip R. Bell and John R. Patterson

THE MAYOR OF SANTA CLARITA, CA, holds an annual hairdresser's luncheon to learn what citizens are really concerned about (people will tell their hairdressers what they would never report in a city-wide survey).

The GM of a large midtown hotel holds quarterly focus groups with the taxi drivers who frequent his property waiting to transport departing guests to the airport (he knows the taxi drivers get a more honest earful).

At least 95 percent of all companies seek customer feedback by engaging in customer inquiry. Armed with surveys, focus group reports and suggestions, the marketing department slices, dices, and presents to leaders *what we know for sure about our customers*.

But is *understanding customers* the end goal? The huge investment in gathering customer feedback is primarily to gain either confirming or corrective information—to learn *how are we doing* and *what do we need to fix*. But, today's customers show their allegiance to innovative companies—those with a passion for the inventive. **Traditional customer feedback and evaluation can't effectively inform innovation.**

We once consulted with a company to help them better understand what drove loyalty among their customers. The CEO was delayed and joined us 30 minutes into our story. As he took his seat, he asked: "What can you tell us that I don't already know or can figure out from your report?"

We politely asked him: "What is behind your question?"

"I appreciate your research, but 'I'm looking for *insight*—not *understanding*. What were the surprises in your loyalty study? What are our customers *communicating without saying*? What is a *big aha* that we can translate into a competitive advantage—or at least a deeper customer relationship?"

His queries got us thinking: *How do we push our pursuit of understanding to the point of insight?* Does *insight* emanate from great rapport with the customer, smart questioning, or shrewd analysis? What if we rethought the *ask a question, get an answer* mode of cus-

tomers intelligence? How can customer input help inform innovation? "Breakthroughs," said Andy Grove, former Chairman of Intel, "come from an instinctive judgment of what customers might want if they knew to think about it."

- When Moen hired Continuum to help them develop a new line of showerheads, Continuum got permission to film customers taking showers in their homes and used the findings in the new design. Among the *insights* gleaned were that people spent *half their time* in the shower with their eyes closed and *30 percent of their time* avoiding water altogether. The data contributed to the new Moen *Revolution* showerhead becoming a best-seller.

- Treadless.com invites their website community to vote on the coolest t-shirts designed by fellow amateurs. The winning entries become their product offerings, providing great exposure for budding designers and a

sense of ownership by the community.

- Mountain Dew created a user-generated process to launch a new product. The process (*Dewmocracy*) involved three million customers in the design, development, and marketing of a new drink (ultimately called *White Out*).

Think about the insights that Treadless and Mountain Dew gained!

Today's customers are *picky, fickle, and all about me vain*. Their *have it my way* orientation means that you need *creative differentiation*. Retooling to *approach the marketplace with imagination* requires *rethinking the means and methods for gaining customer intelligence*. Success will come when you can say, *We learned something that surprised us.* SSE

Chip R. Bell and John R. Patterson are authors of the best-selling book Take Their Breath Away: How Imaginative Service Creates Devoted Customers. Their forthcoming book is Wired and Dangerous. Visit www.taketheirbreathaway.com, chip@chipbell.com.

ACTION: Seek insights into your customers.

SERVICE/CO-DESTINY

Focus on Co-Destiny

See your customers as friends.



by George F. Brown, Jr.

IN 1970, WALT KELLY HAD HIS comic strip character Pogo use the phrase "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us" in an Earth Day poster. Since then, we see it applied in many settings, including in the most difficult leadership challenges.

This year CEOs ranked as their most important challenge *sustained and steady top-line growth*. Pogo's message provides an insight relative to this challenge. *Firms that try to address their growth challenges on their own won't be successful.*

Those that look outside of their walls for solutions *get it* and will reward their shareholders.

You can best achieve your growth strategy by helping your customers achieve theirs. When we ask executives to tell us a success story, they often tell of suppliers that helped them to grow their business—to reach new customers, to deliver a superior product, to move up the *Good-Better-Best* spectrum, how to get to a critical competitive price point by taking costs out of manufacturing or logistics or warranty or some other costly process. These suppliers help their customers grow by creating value.

There are many approaches to value creation—and often your customers

can best provide the details. One approach would be innovations that contribute to merchandising and marketing for your customer—ones that enable them to gain market share or command premium prices or both. Often, the end customers in such markets are always looking for innovation, something new, a step-out offering from the manufacturers and their suppliers. For example, you might **contribute an innovation** that helps your customer enhance its product line. Or,

you might help your customer **resolve technical challenges**. In every industry, there are certain technical challenges.

Often, customer purchase decisions depend upon your customer's success in meeting these technical challenges. Or, you might help you customers

to **take costs out of the system** or otherwise improve competitiveness of your customers.

You don't need to see your company and employees as *the enemy*, but you do need to *see your customers as your friends*. They will define the route to success, by telling you what challenges need to be overcome in order to become the subject of success stories. By focusing on *CoDestiny* relationships and solving your customers' growth challenges, you'll find the solutions to your own growth challenges. SSE

George F. Brown, Jr., is CEO of Blue Canyon Partners, and co-author of CoDestiny: Overcome Your Growth Challenges by Helping Your Customers Overcome Theirs (Greenleaf). Visit codestinybook.com.

ACTION: Create co-destiny relationships.

Listen to Customers

Here's the why and how of it.



by Duff Anderson

INTUITIVELY, MANAGERS AND leaders know that they need to listen to customers, but *knowing what drives customer satisfaction* (past, present and future) is the most powerful competitive information available. The importance of customer input is captured in this statement by former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch: "We have only two sources of competitive advantage: The ability to learn more about our customers faster than the competition; and the ability to turn that learning into action faster than the competition."

Adapt to the Environment

A misguided notion in the theory of Natural Selection is that the strong out-compete the weak and win. But, the theory suggests that the one who is best adapted to its environment survives, while those who are not, don't. In business, the customer ultimately defines the environment. The Internet has made the customers' voice much more audible. Enhancements in analysis algorithms and increased computer processing speeds have also improved marketer's ability to hear it. Simply, Voice of Customer (VoC) is like a hearing aid—it improves your ability to listen to your environment.

The Internet enables us to speak directly to customers in the context of real experiences. People can and want to speak for themselves, and you need to listen to customers in real situations, since the ways and means of shopping have evolved. People now research purchases online, they use search engines, and they are recommended to sites through social media networks.

VoC data replaces panel and focus group results with measures of real world insights that reflect the evolving behaviors and needs of customers.

Complaints vs Insight

While a feedback button that any visitor can access at any time will flag immediate and obvious issues, this form of feedback is more of a customer complaint portal than a tool that can help you tap into the hearts and minds of your visitors. To make solid decisions based on VoC, a *proactive set of survey*

questions and a representative sample of visitors is required. To achieve such a sample, *invitations must be random, and participation requested upon their arrival to the site.* Beyond listening, the challenge is to adapt to the environment and the right message. Start by asking four questions: *What are my customers/website visitors there to do? Are they completing what they set out to do? If not, why not? How satisfied are customers/visitors?*

Mind Your Manners

Nobody likes the feeling of being watched, so tell visitors upon arrival to your site that they have a chance, if they desire, to provide feedback after their visit. Also, nobody likes being interrupted. So, don't interrupt potential customers in the middle of their visit with a solicitation for feedback that was triggered by some action they took. Survey interruptions yield four to five times fewer respondents than on-arrival invitations and increase the aggravation among all visitors, whether they participate or not.

By inviting upon arrival, *you avoid interrupting visitors during their experience.* Consider entering a retail outlet and receiving a polite, "Welcome, is there anything I can help you with today?" Compare this polite greeting to a salesperson following you around the store and rushing over only once you pick up an item.

Moreover, inviting feedback during or at the end of a website visit can lead to a negative bias, as these invitations garner more negative feedback. Timing is everything, as it affects visitors' motives to take the survey and people are always quicker to complain than they are to compliment.

By inviting upon arrival, you can gain a representative sample of positive and negative feedback, as *the commitment to provide feedback after the visit occurs before the experience.* Further, the positive to negative ratio among those who participate in on-arrival surveys is equal to those who don't participate.

Understand What and Why

Websites are the most measurable of sales and service channels, since data exists on what visitors are doing. *Behavioral Web Analytics*, or *click stream data*, is a form of measuring website performance and provides valuable decision support to help optimize online

channel offerings. However, metrics like *pages visited, time on site* and *conversion rate* provide little insight into the hearts and minds of online customers.

What's missing is the insight gained by listening to website visitors, as they can provide the *why* behind the *what*. Uniquely, visitors can provide feedback in the context of the purpose of their visit; they can also let you know whether or not they could complete their desired tasks and how satisfied they were with the experience. To access this level of insight, you need VoC—the immediate post-experience feedback from website visitors. "All the quantitative data you have from your web analytics tools helps you understand the *What* happened. It can't tell you *Why* something happened," said Avinash Kaushik, Web Analytics Evangelist for Google.

It's a Process, Not an Event

Marketers are often challenged with the belief that continuous VoC studies are not actionable or that organizations themselves are not capable of repeatedly acting on the results. In a



sense these decision makers are putting the cart before the horse. They see *customer satisfaction* as a performance measure that should be gauged only once in a while, that *customer satisfaction* is an event, like a checkup. Gauging customer satisfaction is a *process*, not an *event*.

By listening to your customers and measuring their attitudes, intentions and opinions, you gain the ability to take action—to know *why* your customers are satisfied or dissatisfied. Continuous listening moves customer satisfaction from measurement to decision support. It enables you to see trends, understand meaningful changes, and to be confident when reactionary measures are taken.

Continuously measuring the VoC helps to better understand which perceptions and attitudes are changing, which ones cycle, and which ones remain constant. You can then move *measurement* to *understanding*, *surprise results* to *insights*, and *cycles* to *things that can be planned for*.

As customers evolve and times change, so too will the roles of sales and marketing strategists as they make way for the VoC, incorporating it as a basic requirement for good decision-making. **SSE**

Duff Anderson is VP of Research at iPerceptions. Visit www.iperceptions.com.

ACTION: Make way for the VoC.

Culture of Optimism

Six ways to boost motivation.



by Jon Gordon

WITH THE RECESSION Waning, many employees are in a funk—fearful, overworked, distrustful, and dispassionate. And many leaders and managers are frustrated by their team's low morale and sluggish performance.

The solution to this malaise lies in motivation. *The ability to motivate people is one of the most important skills you can possess. Take on the role of motivator—to unite, rally, and engage your team and keep your numbers on the rise.*

When people are feeling fear and negativity, you have to counter with even *more powerful emotions*—like faith, belief, and optimism. Your success depends on *your ability to motivate*.

Apply *six strategies* to motivate people (and achieve desired results):

1. Don't be too busy to communicate.

In uncertain times, people wonder *what will happen next* and *what action to take*. Uncertainty creates a void. Unless you fill that void with clear and positive communication, *people will assume the worst and act accordingly*. Fear and negativity will dominate their thoughts, behaviors, and actions. *Make communicating with your employees a top priority daily*. Communicate with *transparency, authenticity, and clarity*. Have a short morning motivational each day, make office rounds in the afternoon, or take your team to lunch. Take time to talk to each member of your team regularly.

2. Lead with optimism. The engine for growth and prosperity is an *optimistic, can-do attitude and spirit*. Sadly, optimism is in short supply with the doom-and-gloom media coverage, the workplace rumor mill, and economic uncertainty. To combat pessimism, you need to transfer your optimism and vision to others and inspire them to believe they can succeed, to think and act in ways that drive results. Convey your optimism in all you say and do.

3. Share the vision. Give people something to be optimistic about. Talk about *where you've been, where you are, and where you're going*. Share your plan for a brighter and better future; talk about the actions you must take; and constantly reiterate the reasons why you will be successful. Create a *vision statement* that inspires your team—a *rallying cry* that means something to

them. This vision must come to life in the hearts and minds of your people. Share it, reinforce it, and inspire your people to live it daily. *A positive vision of the future leads to powerful actions today.*

4. Relationships build real motivation. It's easier to motivate people when you know them and they know you. If you don't get to know the people who work for you, *how can you know the best way to lead, coach, and motivate them? How can you expect them to trust and follow you if they don't know you as well?* Make developing *meaningful relationships* with your employees your top priority.

5. Create purpose-driven goals. *Real motivation* has nothing to do with money or number-driven goals—it is driven by purpose and a desire to make a difference. People are most energized when using their strengths for a purpose beyond themselves. *Numbers don't drive peo-*

ple—people and purpose drive the numbers. Give team members a sense of purpose that will *motivate them* to take action.

6. Nourish your team. Every person wants to know, "Do you care about me; can I trust you?" If your answer is *yes*, they'll likely stay and work with you. Employees who feel cared for, honored, and nourished are more engaged, loyal, creative, and productive—they'll want to do good work for you.

Belief plus action equals results. If you don't believe that something can happen, you won't take actions to create it. If you believe that your team can do big things, they will believe it, too. And that belief will *fuel the fires of action* and provide you with desired results. **SSE**

Jon Gordon is a consultant, speaker, and author of *Soup, The Energy Bus, The No Complaining Rule* (Wiley). Visit www.JonGordon.com and www.Soup11.com.

ACTION: Create a culture of optimism.

MARKETING/PRESENTATION

Loud and Clear

Resonate with the audience.



by Nancy Duarte

TODAY WE'RE OVERWHELMED with messages. Social media enable constant communication, but *easy communication* does not always translate to messages that are *received, understood, and drive action*.

At a time when people are tweeting, blogging, emailing, and more 24/7, the best way to genuinely connect and create change is via human, in-person presentations. You should know how to communicate your messages with clarity and passion.

Great presentations are like magic. It takes a lot of work to breathe life into an idea. Commit time, discipline, and energy to understand the audience and craft a message that *resonates* with them. Delivering your ideas in a captivating way can be your competitive edge.

You can best *resonate* with people and *lead them to purposeful action* using *story-based messaging*. To help people recall, repeat, and transfer your message, have a few succinct, clear, repeatable sound bites that create *Something They'll Always Remember* (STAR) moments.

Here are *six tips* for creating presentations that *stick* with your audience:

- **Create crisp messages.** Empower each person to repeat and resend your key concepts to followers in their networks.



- **Craft a rally cry.** Your *rally cry* is a small, repeatable phrase that can become the slogan of the people trying to promote your idea. President Obama's *rally cry* in the campaign was *Yes We Can*.

- **Coordinate key phrases with the same language in your press materials.** For press presentations, repeat critical messages from your press materials to ensure they pick up the right sound bites. When a crew is filming your presentation, have at least a 15- to 30-second message that is so salient it will be obvious to reporters that it should be featured in the broadcasts.

- **Use catchy words.** Craft your message with catchy words. Neil Armstrong used the six hours and 40 minutes between his moon landing and first step to craft his historic statement. Most phrases that have historical significance are mindfully planned.

- **Make them remember.** Ensure the message is remembered by: 1) repeating the phrase; 2) punctuating it with a pause that gives people time to write what you said; and 3) projecting the words on a slide so they receive the message visually as well as aurally.

- **Imitate a famous phrase.** Everyone knows the Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. An imitation of that famous phrase might be *Never give a presentation you wouldn't want to sit through yourself*.

The future isn't just a place you'll go—it's a place you'll invent. **SSE**

Nancy Duarte is CEO of Duarte Design and author of *Resonate: Present Visual Stories That Transform Audiences* (Wiley). Visit www.duarte.com.

ACTION: Resonate with your audience.

Your Think Tank

Great ideas boost business.



by Jim Kukral

YOUR GREAT IDEAS SET YOU apart from your competition. So, get your creative juices flowing in order to out-think and out-earn your competition. Great ideas come in many shapes and sizes—whether it's a new logo or a new product. Give your best ideas a shot at life.

Your best ideas often come to you when your mind isn't trying to come up with them (on the treadmill or in the shower). Generating useful ideas is a skill that can be learned. The more you practice, the easier it becomes. When you unlock your brain, you can generate amazing ideas that will skyrocket sales, load businesses with leads, and create a powder keg of publicity.

Here are 20 suggestions:

1. Carry a notebook. When you think of an amazing idea, write it down. Have a small notepad or digital recorder with you at all times to capture ideas.

2. Eavesdrop. Listen to people talking on the bus, at the coffee shop, or in the elevator at work. You'll get a sense for what people care about: their concerns, wishes, and interests. You may also hear a great idea or two in the mix. Build on what you hear to *create a story*, and let that story lead you to an idea.

3. Do something new. Sign up for a class, take up a new hobby, listen to a different kind of music, or do anything that is new to you. Not only will it get new parts of your brain humming, you'll meet and connect with new people—a great way to find *great new ideas*.

4. Hold a grudge. What annoys you? The things you wish were different are also likely to annoy other people. Keep a running list of all things that bug you and find solutions.

5. Find the peanut butter to your jelly. Take two ideas and put them together to make a new one. What's a *Snuggie* but the mutation of a *blanket* and a *robe*? Think beyond the obvious connections to come up with something innovative.

6. Get physical. Movement increases the flow of endorphins, and sends more blood to your brain. Activity helps you think. I keep a mini-trampoline in my office and jump up and down for a few minutes to get my blood moving. Run, skip, jump, or climb stairs to get your

pulse up and get your brain moving.

7. Get an outsider's opinion. When you are too close to a project, it creates a mental block. Bring in a fresh perspective. Get someone who is not familiar with your situation to ask you questions. This may lead you to an idea that you overlooked because it was *too obvious*.

8. Just listen. If you listen when customers talk, you'll hear ideas for new products and services, ways to improve customer service, and uses you never considered for your products that can open up new markets. If several customers are making the same comments or asking the same questions, act on it!

9. Change your routine. New surroundings and new experiences can help your brain to shift gears and get you to think differently. Drive a new route to the office, try a new restaurant



for lunch, start work a little earlier (or a little later), work in a different place, or *anything* that busts you out of your rut.

10. Listen to music. A little Mozart (or Metallica) might awaken your creativity. Whatever works for you, fire up your iPod, get into the groove, and let your mind work.

11. Take a shower, walk the dog, do the laundry. Great thinking happens in the shower because *showering is a mindless activity*. And the warm water is relaxing. Wash the dishes, walk the dog, or fold the laundry. If you give your mind the chance to wander, you'll free yourself to come up with a *brilliant idea*.

12. Make a list (and check it twice). Write down everything you can think of related to your issue. For example, if you need a new slogan for a product, write down every feature and benefit you can think of, the types of people who need the product, the problems it solves. You'll not only have your slogan, you'll have a library of words you can use in marketing campaigns.

13. Use a prop when it is time to be

creative. It could be anything (such as wearing a silly hat) that signals that it is time to go into idea-generating mode. Have a routine. It might be to put on your hat, grab a ball to toss in the air, and lean back in your chair with your feet on the desk. Once in your *Creative position*, start coming up with ideas.

14. Be a bookworm. Read everything you can get your hands on: business books, novels, newspapers, magazines, blogs. The more raw materials you take in, the more you learn, and the more you know, the better you will become at putting together seemingly unrelated concepts to create something new.

15. Sleep on it. Just before going to bed, think about the ideas you want to generate. Be specific: "I'll come up with great ways to promote our new product." Keep a pad and pen or a recorder next to your bed so you can capture the ideas as soon as you wake up."

16. Ask the almighty Google. When you are stuck on an idea, try entering a few words related to what you're looking for. Google will try to complete your query, and may come up with just what you need. Then look at some of the search results to see what inspires you.

17. Doodle. Make random doodles on a white board or paper. Draw, jot words, make circles, or what you do when you doodle. As you loosen up, ideas may start to form on the page.

18. Forget everything you know. Too often, we let our biases creep in and influence our thinking. Start fresh, without preconceived notions of what you must do or what is impossible. Be open to anything and everything.

19. Borrow an idea. Look at what others are doing and see how you can apply their ideas to your business. If a solution is working for someone else, it may work for you, too. By the time you adapt their idea and tailor it to precisely fit your business, it will be unique.

20. Hire a professional. If you're truly stuck on something, or if a deadline is near, consider hiring some outside help. It can be a great investment. Often, they don't even come up with the ideas for you. They simply ask the right questions that lead you to the great idea.

To come up with great ideas, you need to free yourself from worry about what other people might say, have a place where you can brainstorm and record some outrageous thoughts for getting attention. Soon, your great ideas will be boosting your business. **SSE**

Jim Kukral is the author of Attention! This Book Will Make You Money (Wiley, www.attentionthebook.com). Visit www.JimKukral.com. Twitter @JimKukral.

ACTION: Generate and apply great ideas.

Win More Clients

Avoid three deadly mistakes.



by Terri Langhans

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU made it to the short list, and you've been invited to the *new client interview*. In reality, it's a pitch that could be a shoot-out between you and "the other guy" or a line-up of back-to-back, dog-and-pony, show-your-credentials presentations where you and the competition parade all day.

This is your make-or-break chance to win. What will you *say* in your presentation that'll set you apart? What will you *show* that proves your expertise? How do you hit the prospect's *hot buttons* without stepping on *land mines*?

Three Pitch Traps

Here are some traps, tips and tools:

Trap 1: Too much stuff. You know your stuff, and want to share it. You figure the more stuff you share, the more credible you'll be and more likely to get hired. Wrong. It bores people or frustrates them into belligerence.

Whittle down the number of slides. The rule of thumb is about two minutes per slide. Picture your audience extending you a thimble's worth of interest. Don't fill it with a fire hose.

Trap 2: Failure to get to the point. Instead of thinking about all the stuff you want to say, that you hope you get time to say, think about this: *When you leave the room, what do you want the client to remember and repeat?* What do you want them to say when someone asks, "So, what do think about Acme?"

A: "Well, they talked about this, and they showed us that, and they're located there, and they were easy to talk to."

B: "They've got the experience we need and can hit the ground running."

Obviously, you want B. That's the point of your presentation, and everything you say, or do, or show needs to support, defend, prove, or bring to life that point. Your point is *not* "hire us." That's your call to action. It's what you want them to do as a result of being convinced. Don't confuse the two.

Trap 3: Making the presentation all about you. Prospects don't care about you. They care about themselves, their work and what you will do for them. So here's how to convert your credentials and capabilities to something your new clients will care about:

1. *Before you create your presentation*

or pitch, describe your firm, the team, your qualifications or experience. This is an exercise; don't do it in front of the prospect—not yet, anyway.

2. *Now, isolate three or four key features that you think are key to the decision makers on this project.*

3. *Now look for the benefits—the need or want that is satisfied by those features.*

4. *Go beyond the features and benefits and drill down further.* Fill in the blank: "Why is your company's experience so important to this decision maker?"

5. *Look at your answer and ask it again.* "Why is that important to this decision maker?" Or, "What is it about your answer that matters to this decision maker?"

6. *Ask it again.* "Why is whatever you just answered important personally to the decision maker?"

7. *Keep going and you will have a list*

of want or need words and phrases that are all about the client. Save money, maximize budget, higher trust, no surprises, more flexibility, more confidence, less stress, better communication. These are the words that not only help you connect to what clients care about, they set you apart, increase your credibility and help convince clients to hire you.

Once you complete this exercise you'll know your point, and what's important to your prospect. From there you can decide which facts, features, stories, case studies, and benefits will prove that point. Choose your content wisely. *Make it more about them, less about you, and you'll have greater success.* Get to the point, and get more business. **SSE**

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ACTION: Avoid these three pitch traps.

SERVICE/EMPOWERMENT

Remove Roadblocks

Empowered people grow business.



by John Tschohl

EMPowered employees create loyal customers who can drive revenues to great heights, even in the worst of times. When you empower your employees to make decisions quickly to take care of customers, the results will be amazing: greater customer loyalty, more sales, less employee turnover, and *word-of-mouth advertising* that is less expensive and more credible than anything you could buy.

While most executives agree that *frontline employees who deal directly with customers should be empowered to do whatever it takes to solve customers' problems*, often they are merely giving lip service to the concept.

Most employers—and employees—actually fear empowerment. Employers think customers will take advantage of employees, who then will give away the store, in an effort to satisfy them; while employees are afraid they will be fired if they make a decision their employers don't agree with.

This was evident when *Heidi Heise*, an employee at a Subway franchise, gave a foot-long sandwich to two men who were homeless and hungry. She was fired. That Subway franchise suffered \$100,000 in *negative publicity*. (Quiznos franchisee Steve Webber



immediately hired Heise to work for him.)

To develop an empowered workforce, you must remove four roadblocks:

- **Fear.** Employees fear they'll be fired for making an empowered decision, while employers fear that customers and employees will abuse empowerment. When you train employees and support their decisions, you'll *eliminate that fear* and enable them to be creative, yet responsible, in serving customers.

- **Distrust.** Employers must trust their employees to make decisions that will keep their customers coming back. And employees must be able to trust that

their employers will not fire them if they make a mistake.

- **Micromanagement.** Nothing kills *empowerment* faster. You destroy their capacity for creative thinking and problem solving. Let people know *what you need from them*, then get out of the way and *let them do what you've asked of them.*

- **Lack of recognition.** Everyone *needs to be told* when they do something well, *not just when they make a mistake.* The more you recognize the empowered decisions and achievements of your employees, the more they'll use their creativity in dealing with situations.

Eliminate these roadblocks, and you'll have an empowered team that will drive business, crush competition, and save money. When service decisions are made on the front line, you are free to address big-picture issues. **SSE**

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ACTION: Remove roadblocks to empowerment.

Lessons from Avatar

Take your audience for a ride.



by Darren LaCroix

EACH TIME YOU COMMUNICATE—even though you are the same person, saying the same thing—it is different each time. Do you know why?

“I see you,” said Jake Sully, a character in the movie *Avatar*. Do you see the people with whom you are communicating? Do you really see them?

The film is a story about the *Na’vi* people who live on Pandora. The *Na’vi* queues come out of the back base of their skull and hang to their waist. They are an external bundle of nerve endings that are braided into their hair for protection. On the surface, they appear to be ponytails. At the tip is a cluster of nerve endings that allow a direct connection with other organisms. It is an interpersonal and inter-species plug and socket.

The *Banshee* (flying reptile) and *Direhorse* (similar to our horse) also have queues. When queues are connected, they can see into each other. They know and experience each other at a deeper level. This incredible connection allows them to share memories and information. Hence, no verbal or physical directions are necessary. The rider and animal move as one and in harmony. The *Na’vi* call it: *Tsaheylu* or the bond.

Uniquely, the *Banshee* chooses their riders, and the riders must prove their worthiness before being allowed to get on.

This is how people receiving your communication think. They choose whether or not to allow a connection with you. You must prove your worthiness before they will allow a connection and be open your to message. Build trust first and create the connection before taking the audience for a ride. No trust, no connection, no ride!

Audience members, like the *Na’vi*, need to share emotions in order to create *Tsaheylu*. If you are too salesy or cocky, people may listen, but they won’t choose to connect with you. They won’t allow you to take them for a ride. If they don’t allow you to connect, you can’t educate, inspire, sell or entertain. Even if they are looking you in the eyes and smiling, your message may fall on deaf ears.

The main difference is that the *Na’vi* can only connect with one at a time. As a communicator, you can connect with multiple people at once, yet each connection with each individual will be unique. Why? Because you are actually tapping into the emotions and past experience of that person. That is why every communication is different, though you may be using the same words—you may be trying to reach different individuals. You like some types of people better than others. Why? Because they make it easier for you to connect with them.

Because of shared experience and emotions, people with similar backgrounds are more likely to share *Tsaheylu*. Trust translates into more



acceptance of what you have to inform, educate, or sell. That means you are also more likely to get better results.

What can you do to create Tsaheylu? Before you communicate, ask yourself: What is my intention? (Will this help or hinder?) How can I connect first? Am I present? (It is not about you, put your audience first) What common ground do we have? What emotions do they have about this subject? How can we get on the same emotional page first? If this were my last communication to this person, how would I deliver it?

Before keynoter **Patricia Fripp** speaks, she walks into the audience and talks to people. Her intention is to help individuals with their challenges before she begins. She will then take questions before she is introduced. If you were in her audience and she spoke to you directly while being helpful, would you feel a greater con-

nection? Would you be more open to her message? Would you feel a bond? More eager to listen?

In the *Avatar*, soon after the two main characters meet, Neytiri says to Jake Sully, “I see you.” He doesn’t get what she means. At the end, he understands “I see you” doesn’t just mean, *I visually see you*. It means *I see your actions, your fears, your hopes, I see who you are*. When you’re in front of an audience, whether at home or at work, don’t just see the outside. If you want to create a deep *Tsaheylu*, see into them.

People are often more concerned with looking good to their audience, than helping them with their current challenges. Not if they feel that “I see you.” Don’t speak at the people with whom you are communicating. See them and create the bond first.

There is not one way for you to connect. There is, however, the best way for you to create the bond depending on your audience. Be willing to experiment. Does your audience feel that you see them? Will you see them? How will you try to create: *Tsaheylu*? **SSE**

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ACTION: Create trust with your audience.



Again, each time you communicate, it is different— even though you are the same person saying the same thing. Do you know why? Do you see the people with whom you are communicating? As it is says in the hit movie *Avatar*, do you really see them?

You must prove your worthiness before others will allow a connection with you and be open to your message, whether you are communicating one-on-one, making a sales call, or speaking to a group. Your audience will choose whether or not to allow a connection with you when you are trying to communicate with them.

So, before you try to communicate with anyone, **ask yourself four questions:** 1) What is my intention—and will this help or hinder? 2) What common ground do we have? 3) What emotions do they have about this subject? And 4) If this were my last communication to this person, how would I deliver it?

Your audience must feel that you really see them before they will allow a connection and be open to your influence.

—Russell Trahan, PRwhiz@prpr.net

Bad Sales Habits

These hurt your closing rates.



by Drew J. Stevens

SALES PROFESSIONALS CREATE a competitive advantage by creating long-standing relationships. Relationships are the key to future business. People do business with those that they know and trust.

Most organizations fail to provide sales education, which impacts lead generation and closure rates. Proper education, along with personal development, helps you be aware of their strengths and limitations, and achieve some level of self-mastery.

I notice *seven habits that negatively impact sales closure rates*. Here is how you can overcome these obstacles.

1. Service. With competition increasing, sales professionals need to be more attentive to customer service. It is the clear differentiator today. Customer-to-customer influences grow more important in an environment where social media can instantly make or break you. Ensure that customer service is at the forefront of every selling conversation, and that customers are the purpose of business—not the interruption of it.

2. Communication. Selling is about *the art of communication and the art of building relationships*. Yet many sales training programs focus more on how to close or how to present rather than proper articulation methods. Good conversation creates relationship, not how many widgets are placed in front of the customer. Consumers desire healthy conversation so they can build trust and respect. Focus on three areas: 1) terrific listening skills, 2) agitating questions, and 3) decent vocabulary.

3. Follow up. You need to follow up when you say that you will—not days after a client has left a voice or e-mail message. Don't use being *overworked* as an excuse. If clients are the key to your business, then *nothing is more important than returning their messages*. If customer service is a sales differentiator, then follow-up must be a priority. Try returning calls within 90 minutes and e-mail messages at the day's end.

4. Preparation. You need to know what to say before you say hello. Not knowing information about the company and industry only opens the door for competition. With so many sources available obtaining useful information,

you need to gain insights from the *best sources* or, subscribe to news sources that clip imperative information and deliver it to your e-mail address. Have a voracious appetite for information.

5. Language. If *knowledge is power*, then *language is the key to relationships*. Know what to say and when to say it! Become a voracious reader so that you can carry on conversations with economic buyers who see your value.

Access *dictionary dot com*, and you can double your vocabulary in 30 days.

6. Action. Procrastination is a bad habit with 82 percent of people. However, *in sales, action is vital*. Return calls when you say you're going to. Ask questions that close business. Tell clients what you want them to do. If you don't, they will move on to the next thing because they are too distracted.

The only way to create value is to also cre-

ate action. Your time is as valuable, if not more, than your prospective client.

7. Relationships. We want relationships with those we know and trust. When was the last time you bought anything from someone who was cold calling? When was the last time you had a great sales year from cold calling? So, refrain from *the number of widgets you must sell*, and focus on *how many great relationships you build*. Selling will be less laborious and transactional, and your referrals will expand exponentially.

Get beyond *hoping and wishing* that you had better sales skills—take action. Get some education or seek the advice of a peer group. Create activities that allow you to *learn, grow, and prosper*. **SSE**

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ACTION: Develop good sales habits.

SALES/LEADS

Red-Hot Leads

Start turning up the sales heat.



by Joanne S. Black

EVERY SALESPERSON AGREES that referrals generate the best new business—and yet few businesses run a 100-percent referral-based business! A *referral* means you receive an *introduction*. Period. *Everything else is cold.*

These are not referrals: getting a name from a list, connecting through social media, or using someone's name. It's simple: *Get the introduction and you have red-hot leads!*

Referrals make all the difference. When a salesperson is referred, they are pre-sold, have credibility and trustworthiness, their competition decreases or disappears, and *they convert sales prospects to new clients more than 50 percent of the time*. And there's a boost in the client pipeline: *referred customers are more profitable*, and provide referrals to others.

Whether salespeople are new to the field or have sold for 30 years, they all agree: *referral business is the most effective and highly leveraged business-development strategy. Nothing else comes close.*

In a referral-selling poll I conducted with 1,100 salespeople, *52 percent said that when they receive a qualified referral, they convert a sales prospect to a new client more than 70 percent of the time*, and 31 percent said more than 50 percent of the time. There is no better way

to generate red-hot leads. Yet after this poll, I asked: Do you have a strategy to build your business through referrals—with a written referral plan, weekly referral goals, and methods to track and measure your results? A whopping 83 percent answered, "No."

It doesn't add up: managers know that referral business is unsurpassed. And yet they don't run a disciplined referral business. Referrals are common sense, but not common practice!

Five Ways to Get Red-Hot Leads

Try these *five simple ways*:

1. Make a list of everyone you know—clients, past clients, peers, neighbors, service providers, friends, co-workers. You should have at least 100 names. *Prioritize the list with people you know best at the top.*

2. Set a goal and decide how many referral sources you will contact weekly. Arrange meetings.

3. Tell your referral sources that you build your business through referrals and would like their help. Describe your *ideal client* and ask for one or two people who meet your description.

4. When your referral source makes a suggestion, find out as much as you can about the person and his company.

5. Then ask your referral source to make the introduction (by phone, in person, or by e-mail).

Start thinking about *how you spend your time and the payoff you want*. **Get Red-Hot!** Get that introduction! **SSE**

Joanne S. Black is a leading authority on referral selling, professional speaker, and author of No More Cold Calling. Visit <http://www.nomorecoldcalling.com>.

ACTION: Generate more red-hot leads.

'No, Thank You'

Opportunities or lost sales.



by Amy
Castoro and
Peter Luzmore

WHY, AFTER ALL PERSONALITY TESTS, job shadowing and analysis, and customer feedback surveys, the secret ingredient to the top salesperson's success is nearly impossible to reproduce in others? How is it that when some salespeople hear "No, thank you," they can develop the conversation into an engaging discussion? Can you learn how to connect authentically with others and build trust in the face of rejection so that the customer or client wants to buy from you or work with you in the future? Is this quality of presence a birthright or is it learned?

First Critical Moments

When a customer says "no, thank you," you may feel rejected personally, triggering a cascade of reactions that reflect your way of relating to the situation. Depending on the importance of the sale, you may react with fear, anger, or deep disappointment. These reactions are projected and noticeable in your actions and language and may cost you future business. You may freeze and look for a quick exit from the conversation or not respond to the email in which the customer relays the bad news. Or, you may overreach with the customer, with repeated, unwelcome call-backs or going over that person's head to appeal to a superior. Or you might lash out with threats.

Given the importance of those first moments after you get the customer's *no, thank you*, reflect on your reactions and consider how you might take different action that will build trust and plant the seeds for future sales.

Your Presence Is Your Message

People's perception of your message is informed by 7 percent content; 38 percent voice, tone, and tempo; and 55 percent by body language. Hence, 93 percent of your message is communicated by how you present yourself.

For example, when a client is angry, you recall their voice, tone, and body language more readily than their argument. Or, when a customer rejects your offer, you remember the tone of their

voice, their lack of enthusiasm, the uncomfortable, hurried excuse to end the call or get you out of their office. You may remember a slight collapse in your shoulders, or depending on how the financial quarter is going, the tightening in your stomach or shortening of breath, a feeling of panic.

Avoiding a communication disconnect. Humans relied on the ability to read and trust people around them *even before spoken language evolved*. This instinctual system still forms the basis of communication. Paying attention to physical expressions is vital to understanding that *how* we react and *how* we communicate is every bit as important as *what* we communicate. In fact, *how* we communicate can negate the message we are trying to convey, producing a communication disconnect.

Such disconnects with prospects erode trust and reduce the likelihood of future sales. Your capacity to listen to the *content* and to *voice* and *physical presence* provides critical information. Observing these *signals* from your body can help you realize that the moment is not right for responding to an annoying email or to a customer complaint or to a boss's decision to restructure the territory.

You can use this information to improve coordination and increase satisfaction within ourselves and in our communication with others, and with training we can produce these benefits almost immediately. Experiencing immediate, short-term benefits then encourages us to build on that foundation and find even greater rewards over time.

Observing our reactions. Consider how you are triggered when a customer declines your offer. The first emotion you register may be disappointment. Think how disappointment feels in your body, the *sensation* of disappointment, and *how* disappointment expresses itself in your language. For example, you may experience a slight collapse in your back, or a softening in your voice. You may tense your shoulders and sharply narrow your eyes. The words you choose may be something like: "I think you are making a mistake" or "Do you realize what you are missing out on?" or "I'm not sure how long I can offer this price."

When a customer says "no, thank you," your reaction with both language and body will either open pos-

sibilities for the future or close them down. If the customer senses that you can accept and acknowledge their position and still keep the relationship collaborative, he'll build trust with you.

What we say and our capacity to follow through. Your language is the key means of building trust by consistently managing your commitments. For example, you can build trust with a customer by clearly stating *by when* you will take a certain action, and follow through. Your capacity to follow through on commitments depends, however, not just on yourself, but on your team, on all the people whom you count on to make things happen. This is most painful when communication with global partners fails, and your reputation is severely damaged by not fulfilling on your promise to deliver.

Power of the centered presence. Your ability to hold a *centered presence* is critical in building trust. *Presence* refers to

character assessments that others describe as charisma, charm, balance, trustworthiness, and integrity. People first seek to trust the person rather than the message. Hence, *you are most powerful when your language and your presence are aligned*, sending an authentic and trustworthy message.

Your body broadcasts

what you're thinking, dictates how well you connect to others, and what action is possible to you in the future. When you are angry, sad, joyful, or humble, your emotional state is connected to the shape of your body and how your language is expressed. *Through your presence and language, you have the power to mobilize others and invent a shared future.*

Developing a centered presence. With the growth of global sales opportunities, you need to learn pragmatic practices that produce higher collaboration, trust, and cultural awareness, resulting in higher *productivity* and *customer satisfaction*. Develop a *centered presence* and take new actions based on this presence, connecting to others in more effective ways to achieve measurable results.

No, thank you is a chance to build trust by showing clients your most positive qualities: authenticity, collaboration, and trustworthiness. Without trust, you don't get a second chance. **With trust, you gain opportunities. SSE**

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ACTION: Build trust to make more sales.

Eight Pet Peeves

Change annoying habits.



by Rhonda Savage

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST BOSSES, you deal with *people-related pet peeves and frustrations* daily. Whether it's bad manners or using company time for personal phone calls, most pet peeves start as small frustrations, but turn into bigger problems for you and the business. What can you do to change these behaviors to avoid their negative impact?

1. They complain about not being appreciated or recognized enough. Dial up the praise and appreciation by daily recognizing the good efforts of your team members. Done well, praise is genuine, specific, and timely. Start meetings by having team members brag about how they helped a client or resolved a difficult situation—and then have everyone cheer them. Change the culture by starting with the positive.

2. They don't follow-through when I ask them to do something. Make certain people know what they need to do and ask them to write it down. Set a deadline for them to report back (then you won't have to wonder whether the task was done. Employees need *detailed, specific* instruction, coaching, feedback and appreciation or correction. If they don't do what they need to do, despite your efforts, sit down with them one-on-one to resolve the issue.

3. They display bad manners. Messy or rude habits are unacceptable. Chewing gum and eating in common areas is unprofessional. Have and enforce policies about bad habits. By having private, employee-only areas in the office and having a system in place for lunch breaks, you'll avoid many issues. *Clarify your expectations and hold people accountable, fairly and consistently, for their actions.*

4. They don't update me regularly with information on their clients. As a manager, you can't keep up with clients daily. Your employees need to build relationships and listen to customers. As they build these relationships, have them update you weekly (in staff meetings) on the status of each client or prospect.

5. They don't listen to customers. *Listening is your primary sales skill.* Your employees should listen to customers and seek to understand their needs and concerns. This will enable you offer better service to them—it connects the clients to the business and makes them

feel understood. By communicating client concerns, you can prevent small concerns from becoming big problems.

6. They don't feel comfortable talking to prospects about our services. All employees should be able to confidently talk to prospects about the products or services you offer. Train them. They need to feel confident that they're saying what you want them to say. *Scripting is a valuable training tool.* Write common concerns and questions and train employees on how to respond.

7. They use cell phones and Internet for personal reasons on company time. Cell phone use, texting, and personal Internet use are forms of time embezzlement. These habits hurt the business and the customer. Soon resentment will build among your best team members.

SALES/SINS

Seven Deadly Sins

What not to do during a sales slump.



by David Mattson

MANY SALESPEOPLE ARE stuck in a sales slump, and don't know how to get out. They are paralyzed. They don't have a system for success, or forget what they actually know, and are merely reactive. This economy can be a period of profit and productivity, but you must avoid seven deadly sales sins:

1. Abandon your sales procedures. When sales slow, you tend to panic, forget what you know and start throwing ideas against the wall to see what sticks. You jump from activity to activity, neglecting your sales process (which tells you exactly what needs to happen in order to complete a sale).

2. Focus on revenue only. If you want to frustrate a sales team, *only* focus on numbers. You need to consider revenue and behaviors. To achieve your sales goal, your business needs to know which behaviors need to take place in order to provide favorable sales results.

3. Stop prospecting. If you want to lose long-term sales, focus only on your current customers and stop prospecting. You don't have to enjoy prospecting; you just need always to be on the lookout for new customers in anticipation of the peaks and valleys.

4. Eliminate marketing and advertising. When businesses see a decrease in sales, the first costs they tend to cut are



Then morale and production drop. So, limit use of these items and *hold all team members accountable to the same standards.*

8. They cry when stressful scenarios and conflict arise. Whether they cry as a result of stress, a poor review, frustration, anger or fear, you need to calmly suggest other ways to respond. Discuss why your employee feels the way he or she feels and how you might help resolve the issue or give tools to cope. Belittling or criticizing the employee, especially in front of another person, will only make the problem worse.

Follow these guidelines to prevent *pet peeves* from becoming *big problems*. **SSE**

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ACTION: Address these eight pet peeves.

marketing and advertising. That is a mistake. You must create mindshare with customers and prospects. An often missed opportunity is simply following up on all leads that are generated through marketing. Only 2 percent of leads at trade shows are followed up on. Simply following up on leads could allow you to come out of the slump.

5. Act like Hercules. If you want to kill sales, create a culture of learned helplessness. Many sales managers do this and don't even realize what they have done. The sales manager steps in and micro-manages the day-to-day processes of their sales teams to "save the day." This tactic could backfire. You

need to empower your sales people to close deals within parameters, and *be responsible and accountable for their own progress and performance.*

6. Believe that you're "past that." If you want to drive a business into the ground, forget what you did that made the business successful. *Remember what made clients and prospects fall in love with your company, then go back to that.*

7. Stop planning for seasonal slow-downs. If you want to stay in a sales rut, don't plan ahead for seasonal slow-downs. Leaders should anticipate months or times of year when sales trend down and feed the sales funnel before these occur. If you know your business will be slow during the holidays, feed your sales funnel now.

By avoiding these *deadly sales sins*, you may become stronger than ever. **SSE**

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ACTION: Avoid these seven deadly sales sins.

Sales Mindset

Learn the prospect's truth.



by Ari Galper

MANY SALESPEOPLE DON'T enjoy selling. They expend so much energy chasing the sale that by the time they get it, they feel let down. This feeling is the result of *traditional selling*—the idea that selling is all about making the sale, and if you can just push through pushback and rejection, heaven awaits you.

But in today's world, the true *high* is not found in making the sale—it is found in the ease and pleasure of connecting with prospects, them trusting you, you solving their problem, and them deciding to choose your solution.

The new sales mindset is all about learning your prospect's truth by focusing on what they're telling you and hearing it and accepting the truth of where your prospect stands in relation to whether you fit together or not.

Being open to hearing a truth-based *no* from a prospect, and walking away whole, is the power behind the new mindset. Here are some differences between focusing on making the sale versus focusing on learning the truth:

When your goal is to make the sale, prospects sense that you're moving forward to *make your sale*, not to help them. They know you're looking at them as *a sale*, a means to an end. Your thoughts get scattered, because your mind wants to go to the next step while you are trying to listen. People sense that you're pressuring them to move forward. They react by withdrawing and trying to get out of the situation, or get aggressive and try to reject you so you'll go away. You rely on your pitch—who you are, what you have to offer, and why they should buy from you. You make assertions to convince them to buy.

When your goal is to learn your prospects' truth, they sense that you're trying to *help them* and *relate to them with integrity*—working together for a mutual outcome. You listen and hear what prospects are saying, and respond with full attention by staying in the present. People trust you and feel free to open up about their concerns. You stay relaxed as you explore *whether there's a fit between your product or service and your prospect's problem*. You ask questions that bring out more of the truth, and you listen.

When you have relaxed, comfortable conversations with prospects, you feel a huge sense of accomplishment when sales happen. When you make sales based on integrity and by helping prospects solve their problems, you experience no letdown. You look forward to the next day's calls. You enjoy the process, and when you make the sale, you feel satisfied, energized, and proud to have helped your prospect. You'll also achieve your financial goals.

Building Mindset Habits

Here are *five tips* for building better mindset skills:

1. Before making a call, tell yourself: "My only goal is to create a conversation that will build trust so I can learn my prospects' truth. Until then, I won't know whether I can help them."

2. Develop an opening statement that describes the core problem or issue you know your product or service solves. This allows the conversation to



open naturally and comfortably.

3. If your mind jumps to making the sale, try closing your eyes and focusing on listening to and hearing prospects. This is helpful early in calls when you're learning about the prospects' problems.

4. When you feel that there's a fit between their problem and your solution, avoid launching into a pitch. Instead, ask, "Would it make sense for us to continue our conversation to see to what extent I can possibly help you?"

5. After making a call, debrief yourself. Did you ever create sales pressure or start pushing? Did prospects pull back and start to defend themselves by trying to end the call? How can you stay more focused on the conversation in your next sales calls?

Letting go of trying to make the sale actually makes the sale more possible.

Lose the Old Mindset

Here are seven ways to cultivate the new sales mindset:

1. Stop the sales pitch and start a conversation. Rather than start a sales call with a presentation about yourself, your company, and what you offer,

start with a conversational phrase that focuses on a specific problem that your product or service solves. If you don't know, ask customers why they purchased your solution.

2. Seek to discover whether you and your prospect are a good fit. Let go of trying to close the sale. By focusing your conversation on problems that you can help prospects solve, and by not trying to move the sales process forward, you'll discover that prospects will give you the direction you need.

3. Note that you lose most sales at the start. If you think you lose sales due to mistakes you make at the end, review how you begin the relationship. Did you start with a pitch, using traditional sales language—leading prospects to label you with the negative stereotype and making it hard for them to relate to you with trust or to have an honest, open conversation about their problems?

4. Hidden sales pressure causes rejection. Eliminate sales pressure, and you'll never experience rejection. Prospects don't trigger rejection. You do—when something you say triggers a defensive reaction. Eliminate rejection by giving up the hidden agenda of making a sale. Instead, be sure that everything you say and do stems from the basic mindset that you're there to help prospects identify and solve their issues.

5. Never chase prospects. Instead, learn whether there's a fit or not. Ask prospects if they're open to connect again at a certain time and date.

6. When prospects make objections, validate them and reopen the conversation. Trying to overcome objections only creates more sales pressure—and keeps you from learning the prospects' truth. So, shift to uncovering the truth by replying, "That's not a problem." Use gentle, dignified language that invites prospects to tell you the truth about their situation without feeling you'll use it to press for a sale.

7. Never defend yourself or what you have to offer. Even if you believe that you are the best choice, tell them that you aren't going to try to convince them of anything. Instead, ask them again about key problems they're trying to solve. Then explore how your product or service might solve those problems. Let prospects feel they can choose you without feeling sold.

The sooner you let go of traditional sales beliefs, the faster you'll feel good about selling—and see better results. **SEE**

Ari Galper is the creator of Unlock The Game, a new sales mindset, and the audio seminar 7 Sales Secrets. Visit www.UnlockTheGame.com.

ACTION: Change your sales mindset.

Are You Green?

What are you neglecting?



by Kelley Robertson

MY WIFE AND I MOVED TO a new subdivision last March, and during the summer we missed having a grassy backyard. When the landscapers finally delivered sod, they told us to water it for two hours every day for the first two weeks to ensure that the sod would take hold and thrive. However, several neighbors disregarded these instructions and only sporadically watered the sod. As a result, their grass turned brown and died.

Such neglect also happens in sales. Salespeople often neglect to execute certain concepts that contribute to their success and they wonder why their sales falter or die off. Here are *eight things* that many sales people neglect.

1. Nurture existing accounts. Just because you captured the initial sale does not mean you have a customer for life. You need to nurture your accounts and keep adding value to ensure a competitor does not come along and take the business from you. Keep in touch with these key accounts and look for ways to continually add value. A coffee meeting or lunch is often all it takes to keep abreast of the changes in their company and to discover new opportunities to help them.

2. Nurture prospects. Many salespeople make contact with prospects but fail to keep that contact alive when the sale doesn't immediately happen. You need to keep your name in your prospect's mind. Look for ways to stay in touch with prospects by providing valuable information or insights that will help them improve their business.

3. Develop yourself. Too many people stop learning and integrating new strategies into their routine. *What worked last year may not be relevant today.* Just because you attended a training program a few years ago does not mean your skills are current. Make the time to read new books, attend an industry conference, listen to audio recording, or participate in a training program.

4. Take recharge time. Taking time to rest and recharge is *essential* if you want a long-term career in sales. Selling is challenging; it requires a tremendous effort and energy. Recharging your batteries can give you renewed energy

and inspiration, not to mention new ideas and thoughts. Take a vacation or at least take time away from the office so you can return *refreshed* and *recharged*.

5. Network. Many people *aggressively network* when they embark on their sales career. However, as time passes and their sales grow, they gradually stop networking as much as they used to. They get caught up in the day-to-day busyness of their job and stop making time to connect with others.

6. Fill the pipeline. Some people experience major fluctuations in their sales as a result of not keeping their pipeline full with new prospects. They often end up working on a few projects and stop prospecting. However, when those projects are completed, they usually discover that they have no leads to follow-up on. A rule of thumb is to ensure that you have 300

percent of your sales quota in your pipeline at any given time.

7. Make cold calls. Not every business relies on cold calling to generate new business. However, most salespeople rely on this strategy, and neglecting it can seriously affect your results.

8. Follow up. Follow-up is key. Many of my prospects and customers have said, *Thanks for following up* when I connected with them after making multiple attempts. Decision makers are busy, and neglecting to follow up after an initial meeting can cost you the sale.

Neglect usually starts with *one small thing* and gradually expands into several other areas; the result can be devastating. What are you neglecting? **SSE**

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ACTION: Attend to these eight imperatives.

SERVICE/EXCELLENCE

Expect Excellence

It's a key to effective leadership.



by Michael Beck

THE IDEA OF EXPECTING excellence isn't new. Like everything a leader says and does, it's not so much a matter of *what* he or she does as much as it is about *why* and *how* they do what they do.

There's a big difference between creating a culture where *excellence is expected* and one where *excellence is demanded*. In the first case, the culture sets the expectations for excellence, and the actions of team members put pressure on everyone to perform up to the standards of excellence expected.

When you *demand excellence*, *pressure from you is the only dynamic at play*. And people push back in the form of passive-aggressive behavior or disengagement—working just hard enough to keep from being fired.

You can create a culture where *excellence is expected* by:

- **First, define what excellence means to you. How you define excellence is governed by your standards and values.** Standards determine the level of quality you desire. *They govern quality of service and product.* Determine what level of quality you want to be known for. *Excellent quality* does not necessarily mean *the best* that can be produced. Rather, *the level of quality that determines the standards by which you are*

governed is determined by the expectations of your market. This doesn't preclude setting a standard that exceeds the expectations of that market—it just acts as a benchmark by which your performance is measured.

The values that create a culture of excellence govern how you do what you do and are concerned with how you relate to others. These values may include *integrity, respect, honesty, and fairness, authenticity, family, kindness, commitment, loyalty, compassion, happiness, empathy, health, and humor.*

Define what *excellence* means to you by setting expected *standards for performance* along with the *governing values* that determine how you will perform.

- **Next, design and create a culture that elicits excellence.** What constitutes a *culture of excellence* and how do you create it? *Culture is created by how well you live by and communicate the values and standards you've identified.* It's not so much *whether* you and your team agree to these things, as it is about *how consistently* and to *what degree* you adhere to these values and standards. Doing this well creates the proper expectations with new team members, installs a sense of pride in the team, and fills your organization with integrity—causing most of your team to *act, think, and speak* in a certain way.

Demanding excellence of your team produces only modest results. *Designing a culture of excellence* will produce self-sustaining results. **SSE**

Michael Beck is Business Strategist and Executive Coach. Visit www.michaelbeck.com.

ACTION: Create a culture that elicits excellence.

Leadership Selling

Be a quintessential salesperson.



by David Goldsmith

IMAGINE THAT YOU'RE SITTING alone, eating lunch, and your thoughts turn to a project idea—and you know that you must take action soon. Since you've hired new front-office employees, the workspace has become overcrowded. You need to expand the space to accommodate the needs of your business.

Your mind now races with thoughts and questions: *How can I convince the production personnel that stealing 1,500 square feet from their inventory space to make new front-office space is a good thing? Will I be able to secure a larger line of credit from my bank to fund this project? How do I get around the fact that I'm not going to give the renovation contract to my spouse's brother, again, because his prices are highway robbery? How do I maintain staff morale amidst the mayhem and dust?*

Notice how these questions are about how *you* will sell your project idea—a build out of new office space—to several people: your production crew, office workers, banker, and your spouse! Every one of them will require you to come up with a different sales pitch, too. Perhaps you've never realized how often you are selling.

Selling is what leaders do daily.

You've had to sell yourself, your ideas, and your credibility to gain employment or start a business, climb the ranks, lure key talent to your team, earn funding from lenders, garner government cooperation, and gain buy-in on projects. Thanks to your sales ability, you have many accomplishments. At times, you may be involved in selling a product or service to a buyer, but more often, your range is much wider. The more capable you are of selling yourself and your organization within that wide range of situations, the more success you're likely to achieve.

Despite the *enormous impact* that sales have on the success of leaders, 96 percent of them *have never taken a sales course or read a book on sales*. Perhaps the lack of sales education comes from leaders' perceptions of selling: they consider *selling* to be an activity reserved for salespeople and customer-service reps. But in reality, *leaders are quintessential salespeople*.

The art of selling is vital for leaders to master. So, hone your sales skills.

Here are four ways you sell every day:

- **Externally** you sell to people who can help your organization grow, such as vendors, allies, lenders, government boards, regulators, lawyers, panels, voters, and media. If you're in the military, you sell to funding sources, allies, government agencies within your country and outside, vendors, intelligence sources, media, and heads of State. Not-for-profit, education, and government leaders are no different in that countless external sales are being conducted every day.

- **Internally**, you sell to people who can advance the organization from the inside out, like department heads, board members, senior managers, cross-functional teams, and front-line staff. You need to address people who hold many different positions in ways that gain buy in.

- **Personally**, you sell your reputation and credibility with the clothing you wear, your mannerisms and speech, how well you write, how fast you respond, the appearance of your desk, where you live, your track record of achievements, and your ability to inspire and lead others where they want to go. You also sell yourself with the choices you make about how you spend your time in different venues: at work, in meetings, on the golf course, or community service event.

- **Organizationally**, you sell by ensuring that your organization is strong and functioning optimally, since the strengths of an organization affect the relationship between the organization and outsiders. Your role is to make optimal performance possible by being a great leader. It's easy to believe that people buy from people, but the vast majority of purchases are the result of buyers feeling confident about the organization from which their buying, and that confidence is earned when the organization's collective parts work together successfully. Think about all the people you've purchased from in the past month. Most you only know because the organization made the sale collec-

tively. You likely lose more opportunities out your back door than your front door. You may have great sales teams that can pull in the sales, but then you drop the ball and either force a canceled sale, discounted sale, or loss of a future sale. When you lead and manage others in ways that make them successful, you maximize your success.

Everyone is in sales. Everyone, from customer service to janitorial service, must perform in a way that contributes to growth; and their performance still rests on your shoulders. *Say that you run a restaurant. You may not be the person who prepares the meal or delivers it to a patron's table in a timely manner, but you develop*

the systems and give people the tools they need to make this best-outcome scenario possible. You'll still need to sell someone on your ideas and projects as you develop these systems and provide these tools, but when you perform in a leadership role, you are selling through the organizational strengths that you have created.

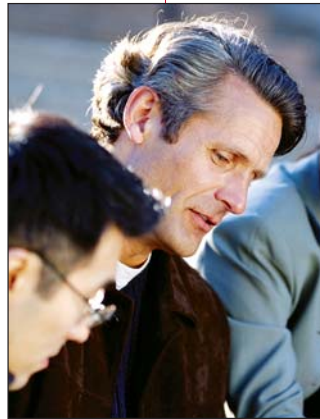
If you decide to share this idea that *everyone is in sales* with your staffers,

be clear about your expectations of each individual, department, or business unit. Staff members must know what they must do to fulfill their role in sales.

What can you do to improve your ability to sell? Consider *selling* as an *integral daily activity* that requires you to improve your ability to pitch the right message to the best people to achieve your desired outcomes. Start studying negotiations, sales, or different cultures as ways of expanding your mind and your skills. Take a sales course where you can gain instant feedback on how you present yourself. And, begin practicing the art of selling with awareness of how you sell, paying attention to your voice, mannerisms, and body language. Track how timely you are about addressing matters or returning calls. Pay attention to how you structure your messages, watching for times when you should get to the point quickly and when you need to warm up prospects first. During the day, stay aware of how you're always *on*, your buyer doesn't fit into a tidy demographic classification, and your "product" is always evolving. Mastering the art of leadership selling is a necessity for any leader to succeed. **SSE**

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ACTION: Improve your sales ability.



Stay Motivated

And boost productivity.



by Jeremy J. Ulmer

HERE ARE MY TOP 10 WAYS to keep motivated:

1. Get inspired everyday. Inspiration can be found everywhere (sales blogs, sales articles, success stories, sales forums, peers, friends, sales books, and motivational quotes).

2. Hire a sales coach. Work one-on-one with a sales coach to achieve breakthrough sales results. Ask probing questions of any sales coach you interview before hiring a sales coach.

3. Have compelling reasons for your actions. When you clarify why you want to accomplish certain goals, and what achieving them will mean, you'll increase your motivation and stay on track.

4. Be ready for negative self-talk. Become aware of that inner voice that says you should quit and give up. Recognize negative self talk, and replace it with positive talk.

5. Get back on the horse if you fall off. Don't beat yourself up if you slip up one day, but get back into your routine the next day.

6. Visualize your sales goals in detail for two minutes each day. Imagine how your successful outcome in sales will feel. Form a clear of a mental picture.

7. Create a daily journal for your sales goals. Write notes, focusing on what you got done and how you felt about what you did or did not do.

8. Get competitive. Use your competitive drive to achieve your goals. Strive to be #1 in new clients, revenue, or appointments set.

9. Make a public statement about your commitments. Make a statement on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter; tell your friends and family that you'll achieve a certain sales goal by a certain date. You'll get support—and accountability.

10. Think positive. If you hear negative thoughts, notice them, and then replace them with a positive mind-set.

Increase Sales Productivity

Here are 10 tips to boost your sales:

1. Do the most important things first. The most important tasks should take priority; if you put them off until later, they rarely happen. Do them first.

2. Wake up earlier. Get up just 30 minutes earlier and get a jump start on your most important tasks.

3. Streamline information. Think about all the information you receive daily. Start to edit and remove anything that you don't benefit from.

4. Clear off your desk and get focused. Get everything off your desk that you don't need. Remove all distractions and focus on one thing at a time.

5. Get to work early and leave early. Arrive a little early to start on your most important things without interruptions. Set an end time to your day, and focus on getting more done before that time.

6. Schedule your meetings and avoid last-minute meetings. Stop taking on-the-spot meetings. Treat whatever is on your schedule like a meeting in progress.

7. Eliminate non-essential work. Only work on activities that move you toward your goals. Remove or delegate

non-essential tasks, and start to say no to new requests that are non-essential.

8. Do the tough stuff first. Do these first thing in the morning. If you put the tough tasks off, they will only become more difficult to accomplish.

9. Shut off your Internet connection. Schedule times when you will be online. Working off-line can help you increase your productivity as you can focus on one task at a time without distractions.

10. Get passionate. If you truly care about what you are doing, you'll work to get it done. It will flow, and you won't procrastinate. Find the deeper meaning of achieving your goals. What will it enable you to accomplish, to do, to be? SSE

Jeremy J. Ulmer is a sales coach who transforms sales results. Visit www.SalesCoachingHabits.com.

ACTION: Boost your sales productivity.

MANAGEMENT/LEARNING

Intellectual Capital

What did you learn today?



by Mark Hunter

TOO OFTEN DO OWNERS SAY: *We were forced to close because the bank will not loan us the money we need.* Here's my perspective: Companies don't fail due to a lack of financial capital—they fail due to a lack of intellectual capital.

Companies fail because people don't think. It's easier to blame someone else for our problems. It's what most people do, and besides, we all believe we're brilliant. Any set-back could not possibly be associated with us; therefore, it has to be somebody else's fault, right?

I'd say that 97 percent of all failures are due to a lack of intellectual capital. You are in business to satisfy customer needs at a value for which customers are willing to pay and that is more than the company has to spend to prepare the item for sale. It's that simple—just sell something for more than it costs to make it and you're fine. Well, not quite.

Many other factors come into play, and all of these circumstances require the proper use of intellectual capital. The level of intellectual capital in any business varies dramatically, but how the intellectual capital is used largely determines the success or failure of a business.

In my role as a sales consultant, I've watched many people with incredible intellectual capital not being challenged at all to contribute. At the same time,

I've watched dull managers making all of the decisions without any input.

When I work with salespeople and managers, I ask them: *What did you learn yesterday? How did you apply today what you learned yesterday? What do you expect to learn today? What will you need to change next year to stay ahead?* I love to challenge them. Sales is all about fulfilling the needs of people or entities, but often these people or entities don't know what their needs are. Worse, they don't understand what needs they may have tomorrow. I try to help them today, and prepare them for tomorrow.

No matter what your role, your job is to help those with whom you come in contact to fully use their intellectual capital. Of course, you need to be fully using your own intellectual capital and asking yourself these same questions. In my company, we ask ourselves these questions regularly. We also seek diverse opinions.

The opportunities before you have never been greater. There are more opportunities for businesses (large and small) to grow and thrive—and the financial capital requirements are actually decreasing. However, you face more competition, and the lifecycle of any business is shorter, making intellectual capital even more important today.

Who has intellectual capital from which you can learn? What can you do daily to be growing your intellectual capital? And, what is one breakthrough idea that truly defies gravity that you can implement in the next six months? SSE

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