

Making of a Top Performing Sales Person

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Top Sales Persons make it there not by accident

Here is an insight into the method.

The major downturn in the economy from the last two years has affected sellers everywhere. Hot prospects delay purchasing until political climate improves / stabilizes or their stock value increases or a variety of abundant reasons that are commonplace to hear nowadays. Competition has never been tougher. Customers are demanding more, at the same time their loyalty is plummeting - and all they talk about is price, price, price! There is a New Way of Thinking, which has come into town. Top sellers take on personal responsibility for their future, believing they can make it happen. Here are some of the things that one can do to be like these elite sales professionals:

1. Be Personally Accountable: When faced with difficult situations, top sellers approach it differently. One of the main differences is found in the questions they ask during hard times. Sellers who avoid accountability ask questions such as: When will management do something about our service problems? Why are our sales targets still the same when it's obvious the economy is down? When will marketing do a better job of getting in leads? Why can't our prospects understand that our products are a better long-term value? When will customers stop being so demanding?

Everyone has voiced questions like this at some point in their career. These why, who and when questions ensure blame is deflected towards others - it's someone else's responsibility to make things better.

Top Sellers ask very different questions like: How can I meet my sales numbers despite the difficult market conditions? What can I do to help customers understand why our products are a better long-term value? What new skills do I need to learn to be more successful? What can I do to help marketing with their campaigns to sell more? How can I use my customer's demands to solidify our relationship?

Notice how top sellers' questions start with "How can I" or "What can I?" They assume personal accountability for the outcome. By asking these same questions, you can stimulate many ideas to keep you in control of your destiny.

2. Say I Will, Not I'll Try : This may sound too easy, but it's a key step. In these turbulent times, what you've always done to be successful may not work as well. Acknowledge this and make an "I will" commitment to change. Not I'll try, but I will - there's a big difference.

For example, have you ever said you'll try to lose weight? Losing weight means doing things that make you uncomfortable - like watching what and how much you eat, and exercising on a regular basis. If

you're like most people, you lost some weight initially but after a while returned to your old habits and the kilograms came back on.

The same thing happens in selling. Many sales professionals know new ways of selling are needed. They try new strategies or tactics they've heard worked for others. The first time they try these new behaviors, they're miserably uncomfortable and feel like a novice again. When immediate results aren't forthcoming, they quickly revert to their comfort zone convinced the new techniques don't work - at least for their customers.

A top salesperson would say, "I will figure out how to succeed in today's crazy market." When trying new behaviors, elite sellers feel the same discomfort but accept it as a natural consequence of learning. They keep practicing till they've mastered the new skill. If the desired results still don't come, these top sellers continue searching for knowledge and skills that lead them to success.

The difference? Top sellers don't say, "I'll try." They know change is difficult, takes time and is an on-going process. Their "I will" commitment keeps them going even when times are tough.

3. Be proactive: In today's tougher economy it is certainly one of the primary requirements of success that we be extremely proactive in our approach. There are a number of things one should do:

a) Develop a clear set of proactive goals or objectives. - Don't just tell yourself that you need to do more, give yourself a specific set of objectives that need to be attained.

b) Develop a presentation that supports that proactive approach. - Don't assume that you know how to sell, or how to be more pro-active.

c) Evaluate the existing skills and competencies. - As you get your program started do some assessments on yourself to see where you can shore up skills with some training.

d) Track activities. - Setting up any kind of new approach, especially where new or different activities are required, demands a tracking system.

4. Take Action: Last, but certainly not least, top sellers don't just come up with a bunch of ideas. They act on them. If they feel their selling skills need to be enhanced, they sign up for training workshops. If the company won't pay, they use their own funds. If customers don't value their products, they try different approaches until they find one that works.

If a customer's service problems affect future sales, they do what it takes to resolve them. If better sales tools are needed, they work with marketing to develop them.

If top sellers are in a fix by a sales situation, they get help from a variety of resources. They brainstorm with colleagues. They seek their boss's advice. They enlist corporate leaders to make high-level sales calls. They explore new ways of working with business partners.

What normally happens with an average sales guy? Do they do that when the going gets tough? Or do

they talk at length with fellow sales reps, lamenting the dire economic conditions, competitive pressures and miserable state of affairs in your company?

Everyone gets down occasionally and blows off steam. But top sellers don't indulge in self-pity. Very soon they ask "How can I" or "What can I" questions to stimulate options and move themselves to action. Meanwhile, their less successful counterparts are still on the phone playing the "Ain't it Awful" game.

5. Get Started Now: An easy way to get started on this process is to analyze a sale one has recently lost. One should ask oneself: What could I have done differently to increase my likelihood of success?

Dissect the sale in detail, looking at every stage of the sales cycle to identify where mistakes may have been made, steps omitted, the process rushed or important information overlooked. Think about what else one could have done or how one could have handled things differently. One doesn't have to do this alone; colleagues can provide valuable insight based on their unique perspective.

Write down all thoughts, ideas or suggestions on paper. Then analyze the list, separating symptoms from root causes. Try to determine where changes in tactics or strategy could have impacted sales success. Again, get input from others.

Finally, commit to growing from this valuable learning experience and take action. Perhaps one needs to strengthen ones presentation skills - get a book, watch a peer, or role-play with a senior. Perhaps one needs a better grasp of customer needs - write down questions to ask for tomorrow's sales call. Perhaps one needs to call on higher-level decision makers - do it now on an in-process sale. Whatever one learns in this process is an incredible opportunity for personal development.