

STOP THE SELLING MALPRACTICE

You know you're in trouble when your sales team sets very low standards and then consistently failed to achieve them.

If that sentence applies to your group, let me suggest a plethora of ideas for you to contemplate

- Gallups research found that only 1 in 10 possess high talent to manage. Would your sales chief rate 8 to 10 for being a motivator, assertive, accountable, relationship builder, and a great decision maker? If the chief scores 7 or below, get him or her the necessary help because the 7 will only obtain 7s with results. Invest in mentoring for the chief before you invest in the rest of the team. It's similar to oxygen masks falling out of the airline's ceilings. They tell you to put yours on first and your child's after that.
- I want my clients to show me their Annual Sales Plan. Why? I want to see their focus on target accounts. I want to see the "no later than date "selected to either land them or increase their share of business. I then want to see what each person is going to do monthly to maximize the chances of the deadline bearing fruit. Goals without deadline dates can often result in drifting along.

Unfortunately, when I ask Salespeople for the no later than date these clients will come on board I usually hear "how can I tell you that?" If they don't know, who does? If you develop a good (at a minimum) plan, you can review it with each client to see if you are on-target. Adjustments might be needed, but having the client co-author your plan will dramatically bolster chances and beat the deadline date. If, by chance, a client tells you that you have 0%

chance of earning the business, just ask “why?” before you fold your tent. If you still get a “no”, it’s still good news as you can stop beating a dead horse and move on. It’s better to get a firm “no” now than 6 months down the road. Time is money.

- I wrote “earning the business” above. I prescribe the Joy and Value factor versus trying to sell stuff. I began in the sales profession at the age of 24 and I quickly found out that I did much better when I asked questions. During the gasoline crunch in the 1970s I asked one executive about his challenges. He said “getting better fuel mileage with our trucks.” I contacted the State Department of Transportation and they sent me information on decreasing fuel costs by the new air foil that are so common today. The client may have forgotten our conversation, but he didn’t forget to give me my first order when I delivered the information. I delivered value.

Many of the clients I consult with arrange for me to speak or consult with their target accounts. That’s value. Even while making corporate calls, while conducting field education with the salesperson, I sign one of my books early on. No big deal? Well, when was last time someone called on you and brought along an author? It’s value and it’s different. Do these Joy and Value exercises land new clients? If you were the decision maker, wouldn’t you buy from such a progressive vendor? Again, it beats selling stuff over 90% of the time.

- Build great relationships with MITO (Most Important Top Officer). I learned early on that MITO is the top influencer and delegator. I always mailed a copy of my monthly newsletters to MITOs of each target account. My very first newsletter got me an invitation from the Green Giant president to come see him on my next visit. I postponed my previously planned activities for the next two days in order to get to his city and for the next day’s appointment. He brought in both

his VP of Procurement and VP of Sales. Then I received my first order and an invite to join those three for a golf outing at their country club on my next visit. They not only paid for everything, but they took delight in giving me several new products to start shipping before we teed off. Note: I didn't try to sell them. My newsletter provided market changes, ideas for growing their business and a bit of funny stuff. Again, it's Joy and Value. The joy comes from being creative and it's fun for all to build relationships. Relationships are a lot like algebra. Have you ever looked at your X and wondered Y?

- Today, possibly as many as 1 million vendors are wining and dining a client like robots. Want to have more impact? If the client lives within an hour or so from your home try this scenario. Have a limo driver pick them up and bring them to your home where you have a masseuse and a gourmet chef also awaiting their arrival. There's details to get early on such as favorite foods, wine and even taboo items to serve as some might be allergic not just to the entrée, but possibly to an ingredient. And, be prepared for the attendee to balk if he/she hasn't ever had a massage. I've had many drag their feet going into the room for a massage but they come out a different person, both relaxed and grateful. This is but one example of how you can take almost anything and put your own spin on it. Be anything except boring. It beats going to Denny's where their slogan is "if it's your birthday, the meals on us." Actually, if you go to Denny's on your birthday, your life sucks.
- Which brings me to creativity which is an attribute describing less than 5% of the population. Being "weirder" than the other 200 or 300 Salespeople make clients not only like you, but they want to be with you more often. Creativity starts with being a great listener. Salespeople are often so intent on talking, they don't hear the subtle opportunities they were just afforded.

Scoring a 3 on listening = a 2 with creativity which equals a 1 for sales results. Listen to learn opportunities for utilizing creativity.

- Build in thinking time to plan for the year and then work it backwards to the quarter and the month. I suggest you take one day after each quarter to ask yourself 1) what did I do that I should not have done? And 2) What did I not do that I should have done? And what part of your thinking needs to include the Joy and Value you're going to bring to each target account – and others starting next week?

I've built into my thinking time what my therapist told me last week. She said my narcissism causes me to misread social situations. I'm pretty sure she was hitting on me.

- I talked about annual plans, but to expand further I suggest you also develop a strategic plan. There is a reason why most major companies spend a great deal of time and resources on strategic planning – it provides the roadmap for the future for the organization. It enables the leadership team the opportunity to take a step back from daily operations and to think, analyze and plan with a strategic mindset and intent. For example, creating a sales goal of increasing revenue by 10% is meaningless without understanding internal capabilities, analyzing external environment (the industry and competitors), selecting the specific strategies that might best yield a 10% increase and even anticipating how the competition might respond to that strategic approach and designing countermoves. Growing companies in the industry leaders plan strategically; mediocre companies continue utilizing the same approaches while the competition takes marketshare away from them. If you have never developed this plan, I suggest you visit www.thestrategyexpert.com for a head start.

- One-on-one sales education almost always beats classroom training as it's customized for each person. The key is to hold each Salesperson accountable for implementing new skills – and quickly. University of Waterloo's Curve of Forgetting study shows that students forget 50 to 80% of what they learned after just one day. And, they forget 97% in a month. This is why I assign new skills to be acted on the day I provide both one-on-ones and seminars. Education then moves from a cost to a worthy investment. Target your education needs and assign/agree to implementation and follow up with them quickly the new skills along with the results. I want to learn who they tried the new skills with along with the results. Even if a Salesperson bombed trying a new skill, it's still good as he's growing.

And with that, I'll stop writing to reduce your reading time. This will allow you to think about and start implementing one of the above ideas.

J.J. Watt, Houston Texans player said it best. "Success isn't owned. It's leased and rent is due every day."

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