



What Does it Take to Succeed in Sales

Ever feel like you're overpaid as a sales person? Not likely. But let me offer a reason for asking that question.

Sales is autonomy and independence. It is a tremendous opportunity and constant scrutiny. It is not a profession for the faint of heart, or thin of skin. As a director of sales, I once had an owner who told me over and over, "Michael, in selling, you get a report card every week."

I saw a list recently of the 10 most overpaid jobs in today's marketplace, because as one of the writers stated, "some things are just too important to allow them to be screwed up." Like airplane pilots and ... underperforming sales people, which is somewhere around 80 percent of them (see 80/20 rule). Sales people are everywhere, but true selling professionals are still a minority. Ever hear the one about sales being a numbers game? Sales is an indicators game. Indicators are numbers that offer evidence toward any conclusion. And the only verdict, ladies and gentlemen of today's economic jury, is that most sales people are under-performers.

Underperforming sales people are too busy to read, too busy to write hand-written notes, too busy to improve their performance, too busy to strive for top performance among their peers, and too busy to get power letters from customers who are amazed by their show ... or just too boring to amaze customers at all.

While sales can be one of the highest paying professions, it is also one of the most overpaid to those who settle into the status quo of perpetual underperformance.

The key element that separates the top 20 percent of all sales people (the 20 percent who sell 80 percent of all that is sold) from the rest is their personal motivation to excel.

Status Quo is the greatest enemy of excelling in sales! Thinking that the marketplace or the month of the year is the problem. Thinking we're doing better than we really are. Thinking that you are doing better than you really are ... that things are OK, or improving, or not as bad as they could be. And with thinking like that, they soon will be.

Whose job does it then become to shake

things up? Which manager is left to rattle the cages and become the bad cop in the play we've all seen before? Carrot or stick? Motivational speakers or sales trainers? Contests or penalties? What's the motivation? The desire to excel! To become! Becoming is a process, which means it doesn't happen in a day or a week or a year. And it doesn't happen just because you made a sale today - or didn't.

The selling entrepreneur has a different way of looking at the world - or should. If that's you, then you cannot be subject to the indifference of most attitudes found in the marketplace today. You must be "on" when the curtain goes up on this day of selling performances. Think like an actor. Playing the role of a selling professional will have to do until you can actually become one. Based on your recent performance would anyone believe that you're a selling professional? Or just a bad actor miscast in this role?

Most training is delivered to individuals who don't think they need it ... and the best sales presentations are made to those who don't want to see them (or thought they didn't).

Selling is simple: Move up or get out. What battle have you won lately? The selling show of many sales people today is not much different than delivery drivers or take-out restaurants. "What can I get for you today?" is not a professional selling question.

Stars, even selling stars, are created through their own unique presentation or performance that gives us a pleasurable buying experience.

How does your doctor sell? "You'll be glad to know that we're running a half-off special on all abdominal procedures this month."

At that show, the concern is not the price! It's bigger than price. The value is greater than the price.

And so it is with a majority of, but not all, selling or buying experiences.

Consumer Fact: Passion Before Price

If someone is passionate about gardening he or she might spend \$1,000 on a Japanese maple tree ... but he or she still wants the cheapest mulch. Because no one is passionate about mulch, price becomes a factor.

This marketplace owes you nothing but is

willing to pay almost anything for the right value proposition.

Stale, tired, boring, blah, blah, blah ... makes the buyer look harder at the price. Excellent service and "make-my-life-easier" solutions tower over whatever number I have to pay to get it. And once I've found it, I'll pay more not to lose it. The problem is that's not how most sales people (the 80 percent) look at it.

Never conspire with the buyer to lower your fee.

Status Quo is the greatest enemy of excelling in sales!

When you conspire with the buyer to lower the price, two things are lost: Value and revenue. We can always negotiate less value that costs less, but if there is obvious value, the price becomes secondary.

Remember the last time you were in a fine restaurant and looked at the lobster? How much? Market price. You don't buy lobster at drive-thru windows.

More facts:

If price becomes the star of the show, the perception of value is lacking or not very impressive by the sales man or by the prospective buyer. What's your value proposition? Or will you just take orders and justify the price?

Selling is not telling-selling as a professional is excelling and becoming known as an excellent professional at what you do.

That's doing the things that are easy and the things that you know you should do, without being told to do them.

If you're not excelling, or in the process of excelling, then you are failing at sales.

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