

SALES EXCELLENCE

SALES EXCELLENCE EXPLORES THE BEST PRACTICES ON IMPROVING SALES EFFECTIVENESS BY IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

HOW DEEP IS YOUR WELL?

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HOW AND WHERE TO FIND PROSPECTS

A critical necessity for the human body is water. While this is not original information, the correlation to sales and being successful is profound. Just as the human body needs water, the salesperson needs prospects.

Most people wash out in sales because they don't have enough prospects. Simply put, they run out of water, shrivel up and die. So I ask you, *"How many times can you go to the well before you come up empty?"*

Insurance companies have a system that keeps the sales pipeline perpetually full. Here is how the insurance companies view the sales process:

- 80% of salespeople will fail in the first year
- 50% of the remaining 20% will wash out in the second year

Now here is their strategy...

A new salesperson comes with a ready-made list of prospects: friends and family members, aunts and uncles, cousins, et al. When that salesperson leaves, and statistics say they will, the insurance company knows that the policies sold to those friends and family members aren't likely to be cancelled, which leaves the insurance company with continued renewals. Most salespeople don't cold call or network well enough to sustain an ongoing pipeline of prospects and burn through their immediate list of contacts within the first year, if not sooner. Hiring more salespeople adds more prospects. For insurance companies, hiring a new crop of salespeople every year keeps the pipeline full.

So, what's your strategy?

A second critical necessity for the human body is food. A farmer has to plant lots of seeds in order to harvest a substantial crop. The odds for success are not in his favor. He has to plant at least five seeds for every one seed that grows to be harvested. Many factors work against him:

- ✓ Seeds don't sprout
- ✓ A drought, fire or flood destroys what he planted
- ✓ There is not enough rainfall or sunshine
- ✓ Birds get the seeds before they sprout and grow
- ✓ Animals eat the crops before they can be harvested

And so it is in the world of sales. Salespeople must contend with the economy, the competition and a host of other obstacles that destroy the seeds they planted. Some are harvested, some are not. Planting and harvesting is what must be done in sales. Enough seeds have to be planted, cultivated and watered in order to harvest and enjoy the fruits of the labor. Farming is a tough business, and so is **sales**.

HAVE YOU DUG YOUR WELL YET? HAVE YOU PLANTED YOUR SEEDS?

You need to have a steady source of prospects as well as a plan for how and where you are going to find them.

Some Prospecting Strategies

- Develop a direct mail campaign
- Conduct telemarketing or cold call
- Participate in networking events
- Speak at networking events and be seen as the expert
- Join an organization (associations directly related to your business)
- Ask for referrals
- Write an article for the local paper
- Write a book
- Talk to lots and lots of people

What are you doing in these areas? Are you doing enough? What will you do to make a difference? What is your strategy in these areas? You must devote a certain percentage of time EVERY week to this part of your business.

I have and continue to use each of these methods to fill my pipeline. The way I have been most successful in keeping my well full and planting seeds is through speaking engagements. 80% of my clients over the last 27 years have come from speaking engagements and 12% have come from referrals. These are forms of warm leads.

If you don't have enough prospects and don't continue to fill your pipeline, the inevitable will happen. Eventually your well will run dry. When that happens, you will lean on existing customers to maintain your business and before long, all of your eggs will be in one basket. You hang on to that ONE customer or that ONE sale to pull you through, or you rely on a few clients to support you.

When you try to drink from the well too often and haven't replenished it with new clients, you find it's all dried up. In sales your well can run dry for a number of reasons:

- ✓ The customer got tired of you beating them up for orders
- ✓ Ownership changes
- ✓ Your contact leaves
- ✓ The company moves or goes out of business
- ✓ Your competition cuts the price to capture the market share

ENSURE YOUR WELL IS DEEP ENOUGH SO YOU HAVE PLENTY OF WATER. ALWAYS REMEMBER, A WELL CAN AND USUALLY DOES RUN DRY AND YOU MUST BE PREPARED.

Make sure you have multiple lists and contacts and know where to find new prospects. One list is not good enough. If you have a list of 20 contacts, that is only enough to last you one day. Your well isn't deep enough. In all likelihood, you will not close all 20 sales. You need lots and lots and lots of prospects. You must identify the market and the potential customer base to call on and cultivate each of them.

Because sales is a numbers game, adopt the philosophy of "Next." Having plenty of prospects in your pipeline makes it easier to make sales calls and weather the changes, because sooner or later the timing works in your favor.

By timing, I mean the customers know they have a need and you just happen to call on them at the same time they have the need. Persistence and consistency will pay off, and following up will eventually pay you dividends in what I refer to as a "Timing Sale." It happened because you were in the right place at the right time. Some call that luck. As a friend of mine and I were leaving a get-together, I said to him, "Good luck." He said, "I don't need luck, I make my own." That says it all. You make your own luck by doing the things you have to do. It doesn't just "happen" through wishful thinking.

PLAN YOUR WORK AND WORK YOUR PLAN