



TRADE PART 1 SECRETS

Top tips and insights for making your mark in sales. **BY COLLEEN FRANCIS**

ATTITUDE FIXERS

Study after study has told us that only about 20% of all sales people are top performers, meaning they regularly close at least half of their qualified prospects. Similarly, about 20% of the sales force are either underperformers, brand new or on their way out. This means that the considerable majority of sales people – roughly 60% – can be classified as simply average. If you find yourself falling into that category, here are three quick fixes that can help you move up into the top 20%, and help turn your career from average to outstanding.

>> QUICK FIX #1: ATTITUDE

95% of all the top performers I interview tell me that the number one contributor to their success is Attitude.

I know you've heard that before. But take a moment and actually think about it. Are you so certain of your ability to hide a sour mood or personal annoyance, that you're willing to risk losing a sale if you're wrong?

The fact of the matter is, unless your last name is Streep, Brando or De Niro, your thoughts will affect your behaviour. In other words, we always move toward our most dominant thought. So make sure you play that positive tape in your mind, and don't let yourself get caught up in any negativity around you.

If you do find yourself slipping into a negative frame of mind, try some of these tried-and-true ideas to help you snap out of it, and put your best foot forward:

In short, show your customer how you feel by being at the top of your mental game. Close business by projecting a sincerely happy persona, not hiding a negative attitude behind a facade. And above all else, either love what you do, or get out!

>> QUICK FIX #2: HIDDEN CLUES

According to a recent study from the October 2003 issue of Sales and Marketing Magazine, an average of 45% of sales people have faced discrimination from clients based on their non-verbal communication, including the way

they dress, their mannerisms, their posture and even their gender.

Obviously, there are some things you simply can't – or wouldn't – change. But what about some of those things that are under your control, and which could have a serious affect on your success?

For example, do you often go to bed too late and have to drag yourself into your first call, or tend to eat a huge three-course lunch and then spend your 2pm meeting yawning at your customer?

Sales is about trust. Trust is built on rapport. And rapport is a direct function of your customer's perception of you, and how they feel about you. No, it's not fair. But it is a reality. So pay attention to your business style, manner and projection.

Remember, in sales, the customer's perception is always the reality in which we work. Our job is simply to align our behaviours, style and intentions with our customer's perceptions. Substance is what will convince them your product or service is the right solution for their needs. But style is what will get your foot in the door.

>> QUICK FIX #3: THE RIGHT OPENER

The wrong opening statement can actively repel even the most open and agreeable of customers. So if you ever find yourself starting a conversation with "how are you today?" – stop it!

Why? Because it reminds your customers of all those annoying dinnertime interruptions they've gotten over the years from telemarketers looking to sell them something they don't want or need. Are you a telemarketer? I didn't think so. And even if you are, stop sounding like one!

The bottom line: Treat all your customers the same, and the best will go away.

Finally, we can't forget our real customers – the people who are paying us now. What are you committed to doing this year to make sure your best clients stick around? ■

HERE ARE A FEW GREAT IDEAS GATHERED DURING A RECENT SALES GOAL PLANNING SESSION I DID WITH SOME CLIENTS:

>> **Build genuine relationships, go beyond asking common questions, and dig for real emotional issues.**

>> **Take the time to schedule "in person" meetings as often as possible. The telephone and email are productive tools, but nothing builds rapport as well as a handshake and eye contact.**

>> **Be willing to offer your Gold customer something unique and of added value – a better service, a guarantee, faster turnaround time or a volume discount.**

>> **Get in touch with your customers every 6 weeks, and always call or send them something of value first – don't call just to see whether they're ready to order more product.**

>> **Send a note or other recognition on the anniversary of the date they started doing business with you, or even better, on their company's anniversary.**

>> **Send your best customers referrals to potential clients and partners.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen Francis is a respected speaker and trainer, working internationally with companies and individuals. Driven by, and singularly focused on, sales success, Colleen's innovative sales methodologies are helping experienced and new sales professionals achieve maximum results. In 2001, after 15 years of direct selling and sales management within the technology and financial sectors, Colleen founded Engage Selling Solutions, a firm dedicated to sales success.

