



Reading on the Plane N°6

Our 'Readings on the Plane' are short and concise readers on business issues.

You can read them on plane while travelling or of course anywhere else, when you want to spend some time with a hopefully inspiring paper of your interest. So enjoy the reading and come back with comments if you like.

Warmly

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14 FUNDAMENTALS

Every Sales Person Should Know

There are only three ways to sell more.
Do more right. Do less wrong. Or, do both.

Every successful salesperson knows that there are many skills and attitudes that contribute to their success, but there are fourteen critical attributes and focus points that sales high performers have integrated into their overall sales strategy. The following are in no particular order, but if you want long-term consistent success you will embrace and incorporate each of them into your routine sales attitudes and behaviors.

1. Make a sale, you'll make a living. Sell a relationship and you can make a fortune.

Poor salespeople focus on just closing the sale. Successful salespeople focus on closing the sale and the relationship. Which is your approach?

For many salespeople, the close of the sale, typically comes at the end of the sales presentation. It represents for many, the final act in the sales process. It is unfortunate that these poorly informed or trained salespeople, lack adequate understanding of the role of selling in today's competitive world.

Selling is not about only closing the current prospect on a particular product or service that solves one of their pressing problems, needs or desires. It is about building a trusting relationship and partnership with them, by becoming a resource, and helping them solve their on-going problems, or satisfying their continuing and evolving needs and desires. Super stars know that the lifetime value of a client is far more than the value of one sale or transaction. They take a long view of the relationship. It is not just about this sale but future sales, referrals and customer trust and loyalty.

2. People buy when they are ready to buy not when you need to sell.

One of the critical concepts that sales high performers know is that their role is to help people buy and that just because they may be behind in their sales quota is not a reason why a prospect should buy from them now.

You don't change people's buying habits or circumstances. What you can do is accurately discover them and then attempt to create a sense of urgency. A lot of buying is done due to momentum. It is important to discover those "real" reasons or circumstances as to why a prospect would buy now, later, not at all or never. Once you have discovered their real issues the sales super star tailors their appeal to those specific needs, desires and buying circumstances.

3. When you sell price you rent the business. When you sell value you own it.

Most poorly trained salespeople tend to lower the price when they receive price resistance. Any price, no matter how low, will always seem high to a prospect or customer if their perceived value is low. The key to effectively handling price resistance is to understand this simple, yet profound, concept.

Prospects and customers say they want low price, but what they really want is low cost. What is the difference?

Price is what customers pay for your product or service now. Cost is what the customer pays by buying late, not at all or wrong. It is their overall cost over an extended period of time.

In most cases we get what we pay for. Buy cheap and you get less value or higher cost. Buy expensive and you get higher value or lower cost over time. This is not always true but tends to be true most of the time.

The sales high performers sell value and don't defend price. In the long run, it is much easier to justify high price if the value is there, than poor quality and constant product/service problems.

4. Your prospect will tell you what you need to tell them to sell them.

Accurate and timely information is the key to success in selling. One of the biggest mistakes poor salespeople make is that they give information before they get information. In other words they talk too much. If you practice this approach, you are going to make one or all of the following mistakes. 1) You will give too much information (more than is necessary to make the sale). 2) You will give the wrong information (based on the prospect's needs, wants, desires or problems). 3. You will give information that could sabotage your success either in the short or long term.

The sales high performers understand that their job is not to sell their products or services but to help the prospect become comfortable with buying their products or services and giving themselves permission to buy now. Information is power and successful salespeople are masters at uncovering needs, problems, prejudices, concerns and desires in a timely and truthful way.

5. If two people want to do business together they won't let the details get in the way. If two people don't want to do business together they will let any detail will get in the way.

Some people actually know that when they are making a commitment to you to buy that they have no intention of following through. Why? Maybe they are just subtly telling you that they are not really a prospect for you. Maybe they have an inflated view of their authority or power within their own organization. And maybe, they just lie a lot. If two people want to do business together they won't let any details get in the way. If a prospect doesn't want to do business with you they will let even the slightest detail get in the way. We are talking here about intent. Sales high performers know how to identify the prospect's real intent or their purpose. They are not easily misled and tend to probe deeper when they feel they are not getting the real truth from the prospect or customer.

6. They need to work as hard to keep the business as they did to get it in the first place.

Many salespeople make lots of promises or benefit statements while trying to sell a new prospect. Most people like to buy, but resist being sold to. A key concept to keep in mind while selling is that the close of the sale is not the end of the sales process, but the beginning of the sales relationship.

The purpose of the sales process is to discover how you can help a customer or prospect with a need, problem, desire or challenge, and then position your product or service in such a way that the customer

discovers in his mind the value necessary in order to justify a purchase. Once the sale has been closed and the prospect accepts your promises, commitments or features as ones that will benefit him, he or she now moves into a sort of limbo mode. They wait patiently to see if you meant all of that sales stuff or were just trying to get another deal. They observe and monitor your behaviors, actions, follow-through and communication consistency. Most don't do this consciously but nonetheless they are doing it.

After-sales service is the key to keeping sales closed and keeping customers satisfied and buying again. It can often be a subtle test to see if you can really deliver.

One of the keys is to promise a lot and deliver more. In other words, exceed customer expectations -- wow them with service. Poor salespeople continuously promise a lot and deliver less, or promise a little and deliver next to nothing.

Sales high performers know that to ensure repeat business, customer loyalty, positive references and qualified referrals that their after sales service must be one of their strengths.

7. To sell more every year, they get better every year.

Over the years, one common denominator I have observed in sales high performers is their willingness to invest in the continued improvement of their skills, attitudes and philosophy.

Life is an interesting relationship between paying the price and winning the prize. Between self-investment and rewards. Between investing time in personal development and your ultimate success. It is never too late to begin an aggressive on-going self-development program. There are hundreds of books to read, audio CD's to listen to and seminars to attend. Sales stars don't wait for their organization to invest in them and their future value. They take full responsibility for the quality of their life and learning. They are pro-active in seeking out learning opportunities. They use professional coaches, have mentors and belong to mastermind groups. They are constantly taking advantage of networking opportunities looking for all types of people who can help them improve. They create strategic alliance relationships that are mutually beneficial.

8. They manage their time and territory effectively.

Each of us gets 24 hours to do with what we will. Some salespeople wish they had more while others wish time would pass a lot quicker. Some salespeople act like they have an unlimited time bank available to them and that their prospects or clients will see them whenever the salesperson would like. The sales high performers understand the importance of using every available selling minute to its full advantage.

Before you can improve your use of time to sell you need to get a handle on how you are spending your time and how you are abusing it. Most of us tend to waste the time we do in the same old ways, day after day, year after year. For one week carry a stop watch and start it when in the presence of a prospect or customer to sell only and then stop it when you leave. After the sales visit don't reset the clock but keep a running accumulative total of time spent selling in one week. You can do this with every sales activity for

example; how much time you spend on the telephone prospecting for new business, travel time, doing paperwork, in meetings, how much time you spend doing research or solving client problems.

With this simple exercise you will get a fairly accurate picture of where you need time and territory management improvement. You can't change or fix a problem until you know what the problem is so before you launch into some sophisticated time management program, remember, you cannot manage time. It passes with or without you.

9. The close of the sale begins when the prospect agrees to see them.

Most people don't like to make decisions. The main reason for this is they don't want to make a poor or wrong decision, and traditional sales closing methods ask people to make a decision. For example; "Do you want it in green or red"? (Alternative choice) "Do you want to use your pen or mine"? (Action close) "Can we write up an order now"? (Direct close) Each of these closing techniques, even though they do work, has two fundamental problems.

- 1) They ask the prospect to make a decision.
- 2) The average salesperson is uncomfortable using them.

Few salespeople have a 'closing strategy' process that they follow with each and every real sales opportunity. They tend to ask a few questions, jump into the presentation too soon, try and overcome a couple of the prospect's sales objections and then prematurely go for the close -usually unsuccessfully. The sales super star knows the outcome long before they get to the end of this routine process and they do it by ensuring that; they have a well-qualified prospect, they know the prospect's dominant buying motives, they have identified all of their potential objections before they are even expressed, they have carefully observed the various buying signals from the prospect and they have given an effective and interactive presentation. They know long before they ask their closing question what the answer will be. How? By being effective at people reading skills, by asking intelligent, effective and appropriate probing qualifying questions, by being good listeners and by asking a variety of trial closing questions throughout the sales process. They don't try and force a fit. They discover the prospects sense of urgency or they create it.

They are in the prospect's presence to sell not educate. They are there to do business. From their opening remark to their final closing statement their attitude is I am here to sell. This does not mean that they are applying pressure or hard-selling. It means they are serious about helping the prospect solve their problems or take advantage of opportunities.

10. High ranking Managers want to buy –not to be sold.

We are in the middle of a constant war. It is the war for attention, some call it the war for eyeballs. This has an effect on all of us. Almost everybody I know is a little fed up with people calling and wanting to sell something or doing a survey and asking questions. This accounts for high ranking managers in a particular way because they are literally flooded with buying requests from suppliers.

The question for high performers in sales, especially in key and global account management is: How can I create a situation to get in touch with those high ranking managers? And what is necessary to do, to attract their attention in a useful way, to make them becoming interested in me?

High performers know that a CEO does not want to be sold something. But he must buy from his suppliers and he wants to buy. The only but important hurdle to take is: That most CEOs hate sales situations. And you have to find an answer to the question: How can I make him / her buy our products or services instead of selling something to them.

11. They never give up control of the sales process.

A common mistake some salespeople make is that they have no well-defined sales process and if they have one to lose control of it at some point. There are many ways they accomplish this and here are just a few for your consideration:

- ▶ First mistake: There is no sales process at all. You should establish one at least for your key and global accounts. Doing sales without a sales process is like building a car randomly. As sales process contains some sales tools like the 'Quick-Scan' the 'Account Planning Tool' and 'True Value Selling'.

And here are other things a lot of salespeople do for not being in control of their sales activities...

- ▶ They quote price before they have had a chance to build value.
- ▶ They don't ask enough questions early in the sales process. They just ramble on.
- ▶ They send out 'literature' when asked, without first qualifying the prospect's agenda or reasons for requesting it.
- ▶ They send people to their website without first getting some basic qualifying information and having a follow-up strategy after the prospect has perused their site.
- ▶ They don't get advance deposits on services or products.
- ▶ They leave "will calls" when calling a prospect.

Control of the sales process is one of the key strategies of the sales high performers. They understand that control of sales activities is in the ultimate best interests of the prospect or client; and the best for their own company as well. When the salesperson controls the sales process they are never broad-sided with a lost sale they thought was in the bag.

12. They never project their buying prejudices into the sales process.

The objection that you will tend to have the most difficulty answering successfully is that objection that is the most consistent with your own value system.

If you are a price buyer and your prospect objects to price you will tend to accept their objection. If you are the type of buyer who tends to think decisions over before making a purchase and your prospect says to you, "We need to think this over." Again, you will tend to go along with their objection as rational or making perfect sense (because that is the way you buy.)

This simple act of accepting sales objections that resonate with you because you can relate to them is nothing more than projecting your personal attitudes, opinions, judgments or biases into the sales process. When you project your personal beliefs into the sales process you are assuming that everyone who buys, buys the way you like to buy and often for the same reasons. You are also tending to assume that when they don't buy for a reason that is similar to one of yours that it makes perfect sense to you.

The sales super stars leave their personal biases, prejudices and opinions at home.

13. They negotiate the best possible value.

Negotiations on terms and conditions, and especially on price are a central phase and activity during the sales process. And negotiations can easily soar the excellent job you have done, developing and presenting your solutions so far for your customer. Even if you have mastered the early stages of your sales process at the best, there will be the moment when you have to bargain your offer, sometimes with complex buying centers, consisting of people with very different roles, interests and job functions. And very often you will hear that your offer is too high. A lot of little skilled salespeople and people without any standing enter into a fatal dynamics that inevitably lead to an erosion of price which means an erosion of profit as well.

Who can really cut your prices down? Your customers? No, they can't! Your competitors? No, they can't either! The only person who can cut your prices is you.

The problem is: People on your customer's side are usually experienced negotiating professionals, especially when of the purchasing department. Most of them hold two big advantages against any of their suppliers: As we said, they are very experienced since their day very often is filled with nothing else but negotiations. And second, they are very well trained. In average purchase managers train 4 times as much as salespeople do.

For this reason sales stars make sure that they master the process of negotiating at an excellent level. They learn how to tackle these pros on the purchasing side. They are aware of the fact that negotiating prices and conditions is a major part of their sales job that requires high structural, strategic and communicational skills to get to real value results for all parties.

14. Sales stars never lose their passion.

Passion is the great equalizer. It can make up for a lack of experience and knowledge. I am not suggesting that you not develop your knowledge or experience -only that until you do, your passion will be interpreted by others as a strong belief in yourself, your mission and your purpose.

Passion is different from enthusiasm. The old outworn cliché says: "Act enthusiastic and you will become enthusiastic." I have never subscribed to this philosophy. The reason is that if enthusiasm is an act which you use when things are going well, how do you behave when your life is falling apart? Are you just as enthusiastic about failure, more problems than you deserve and any number of disappointments, frustrations and adversities?

Passion is not an act. It is a way of believing. It is woven into your cellular structure just as much as your DNA. Passion -real passion for who you are, what you are selling, who you are becoming and what you believe in. It shouts to the world: "I am here to stay, I am here to make a difference, I will leave my mark in this world. It may take me my entire life, but I will not give up until my purpose and destiny are realized."

Are you in love with where you are, where you are going, who you are becoming and what you are selling? Or, are you living like more than 85% of the population with the attitude, "Same Stuff, Different Day"? If you have lost or are losing your passion for your career do whatever is necessary to get it back.

"And now, enjoy your sales day!"

Very best regards,

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TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US IS EASY

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