

How Far are you Willing to go to Make it in Sales?

by John Chapin

I am of the belief that pretty much anyone can make it in sales if they are determined enough. Assuming someone does not have brain damage or some other major mental hindrance, sales can be learned. I am proof of that. After struggling in school and being an abysmal failure at the onset of my sales career, if I can be successful, you can too. After all, as a former president once said, this isn't rocket surgery. Granted, some personality types and skillsets are more cut out for sales but the bottom line is: if you are committed, you can be successful. That said, what must you be willing to do to be successful in sales? By the way, when I talk about being successful, I'm talking about really making it which means you're in the top 5% of salespeople, not simply scraping by and paying your bills.

Three commitments you must be willing to make to be in the top 5%

Commitment #1: personal and professional development

The most important element of your personal and professional development is acquiring superior sales skills. Let me start by saying that you, and only you, are responsible for your development as a salesperson. Hopefully you work for a company that sends you to seminars, brings in sales trainers, runs sales meetings in which sales skills are worked on, and otherwise gives you the tools and resources to develop your sales abilities. That said, there are companies that do not do these things and ultimately the responsibility for developing your sales skills lies with you, not your company. So, are you currently reading a book a month, or a week, to develop your sales skills? Are you going to seminars, listening to audio programs, and watching video on how to sell? If you aren't, you need to start. You have to be spending at least an hour a day learning sales and developing your sales abilities. You need to practicing, drilling and rehearsing your presentation, answers to objections, closes, and everything else involved in the sales process. Also, you must be willing to invest your own money in some of the above resources if necessary. Even if you are a veteran, you have to continue to hone your abilities and get better. We're all familiar with the saying, "When you're green you grow and when you're ripe you rot." The world is simply changing too fast, competition is getting fiercer, consumers are getting more educated, and as a result, you must continue to develop yourself and your sales abilities.

Commitment #2: time

Next, how much time are you putting in? If you're relatively new to sales, you need to be putting in 3 to 4 hours a day prospecting, in addition to skills development mentioned above, following up, presenting, closing, building relationships, and other miscellaneous items that come up during the day. Yes, this is a long work day. So are you willing to come in at 6 a.m. and work until 11 p.m. and work weekends if necessary? In order to be in the top 5%, you need this level of commitment. As a veteran with an established business, you may work fewer hours, but especially when you are just starting out in sales, or in a new industry, or with a new company, you have to put in the hours.

Commitment #3: willingness to do whatever it takes legally and ethically

Finally, how far are you willing to go to be truly successful in sales? Are you willing to make 100, 200, or 300 calls a day if necessary? Are you willing to stand in the mall or on a street

corner in NYC and pitch people walking by? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to beat the competition and go the extra mile delivering much more than you're getting paid for? Are you willing to turn over every stone, pull out all the stops, continue to follow up, and keep going when you hear "no", or "we've decided to go with the competition"? Are you willing to do what the chiropractor in San Francisco did before he opened his practice when he called on over 20,000 homes and businesses Monday through Sunday for seven months in order to let people know he was opening an office? I'm not saying the above will be necessary, in fact, that level of action most likely won't be, however, in the case that it is, are you willing to go that far? Are you committed at a level in which you say, "I don't care what it takes to be successful and feed my family and make my dreams come true, I'm willing to do it?" If you have that kind of commitment, nothing can stop you from being a major sales success.

Some final ideas to keep in mind when striving for sales success: first, **the most important tasks you do are: prospecting, presenting, closing, and building relationships with your top 20% accounts.** Those items should take up 90% of your day.

Next, stop looking for quicker, easier, less painful ways to be successful and decide that you're going to make the contacts and do the hard work. Many salespeople let an e-mail suffice for a phone call or in-person visit. While technology can make us more effective staying in touch and following up, an e-mail will never replace an in-person call or phone call. Most e-mail, social media, and other technology has simply given people false hope that there's an easier way than facing fear, stepping out of their comfort zone, and contacting people live.