

## **You Know Your Thinking is Stinking When...**

by : *Dave Anderson*

---

Sometimes without realizing it your thinking ends up in a rut and the only thing that reveals it is when you step back and take a good look at what you've decided to accept in your organization. Here are five thinking traps commonly found in business. Take a look and see if your thinking - or that of your managers - is stinking.

1. You don't think you can find one hour per month to train your managers.

One of the most neglected disciplines in business is taking the time to train managers on an ongoing basis. I'm not talking about management meetings where you go over forecasts, marketing, monies due and the like. These are important but not to what I'm referring. I'm talking about management training meetings where you get your department heads together once or twice per month to spend time learning more about leadership: watching a training DVD, reviewing highlights from a course you attended, or all your managers reading the same book as a project or discussing recruiting, interviewing and training strategies together. Amazingly, we find time to train underlings like salespeople but don't put a priority on coaching the coaches. Normally this is because dealers overestimate the leadership ability of their managers. Because these folks have good technical management skills (the paperwork part of the job) dealers wrongly assume their managers have developed leadership skills (the people work part of the job).

2. You think you're indispensable.

Seven words for you: get over yourself; you're not that good.

Charles Spurgeon put it well when he said, "Success can go to my head and will unless I remember that it is God who accomplishes the work, that he can continue to do so without my help and that he will be able to make out with other means whenever he wants to cut me out."

3. Sales managers who think their job is to pencil and close deals, do inventories, dealer trades and write out schedules.

You're partly right but mostly wrong. Your primary job is to get people better or get better people: to take the human capital you've been entrusted with and make it more valuable tomorrow than it is today. In fact, there is no better way to measure a manager. You can buy computer programs that pencil deals and hire clerks to do much of the rest of your job. Get people better! If you don't get this you don't have a clue as to what your real job is.

4. You find yourself defending average- or below-average performances.

Are you kidding me? How stinking does your thinking have to get for you to defend people who cannot turn out a performance of at least industry average standards? The fact is that some of these people are just plain bad. They have too far to go. Even if you do improve them to a degree they won't be anywhere near an acceptable level of performance. After all, if you take bad and invert it you don't get good: you get "not bad." And you'll never build a great team if it's littered with "not bad" morons. Sure, you can improve people through lots of attention and investments of time, dollars and training. But the opposite of failure is not excellence. The opposite of failing is passing and as I recall from school, passing grades start at a D-. Yes, it's a step in the right direction but you rarely turn a D- into a C, much less an A. Mr. or Ms. Dealer, if you have managers in any department that defend below-average performances either train them, demote them or fire them because they're killing your business. And if you're the one

defending this nonsense you ought to be ashamed.

5. You try to build a team of eagles and attract great people into your dealership by guaranteeing poverty wages.

We talk big in our business about recruiting efforts to attract great people from outside our industry. And since you can't normally offer flexible scheduling, weekends off or a reasonable amount of hours to work each week, you must try and compensate by offering generous salaries, right? After all, a superstar selling copiers at IBM and making \$100,000 or more per year will need a soft landing when transitioning into your business and you'll need to take the fear out with a higher guaranteed pay for a period of time, won't you? Not quite. What's more likely is that you offer a generous \$1,000 or \$1,500 per month draw against commissions, complete with "unlimited potential" for a huge income. But the problem is stars in other industries are rarely willing to give our business a chance and discover the great potential because they can't get past the fear factor. Nor can they get past the "spouse factor." Can you imagine the conversation at home: "Well dear, I'm thinking of switching careers, trading in the \$8,500 per month I make at IBM and taking my great sales and networking skills and putting them to use in the car business. I'll need to work about 60-70 hours per week to start, I won't get weekends off but they're going to guarantee me \$1,000 per month plus all the donuts I can eat each Friday."

No wonder we have such turnover rates: with what we guarantee people we never get to see the stars of the sales profession; we get people to whom that \$1,000 or so each month looks pretty good. Yes, you can grow your own but little energizes your culture more than bringing in a real pro with highly developed sales skills and watching them raise the bar of your entire sales force. The Associated Press recently reported that poverty level income for a family of two is \$12,015 per year and for a family of four it jumps up to \$18,810. Do these wages sound pretty close to what you're guaranteeing salespeople when they join your company? There are some groups of people this pay strategy works with but the point I'm making is you'll never see the greatest salespeople outside your industry offering them promises of poverty.

I recommend you get more bold and flexible when you find a star. If Mr. IBM wants to change careers and can prove he made \$100,000 last year, go ahead and guarantee him \$8,500 per month for the first 90 days; \$6,000 for the next 90 and \$4,500 thereafter. This guy has an ego too big to come to your place and fail and if he can't make it selling cars his ego won't allow him to stay and eat up your guarantees. I can promise you even if he doesn't make his draw the first few months what you'll reap off him both initially and in the future will be more than worth it. And before you think you're getting off cheap hiring the \$1,000 per month guy you should consider what he's costing you with all the deals he misses because he doesn't have the closing, networking or follow-up skills to convert the opportunities you buy him into sales. Believe me, the \$8,500 per month salesperson is a bargain in comparison. And if your managers have a problem guaranteeing salespeople more than they make themselves here's two words of advice for them: grow up. In most professions the star players make more than their coaches: why should our business be any different? When you hire a star you give yourself a raise as well.

If your thinking is stinking and in a rut it's time to fix it fast. The first rule of ruts says that when you find yourself in a rut, stop digging and start climbing. Your ascent begins now.