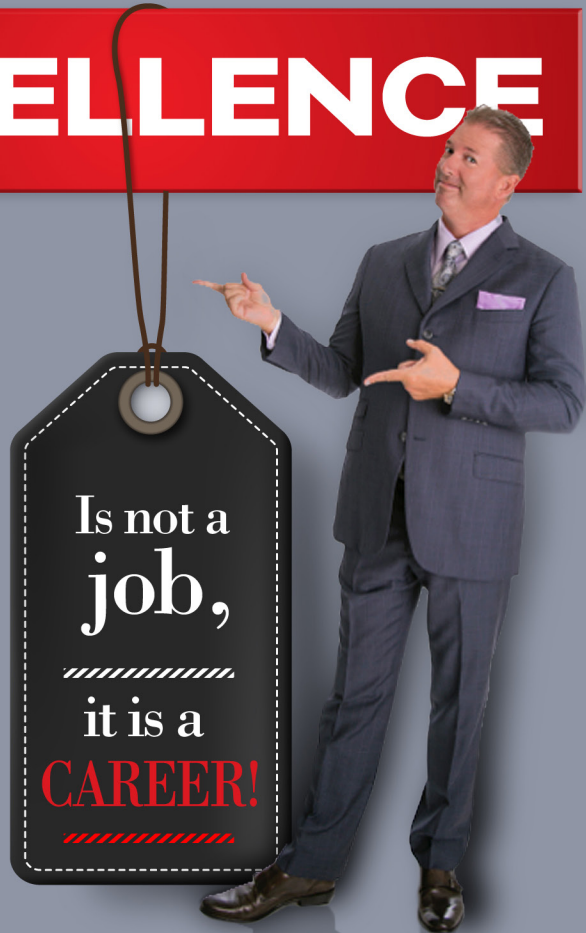


# SALES

# EXCELLENCE



by Steve de Laveaga

Sr. Vice President Sales & Marketing



# SALES

# EXCELLENCE

Is not a job, it is a CAREER!



**Steve de Laveaga**

Sr. VP Sales & Marketing

*Fidelity National Title Group*



*“Be at your Best  
when your best is needed”*

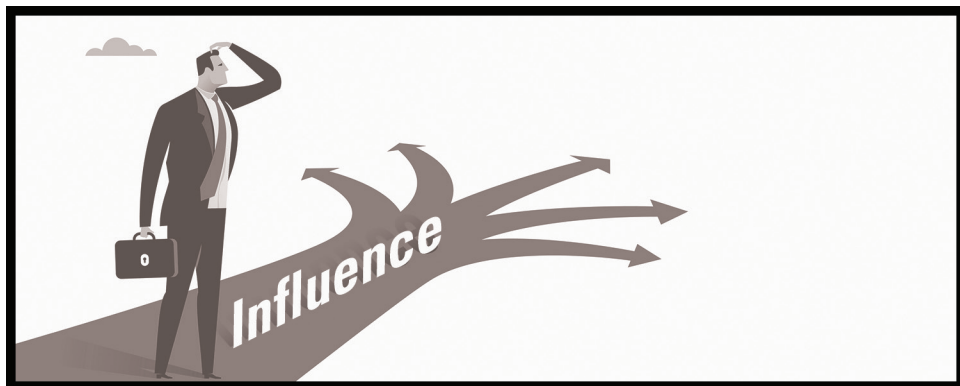
- The Coach- John Wooden

### ***Special Thanks***

*I would like to thank my wife, Jodine de Laveaga, daughter Taylor who is attending Law School at UCLA and son Coby who is a sophomore at Cal Lutheran University. My family is, without question, the best teammates anyone could ever have. I could never have become the “sales leader” or achieved any real success without you all. You are my motivation and my encouragement. And still are!*

### ***Special Dedication***

*Dedicated to my mother, Michelle Tyler. She used ‘tough love’ in raising my brother and I, and so gave us the grounding and platform we needed to be successful. She loves her grandchildren with unconditional love and generosity, and shows them a passion for life that has touched them and teaches them the same. Her support for me has been constant and consistent. ....In a word, Thanks Mom!”*



**N**o one starts out saying, when they are a teenager or an early adult, that they want to be in sales. You don't hear a 14 year old say to his/her parents, "Mom, Dad, I know what I want to be.... a sales executive." What you do often hear, when someone is persuasive, influential or argumentative, that they should consider going into "Sales". This starts when you are young as you learn to communicate; You create arguments and make a stand, mostly in an attempt to get what you want. This might be a new toy, more allowance for the week, or to stay out a little later during your teenage years.

As a proven practice, I know of very few people who said early on in their life, I want a career in "Sales"! Most of the great salespeople I know tried other jobs first and either failed forward into a sales role, or else just needed to make money and had that 3-D program and made it work. (3-D Program: Drive, Determination and Desire).

The truth is, when I talk about sales, I want to talk in terms of being "Great" in sales. This means operating at a level where you achieve the self satisfaction in knowing everyone you come in contact with and create a true relationship with, are folks that create you create a vast sphere of good will towards; and your enthusiasm and passion for adding value to their job or business, has in turn added value

to their life. Being great in sales really means that you are able to create a greater quality of life for the clients, stakeholders and work mates you in turn help influence. This is why sales is the greatest career anyone could ever undertake.

The key to being in a sales career, as opposed to a sales job, is that you need to be great in the job, and aspire to be in the top 10% of your field of sales executives in your firm. Sales is best suited for the individual that is willing to fail forward into greatness or demonstrate the work velocity and/or work motor to overcome the initial prospecting and learning challenge. Having said this, what I have I have found time and again, is that the ingredients for greatness in sales does not seem to be talent, does not seem to be high intellect, does not seem to be your gene pool or nepotism. There are three qualities, overwhelming present in top sales executives I come across in my network across the US every month. They are as follows:



## Work Velocity

You **must** have a high work motor. Sales is not a nine to five job. It will require dinners and evenings. It may require weekends and early mornings. It is a job in which you will need to wear out the soles of your shoes, not the seat of your pants. Early on in the sales process, when prospecting is difficult until you learn your scripts from your best practice mentors, it is important to learn that every

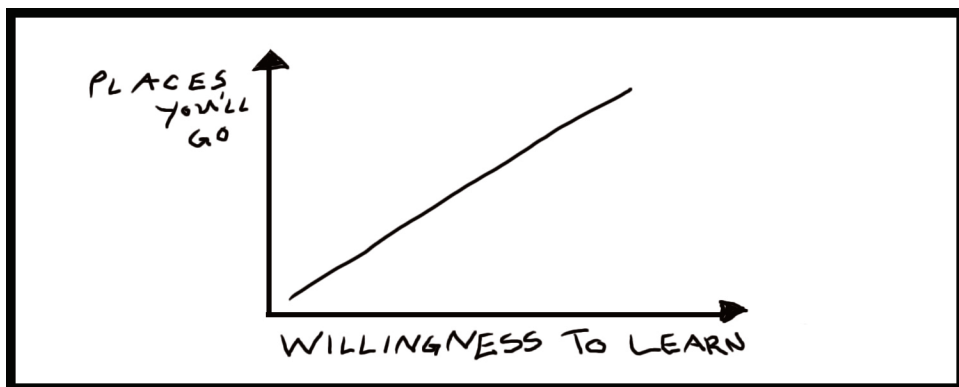
“No” doesn’t mean never. What it usually means is that you need to ask in a different way. This is one example of “Failing Forward”. Finally, you need a real love of a hard battle. The tougher the prospect is to land, the more focused and passionate you need to be about getting them engaged in your network.



## **Likability**

People do business with people they like. Being likable makes the career of sales easier, as you will get into more places more quickly; will be able to meet more people more easily, and when meeting, you will often be given more time to convey your point. In terms of retention, clients will allow a salesperson that they like a longer leash before changing products or services. In this way, being likable is equally important in retaining clients as it is in attracting prospects. Traits of the most “likable” and successful sales executives are transparency, confidence (not to be confused with cockiness), empathy, being an intent listener, a supreme problem solver, and having pride in the product and/or firm you represent.



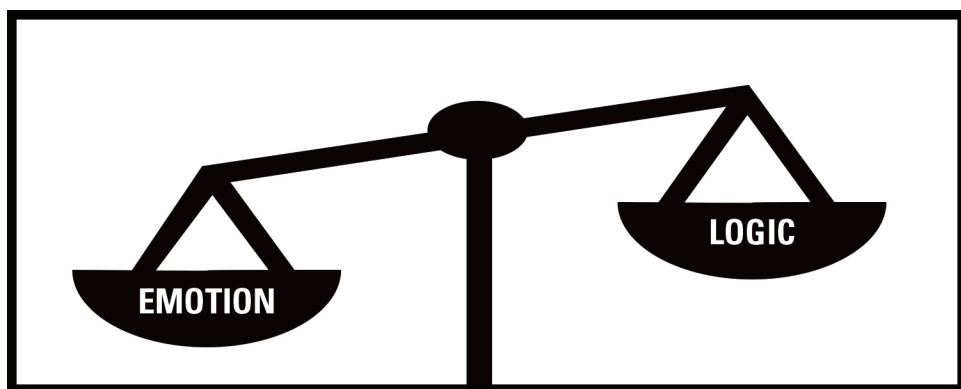


## Willingness to Learn

In terms of achieving sales greatness, willingness to learn is the single greatest determining factor. You need to be able to learn: Your customers' business, the top techniques from your peers and competitors, the "Best Practices" in the field of sales and the business of whatever vertical market you are in. Learning and gaining additional knowledge should be like an addictive drug: the more you know, the more you know you need to know. Seek advice in every conversation and be genuinely excited about "Failing your way forward." Failure is absolutely a key part of success, provided that each time you fail, you LEARN!

To illustrate this, I will use an example from my own situation. I currently hold the role of National Sales Manager for FNTG (Fidelity National Title Group). We sell Title Insurance. However, I have never thought, or said, that I am in the "Title Insurance business". What I believe and convey to people is that "I am in the Real Estate Space". I say this because, in actual fact, selling Title Insurance is just a by product of my being able to understand Real Estate and in turn assisting my clients in their businesses by saving them time, helping them create more transactions and saving them money and cost's on their expense line, which in turn makes them more profit for their business. Knowing the best practices in the real estate market allows me to do just that. When I help someone make more profit in their business, it always positively affects their

life. I work very hard to connect the dots that I had a link to their life being more successful as a result of us working together. Further, I make their additional profit emotional. I do this by first identifying their win in dollars: “So that listing acquisition strategy we worked on last month helped you get 3 new listings. Fantastic! Your average commission was \$12,000 per deal, I am so glad you made an extra \$36,000 on that strategy.” Next, I get to the emotional side; “So tell me my friend, what are you going to do with that extra 36K? Family vacation? Start a college fund for that beautiful daughter of yours? Buy your bride a Tiffany’s bracelet?” Facts and data make the Customer/Prospect think, but ***emotion makes them act.***



Let’s talk about why the word “sales”, and the job “salesperson” has had, at times, a very negative connotation. The truth is, it is sometimes a deserved connotation. There are a lot of terrible salespeople employed in the workforce today. I am talking about people not suited for the role, and these generally fall into these categories:



## **The Farmer**

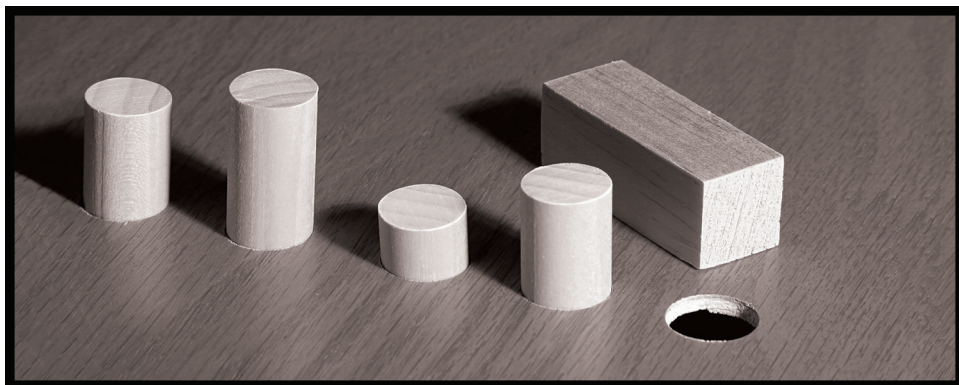
The Farmer salesperson doesn't hunt or purposefully seek new business with any kind of intentionality, they wait for it to fall to them; adding no value to their customers' business. They believe it is up to the company to bring them leads and opportunities. Growth is a very scary word to these folks.

## **The moss on the rock**

This type of salesperson attaches him/herself to the internal production people or to middle or senior management, believing that their ability to cozy up to these folks will protect them from being accountable for their sales number. They spend much more time in the office or at internal events than being out in the field, where the money actually is.

## **The "Its coming" guy**

This type of salesperson is always talking about the large opportunity he has met with multiple times that is just about ready to sign up but never actually does. He/she thinks by always having something in the pipeline, their job is safe. Again, this type adds no real value to their current or prospective clients.



### **The round peg in a square hole**

This person is not a bad person in any way, they just aren't a good fit for sales. They don't have the 3-D program, they don't have a high work velocity and they won't ever be great in the role. They needed a job and they thought they would try sales. This is a complete culture killer for growth and because they are nice, poor sales or business leaders' keep them in the role, because "They are nice, they are fine, they work really hard". The truth is, this is one of the most harmful things a company can do if it is wanting to grow and build a strong sales culture.



### **The Used Car Sales person**

This is the slick, insincere, over talker who believes he/she can BS their way through the program and make enough money to make a

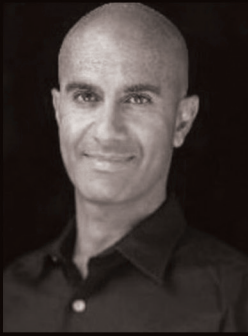
living. This person can never have a successful career. He/she may make quota a few months, but long term, can't be great in sales or have a long term career in the sales field because they simply don't understand the "Value Exchange" Principle.

- "Value Exchange" is that I must learn to step first as a Sales Executive and add value to my Prospect/Client in a "Strategic Give" action. Once I have added a certain amount of value, I have now earned the right to ask for the prospect to use my product or service, or for my client to recommend me to additional folks in his/her database.

The stark reality is there are significantly more "bad" sales people out there than there are great ones. However remember the goal of this book is to help create and in turn develop you into that sales savant; to be considered "Great" and be in your company's' top 10%.

I also want to challenge business owners, executive sales managers' and leaders; essentially anyone who oversees a group of salespeople to stop settling for mediocrity and set a standard of growth and a criteria built around Best Practices. Don't starve your strongest salespeople and feed your weakest by giving the weak ones a "house" account, or a better territory, just so you can have the satisfaction of saying, "All my Sales Executives are making quota and hitting their goals." I would like you to "De-Cruit" your bottom 15-20% of salespeople each year, who fall into any of those above 5 categories and set the folks who have the work velocity, likability and willingness to learn, on a path to greatness. As an organization, resist the urge to cater to the lowest common denominator in your sales force. Instead set a standard and "De-Cruit" (re-populate that lower 15-20% level back into the work force to waste some other Company's money and resources).

How do you do this, it will require the following:



The results of your life reflect the standards you've set.

— Robin Sharma —

AZ QUOTES

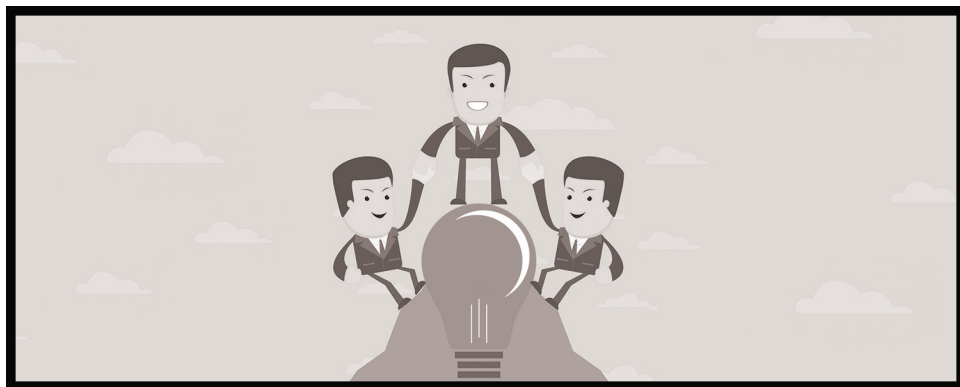
## A strong set of standards

These standards should include both Lead and Lag measures, (One of the Best Sales Books ever written, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*-Stephen Covey) which will let you know when your salespeople are either on the right track and trending north by tracking their Lead measures, or if they are exceeding standard, or if they are not meeting standard. There should only be 2 reasons why someone doesn't meet standard: "Will or Skill". If it is a "Will" issue, that means their work velocity is not up to speed. It is rare that this is fixable. If it is a "Skill" issue, you, as a sales or business leader, should be able to influence and teach the skill part to get them to meet standard through Best Practice Application.

Let's define Best Practice Application. Here is the simplest way to define this term: Someone in your company, or in your current field of service or product, is already No. 1 at selling it, take the top three sales executives or "Top 10%" in your firm or in the market and profile them, ask what their activities look like, how long it took them to get to that high sales volume number, why they choose to do this job in this field and the process of their path. Basically, case study the best, both tactically and strategically. This way you are using a proven number, a proven practice of someone already getting the result you want at the highest level, so it gives it a tangibility because it is already being achieved. This case study should serve as a "Sales Standard" for your sales force. Remember,



sales executives will “live up or down” to the standard you as a leader and company set.



### **A Sales or Business Leader with a good Sales instinct to oversee your Sales Team**

I see so many companies or sales leaders that want to put a “system” in place to be the All Omnipotent decision maker for all salespeople. If the sales executives don’t hit the “Proven Metrics” of this system, they are fired. While it would be nice to automate the entire sales process, this is a recipe for never achieving sales greatness. Sales is a people centered business. Having a personal instinct to look folks in the eye and challenge them, motivate and encourage them is required for sales greatness. This is not to say you will not need metrics. You will need metrics; but sales has a human element, a feel, and an instinct that requires someone to oversee it and in turn add value and input to the market of the moment and to the “people” in the sales team. This “Dynamic Sales Sensor” is a key component. If you find a sales leader who has it, embrace it, pay for it and give them enough bandwidth to influence. You absolutely need a process and a system of transparency, but it won’t be enough if you don’t have a lead sales influencer overseeing that system and process.

## **A Growth Mentality**

This sounds easy, but requires you to turn over your staff more regularly than is generally comfortable for most managers or business leaders. Letting folks coast on the number and not grow, even if they have a good number will create an environment of “settling”. This contentment can then start to permeate over to other sales executives and pretty soon you see your market share drifting down and your margins start to shrink as you have to overpay salespeople for the same number, year over year. Don’t just accept a good number. Reward for growth. Reward for mentoring other sales executives. Standing still and just maintaining a number doesn’t actually work long term, because of the points I mention above. Sales executives will live up or down to the standard and scoreboard you create. Transparency heightens the expectation for action, be as transparent and loud as you can about your standards and your scoreboard.

### **Suggestions for determining the metrics to Sales greatness:**

Take the top 10% of sales executives in your business today; look at their current order count, revenue, new business growth and prospecting process. Now go and make this your standard. These metrics are ALREADY being achieved, so you know it is feasible, and you have a basis and road map for success. Map a standard and a “Skill Map” to achieve it. Sales executives have a good corporate BS meter; if you put huge quotas and unrealistic goals out there, the best sales executives will find their way out of your company. When you use a proven number, one that is already being achieved, one that is fact and not fiction, your salespeople will want to meet or even exceed it, because it is already being done. (In the Real Estate space, Keller Williams does the best job of doing this, which is why they are now the largest real estate brokerage in the U.S., and growing.)



## Key Point

Sales Executives will live up or down to the expectation and standard you set for them. If the bar or standard is set low, this will be where they tend to exist. If it is higher, and based on proven fact, sales executives will reach for it. This standard is already being met by sales executives in your company. Now make this the standard and based on this, you will see sales executives starting to achieve it within 12 months.

When you build out your Lead Measures (The things that happen before the sale: prospecting calls made, new business meetings attended, customer referrals achieved) review and case study a sample of your top 10% and take into account how they got there, what their activities were, who they prospected and when they hit trends that showed they were going to grow and exceed the standard.



## Important point here

It is important to have a Sales Leader or Sales Manager who can ascertain when someone doesn't meet standard: Were their scripts are off point and as such they are not delivering the right message? Or do they just need more runway (time)? Are they doing a poor job of "Self Management"? As we know, there is no such thing as "Time Management". Everyone has the same 1440 minutes in a

day. It may be that your people are in reaction mode instead of in purposeful prospecting mode. If this is the case, work with them on improving their skill, have them create a script book from your top sales executives, have them shadow a top exec in their prospecting meetings so they can mirror behavior. Have them create a morning “Power Hour” where they don’t turn their email on until they do the 5 purposeful activities they need to in order to grow. This tactic refers back to if they are giving you the “Will” work velocity. You, as a sales leader will need to work on giving them the “Skill” to achieve greatness.



## **Is it a Time Management Challenge or a Self-Management Challenge?**

### **Self Management vs. Time Management:**

This can also be translated into Reaction Mode vs. Purposeful mode. Your sales executives all have varying degrees of intelligence, talent, verbal skills, non verbal skills, etc.... The only thing they have an equal amount of is time. Each of them has the same number of minutes in every day to achieve their goal. The reason why so many salespeople fail is in part how they use that time to achieve or exceed the standard. I have learned the only real time a salesperson can own is in the morning. This is where they can create their own “Important tasks get done first” agenda. This is the time they make their prospecting calls, this is the time they practice their scripts, create a true target list of important stakeholders to engage. It is also the time they work on their physical health (work out, walk, yoga, etc.), and their mental and emotional health (meditate, think,

work ON their business). The reality is by 10 am any busy sales executive now has a certain degree of “Reaction” they now have to deal with; so their time to be purposeful is between 6-10 am. My best sales execs take ownership of the morning, are working on their mind and body, as this helps them work better in their business. When they don’t protect that time for the most important activities of their day they lose focus, get out of balance and don’t grow.

**“The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say ‘no’ to almost everything.”**

**- WARREN BUFFETT**

### **The Power of No!:**

The faster you learn the Power of NO! The better your growth curve will be to success. We constantly get asked to be involved in things that don’t have any real bearing on our Goals. We all have personal and professional goals that we are committed to achieving and I know for me, when I understood, for me to achieve any of the Important goals I had to promise myself I would learn to say NO. Once I started to say NO, gently, but unapologetically, I started to move much faster towards success in both my personal and professional life.

### **The Three myths of Sales Success:**

“I am all about relationships, I am a relationship guy/gal and that is how I am going to grow my business.”

Here are the facts: Yes being able to build relationships with the people you are going to work with is important, but the reality is, sales

is about getting relationships with prospects and stakeholders we DON'T KNOW TODAY. The key to sales is "Purposeful Prospecting" the opportunities we don't already have, so that we can add value to that prospects' business and in turn add value to their life. This will then allow you to build a sincere bond into that relationship which in turn allows you to overcome objections like price and service disruption; small issues that a good relationship will be able to win out over. However, if you don't first get to opportunities you don't have today, you can never grow enough to be "great" in a sales career. Purposeful prospecting must come before "I am all about relationships".

### **"I know a lot of People in this space"**

I hear this a lot from folks as their "Value Proposition" to me when they want a job or career opportunity with our firm. The truth is, as a sales leader, I am less interested in who my prospective hire already knows than in knowing HOW they are going to get to know new opportunities. I am looking to see if this person has the velocity to own their mornings, fail forward and learn to purposefully prospect, and in turn, are they willing to learn from sales executives we already have who are doing it with a "Best Practice" process. The truth is, if the people they already knew in this space were better producers, or if they knew more of them, they wouldn't be speaking to me about a job. I am much more excited to hear how they are going to get to meet the folks they DON'T already know.

### **"I am a Hunter Boss, just let me do things my way and I will bring in the Business"**

This is someone who I have had success with, but I have learned to hurt them a little in the business sense initially, then heal them and bring them back into the fold. Leaving a sales executive totally on their own island is a huge mistake for a couple reasons.

First, they don't allow anyone from "Corporate" to get involved with

their clients, as they want to hold the company hostage by acting like these clients will only work with them. If you allow a sales executive to operate on this perception, they have the potential to leverage that and, in turn, your cost of sales will get way too high. It will hurt the sales culture you are trying to create and this particular sales executive will never achieve sales “greatness”, as they will not show any willingness to learn.



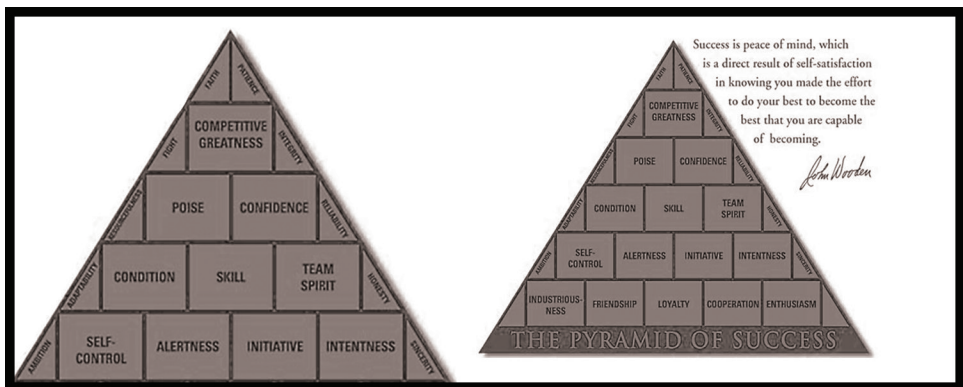
So, once I see they have the work motor, I now need to show them that with support, leadership, and the ability of the company to assist with strategic influence, we can all win so much more, starting with the client. I tell them, it shouldn't be, "Your Client", or "My Client"... It is "OUR Client." I show them how they can get more accounts by using the best practices from other top sales executives in our firm, I talk to them about leaving "Footprints" and impacting other folks lives by them mentoring other sales executives. I cater to their sense of pride and ego and promote them to other parts of the company as someone who is coming around and becoming part of the solution, not part of the problem. I ask our senior leadership to reach out and say, "I have noticed a real positive step forward, we are really impressed with your efforts." We have had a number of sales executives who started with this "Lone Wolf" mentality, who we eventually brought over to our team focused mindset. They became some of our very top sales executives today and created a great career in sales as a result. They learned it is not "My client" or "Your client" mentality, but rather "OUR client". And WE beats ME,

every time.

## My Story

I would now like to frame up how I came to think the way I do, which was through experience, mentorship and again, failing forward into sales and a career of intentional success in sales. To follow is a short, chronological walk through of my life of failing forward, by chapter and epiphany.

From the age of 1-14, my life was pretty charmed. My folks were married. We were not wealthy but my younger brother and I always felt we had everything we wanted. I was cruising through life, the way 14 year olds do... Then, in the summer of my 14th birthday, my dad's drinking became worse. He lost his business, got more abusive at home and left my Mom, brother and I, who then had to 'figure it out' for ourselves.



## Epiphany Moment

My Mom, who is unquestionably the toughest, smartest woman I know, now had to jump into finding a job, paying the bills and getting two teenage boys to understand the seriousness of what had just happened. She looked my brother and I in the eye, with tears in her eyes and a solemn tone said, "There comes a time in everyone's life where you have to plant your feet, stand firm and take a stand

and grow up. That time for you is now. I wish it would have come later. But it is now. You will both need to get a form of income, I am going to be gone working long hours, and I need you to get at least a 3.5 GPA, and play a sport. You are both going to college, but we won't have the money to send you and debt is not a good thing; so getting a scholarship will be the best way. That journey gentlemen starts today, please understand, your margin for error is small. You will have to be in the top 1% to get a scholarship. This means that when you are at the movies watching Star Wars, some other person is out there working at their sport, or studying. When that coach or university has to make a choice about who to give that money to for a scholarship, they will beat you out. Make your mark. The world is yours, but you must seek it."

The gravity of her tone and demeanor frightened me. Although young, I could tell this was the most important conversation in my life to date. My work ethic literally started that day. I proceeded to make basketball my passion. At the time I was not even a starter on the freshman boys basketball team, but ended up leading our league in scoring as a high school senior, making the All Conference Team and receiving a full scholarship to a small NAIA University in Southern California, California Lutheran University.

As life has taught me, things happen for a reason. This small school in Southern California was where two of the greatest coaches and mentors held their summer camps for 6 weeks every summer. The first was John Wooden, the Wizard of Westwood, who won 10 NCAA Men's Basketball Titles while Coaching UCLA and who was voted the Coach of the Century by Sports Illustrated for the 1900's. The second was Pat Riley, the Coach of the Decade in the 80's, who won 5 NBA Championships by leading the Los Angeles Lakers and "Showtime" to 5 championships in the 80's. I became head counselor for both of these men, running their summer camps and working personally with them every summer during my four years at Cal Lutheran. A number of the mind sets, intangible skills and best practices written in these pages were shaped during those four summers with two of

the greatest mentors anyone could ever ask for. The reality is, if I hadn't gone to Cal Lutheran I would have never had that deep of an opportunity to learn from their greatness. I made "Willingness to Learn" my mantra. I became an expert 'thief' of the Best Practices that successful people did to be successful!

**“DON'T MISTAKE ACTIVITY  
FOR ACHIEVEMENT”**  
- JOHN WOODEN



## Epiphany Moment

Coach Wooden saying, "Have a real love of a hard battle. Make each day your masterpiece, you don't get a do over. If you are not practicing, someone else is and when you meet, they will certainly beat you." His Pyramid of Success is a plaque I won as a camper 30 years ago. It still hangs on my wall and I look at it every week. I had the opportunity to drive Coach Wooden to and from camp during that time. The time spent with him those mornings and afternoons has had an impact that to this day touches my Mind Set.

**"You have to be ALL IN, if  
you are going to do it,  
OWN IT!!"**

- Coach Pat Riley





## **Epiphany Moment**

Having the opportunity to speak with Coach Riley about what it took to be great. Here were some of his best words of wisdom, “The difference between a good NBA Player and a great one is literally 15 minutes a day, extra, on the court and working on your game.” This is also true in life, any sales executive that spends an extra 15 minutes reaching out to prospects in the morning, or takes an extra 15 minutes and thanks his/her key stakeholders on his/her way home with genuine gratitude, will absolutely be in your top 10% and make more money for him/herself and your firm. “Your deeds have to match your words. Make sure your audio matches your video.” “You have to be ALL IN, if you are going to do it, OWN IT!!”

## **On applying work ethic:**

In 18 years of playing competitive basketball (4 years in high school, 4 years in college and 10 years professionally), I can honestly say I’ve never had a teammate outwork me, in terms of my individual skill workouts. I would stay after with players on my team that dribbled better than me, or had better footwork than I did, and ask them, how they learned to do it. They nearly always shared their process with me and I in turn copied it and tried to add my own small, special sauce to the skill to make it just a little better. Then, in the off season, I would reach out to my peer competitors who were better than me and ask them their advice on a certain skill, or a mental mindset I admired about them and again, in nearly all cases, they shared their skill and process. They told me how long it took to develop it, where they learned it, what was their key Aha moment in the process that got them to get even better at it.

# **The Chief Learning Officer (CLO)**

# **PLAYER-COACH**

# **LEADER**

## **On applying willingness to learn:**

Every off season, I picked one particular skill and made an intention to improve in that skill, Free Throw shooting, Post Play, left hand dribbling, learning to go right off an uptake, etc. The result was that I became, and still am, the leading scorer in California Lutheran University history, with over 2500 career points and setting 25 school records. In addition, I was their only ever 3 time All American. I went on to play 10 years professionally in Australia, where I was an 8 time All Star and 7 time Scoring Champion. To this day I am still the All Time Leading Scorer in ABA- Australian Basketball Association History with nearly 10,000 Points.

Throughout my life, whether it be in sport, as a sales executive, a sales leader or as a business influencer, the process for success in all of those areas followed the same path and process I have outlined here.

So, what do you want in a sales leader? What I want is a Player/Coach as my Sales Leader, not a Scorekeeper. I want someone who has the talent and ability to influence a better result for the sales game and process, by being involved and making an impact with her/his sales executives. The key points in the transition from sales executive to sales leader (Manager), when moving one of your best sales executives into the leadership role are timing, emotional and mental maturity and having a good mentor. Not everyone is ready

for this just because they, themselves, are a high achiever or your top producer in sales. I have seen a lot of great sales executives fail in this role. Both the company and the sales executive must be “ready” for a shift in mindset from “ME” to “WE”. Below is an outline for successful transition:

## **Timing**

I can tell you in my first 12-15 years in the sales space, I believed that being a sales manager would be a waste of time and effort. I couldn't fathom why you would want to “babysit” a bunch of whiney sales folks, who couldn't sell anywhere near as good as I could. The whole thought was ridiculous. As a talented sales executive, we make a ton of money and only have to worry about our customers', not a bunch of other prima-donna salespeople and their “issues”. However, there comes a time in your life where you seek a greater significance in your sales career than just your own success. You realize that you don't just want to “man a post” and sell by yourself your whole life. I can remember vividly when a great mentor of mine encouraged me to go on a couple of appointments with a newer sales exec and see if I could assist her with getting her territory kicked up a little bit. When I did and helped her secure a large client, and saw her excitement and gratitude for my assistance, I started to realize that was more of an adrenaline rush than closing my own deals. It was at that moment I wanted to “influence” a greater area and more people. I was starting to understand “WE” can be so much more rewarding than just “ME”.

## **Mental and Emotional Maturity**

Understandably, I was a poor sales leader in my earlier years because I still wanted to get credit. , I still wanted to be the biggest star in every room. I wanted the most recognition. In time, mental and emotional maturity taught me that it is a “WE” game, not a “ME” game. I also realized that if I promoted my team before me in all cases, then I would be a leader our sales team would follow.

You need to stand out front and take criticism first and behind them when credit is handed out. The team gets all /first credit. It's amazing what can be accomplished on a Sales team when no one cares who gets the credit.

If you are going to transition from sales executive to sales leader, make sure you are ready for it emotionally and mentally, or it just won't work.



## **Mentor**

A mentor is of extreme value during this transition. I have found that if you want to train or lead “sales lions”, you had better be one or have been one in order to have your advice heeded. A good mentor can keep the sales leader focused on the goal: First, making sure his/her team wins and second, that they can have some credit but in all times of failure or challenge you, the Leader, need to jump in and take the heat first from upper management. If you do this, the sales executives on your team will take note and will rally and go to the mat for you. However, if you are nowhere to be found when the criticism comes out you won't be someone they will want to follow.

When hearing from sales leaders about their team: “Steve, my team just doesn't prospect well, they don't want it bad enough, they are content and won't go that extra mile to exceed the quota we need. I

just don't understand how they can think that way", I have a favorite piece of advice: "Okay, what I heard Miss Jill (Sales Leader), is that YOU haven't created a compelling scoreboard or best practice script book and program which would enable your team to prospect to meet your intentional quota and goal. Your inability to reach them and engage them in a true growth mentality is why they think the way they think. I believe [Jill], that your team is a reflection of their Leader... You. So now I want you to shift your mind set and present the lead and lag measures that you now are going to put in place. Then Best Practice, Train and Mastermind in order to get them there!!"

### **A Sales Leader's ability to "Market Up"**

Marketing the successes of your sales team and the results they are achieving, the quality feedback from customers and stakeholders and sharing these strategic wins with upper management is a key component to being a great sales leader.

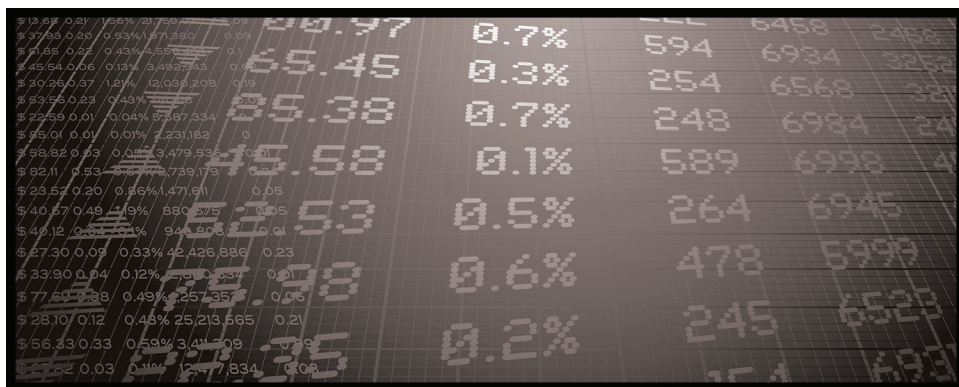
First of all, catch that key word, with regards to Marketing up to Senior Management, and that word is STRATEGIC! A common mistake is sending up 3-5 emails a day of what you believe to be wins. I have an internal best practice here: The higher up I am sending up the marketing, the less (fewer emails) they are getting from me. For example: My immediate manager might receive one to three large "strategic wins" per week from me; my divisional manager about one to three per month from me, and anyone above them can expect to receive one success story WIN per quarter. In all cases it is STRATEGIC, for the following reasons:

Upper management deals with many problems on a daily basis: Reducing staff, a fluctuating share price, a legal issue, compliance concerns, etc. What they don't get a lot of is the "Good News" from our clients or the main street level. The truth is that without SALES, there is no business. The entire reason any of us are in the business we are in, is because someone wanted to use/purchase our product or service, we did a good enough job with folks that they bought it a few more times and.... We had a business. Often these "WINS"

in the field best news that upper management will get all week. Share it, but do so strategically. Trust me here. The result will be their appreciation in knowing the WINS at the main street level. Being able to decipher and interpret “Wall Street” discussion and message it down to a “Main Street” message and verbiage is key for sales leadership.



Like nearly all public companies today, the single greatest expense that the Wall Street investors believe they can control in a company like mine is employee count. There are fixed costs for rent, insurance, underwriting, etc... What we can control is based on the number of transactions we have: The number of people we need to close those transactions in a successful, profitable way. This is why you hear some people, usually not from Corporate America, say that Corporate America and big companies are, “All about the number, they don’t care about people or loyalty, they fire people all the time.” It is at this point that I, as a sales leader in my firm, and my fellow sales executives interpret and passionately explain this “Wall Street” message down to our “Main Street” level of the 17,000+ employees, stakeholders, customers and prospects, as follows:



**“You are absolutely correct, we ARE all about “The Number.”**

Now, allow me to explain to you what that phrase, “The Number”, really means. “The Number” protects, keeps us safe and allows to plan for retirement, family vacations, college funds for our children. It allows us to set aside funds in a stock match and or a 401K for our retirement, so we know we will be able to stop working at a pre-determined time and take care of ourselves and our family. Companies that don’t think or focus on “The Number” end up the worse for not doing so. Take an example of a situation that occurred in our vertical space. About 8 years ago, Land America Title Insurance Company and their 10,000 + employees went to bed one Friday evening as the third largest title insurer in America. On Monday morning they were bankrupt, 401k’s were decimated and a share price that was nearly gone. All because they didn’t pay attention to “The Number.” In firms like mine, that pay attention to “The Number”, the employees sleep very comfortably at night knowing as long as we meet or exceed “The Number”, that our 401k’s, stock matches, family vacations, college funds, our plans are safe and secure. So yes, we are all about “The Number”, because it is “The Number” that protects our 17,000 + employees and stakeholders every day, and allows them to achieve and prosper.

This is why as a sales leader, it is inherent to the job to build and disseminate a quality message that fits the culture of your company; one that explains to both Main Street and Wall Street how and why

you are going to be successful in any market.

Score boarding and transparency in the sales process is something that has to be part of your sales culture if you are going to achieve sales greatness. The best book I have ever read on this subject is “The Four Disciplines of Execution” by Stephen Covey. It clearly outlines the case studies and the results of public score boarding the results that you want more of, who sees these scoreboards as well as the extreme benefit of making them very public and transparent. Remember, transparency creates a heightened expectation of action, while at the same time acts as a self correcting mechanism. I use score boarding in all facets of our business.

## **Lead Measures**

Lead measures are the activities that take place prior to the sale. Here are a few: Number of contacts added to your database weekly, number of calls to prospects weekly, number of calls to influencer clients weekly, number of “break breads” with prospects weekly, number of “break breads” with top influencer clients weekly, total number of new business appointments, total number of one on one appointments weekly, number of referrals given weekly, number of referrals received weekly, total number of touches weekly, phone, email, text, in person, etc..

## **Lag Measures**

Lag measures are the activities that measure revenue and actual order count. Here are a few: Open orders, closed orders, total revenue, percentage of growth over last month, percentage of growth over last year same month, forecasted growth trend based on last six months, most new business orders, highest percentage of growth month over month and year over year, current market share percentage, market share growth month over month and year over year, etc....



## **Keys to making the scoreboard having a self correcting and impactful effect on growth, sales culture and sales greatness:**

You should be able to look at the scoreboard and determine, in about 30 seconds, who is winning and who is losing. If it takes longer than this, you have made it too complicated for sales executives and sales leaders to be impacted by it. We use “Heat Maps” here, color coding all areas of the scoreboard. Areas in RED would be hot, and in a “Heat Map”, hot is great. Yellow on a “Heat Map” is only warm, indicating you might be trending up or trending down. So yellow is caution. Blue on a “Heat Map” is bad, it indicates a downward trend.

Another tool we use is what I call a “\$Money Map\$”. It is the same idea as a “Heat Map”, in that all areas are color coded, so that in 30 seconds or less anyone looking at the “\$Money Map\$” can ascertain whether they are doing great, or else not as well as they may think or want. In a “\$Money Map\$”, green is great. Yellow is caution and red is bad. While there is always additional detail should you need to dig into, we get the most views and action on these types of indicators, as they show in a glance, whether a person or area is winning, close or losing. This ***should*** be the entire goal of a scoreboard. I see way too many companies create complicated, overly busy spreadsheet that would require a background in statistical analysis to be able to understand. In truth, the folks that need these indicators, the ones that need the impact of the information therein, like salespeople, just don’t give it any real time. They figure that if they are getting paid, then they are doing fine. ***More importantly***, most salespeople care as much about recognition as they do money. They are competitive by nature, so scoring their result in a manner that is compelling, but also easy to read, always helps us get a better result.

## **Market Share Proven Growth Strategy**

I have only ever seen ONE proven strategy that has worked in every major market; and in multiple vertical businesses with consistency,

for over two decades: Market Share Proven Growth Strategy. This concept is outlined below:

First and foremost, in order to grow Market Share you need to identify and then engage the “Influencers”. These are the clients in the market who the “Herd” looks to follow and emulate. Every market has “Influencers”. It is your job as a sales leader and as a company to identify them and in turn create a reward system and sales strategy built around getting the “Influencers” “to be on your team and support your message.

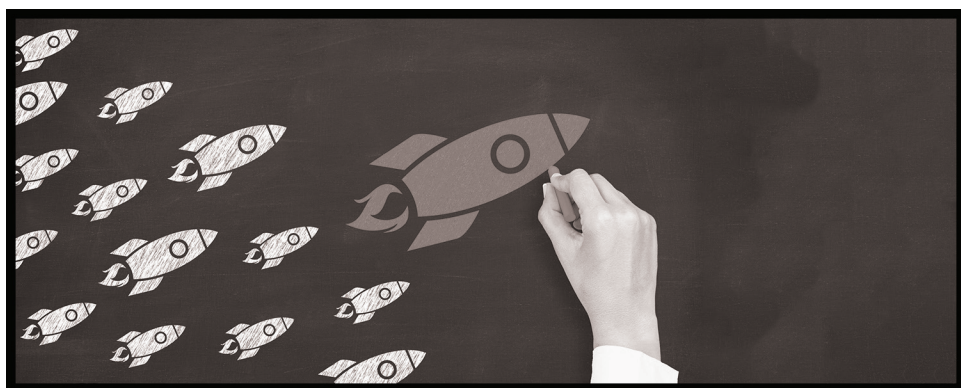
These “Influencers” will be harder to get to, and will be tougher to move. But the engagement of even just one of them will influence move multiple clients to your service or product. Acquiring their influence makes the job easier for your sales force. More folks listen to your message, more opportunities come to you proactively because these folks use you and in the end, they drive adoption faster than we ever could without them.

**“THE HERD”** Named for, you guessed it... having a ‘herd mentality’, and makes up approximately 55-60% of the market. These folks ask, “You work with Mr. (INFLUENCER), how does he/she use it? What do they do with it? How are they making money with it? Can you share with me any strategies they use?” We get the benefit of the **“INFLUENCER”**’s credibility that they have built up through their years and success in their business transferred to us, and in turn our product or service. The sales cycle for the **“THE HERD”** when you have benefit of the **“INFLUENCER”** is shortened by 70%; primarily because you are not having to prove your service or product ‘works’, that you are someone who sells something of value, etc.... We use the quote, “These top **“INFLUENCERS”** we work with don’t make mistakes in their business; they pick the best partners and the best products, and that is why they have picked us.” The implied message here is that if you use the same products and partners that these top performers do, then you can get a similar result. There is truth to this message; we have been able to improve the overall

market share of our client base by sharing “Best Practices” used by successful **“INFLUENCERS”** in our business segment.

By gaining the **“INFLUENCERS”** you influence the **“THE HERD”** and now you have a brand that your market segment believes is used by the best. This brand now becomes the service or product that people want to be involved with, and engage with in the marketplace so that they can move their business forward.

It is a proven best practice that when the top producers and operators apply and adopt your product and/or service, your product and/or service gets better and in turn your business gets better.



Remember, it is better to take longer to go to market in order to get the **“THE INFLUENCERS”** on board, as opposed to rushing to market just with a good message and no influence.

### **The Benefit of “Failing Forward” to Sales Greatness...**

Willingness to learn is the first mind set required to reach sales greatness. In order to learn you will need to embrace failures in the sales process. At any given time, 50% of your sales strategy is working better than the other 50%. The key is to figure out why that 50% is working better and how can you scale it, tweak it and/or replicate it to consistently improve on your overall result.

## **“Measuring Failure”**

The key to measuring failure, as a sales leader or sales executive, is to ask yourself the following question:

1. Did I give the initiative enough runway (time), to get it off the ground and truly measure it? I have seen really strong sales initiatives not get the credit for the success that it deserved, because the owner of the initiative did not give it enough time “runway”, i.e. time to get traction, or time to learn from what didn’t work so as to know how to tweak it to get to a superior plan.

### **Don’t let ego and emotion drive your sales initiative**

I have watched a number of strong willed and overconfident sales managers and sales executives stay with an initiative, even when it is clearly not working. They do so because they are emotionally involved with the initiative. They let their ego keep the initiative going, they aren’t going to let it “fail”. They see the failure as the fault of the market, the sales executive, time constraints, they believe that if they give it more time it will succeed as an initiative. The truth is, you can see in 90 days, by evaluating lead measures and using good instinct, whether a sales initiative you have undertaken is going to bear fruit. If you don’t have a good feel for your initiative, or if the lead measures aren’t giving you a good trend within this time frame; it probably isn’t going to work long term.

### **Highest and Best Use**

The faster you learn to apply the concept of ‘Highest and Best Use’ in your career, the more quickly you will be on to ‘greatness’ in your chosen field of influence. Talented people sometimes believe that their talent can create success in ANY situation or role; that they can adapt and become great in multiple areas of business, because their talents that made them very successful at something, will in turn translate and make them great in another vertical, or area, or role in the business. I disagree with this statement wholeheartedly. We

all have a highest and best use of our talent and influence, and the more quickly you identify yours and RUN into it, the more quickly you will be on the path to greatness. I'm not saying that you cannot be good at a number of different roles and tasks. You can. In fact, people with talent generally can and do become adept at a few different roles; but if you are seeking "GREATNESS", then the truth is you have to answer the question, "What is your highest and best use of your skill set and talent.?"

I'm often offered opportunities to start a business, as CEO or President of this Division or Business Unit Manager of another. The truth is, I have worked in some of these roles, did a capable job and was generally considered a "Success". However, it was NOT my highest and best use of talent, and I wasn't GREAT at it. I am a "Sales Guy" at heart, I have an unbridled passion for "SALES", the process, the customer, the verbiage, the story. In short, ALL of it. I am excited every day to make an impact in the business of our prospects and clients and I want to get better at it every day. It is who I am. Once I embraced this, I was able to influence more success in our stakeholders (The people that worked with me and for me), our customers, our prospects and our business as a whole. I observed other folks who chose to go from position to position, in an effort to show how versatile their skills, how their skills translate to any part of the business, etc. Yet, they never they never really achieve "Greatness" in any one field, but they were pretty good at a lot of it. The reason an expression like, "A Jack of all Trades and a Master of NONE" has been being said forever is because it's true.

Find your highest and best use and seek greatness....When I embraced what I am at my Core, I am just a "Sales Guy", I am not super smart, I am not well read, I didn't go to an Ivy League college. I don't have a PHD. I'm average at math (except when calculating my commission, then I become a genius, like all sales executives do). I am just really good at helping to influence folks in getting a better result. And you know what? That is just fine. Now go be GREAT at it!!

## Social Media

Like it or not, it is going to be a substantial part of the future of sales and the sales process. At 49 I'm in between those that would rather not have to worry about it, and those who should be diving into it. But I have formulated what I believe to be a common sense approach to how Social Media can build your brand and profile; so that you can look as good "online" as you do in person. 😊

Below are a few best practice tips for using Social Media:

First and foremost, be where your sphere is. You must be on and engaged in social media platforms; for my vertical market, this means Facebook and LinkedIn.

Facebook can and should be used as a brand platform, for YOU as a salesperson. Your posts should be half business and half personal. Remember, personal matters. People do business with people they LIKE!!

It is your highlight reel and should be your best foot forward, all the time; not a running commentary on how you are 'feeling' every hour of the day.

Also, you can't get engagement if you are a one way poster of your own content. You must engage, 'like', comment and interact. Doing so will create the engagement you want and need. Remember, a "like" is a high five, a "comment" is a hug!

Google yourself once a month and make sure you are putting the correct brand and message out there that you need in order to be looked upon as a valued resource in your space. You want to look as good "online" as you do in person.



***A word on the necessity of passion in the sales process in order for sales greatness to be achieved.***

I have never met anyone in sales, who was great, that did not have passion. I like to tell my folks: “If there is no passion in the present, there is no power in the future.” What this means is that no matter what product or service you are selling, you need to create a way to become passionate about the process. The way to do that is to get passionate about the result!! The result should always include your client receiving one or more of the following benefits, because of your product or service. Are they saving time? Are they saving money? Are you able to assist them in getting more transactions and opportunities in their business as a result of them choosing you as their service or product provider? Any time I have been able to sustainably assist a client in their business in even one of the following 3 areas (1. Saving time 2. Saving money 3. Growing their business and their profit), I have been able to positively affect their lives. Affecting people’s lives in an upward and positive way is something to be PASSIONATE about. So, if you are in sales to be great, go to your current customer base, find the loudest and best success stories of your service or product being applied which gave your customers the most impactful win of their lives. Then, work passionately to emulate that throughout your customer base, starting at the level of your most influential customer.

**Top Tactical Tips**



## **Five simple, but important sales truths that the best sales executives have learned.**

1. **Never Be Late....Ever.** I know what you are saying, “Steve, it is impossible to never be late.” It is absolutely possible. The reason that it is possible to never be late is that you know when you are going to be late for an appointment. Whether it be traffic, a delayed flight, a previous appointment that ran late or long, you know well in advance before you are actually late. So, just make sure you call and text and say, “Hey Brett, it is 8:37 am, I know we are meeting at 9 am, I am at a dead stop in traffic, looks like there is an accident up ahead, so now I am trending to be there around 9:15 am, wanted to make sure you know and can adjust your schedule accordingly.” People will understand this. However, if I walk in 7 minutes late and say, “Oh my gosh, traffic was crazy, sorry I was late.” What they absolutely think is, your time is more important than mine and you obviously think that you are more important than I am. It is very tough to build rapport with someone when you start that way.
2. **Own your Mornings.** To be successful in sales, you need to feel good about yourself. To do this, you need to take time in the mornings for something physical, something mental and something emotional. Get this time in for yourself, in the morning, so that you can give back to your clients and prospects in the afternoon and evenings.
3. **Power Hour.** Sales executives that spend at least sixty minutes every day prospecting, whether it be on the phone, via social media text or email, are constantly growing. The hard truth is this: EVERY client we have today will leave us. It is just a matter of time. The way to avoid living in fear is to be constantly recruiting new revenue and new clients to our business.
4. **Follow up and follow through.** In most sales jobs, the “Fortune”



is in the follow up. As a standard sales practice, you should make sure to give prospects and/or clients a follow up of actions from the day you met with them. We have created an entire script book about summarizing the action items from a meeting and letting the client/prospect know where you are in your follow up. This creates trust!

5. Dress for success. Most people form a first impression of the person they are meeting in the first fifteen to thirty seconds of meeting them. I tell our salespeople every day: Be the best dressed person in the room. Even before I made money and my suits were purchased on the sale rack at Mens Wearhouse, I made sure to get it tailored because a tailored suit makes a suit look expensive and great, even if it isn't. Generally, when people see someone well dressed, confident and outgoing, their impression is that this person is successful and that gives you, as a salesperson, influence. Influence is key in growing your client base. Put your best foot forward, always.

### **Here are 5 Opportunity Killer's**

1. Being Late- (Read Above)
2. Over Promising and Under Delivering. Expectation setting is one of the most important things a sales executive has to learn to achieve sales greatness. Learn to use phrases like, "That will take some time, but I am on it..." "Let me look into that, I will get right back to you by end of business today with a summary..." If I tell someone I will have something for them in a couple hours, and it takes 4 hours, I look incompetent, disorganized, or both. If I say let me get that to you within the next 24 hours and I get it to them in 4 hours, they believe me and can trust me. I am building credibility which creates influence and trust. Same time frame, but the expectation is the key.
3. Over Talking. Learn the art of asking questions and listening

INTENTLY. Less is more when meeting with someone. Generally whomever talks the most, loses.

4. Inconsistent Contact. So many salespeople are attentive for a short time, and then fall off the radar. They call, text, reach out, but then after three weeks they move on, rarely heard from again. Create a consistent touch program. We have an entire script book built around this concept. Remember, “Consistent contact creates growth”.
5. When your Audio does not match your Video. “I can’t hear what you say, because what you do shouts in my ear.” Work to align your words and your actions. This creates trust which in turn builds rapport. This is one of, if not the most important skill to master!

Lastly, in order to achieve “Sales Greatness” you will need your most important partners: Spouse/partner, family, children and loved ones, to be unequivocally on your team, and supportive of your “greatness” journey in sales. If your personal life partners are supportive, there is no limit to what you can achieve. But it is, as they say, a two way street. In order to facilitate a mutually supportive environment, and receive the support that will want and need, it is necessary to set the correct expectation on when you will be home, what they will see on social media and what events you will and won’t be able to attend. Remember, communication is key. Here are a few communication tips, things I myself learned the hard way (failing forward).

### **Don’t walk in the house on the phone from the car.**

End your last call when you are five minutes from home. Take this time to decompress: Listen to music, breath deeply, SLOW DOWN. The point is to do this before getting home. Your loved ones deserve you, being present, when you walk in. Kiss your significant other, embrace and hug your children, be conscious when you first

arrive home. Put your phone out of sight and on silent for your first 90 minutes at home. Trust me, it will be okay.

### **Bad News First.**

As you would for a client, let them know when you are going to arrive (home) later than planned. Call and let them know first, and don't neglect to tell them why. It's important, if you want them to be vested with you on your path to "greatness in Sales", that they understand sometimes you may have to stay later in order to achieve this goal, which in turn should benefit all of you as a family.

### **Separate what is "Urgent" from what is truly "Important".**

I was blessed to be able to attend nearly all of my children's sporting events. But it takes being proactive in managing this part of your life. The way I did it was to block the dates/times for the events on my calendar. For something to bump this off of my calendar now, it would have had to be more "important" than seeing the school musical concert, sporting event, reading competition. And you realize, nearly nothing was that important. Remember, we can never get time back; so fight to keep your time "important" when making decisions with your schedule and calendar.

# About the author...



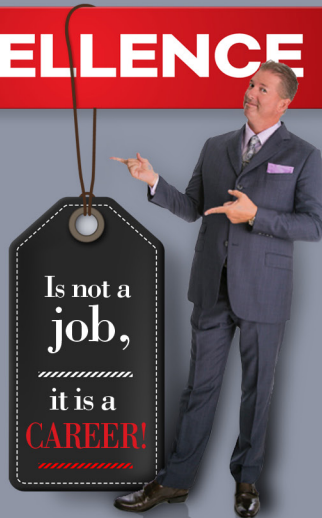
Steve de Laveaga, SVP of Fidelity National Title Group, encompassing Divisions 1, 2, 3 & 5, helps drive Sales and Marketing efforts across the US, to assist their partners and stakeholders in growing their business. Steve has been with FNF as either an employee or contractor for over 14 years. Most recently, Steve was the Sales Manager for Fidelity National Title – Maricopa, AZ, where he oversaw a profit growth of over 746% in four years, as well as facilitating the top Realtor Mastermind group in the state which encompassed 1.4 Billion dollars annually in production.

Steve has gone on to institute a comprehensive coaching program for Escrow Officers and Sales Executives throughout Fidelity National Title Group. The Elite Sales Coaching Program, for Sales Executives, and the Escrow Enrichment Coaching Program, for Escrow Officers, is sold out 4 months in advance and involves over 50 operations, from across 100 counties, in 15 states. 87% of All Coaching participants exceed their Company's trend in Open Orders, Closed Orders and/or Revenue, by using Proven Best Practice methods for Sales and Escrow Success!

Mr. de Laveaga said, "Our focus at Fidelity National Title Group is to be the best "Business to Business" facilitator with our clients and prospects in the Real Estate space. We do this by generating additional transactional opportunities in the market, significant cost savings for our clients and the ability to engage an abundance of new stakeholders, which otherwise would be difficult for them to achieve on their own."

Mr. de Laveaga is not only a driven leader in business and Sales, but also a dedicated husband, father and member of his community. Mr. de Laveaga resides in Gilbert, Arizona with his wife of 26 years, Jodine and their two children, Taylor and Coby.

# SALES EXCELLENCE



by Steve de Laveaga  
Sr. Vice President Sales & Marketing