

Seven Rules For Getting To The Top In Sales

By
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It's amazing. So many salespeople with great potential either drop out or have limited success. Most have good skills, possess the right attitude, and want to get ahead. But something holds them back.

What are they missing?

Simply put, they don't know the rules for getting to the top. Here are seven that will help do the job:

1. Do it now

The world has changed and the message for everyone is *fast forward*. Wells Fargo's FastFlexsm Small Business Loan program tells the story. Online and funded as quickly as the next business day, there are no meetings with a loan officer, no filling out paper work, being told "decisions are made locally" or waiting for a response. Enough, all ready!

This is what customers expect. Salespeople stumble because they don't do it now. They don't get back to customers quickly, whether it's responding to a question, solving a problem, or getting them promised information. Customers expect it done now and it's savvy salespeople who get the message—and the order.

2. Hoard time

Only top salespeople grasp that they have only a limited amount of their most important asset: *time*. It's not renewable. Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

So, don't let distractions rob you of your time. The worst of these is assuming that every prospect can become a customer by working hard enough. That's total nonsense. And this is why thorough prospect analysis helps avoid wasting valuable time chasing the wrong ones.

A prospect analysis answers two questions: *Who are my best customers? Why do I like working with them?* Go after similar prospects and pass on the rest.

3. Corral optimism

Plain and simple, a positive attitude keeps us going. Selling takes tons of optimism to get past ever-present rejections. But optimism is not without a dangerous downside: it can get in our way so we only see what we want to see.

Success requires the ability to spot obstacles and come up with a plan to either get past them or put them aside and move on, rather than pursuing them.

New York University psychology professor Gabriele Oettingen has come up with a way to move forward toward a goal by being both optimistic *and* realistic. She calls it WOOP:

- *Wish*: What's my goal?
- *Outcome*: What would be the best result if you accomplished it?
- *Obstacle*: What's stopping me from accomplishing it?
- *Plan*: What do I need to do to overcome it?

Knowing how to put optimism to work can transform hope into goals, including making sales a reality. And, as you might guess, there's a WOOP app that can help and it's free.

4. Talk less

Salespeople talk too much. What's even worse, their words are mostly automatic. Press their button and out comes the same blather every time. It makes no difference who the customer may be, the words are always the same. It's like a doctor prescribing the same pill for every patient.

Customers know what they're getting when they hear nothing but tattered scripts from the mouths of salespeople. It's so easy to fall into a pattern of talking about what we're selling. It's as if the customer isn't even there. Instead of engaging prospects, endless words drive them away confused.

5. Simplify

The best salespeople make it easy for customers to get their message. That's what Mazda does with the tagline, "Confident driving is better driving." It works because it's Mazda in a nutshell. Once a customer sees that picture, there's time to fill in the specifics and give meaning to the picture. But without the picture, the details are just more stuff.

Hammermill's Copy Plus paper is another example. Faced with an array of choices, why buy Hammermill even if the price is similar or higher? Having the right message: "99.99% Jam-Free™ Guarantee." A simple, clear, and compelling sales message pulls customers.

6. Brand yourself

Just because someone says you're a great salesperson or your resume boasts of sales records and awards, it's not enough. All that's not enough to set you apart as unique—as one of a kind.

There's a reason why Cheerios is the number one cereal: *it's branded*. Eating Cheerios is good for your heart. To take control of your career, think branding, personal branding.

How do you want to be thought of as a salesperson? In other words, what's your brand? Is it that you're good at working with tough customers? Do you have a knack for turning around difficult situations? Do you have expertise in mapping out sales strategy? Or, do you have the skill to simplify complex issues? Whatever it might be that makes you unique, develop it so it becomes your personal brand.

7. Put the past aside

This is a tough one since the past is always with us. So, though it's necessary to being tops in selling, putting it aside isn't easy. Salespeople thrive on telling "war stories" of their sales "accomplishments," even though the facts fade and they're often exaggerated in an effort to impress associates and customers.

What happens, of course, is that salespeople can be betrayed by their own words. Their braggadocio puts the spotlight on them instead of the customer, on the past instead of the present moment, and on the useless instead of what's important. Rather than helping to gain sales, it ends in losing customers.

Taken together, these seven rules for success in sales may be something of a surprise. They may not make the adrenaline flow or create much excitement. In fact, they may seem rather ordinary. But for some, they may also make sense.

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