

## Sales Strategy

# Don't Let Low Hanging Fruit Hold Back Your Sales

By  
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When things aren't going well, salespeople often give in to the quick and easy sale in an effort to get through the troublesome "dry spells." Others become so addicted, they never reach higher. It's easy to fall under the spell of the lure of low-hanging fruit.

Yet, those who excel in sales develop skills that add value to their careers and enhance their confidence. They also know that going after low hanging fruit prevents them from raising their sights, caps their capabilities, and causes them from embracing challenges.

It also, earns them a reputation they deserve, but not as members of the A team. It doesn't prepare them for either tougher times or for new and more demanding opportunities. Transaction dependent, they're known for what they are, order takers.

At the same time, going after the low-hanging fruit has its rewards. It boosts dented egos, and salespeople feel busy and productive. But at the high cost of keeping their minds off moving them forward to where they want to be.

The problem isn't just low hanging fruit. The mindset it fosters does the permanent damage:

- *They never have enough leads.* Often complains that the good leads go to other salespeople, particularly the sales manager's "favorites."
- *They don't cultivate prospects.* Just wants to sell. Views staying in touch with prospects a waste of time: "Why waste your time, they'll never buy."
- *They change jobs frequently.* "That wasn't a good fit." "The manager was always looking over my shoulder." "They didn't know what they were doing."

Even so, the lure of the low hanging fruit is not about to disappear. For some in sales, it's just too good to pass up. "Someone's going to get the easy ones, so why not me?" they say.

But that's not the whole story. Turn the page and come face-to-face with the illusion of low hanging fruit. It's another instance in which the past isn't prologue—just because there's low hanging fruit today doesn't mean it will be plentiful tomorrow. In fact, it may

be an illusion to act as if there's an endless supply. If that's what we believe, we may be "whistling Dixie," keeping our fingers crossed and hoping for the best, when more than likely, we're only kidding ourselves.

Whether we like it or not, more and more business is purely transactional—non-relational. When a customer says, "I'll get back to you" what they mean is that "I'll get back to you if I can't find a lower price." If this is where salespeople choose to pursue their profession, they fall into the trap of competing for business in the largest pool of piranha-like customers.

This applies to every type of sale: price trumps quality, reliability, and guarantees. It's true whether something costs \$.59, \$59, \$590, or \$590,000. The search, online or otherwise, cuts through the clutter to reach the lowest price. When sales are purely transactional, selling is no longer a legacy profession.

While some in sales may not be proud of falling prey to the lure of low hanging fruit and try to hide it as best they can, others see the fallacy. Once hooked, breaking dependence on a low-hanging fruit habit isn't easy. But answering the following three questions may help:

### **1. Which prospects can help you reach your sales objectives?**

What are their characteristics? What makes them a good fit for you? What do you know about each one? What more do you need to know so you'll be thoroughly prepared before making contact?

Be selfish and disciplined. You only have so much time, so spend it where it counts. Pass up the others or hand them off to a colleague. This isn't easy and it takes discipline not to be seduced by the lure of the easy sale.

### **2. Why should they do business with you?**

Identifying the appropriate prospects isn't good enough. Now comes the critical question, "Why should each one want to do business with you?"

They may be a good match for you (or even a perfect one)—but that won't get you to the goal. Gut instinct doesn't count and neither does intuition. By itself, being a good match won't do it. Neither will having a referral or even a personal introduction. You must know enough about them so you can stake your life on why it's in their best interest to do business with you.

Don't even think about asking for an appointment until you know them as well as they know themselves.

**3. What's your plan so they want to meet with you?** After getting info on a prospect, most salespeople go for the appointment. Overly eager, they stumble. They think they're ready when they're not—so they blow it.

They need to ask themselves, “What have I done to prepare prospects so they want to accept my request for an appointment?” In other words, what have you done to provoke their interest?

It won't work if you think you can start on Thursday and call the next Monday and expect to get a positive response. It takes time to cultivate interest with top prospects. They want to feel comfortable with salespeople before saying yes for an appointment. This requires a well-crafted plan to establish your creds.

All this may sound like a lot of work and unnecessary delays. Perhaps. There is, of course, an alternative: Being left with the low-hanging fruit.

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