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# *Effective Selling Begins With Information*

by Dave Kahle

Most salespeople love to be active — out in our territories, seeing people, solving problems, putting deals together. This activity-orientation is one of the characteristics of a sales personality. A day sitting behind a desk is our idea of purgatory. Unfortunately, this activity orientation is both a strength and weakness. Much of our ability to produce results finds its genesis in our activity orientation. It provides some of the energy to move us to sales success.

But it can be a major obstacle. Far too often, we're guilty of going about our jobs directed by the credo of "Ready, shoot...aim." The luxury of this kind of unfocused activity is a casualty of the Information Age. As a salesperson committed to constant improvement, you understand that, to be effective, you must be focused and thoughtful about everything you do. Activity without forethought and planning is a needless waste of time and energy.

If you were going to build a home, for example, you'd want to know about the nature of the ground on which the home was to be built. You'd need to have a good idea about what kind of weather conditions the home would be enduring, what the building codes were, what materials were available and what they cost, and what kind of skilled workmen were required. The list could go on and on. The point is that you wouldn't be able to build a home very effectively if you didn't have good information on which to base those plans.

The same principles apply to building a home as well as delivering effective sales performance. In both cases, good planning requires good information. It may be that your company provides you all the information you need. But, it's more likely they don't. If you're going to work with good information, you must be the one who collects that information. That means that you must create systems to collect, store and use the information that will be most helpful to you. Since our world is constantly producing new information, the system you create isn't something you do once and forget. Rather, it has to be a dynamic system that is constantly processing, storing and using new information.

## **The Information-Collecting Process**

Creating and maintaining your system is a matter of following several specific steps.

**Here's the process:**

- 1. Create a list of the categories of information you'd like to have.***
- 2. Working with one category at a time, brainstorm a list of all the pieces of information you'd like to have within that category.***
- 3. Develop a system and some tools to help you collect that information.***

*4. Store it efficiently.*

*5. Use it regularly.*

**Step One.** Start by listing the kinds of information you think will be most useful to you.

Think about your job and determine what kinds of information you'd like to have to help you deal effectively with your customers. Here's a partial list that would fit most salespeople:

- **Information about your customers and prospects.**
- **Information about your competitors**
- **Information about the products, programs and services you sell.**

You may have a number of other categories, but this is a basic list with which you can begin.

**Step Two.** Once you've categorized the kind of information you'd like, you can then think about what information would be ideal to have in each category.

Start at the top and work down. Look at customers and prospects first. What, ideally, would you like to know about them? Some typical pieces of information would include information about the account's total volume of the kind of products you sell, the dates of contracts that are coming up, the people from whom they are currently buying, and so forth. All of that seems pretty basic. However, most salespeople have no systematic way of collecting and storing that information. So, while you may occasionally ask a certain customer for parts of it, you probably aren't asking every customer for all the information. And, you're probably not collecting it, storing it, and referring to it in a systematic, disciplined way.

Do you think your competitors know exactly how much potential each of their accounts has? Do you think they know other pieces of useful information, like, for example, how many pieces of production equipment each customer has, and the manufacturer and year of purchase of each? Probably not. If you collect good quantitative marketing information, you'll be better equipped to make strategic sales decisions and create effective plans. For example, you'll know exactly who to talk to when the new piece of equipment from ABC manufacturer is finally introduced. And, you'll know who is really ripe for some new cost-saving product that's coming, or the new program your company is putting together.

You may currently be doing a so-so job of collecting information. It's like golf. Anyone can hit a golf ball. But few can do it well. Anyone can get some information. Few salespeople do it well.

**Step Three.** Develop a system and some tools.

The single most effective tool is an account profile form. It's an incredibly effective tool that generates and organizes some of the most powerful processes.

### **Account Profile Form**

An account profile form is a form full of questions, or more precisely, spaces for the answers to questions. The questions are all about each of your accounts. The form is the document on which you store that useful information. It can exist in a couple of different forms – paper or electronic. If you're using contact-management software on a laptop computer, then the account profile form can be several screens for each account. If you're not computerized, then it needs to be created on paper. Regardless of the media, the principles and processes are the same.

A well-designed, systematically executed account profile form can be one of your most powerful tools for acquiring a competitive edge. Here's why. First, it provides you a way to collect quantitative information that will allow you to know your customers more thoroughly than your competition. All those pieces of information that you said were potentially important to you can be collected and stored in the blanks on the account profile form. Create a one-page form with blanks in it for each of the quantitative pieces of information you want.

In addition to the quantitative information about the business, you need another version of the form for each of the key individuals within those accounts. That's called a personal profile, and it is your mechanism to collect personal information about the key decision makers. You apply the same concept and principles to the task of collecting personal information about the key decision-makers within your accounts. You may end up with one document for the company and 10 to 15 personal profiles for all the key people within that account.

Now, imagine getting ready for the next sales call on that customer and reviewing the things that he likes to talk about, refreshing your memory on the name of his spouse, and the names and schools of each of the kids. As you plan your presentation, you review the primary buying motivation for each of those key people. Do you think you'll be better prepared to have an enjoyable, relationship-building conversation with that customer than your competitor will? Of course you will. Do you think you'll increase your likelihood of delivering a powerful and persuasive presentation? Of course you will.

Finally, the form allows you to store important information someplace other than in your head. The problem with keeping information just in your head is that it isn't always readily accessible. When you want to have a relaxed conversation with one of your customers about his interests,

you can't always remember that he golfs and was a starting halfback on his college football team. However, if you have that information stored on a form, you can review it just before you go in to see your customer, and put it uppermost in your mind.

To some degree, every good salesperson implements these concepts. The difference between the run-of-the-mill salesperson and the salesperson who wants to take his/her performance Up-a-Notch, however, is the degree to which the committed salesperson disciplines himself to stick to a systematic approach. Most salespeople do it as they think of it, but don't keep the information systematically. Sales Masters understand the need to discipline themselves, and thus do a more thorough job of collecting information.

**Step Four.** Store it efficiently.

You may have done a great job of collecting information, but if you've stored it on old matchbook covers, coffee-stained post-its, and the backs of old business cards somewhere in the backseat of your car, it's probably not going to do you much good.

If you're computerized, then your computer can be the super tool that allows you to efficiently store the information. If not, you're going to need to create a set of files (yes, manila folders!) in which to store your information.

**Step Five.** Use it regularly.

Before every sales call, review the information you have stored. That review will help you make good decisions about each aspect of the sales call. Likewise, review the information as you create your annual goals and sales plans, when you create account strategies, and when you organize and plan your territories.

As you can tell, an account profile form is a master tool that holds all of this together. If you'd like help with this, visit my web site for a free download of "How to Create an Account Profile Form."

### **Collecting information about your competitors**

Now that you have a system in place to provide good information about your prospects and customers, you need to turn your focus to another area of your business – your competitors. Information about your competitors can be almost as important as that which you collect about your customers. As things change at an increasing rate, it's more important than ever for you to be aware of what your competitors are doing so that you don't get blindsided or seriously outmaneuvered.

That happened to me. To this day, I still get a sick feeling in my stomach as I remember the day when I lost my largest account to my arch competitor. It was an account that made up 20% of my total volume. In my blissful ignorance, I was content to grow my business by calling on the end users and purchasing department, while my competition was successfully building a relationship with the administration. The result? My best account signed a prime vendor, sole-source agreement with my competitor, and within 60 days, I was almost totally out of that account. I was blindsided.

That's a lesson that sticks with me, and one from which you can learn. To become good at knowing what your competition is up to, begin by thinking of yourself a little differently. Here's a simple three-step process for mastering this competency.

#### **Step One. Collect bits and pieces of information**

Begin by consciously collecting little bits and pieces of information at every opportunity. For example, you may have lost a bid or a particular piece of business to your competitors. Rather than just moping about it, use it as a learning opportunity. Try to find out from your customer why they awarded the business the way they did. If it was price alone, try to find out how much lower their price was. If it's something else, find out what. That information won't help for that particular piece of business, but it may give you an insight into the pricing policies of your competition. Write the information down or put it in your PDA.

Take your good customers to lunch, and casually see if you can steer the conversation in such a way as to learn something about your competition.

Keep your eyes open to the coming and going of competitive salesmen. Note when you see them, and in what account. Be sensitive and aware of competitive literature, business cards and price quotes lying around. And don't forget to talk with the other salespeople who work for your company to get their insights.

All these are ways to collect bits and pieces of information. By themselves, they won't help much. But, if you combine these bits and pieces, you may very well see trends, uncover strategies, and discover tactics your competition is using.

#### **Step Two. Store the information.**

As you collect each bit of information, capture it by writing it down, and putting the note in a manila folder marked "competition." You may even have a separate folder for each major competitor. If you're automated, type the information into your computer, and store it in either a word processing or database file.

Regardless, what you're doing is assembling a quantity of information. Diligently collect those bits and piece of information, and file them away.

#### **Step Three. Use the information.**

After you have collected a quantity of these, you'll be able to open that file on a regular basis, consider all the pieces of information, and discover a great deal about your competitors.

The trick is to consistently collect and store information. Eventually you'll assemble an accurate picture. It's like the popular game show "Wheel of Fortune." When Vanna White turns over one letter, it doesn't give you much of a picture of the answer. But after she's turned over several of these small individual pieces, the whole becomes clear and the answer to the riddle is simple to understand. That's the way collecting information about your competition works.

The back of an old business card on which you noted that you saw a competitive salesperson showing a new line of widgets, by itself, doesn't mean much. But if you filed that along with all the bits and pieces of information you've collected, and then pulled it all out and analyzed it, you might see an entirely different situation. Suppose you reviewed that business card note, and combined it with the note you made to yourself that you saw some sales literature on the competitive widget line on the desk of one of your purchasing agents, and then saw that you lost a major bid to the competition because he quoted a new line at lower than traditional prices. All at once you've uncovered a potential threat to your business. Clearly, your competitor is pushing a new, lower priced widget line. You didn't learn that from any one piece of information, but rather from the combination of all those pieces, considered as a whole.

The key to uncovering that information, to discovering what your competition is up to, is to consistently collect pieces of information, store them, and then analyze them as a whole from time to time.

As you may be able to tell, this chapter focuses on skills that previously were not in the toolbox of the typical outside salesperson. But, in the Information Age, much of your ability to make good decisions depends on your being able to collect good information. If you are going to take your performance Up-a-Notch, you must see yourself as a dealer in information as well as a seller of stuff. An important initial step is to get good at collecting good information.

©Dave Kahle is a consultant and trainer who helps his clients increase their sales and improve their sales productivity. Dave has trained thousands of salespeople to be more successful in the Information Age economy. He is the author of over 500 articles, a monthly e-zine, and six books. You can join Dave's "Thinking About Sales Ezine" on-line at <http://www.davekahle.com/maillinglist.html>.

## ***Boost Your Sales Career***

**by Mike Lucie & Tom MacFarland**

**T**his experience-based article focuses on eight areas that will help all salespeople. The areas are: Customers, Product, Time, Energy, Strategy, Closing and Travel.

While the importance of knowing your customers might seem obvious, there are tricks to recognizing their idiosyncrasies - to your advantage. Product or service expertise is tied for first with customers. One should use time to its maximum advantage. Strategy is common sense in 'what to do'. Closing the sale is an art. Maximizing travel effectiveness is art. Any sales job involves an element of zaniness.

### **KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER**

Big subject. Knowing the customers' favorite sport or what their kids eat, and why, is always good. Their office walls and desks tell a story. In addition to this, one can build a file on their personal lives.

Our team made a field call with a young salesman (Eric), who reported to me (poor guy). When our day unfortunately deteriorated, I asked Eric if there were any unplanned calls we could make. Eric understands the technical part of the job well. He had one customer who wanted our product, but would not pull the trigger.

Driving to the plant, he told of his customer's favorite restaurant (hint), kids' sports and lead-in details that would be great to make a friend/dinner companion. None of this was getting him the order. Every time he followed up, he filed more facts, but never received the business.

Meeting his prospect, I reached out and tried to touch his arm. He pulled back indicating he wanted his space. Then this happened: I started to speak about the product - why it was the perfect fit for his application. When Eric steered toward personal matters I stopped him, returning to the product, explaining why it was going to be helpful. What happened next was astonishing.

The customer looked at me and said he appreciated us leaving out small talk, getting directly to what will help. We got a purchase order on the spot for nearly double the amount we quoted.

By reaching out to touch his arm, I found that he was not going to allow me into his private world (good to know). But a true personal rapport is better.

I never need prove myself to a boss travelling with me. When we were given the PO, we showed this was a business and we respected his world.

One can listen to what the customer is saying, watch their body language, and how they respond during the call.

To maintain control of the call, watch how the customer reacts. Sometimes you can safely push the limit to get answers.

Remember the bottom line is knowing your customer's need, and then supporting it. This will keep them as a customer.

## **KNOW YOUR PRODUCT**

For some sales people, truly helping the customer is a puzzle. It's best not to force a product or service only the sales person feels is the right answer. Isn't that what Sales is supposed to do— convince the customer to buy to fit his application? If it is not a perfect fit, isn't our product still a better answer for his problem?

Half right. There are always two, if not three, options. By giving the customer all three he will not be able (or want) to go somewhere else. The way we have always tried to approach answering the customer is "Me or Me". Sometimes exactly what a customer wants cannot happen, be it due to pricing, delivery or lack of fit.

Knowing where you can adjust, one can offer additional options. Most of the time we will win the business with a second option.

Often customers have no clear concept of total cost. Revealing all cost components can sell. For example: your product is two times more expensive but lasts four times longer when compared to others. Savings from lack of downtime, less labor and material will prove your actual price is lower.

The customer usually knows what he wants, and why. It is our job to connect with them and not argue. Often, business is lost trying to show off. This turns them off, and being a know-it-all.

## **TIME**

The most common questions I hear are: "How much time should I spend on a) low-volume customers b) ensuring delivery, and c)" pricing?"

Do I spend my day on existing customers, or new ones? Experience is a great teacher. Having a mentor (and this article) will help. These questions can cause anxiety, but there exists an answer for each.

Start with the first challenge: low-volume customers. A good salesperson can handle 55-60 accounts at a time and do a good job; while a great salesperson can handle 80-90 accounts. Supportive Inside Sales can help. Can your market share in the account be grown?

All accounts **MUST BE SEEN** at least 3-4 times annually. The major accounts, of course, will be seen more often; but if you can plan on seeing everyone 3-4 times you will be ahead.

A good way to manage accounts is on a digital spread sheet. Know where you are going and what to do. Focus and be ready to show that prospect/customer why they need your product.

When making sales calls alone be accountable to yourself. If you have low volume movers, focus on one low product monthly. Don't waste customers' time talking about what they bought. They will start to use products in more projects. Small amount of time, big return. Your time is key.

### **ENERGY**

You will need a high level of energy to help people. You need a high energy level in order to make that extra call, when your competition is going home. But don't try to make too many sales calls in one day. Typically one can make 4-5 calls per day. If each call is normally around one hour this is a 4-5 hour day. This excludes driving and eating.

Customers react to your passion and the energy given; they want to buy from someone who cares about them and their own work challenges. The sales person who gets up after failing, looks at each customer as the only one they have, will get the order and keep that customer.

Do go into all three shifts of major plants covered. This is not easy. The customer will be impressed that you came back, working with all areas of the plant and all shifts. Visit four is usually the jackpot. Put in the time and effort to help them and be rewarded because of it.

“Work smarter, not harder.” True. But when you have made up your mind, give it all the energy you have.

### **STRATEGY**

When the writer first started in Sales, it was expected that you would give out a pen, or screwdriver, or one of a dozen other items that were small, but had your logo on them. Lately there is a minimalist trend of not giving anything. Sales people are losing because of it.

Try to think of this from the customers' point of view. They are doing more with some guy named Les; wearing several hats; and along comes YOU who wants them to buy something they are not sure they need for which they are taking time from their day.

I have given and not given something. When the customer got a small item during the call, they were pleased.

By giving the customer something they are almost obligated to listen to your presentation. They owe you. They feel you have brought something to them, and because of that they will listen.

When not giving anything, it is more difficult to get them to be still and listen.

When working for one company in particular, we gave the prospect a pen when first calling on them. This particular pen was not quality. It was worth about three cents and we called it a magic pen. The reason for the name was if you laid the pen down it would tend to disappear.

We had a hard time pressing this inane waste of time on the customer. The boss said we must do the pen joke, or we would be in trouble.

We met with a maintenance foreman; gave him the pen and my card, saying, “This is a magic pen, do you know why”? His reply: “No” I told him that if he sets it down it will disappear. He stopped walking, turned around, and told me to disappear!



His exact words were: "If your company is telling you to say something that dumb, your product must be terrible". So, I turned around, kept silent and walked out.

I gave pens after that, but I never used the joke again. You can figure out the good from the bad. You may not go into a high level presentation with pens, but for the sales person showing a product to a maintenance supervisor and his crew, I suggest you have a good useful giveaway. Let's address speed.

You want me to talk fast and go over everything quickly just so I can squeeze the presentation in. No. Speed means that once you have started the presentation do your best to go through it without stopping. If someone has questions during it, acknowledge the question but tell them, you will address it when you are done (make sure you remember).

This allows you to keep their attention and keeps you on track for what you want to show. People respect someone who understands what they are doing and wants to help. By moving through the presentation quickly, you are showing respect for their time, and that you are serious about why you are there.

Even though it so important to allow the customer to handle the product, it can be trouble if they take too long.

The longer they handle a certain sample they will most likely be thinking about it when you show the next part. You may have to pass a piece around the table so wait until it comes back to you (if you can) to then talk about the next item.

The way around this is when you give one person something, count five seconds to yourself, then ask for the sample back. They will give it back, and if that sample is an item they want to discuss, when you are done, they will come back and ask for more details.

You will have what all of us want: an interested customer who has questions, and wants to buy.

## CLOSING

It all comes down to this, asking the customer to buy your product.

If you have done everything we have talked about already you have increased your chances of getting an order. Here are a few additional tasks you can work during this phase.

Even though you demonstrated the product and tried your best to understand what the customer wants, now is the time that you absolutely must believe in the product and yourself.

People want to do business with those who care about them, want to help, and be part of the solution. One has to believe one has the answer and in closing this is most important.

You have been taking mental and written notes during the sales process. Now is the time this helps you. Using your notes allows you to go back over the customers' concerns.

Your notes help because most customers usually do not take notes; they may or may not remember telling you certain aspects of the situation. Often they look at you as a welcome distraction or an excuse to avoid work.

Consider a situation that shows how believing and taking notes helps. While waiting for the maintenance manager to come to the lobby and lead me to the maintenance shop his company's mission statement was visible on the wall. The statement basically said that they make a very good product and because of that they could charge more. Ah ha.

Making a few notes, when he came to get me, I felt ready to get an order. After the demo for him and his crew, they loved the product and thought it would solve more than a few problems.

After taking the order, he was a bit surprised and unhappy with the price of the product.

He said he could not pay that, and to lower the price. With my notes - we went over what we had talked about and why they wanted to use our product.

He slowly started to agree but was still not happy with the price. So, I referenced the mission statement in the lobby and asked if he felt that the company made a great product. “Yes”. I then asked if he felt that there were other companies that made great products.”Yes”.

I then asked did he feel that his company was the only one who could charge more for a great product. He looked at me and took the order form and said he understood. This made him think.

I believed in my product and myself, and by taking notes and paying attention I was able to get my customer to narrow down the reasons he said no, and finally helped him to say YES!

If you have put time and energy into the call, you will get the order. Then you can be grateful for getting the business, and helping that customer get what they want.

### **TRAVEL**

No matter how you travel, by plane or car, travel can be a big help or a major hindrance. Or you may be making phone calls in which thinking is the best way to travel. If you have to travel for your job, here are a few actions to keep in mind.

First, make sure you give yourself sufficient time to get there. Give yourself time to assemble your information, when you go to the meeting you are ready.

Try to travel with one airline and stay within one hotel chain, while renting from one car agency. The service I get from doing this helps.

Try to stay near airports because it is easier to turn in a rental car, and also if a flight is mishandled one can get to the airport faster.

Being part of the travel programs gives one not only personal perks (points/upgrades), but as one goes higher within the program the airline/hotel/ rental car company treats us differently (better). Some airline/car/hotels bundle points where possible.

Unless you own your own business, prepare yourself for the tag along bosses, and immediate supervisors. – and on up the chain, scorekeepers, and bean counters. Keep it honest, and don’t spend your own resources. Keep perfect records on your expense account.

To close, here is one anecdote that may be amusing to you. While doing a demo I read the presentation to the customer. When I came into the shop the foreman greeted me with a grunt (not hello). He then pointed to where I should set up my demo.

There were ten people present. I read and pointed with my finger at the words in the presentation book. Within two minutes the foreman looked at me, yelled, grabbed my book, and threw it twenty feet. When it hit the wall it exploded - pages everywhere.

“Do you think we are stupid; don’t know how to read? Let’s see if you can sell without the book”. We did get an order (\$10). ‘Never read from the book again.

I love what I do and can always count on CHANGE! I hope you enjoyed this article, smiled and picked up more than one idea.

©Mike Lucie lives in Buffalo, NY. Tom MacFarland lives in Cleveland, OH. They are available at <https://www.oneeyeninetoes.com./ebook>. This site provides access to sales coaching (Mike), marketing research, and business development (tmacFarland@sbcglobal.net). This article is an excerpt from a larger piece “One Eye Nine Toes Still Selling”. Other useful sales strategies can be found there on the site page in a short book “Sales People Want to Stay Outside”.

## ***Build A Better Sales Force: Focus on Your “First String”***

by Nathan Jamail

**E**very year companies look for ways to increase sales. This year is no different, only with today’s economy, the answers seem to be harder to find. One sure way to increase your sales: focus on your first string. This concept of focusing on your first string is very simple in theory, but it is not easy to execute. Much like great coaching of great sports teams, it takes a long commitment to make the team better by challenging the best players and working with them to improve constantly.

When the New England Patriots football team or the Orlando Magic basketball team practices, does the coach spend the week before the game working with the third string players, or does he focus on working with the first string players? Answer: the first string players, of course, because they are the ones who are ultimately going to win the game. They score the most points and usually play the most amount of time. The coach spends a lot of time with them because they are good enough to merit his attention.

The coach’s focus on the first string players sets a positive goal for all the players to strive for. If the third string players want his attention, they have to work for it! If the first string players want to keep their coach’s attention, they have to work hard to stay the best! In sum, this program requires every player to desire and pursue excellence.

In business the norm is the exact opposite. Many companies have a culture in which managers leave the top performers alone and focus on the bottom performers. It is very common to hear a sales manager or leader say, “ Oh, Bob is one of my top guys, so I leave him alone and let him do his job.” Wow, what a mistake! Another organization that understands a different philosophy will eventually approach Bob and inform him that he is being robbed. Bob will be told he is investing all his time and energy in the company, but the company is not investing in him by coaching him and helping him to develop. Bob will thus be wooed over to a new company. Companies with leaders who ignore their top performers will soon lose them. Even worse, the company’s culture is one that says if the manager is working with an employee on a regular basis, then that person must be a low performer. The leader’s involvement with an employee is viewed as a negative. The leader is a manager and not a coach. It is difficult to coach a person if the person feels that the leader thinks he or she is there to manage poor performance. It’s like rewarding your kids with attention only when they are bad.

### **How do you fix this disordered culture?**

**Step 1: Make the commitment.** All leaders want to create a culture where winning and being the best is the goal, and to do that all players have to want to be on the first string. A leader needs to create a culture that dedicates all of their coaching efforts to the top performers and those who are willing to do what it takes to become a top performer.

Fight the tendency to leave the top performers alone because you normally focus on the weak. A leader must commit to coaching the top performers or committed performers and manage the bottom performers up or out.

**Step 2:** Spend your time with the top performers, conducting ride days and practicing role-plays with them. Your goal is to help make them better every month. The leader must let the team know that she or he plays favorites; if team members are successful and doing the right things, the leader will spend time with them, and the others will have limited coaching. Once this is done, leaders will find their top performers will improve dramatically, and will find their jobs more satisfying. The bottom performers will ask the leader what it takes to become a top performer, and they will do what it takes, or they will find another team. Neither one of those options is a bad thing for the organization or the person. This might sound cold at first, but it's not. Think about a person who is struggling at his job: he knows it and he usually has very low job satisfaction. A leader's job is not to ignore the bottom performers, but instead to move them up or out. A leader who tolerates poor performance is a leader who will always have a struggling team and disappointed top performers.

Many companies find internal competition to be bad because some of the lower producing sales people get their feelings hurt, so they stop recognizing the top performers or stop conducting contests in general. This is another instance of sacrificing the top performers to satisfy the bottom performers. In sales, just like in life, it takes skill, talent and discipline to be successful. When a salesperson does a great job and delivers great results, he or she should be recognized. Kids love to be recognized and feel appreciated, and professional adults are no different. Remember: when a leader tries to recognize everybody equally in order to be fair, his blanket recognition devalues the recognition for the ones who deserves it most. Winning is important, so do it.

The proof is in the numbers. Let's look at this example: a sales leader has five sales reps. The top two reps generate \$100 each while the bottom two sales reps generate \$50 each. If the leader works with the top reps and they improve by 20 percent, then the revenue is increased by \$40. If the sales leader works with the bottom reps and they improve 20 percent, then the revenue is increased by \$20. It is obvious where a leader should spend time. Successful sales leadership comes from focusing on the program or process that gives the greatest return on investment, much like successful retirement plans, marketing efforts and finances. If you don't spend time with your first string and invest in their success as much as they invest in the organization, someone else will.

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## *Adversity Gives You Strength*

by John Boe

**H**ow can you stay self-motivated and productive in the midst of turbulent times and a sluggish economy? How do you persevere as a salesperson when times are tough and customers seem to be holding on to every penny in fear of economic uncertainty?

Every challenge, setback and personal difficulty you encounter in life also brings with it the seed of equivalent or greater benefit! The key to overcoming adversity is to avoid the temptation of panic and instead, focus on finding the greater benefit. Adversity will never leave you where it found you; it will either strengthen your character or weaken your resolve.

During the early years of WW II Nazi submarines, operating in wolf packs, roamed the frigid waters of the North Atlantic with impunity sinking an alarming number of British military and merchant ships. Hitler was confident that his U-boats could blockade England and eventually starve the British people into submission.

In the summer of 1940, while the Battle of Britain was being played out over London, the Germans unmercifully sank over 300 British military and merchant ships. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, fearing the negative impact these devastating losses might have on the nation's morale, ordered the information withheld from the public. In an effort to reduce the appalling number of casualties lost at sea, Churchill instructed the British Royal Navy to begin a study to determine what, if anything, could be done to save more lives during sea rescue.

While interviewing the survivors an interesting discovery was made. To their complete astonishment, the researchers noted that the survival rate for the younger, presumably more physically fit sailors was remarkably lower when compared to their older shipmates. The study concluded that the older sailors had a significantly higher survival rate due to the fact that they had overcome more adversity and therefore, had developed greater confidence in being rescued than the younger, less experienced sailors.

The head of the research project, Kurt Hahn, was so moved by this discovery that he created the Outward Bound program. Hahn designed the Outward Bound program, utilizing a series of progressively rugged challenges, to mentally and physically prepare young British sailors to cope with the adversity of naval combat. Today, the Outward Bound program works with troubled youth to help them develop greater confidence and self-image.

I find it interesting that people faced with similar adversity often experience remarkably different outcomes. Some people become weakened, some become hardened and some become stronger. If you place a carrot, an egg and a coffee bean into a pot of boiling water, each reacts in a completely different manner to their conditions. The carrot goes into the boiling water firm and comes out soft; the egg goes in fragile and comes out hardened; while the coffee bean turns the hot water into coffee by releasing its flavor and aroma!

Selling in these challenging times demands determination and personal fortitude. Having the will to persevere when times are tough is a characteristic commonly found among self-made millionaires. Are you a quitter? The last time you failed, did you stop trying because you failed or did you fail because you stopped trying?

Thomas Edison documented 10,000 failed attempts to develop the electric light bulb. A reporter asked the great inventor how it felt to have failed 10,000 times trying to invent the light bulb. Edison responded, "Young man, I didn't fail 10,000 times trying to invent the light bulb, I simply documented 10,000 ways that it wouldn't work." Imagine how different our world would be today if Edison had been a quitter.

You must expect to encounter detours, roadblocks and potholes of adversity along the road of life. The next time you are faced with adversity, learn from it and know that you are becoming a much stronger person because of it!

©John Boe presents a wide variety of motivational and sales-oriented keynotes and seminar programs for sales meetings and conventions. John is a nationally recognized sales trainer and business motivational speaker with an impeccable track record in the meeting industry. To have John speak at your next event, visit [www.johnboe.com](http://www.johnboe.com) or call 877 725-3750. Free Newsletter available on website.

## ***Taking It Up a Notch: Tools & Techniques to Motivate Yourself & Your Group***

by **Jeff Silver**

**I**t's the bottom of the ninth, the bases are loaded and we're behind by three runs. The capacity crowd is roaring and you, the manager, are calling for your best pinch hitter to go to the plate. "Hit it out, friend, you shout, and we'll all get to go home." You say that because you know the slugger is tired, and the only thing that could get the player more excited is the idea of traveling home and going to sleep. It isn't always that obvious what you need to suggest to yourself and your team, to get them to want to hit a "home run" or score a touchdown or make the big sale or balance the books, or whatever it is you need to get them to do.

All we have is our present, our past and our future to work with in our quest for achievements. A simple or complex encouragement at a key moment is not enough. We need to give ourselves and our groups tools and techniques so we can face every day, every opportunity, as a chance to accomplish something great. The present is now, the gift of now to get something done. It's fleeting, and goes by in a flash. The best way to get something now (or ever) is to set meaningful goals, with plans to achieve the goals. Plans with practical steps to follow that can be done right now. In the now, we have to act like a winner. That means making and keeping commitments, solving problems and finding better ways of doing things and getting things done. Give yourself a present, give your boss a gift that counts, give your company a reward that will be remembered. That would be the gift of results!!

Your wonderful past is chock full of incredible accomplishments that need to be documented and communicated. The most powerful tool you may need to add to your daily routine is the maintenance of a journal of your accomplishments, ideas, feelings, disappointments, wonderings, fears and hopes. This treasure chest can be opened anytime to provide you with the fuel you need to jump start your action. Keep careful track of all your important sales, outstanding customer service activities, opportunities you seized to motivate or inspire yourself or another, times you found a more effective or intelligent way to implement a procedure or met a new professional contact.

It's vital that you communicate to your boss, your colleagues and your customers your accomplishments and good ideas. Help others help themselves with your breakthroughs. Share your knowledge and victories so others may benefit from the great things you have done. Be a hero by detailing legends of your greatness. Modesty is a good quality, and yet you need to let others know of your outstanding achievements.

Your magnificent future is yet to unfold. You have to plan its wonderful possibilities long before it happens. Make out a one year and a five year plan for all the important facets of your life. List all the accomplishments for your family, career, training, hobbies and health that you would like to do. What fantastic things could happen if you make new friends, get a new job or job duties, move to a new residence, travel to an exotic place, start a new hobby or learn some new varied philosophies and ideas? Ask these questions of yourself, and answer them in your journal.

Plan on making history in your own life. What new frontiers do you want to explore? Get a jump on the future by making it different, exciting and open to new experiences. Of all the tools, only the future is totally unknown and open to change. Change your life, change your destiny.

Your own positive attitude is your most important tool to use to increase your own motivation. Examine your own values and decide what you want to do to change your life. Complete the following project to inject powerful impetus to your plan to take your life up an notch or two. Rank the following qualities in order of importance to you: security, status, compensation, achievement, advancement, social activity, recognition, authority, independence, creativity, ethics, intellectual stimulation or appreciation of beauty!

Take the three (3) most important qualities and write a one year goal for each one. What can you do to involve each quality in your life and make your life better. Send the information to me, if you'd like to share and get a response, at my e-mail [drwritelight@verizon.net](mailto:drwritelight@verizon.net) As a professional Life and Career Coach, I'd love to have your input to this project.

To really enhance your success and your impact on your world, you need to be a total professional. You should listen to people, display honesty and character, inspire and excite others, push excellence, know how your employees and customers really feel and think, be future oriented and have the courage to take effective, practical action, even if total success is not guaranteed. You need to walk tall and maintain eye contact, ask for advice, focus on facts, put ideas in perspective and appreciate how others feel.

Act as if every day is the seventh game of the World Series, the Super Bowl or your own Academy Awards ceremony. Ask yourself two basic questions that can unleash your towering greatness: What are the barriers, if any, holding you back? How will you become the greatest person you can be? You know your challenges. You have the solutions to greatness within. Be good, be great and have a wonderful life. Go for the gold!!

©Jeff silver has over 20 years experience in Human Resources and College Teaching. He has specialized in Placement and in addition has a background in Professional Coaching. He also has additional experience in Sales, Marketing and Public Relations. He can be reached at [drwritelight@verizon.net](mailto:drwritelight@verizon.net) and at his web site [jeffsilver.com](http://jeffsilver.com).