

The One Key Factor that leads to Sales Success or Failure

by John Chapin

While one could argue that there are many factors determining sales success or failure, I find that 99% of the time, success or failure really comes down to one item. If you have this one item in place, success is virtually guaranteed. If you don't, failure is virtually guaranteed.

The Key Success Factor and How to Ensure it Exists and Thrives in Your Sales Plan

We all know you need the basics: product knowledge, the ability to get in the door of qualified prospects, get attention, solve problems, get agreement, answer objections, present, close, and follow through, among other things. We also know that your primary job is to produce... to sell. Other equally relevant truths that relate more closely to the key success factor are:

- Sales *is* a numbers game; the more people you talk to the more business you'll do.
- The harder you work, the luckier you get.
- The more calls you make, the faster you figure it out.
- And, production cures all that ails you, or, as my dad used to say, "You could be in the middle of your worst sales slump ever... down, depressed, and hopeless and yet, if you simply found an order on the ground, one you had absolutely nothing to do with closing, but it was a good order that counted toward your quota, you'd instantly be back on top of the world."

All of that said, the one item that determines success or failure more than anything else is your activity level. Specifically, making the calls necessary to make the contacts, get the qualified prospects, and make sales necessary to exceed your quota.

Every time I've seen someone fail in sales, it's because they didn't make enough calls to talk to enough qualified prospects. Every time. While I suppose there could be some other factor for failure, it would be the miniscule exception. 100% of the time in my experience, I've been able to tie failure back to a lack of activity. Here are some rules to follow to ensure you have the proper amount of activity in your sales day.

Rule 1: Know your numbers.

You have to have annual, monthly, and weekly goals and break those down to the daily activity necessary to make them happen. If you're going to make \$250,000, and each sale is worth \$5000, you need to make 50 sales or roughly 1 per week. Based upon 50 sales, how many proposals do you need to get out, how many people do you need to talk to, and how many calls do you have to make every day?

Rule 2: You have to exceed your numbers.

Once you know your numbers, you need to exceed them. We tend to underestimate the amount of time, effort, energy, money, and in this case, number of calls, that it will take to achieve a

goal. As a result, increase your daily number by at least 20%. So if the number you came up with under Rule 1 is 50 calls a day, increase that to 60.

Rule 3: You have to hit your numbers every day no matter what.

Your most important task every day is to hit your numbers. Period. It is always more important than anything else you do. I've seen top salespeople make calls from airplanes, hospitals, police stations, and almost anywhere else you can imagine. I've also seen them make calls at night, on weekends, during holidays, and at all other times imaginable. In one case a salesperson who had just totaled his car, jumped in a cab with torn pants and some bumps and bruises to finish making his sales calls for the day. By the way, he was more effective that day because he had a great story to tell when he showed up. He also displayed extraordinary dedication and commitment to his prospects.

Rule 4: Be consistent.

Consistency keeps you sharp, builds the habit of making the calls, and keeps you in a good frame of mind. If your goal is 300 calls for the week, Monday through Friday, and you try to squeeze those calls into two or three days, you'll become overwhelmed and you'll have difficulty building the self-discipline that comes with daily, consistent action. Also, if you aren't making calls every work day, your calls will have some rust on them. In other words, when you are doing anything other than making calls, your brain slowly starts to forget what to say and how to react to situations that arise during calls. So if you only make calls on two, days during the week, there is a lot of time for your brain to start to "forget", making you far less sharp and effective. One of the best ways to be consistent is to time block the same hours every day to prospect.

Rule 5: Have someone hold you accountable.

While you ultimately have to hold yourself accountable, it's a good idea to also have someone else hold you accountable to your daily numbers. Preferably it's your boss or manager, but it can really be anyone who you'll feel enough pressure reporting to.

Rule 6: Keep getting better.

Read, watch, and listen to information and use that information to make your calls more efficient and effective.

Rule 7: Use the phone and in-person calls to reach out to prospects.

If you think e-mail or social media is just as effective as a phone call or in-person visit for reaching out to prospects, you're delusional. When you are attempting to do business with people, you have to call or visit in-person first. You can send an e-mail, physical mail, LinkedIn request, or something else afterwards, but never as an initial contact to determine if they may be a qualified prospect. First, you can't even be sure they got the e-mail or social-media message, and second, it's weak and says you don't have the confidence in yourself or your product to have a live interaction. **If you're looking for a way to avoid the hard work of making live calls, STOP IT! Pick up the phone and/or get in the car and go talk to people. Lots of people. If you make the calls necessary to fill your pipeline with tons of qualified prospects, everything else will take care of itself.**