

Make sure *Your* Sales Career is the Exception, not the Rule

To be successful in the world of selling you need to be a contrarian. In every industry successful salespeople are the exception, not the rule. In the insurance field only about 20% of the agents who start are still agents ten years down the road. In real estate, the average Realtor sells three houses a year, and even though some may stay in the business because it's the family's second income, and the company allows them to, three houses a year is poverty-level income. In the corporate world, most salespeople don't make quota and in many cases, even those that do aren't making six figures. That's the bad news. The good news is: the top people in sales make tons of money and most have really good lives as a result. The other piece of good news is that success or failure, with rare exception, is completely up to the individual. Sales truly is the highest paying hard work and the lowest paying easy work and the reality is: those that don't make it never make the commitment to put in the necessary work to be successful. All of that said, here are a few thoughts to entertain in order to be successful.

Five Ideas for Sales Success

Idea #1: You must embrace the suck.

Like homework as a kid, or eating your Brussels sprouts, there are some things in life that you don't want to do but you have to. Sales is the same. Whether it's paperwork, computer work, planning, or calls sheets, there will be things you don't want to do but you have to. Even some sales related activities aren't fun. I don't know a ton of people who love to prospect or cold call, me included, but if you don't prospect, ultimately you don't make the necessary sales. The things you don't like doing, or even downright hate, aren't going away and no amount of whining or complaining is going to change the fact that you need to do them, so accept them as necessary evils, get them done, and move on.

Idea #2: You must embrace failure and rejection.

As human beings this one is tough. Acceptance by others is hardwired into our DNA. Thousands, and perhaps even hundreds, of years ago if we weren't accepted by the group, we died alone out in the wilderness. In the 21st Century this is no longer true. Yet, most of us, especially salespeople, still have a major need to be liked and accepted. Most of us have moderate to severe approval addiction. Couple with that the sayings we learned as kids such as, "Don't talk to strangers." We are no longer small children who can be stolen and yet most people act as if they are and can't even make eye contact with a stranger walking by. It's time to recognize these adolescent, false fears and stop acting as if they are real. It's also time to recognize what lies on the other side of failure and rejection: massive success. We all know the stories about Babe Ruth striking out more than anyone, while also hitting the most homeruns, and Michael Jordan missing the most game-winning shots, while also hitting the most. You must see each failure and rejection as a stepping stone to the next sale. Every call, whether a yes or no, gets you closer.

You've got to change your definition of failure, just like Edison who saw his missed attempts as education instead of failure. Though Thomas J. Watson probably said it best, **"If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate."**

Idea #3: You must embrace discomfort and fear.

What's interesting is that the psychological fear felt while cold calling causes the same reaction in the body as someone exerting themselves physically, on a long run for example. This *feeling* is one of self-preservation. It tells the individual to stop cold calling just as it tells the runner to stop running. From a physical standpoint, when running or pushing ourselves physically, this feeling is created by physical discomfort and first kicks in when we have expended about 40% of our physical capacity. In other words, we have another 60% to go. From a psychological standpoint, when exerting ourselves mentally, facing a fear while cold calling for example, this feeling is created by fear and usually kicks in before we even begin our task. In both cases we need to override the discomfort and fear if we are going to grow, expand, and become more physically and mentally. Everything you want is through your fear and outside of your comfort zone.

Idea #4: You must embrace challenges and curveballs.

Challenges and curveballs make you better, stronger, smarter, and more resilient. The more you face and overcome, the more you *can* face and overcome. Just as the strongest trees are made in the strongest winds and adverse weather conditions, the same is true for humans. Obstacles you face, and ultimately overcome, are the like the fire that tempers the steel, they make you tougher and more capable. While I'm not suggesting you hope for the flat tire, the health issue, or any other of lives problems that you *will* encounter on your journey, do your best to rise to the challenge, embrace them, and let them build a better you.

Idea #5: You've got to play mind games with yourself.

The above ideas are going to require you to fly in the face of a lot of what you've been taught over the years. They're going to force you to be a contrarian and see good in bad, and blessings in hardship. That is the champion's edge. The ability to turn adversity into motivation. Not just in sales, but everywhere in life. What drives champions, what drives you, is ultimately what you're fighting for, why you get up in the morning. Is it for the things you want: the cars, houses, money, and the feelings those give you? Is it to prove yourself to yourself and/or others? Or is it for the people in your life: kids, grandkids, parents, friends, or even future generations? Is it about how you'll be remembered once you're gone, the mark you left on the world?

Remember, life will pay whatever price you ask but it's not just going to give you the prize without paying your dues, without being committed, without deserving success, without stepping out of your comfort zone, facing your fears, and going after it. Life will test you again and again to make sure you're worthy. Every single day you're going to have to put your helmet on, fasten your seatbelt, ride the roller coaster of life, and go get it.