

Sales Success Lessons I Learned from my Mom

by John Chapin

My mom passed away recently. As I was writing her eulogy, I realized that a lot of what she stood for, and a lot of what she taught me, led to my sales success. As I looked deeper, I realized that most of her examples also had to do with success in life, not just sales. Here's what I learned.

Mom's Lessons for Sales and Life Success

Perseverance and stick-to-itiveness

I remember my first job out of college as a stock broker. I was having a really tough time and I was going to quit. When I called my mom to tell her she said, "John, anything in life worth having isn't going to be easy. It's going to be tough. Life will test you to see how serious you are, how badly you want it, how committed you are to your dream. And here's the thing, all you have to do is hang in there long enough without quitting. If you hang in long enough, eventually the tide will turn in your favor and you'll win. Every time." I stayed, and the tide turned shortly thereafter and within two years I was the youngest branch manager in the country. When I started my speaking business in the Fall of 2008 and the economy subsequently dropped off the cliff and the speaking business imploded. I remembered what my mom said, "If you hang in long enough, eventually the tide will turn." And it did. She was right again.

Mom's lesson: The bigger and more important the endeavor, the more difficult the journey and the more likely there will be temptation to quit at some point. You don't fail until you quit, and in order to succeed, you need to persevere long enough, and hang on after others have let go.

Commitment

My mom was a substitute teacher for many years. One time they called her to substitute teach and she was really sick with the flu, but she felt an obligation to help out. So she put herself together as best she could and went to work. Later I asked her why she agreed to teach when she was that sick. She said, "John, people rely on me when other people are sick. I'm not supposed to be sick. In life it doesn't matter how you feel physically or mentally, what matters is the commitments you make and that you live up to them, in good times and bad, whether you feel like it or not."

Mom's lesson: Commit and be all-in. The client doesn't care how you feel, or about any other excuses you have as to why something didn't get done. They just want what they were promised when they were promised they have it by.

Go above and beyond, add that little “extra.”

My mom believed if you’re going to do something, you do it right and you do it all out. She always pushed herself to continually improve and be the best she could be. It started in school where she was her high school class valedictorian, and in college where she got straight As. But it wasn’t just the “big” things that she took seriously. She always believed in doing even the smallest things at the highest level. I remember the Halloween I wanted to be a ghost. That’s easy right? A sheet, two holes for the eyes, done. Not my mom’s ghost. I mean, I was the ghost but the ghost outfit was going to represent my mom. She had that sheet on me 4 nights in a row, adjusting, cutting, sewing, tailoring, and changing. The fifth night came, Halloween, she put that sheet on me, and made a few final changes before sending the perfect ghost off into the night.

Mom’s lesson: If something’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right. Always take it to the next level by doing more than you get paid for and delivering more than people expect. Everything you do reflects back on you.

Mom’s second lesson from this example: Leave no stone unturned. You want to make sure you do everything you can to win a sale. As a last-ditch effort, any time I lost a sale I used to ask, “Is it a done deal? Is there anything I can do to still get the business?” This led to me getting the “lost sale” back about 40% of the time.

Be a team player. Make people feel important and special.

In public my mom always had a smile on her face and a spring in her step, she was positive and upbeat. She wanted to leave a good impression on people and she wanted to make sure they felt good and important when she was talking to them. What people didn’t see behind the scenes, was the enormous pressure my mom put on herself to be the perfect mom and wife. She never let people see the weight she carried on her shoulders, and regardless of that weight, she put her game face on in public, and got done what needed to get done from coaching softball, to teaching, to everything she did in the church, to everything she did for her family. She always put others first. She was a team player and always wanted to help, as in the example of teaching when she had the flu. She understood that it wasn’t just about her, she had an obligation to her family, those she worked with, and those she made commitments to.

Mom’s lesson: At the end of the day it’s all about people and relationships. As Zig Ziglar used to say, “You will get all you want in life, if you help enough other people get what they want.” This is also another great example of commitment. Finally, if you find yourself in a comfort zone because you think you’re making enough money remember: it’s also about being in a position to help others.

I always said I got my backbone from my mom. My mom projected a solid character and inner strength. She exemplified in her words and deeds how important it is to have a strong belief in

yourself and what you stand for. My mom's legacy is one of perseverance, commitment, and keeping your priorities straight along with your obligations. Doing what you do what you need to do, what you committed to do, without complaining, and regardless of how you feel physically, or mentally. That you keep going no matter what and never quit until you succeed. That your word is your bond. And at the end of the day, that you help as many people as possible.

Thanks mom.