

The Difference Between Success and Failure in Selling

by John Chapin

Several important factors separate those who succeed in selling from those who fail. Although some of the following items are arguably more important than others, they are all critical to a salesperson's success. When I talk about top salespeople, I'm referring to people who are not only great at the profession of selling, they are also great human beings.

The Twelve Success Factors

1) Great attitude

Top salespeople have a positive, can-do, winning attitude. Specifically, they have enthusiasm, drive, competitiveness, and confidence. Top salespeople are highly motivated to succeed. They see selling as a competition, and they love competition. Top salespeople do whatever it takes to win—ethically—and they do not quit. They are extremely persistent. They are always moving ahead, changing, growing, and pushing through the bad times until they make it. They never give up on themselves and their dream of success. Top salespeople have a win-win attitude. They are genuine and truly like and care about other people.

2) Action oriented

Top salespeople are people of purposeful, focused, well-thought-out, massive action. They are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. They don't procrastinate. They are protective of their time and use it wisely. Top salespeople have a plan and they work their plan every day. They know what actions lead to their success and that's where they spend their time. They follow the 80/20 rule.

3) Preparation

Top salespeople are prepared for anything and they over-prepare for everything. They never wing it. They have prepared scripts, presentations, answers to objections, and proposals. They practice, drill, and rehearse. They never rest on their laurels and are always looking for ways to improve. They are ready for anything and expect the best, yet they have a plan if the worst, or anything else, shows up.

4) Businesslike and business-savvy

Consumers are smarter and competition has increased. Top salespeople partner with customers and build a compelling business case based upon what's best for the customer. They know their customers' business and problems intimately. They ask intelligent questions that both set them apart from other salespeople and, more important, let the customer know they thoroughly understand the business. Top salespeople know and embrace technology, but not to the point where they distance customers and/or remove the human element.

5) Ability to stand out from the crowd

Top salespeople differentiate themselves from other salespeople. They don't sound or act like other salespeople. They are original. A top salesperson doesn't come across as someone trying to sell; he or she comes across as an interested and informed party that's there to help. Top salespeople have an aura of respect around them. The way they walk and talk demonstrates to others that they are professionals and

in turn, they are treated professionally. Top salespeople are real, human, and down to earth, and people like them for this reason. Their caring, sincerity, and helpful dispositions stand out. They are memorable.

6) Likeability, trustworthiness, and the ability to build relationships

Selling is about doing everything necessary to build solid, loyal, long-term relationships. Top salespeople develop and nurture customer relationships and consider most of their customers to be friends. They have the ability to put people at ease and win others to their side, to establish a connection, and build rapport quickly and effectively. They build trust and credibility. Top salespeople can walk into a room and emerge fifteen minutes later having made a new friend. They are genuine, open, and honest. They convey a sincere interest in other people, what makes them tick, and what interests them. They truly like to serve people.

7) Effective communication

Top salespeople are great communicators, knowing what to say and when to say it. They actively listen and are able to hear people well and read between the lines. They ask good questions, listen well to the answers, and take notes. Top salespeople don't confuse people by giving them more information than they need; yet they give them enough information to make a well-thought-out buying decision. Top salespeople have frank, direct conversations with people.

8) Empathy

Top salespeople have empathy for their customers and prospects. They are able to put themselves in other people's shoes. Top salespeople genuinely like people and people feel their understanding and compassion. Top salespeople enjoy helping people and they believe, with every fiber of their being, that buying and owning their product or service will help people.

9) Professionalism, integrity, and work ethic

Top salespeople are complete professionals with complete integrity. They have a great work ethic. They are always on their best behavior because they're aware that they never know who is watching them. Top salespeople are honest. If they don't know an answer, they admit it, find the answer, and follow up promptly. They are straightforward. Top salespeople work both hard and smart. They don't rest on their laurels when things are going well. Top salespeople recognize their top clientele and focus closely on nurturing those relationships and finding more people like them. Top salespeople go the extra mile and always deliver more than they promise. They return phone calls and reply to correspondence promptly. Top salespeople take 100 percent responsibility for everything they do, both professionally and personally.

10) Team player and leader

Top salespeople look for ways to contribute to the team. They share information and success stories that may help the other salespeople in their company. They pull for their peers and colleagues. They use a big sale by another person in the office to motivate them. They are focused on becoming better as individuals and believe that by doing so, they help the people around them improve and make their company stronger. Top salespeople work well with other departments and develop strong professional relationships with co-workers. They get along with everyone, including the person no one else can relate

to. Top salespeople are leaders. They expect to be at the top and they are comfortable there. They do not look down on or see others as inferior.

11) Continuing education and training

Top salespeople are always getting better at selling. They read sales books, listen to sales information at home and in their car, watch videos, and talk to other successful salespeople. They constantly look for ways to improve. They know selling and they know their business, yet they also know there is always more to learn. They study their competition inside and out. Top salespeople stay up-to-date on all new developments in their industry and everything that could affect business. They are constantly looking through trade publications and magazines.

12) Company product and support

Top salespeople cannot remain at the top without reliable products and support. They pick companies and products in which they can believe 100 percent, and they continue to look for reasons their product is better than any other.

While twelve factors may seem like a lot, the keys are: having a great attitude, a sincere interest in helping people, and a burning desire to succeed.