

What Sales Teams can Learn from the New England Patriots

by John Chapin

Even if you hate the New England Patriots, you have to admit they have a formula that works. And the truth is, their secret sauce isn't so secret, in fact, it's rather simple and obvious. While simple and obvious doesn't mean easy, here's how your team can use their formula to dominate their own field of play, provided you've got the stomach for it.

Ingredients of a Dominant, Winning Team

Ingredient #1: A Willingness to Charge into Hell.

"Everyone wants to go to Heaven, but no one wants to die." I'm not sure who said that, but it is the mindset of most people when it comes to achieving almost anything great. When I work with an organization on where they want to go, everyone is all smiles as we create the vision of the Land of Milk and Honey. When we start discussing the plan for what it will take to get there, facial expressions change quickly. Most humans want the weight loss, the great relationship, and the win, without the work. If you want to achieve your version of six straight AFC Championship Games and a record nine Super Bowls, not only do you have to work, but you have to *far outwork* everyone else. You also have to endure great mental and physical pain to grow and become the person and/or team worthy of the reward. There will be long days, tough calls, tough conversations, rejection, failures, and trials and tribulations that will make the grittiest of individuals cower. Yes, the prize will be worth it, but it's going to take a lot of blood, sweat, tears, and pain to get there. Buckle up.

Ingredient #2: A Winning Culture

The winning culture is built on a foundation of working hard and doing your job. As we know, rarely is it the most intelligent or talented that win. It's the person who shows up early, leaves late, and gets the job done no matter what. Julian Edelman, a seventh round draft pick, shows up at 5:30 a.m. before anyone else. Danny Amendola, undrafted, works his butt off too. Same with Chris Hogan, who had only one year of college football experience and about 150 yards receiving. By the way, he had more yards than his entire college career in one game against Pittsburgh, 180, a Patriot AFC Championship record. The culture also includes perseverance, persistence, mental toughness, a positive attitude, and a team-over-individual mindset. The Patriots had to let two great players go this year because they were poisoning the team. Not easy, but they understand that one negative person, no matter how good, hurts the team in the long run. You are only as strong as your weakest link, and the weakest link hurts everyone involved with or touched by the team. Your weakest link is hurting you, your profits, your other workers, and ultimately your customers.

Ingredient #3: A Leadership Team that Isn't Afraid to Lead

Leading includes setting expectations, holding people accountable, being a good example, being willing to work hard and make tough decisions, and not giving in to the whiners and complainers. Recently I was working with a company whose objective was to get all their salespeople to the level of the top two producers. I gave them a process to follow which, when used by other companies, increased their sales by an average of 278% over 12 months. The initial reaction from a member of the management team was, "If we put this together and force

our people to learn it, there will be a revolt. They already think we're pushing them too hard." When I asked who would object, I was told it would be the lowest performers. I then asked two pointed questions, one, why are they concerned about the opinions of the lowest performers who probably shouldn't be there anyway and, two, who's running the company then, or the lowest performers?

The biggest issues I see in the workplace are a lack of accountability and letting negative, low-performers poison the environment. This is baffling to me. No leader worth their salt would put up with negative people who continually miss quota while complaining, questioning management, and causing problems in an attempt to do less work for the same or more pay. They should be shown the door ASAP. It amazes me when owners make decisions based upon how much push back they'll get from the negative people and those that don't want to work. How long do you think you're negative in the New England Patriots locker room? How long are you allowed to skirt your responsibilities and not do your job? Exactly. We all know their motto: DO YOUR JOB. That's one key reason they are great. True leadership requires that you are willing to work hard, get your hands dirty, deal with the issues head on, and that you get negative, lazy people on board or out *quickly*. Again, these people kill morale, productivity, the bottom line, and everything you're trying to accomplish. Negativity and people with a poor work ethic are such as cancer, that if all your people fell in these two categories, you're better off getting rid of everyone and starting from scratch as a one-person shop than dealing with even one of them. A key aspect of leadership is to provide people with a positive, professional work environment.

Ingredient #4: A Process that Works and People Who Buy in and are Committed

The New England Patriots have a successful process that works and everyone drinks the Kool-Aid and follows in lock-step like an elite military organization. When you show up in their locker room you're expected to follow and trust in the process. No questioning, no complaining about the hard work, no distractions from the process, just complete faith that the process works and that those calling the shots know exactly what they're doing. Your only job is to get in line, follow along, do your job, and go to a record ninth Super Bowl.