

Why LESS work is THE WAY ‘to Sales Success’?

by John Chapin

The above title “Why LESS work is THE WAY” showed up in my e-mail box from a sales speaker and trainer in another attempt to make a ton of money with an online course. I see this far too often. Another example of telling salespeople what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. The average salesperson is desperate to significantly increase sales while at the same time avoiding calling on strangers and facing rejection. Look, unless you have tens of thousands of dollars to spend on online advertising, or you can afford to hire a bunch of good appointment setters, the only way you’re going to ramp up your sales is through the tried-and-true method that works every time.

The biggest issue I see with unsuccessful salespeople is that they aren’t willing to do the work. Specifically, they aren’t willing to go out and make the calls and face the amount of rejection they need to face in order to have a successful business. The most popular phrase I hear from these people is, “I believe in working smart, not hard.” Obviously, you want to work smart when and where you can. I’m not talking about hard work and grinding it out without any thought. After all, you can work really hard running as fast as you can looking for a sunrise, but if you’re running west, it isn’t going to happen. Be smart, but first, be willing to work hard.

The problem is, most people’s version of working smart is coming up with ways to avoid making sales calls either face-to-face or via the phone, or both. They try to cheat the system, by finding a shortcut or magic bullet versus following the one sure way that works. Many hide behind spam e-mail or only do prospecting in networking groups where they see the same people over and over again, most of whom are looking for business themselves, so they don’t even hear you when you’re talking about your business. These salespeople spend years searching for the secret to significantly increase sales while avoiding rejection. They spend hours upon hours chasing the less-work-more-sales lies, going down the rabbit hole, and even after all those hours, and wasted money on courses, they continue to mire in mediocrity either not hitting quota or barely hitting it. They just scrape by, bouncing from sales job to sales job, continuing to think, ‘I know there’s an easier way, a way to make a bunch of sales without doing all the work of making calls, talking to strangers, and facing rejection.’ Ten, fifteen, twenty years later, they find themselves still chasing the secret when there never was any secret. This is not the smart way, it is not the shortest distance between where they are now and great sales success, it is the long way, the hard way, because these shortcuts, these magic bullets, these secrets don’t work. Meanwhile, these people are scraping by and struggling instead of living a great life created by selling the right way. The answer is and always was right there the whole time, the only problem is that the answer requires hard work and the average human does not like hard work.

Rudy Ruettinger, who they made the movie Rudy after, said that people aren't afraid of the hard work, they're afraid that the hard work won't pay off. While I absolutely agree with that, I think he gives the average to poor salesperson too much credit. The average or poor salesperson won't do the hard work even if they do know it will pay off because they're lazy. These are the same people who think sales is a 9-5 job Monday through Friday that should still pay a minimum of six figures.

So, what is the tried-and-true method, the non-secretive, direct route to sales success? Primarily it's going out and making the calls. Lots and lots of calls. Initial calls, follow-up calls, follow-up e-mails, follow-up physical letters and packages, making anywhere from eight to 13 contacts with leads, and sometimes more. In addition, it's learning the sales skills, learning the industry, learning your product and your competitors' product, working on your unique selling proposition, and taking the time to develop yourself personally and professionally. Then of course, there's also the hard work involved in building relationships, not only with your prospects and clients, but also with the people at your company, and other support people outside of your company whether it's other companies that support your business, or the person at the post office, or Federal Express, or the catering company. Finding out about them, who they are and what they are interested in. Sending out the cards and thank-you notes, sending items of interest, and doing the other things necessary to build the personal relationship and stand out. Going above and beyond, being super-responsive, and doing more than people expect.

The biggest roadblock to hard work for these people seems to be motivation. Look, as the saying goes, "Sales is the highest paying hard work and the lowest paying easy work." Your focus should be on the 'highest paying hard work' piece of this. If you work hard and refuse to quit, your hard work will pay off but you have to work hard on the right things, those that I mentioned above. Bottom line, you should be prospecting, presenting, and closing 80% of your prime time. Successful selling comes down to talking to enough of the right people the right way. Start by working hard by making the calls and learning how to sell. Set some goals around what you want for yourself and the people in your life, what kind of a difference you want to make in the world, what you want your legacy to be, and what you want people to say about you when you're gone. Okay, now get to work.