

IT'S NOT FAILURE. IT'S FAILURE TO DO YOUR BEST.

I'm often asked, "Why did my salespeople fail?" or "Why do I fail at selling?" (or other words I choose not to print.) And the answer is usually: It's not necessarily sales failure, but failure to do your best or be your best, or failure to take the best actions to help succeed.

There are signs that allow a sales leader to recognize failure is on its way. Most salespeople and some business owners blame circumstances rather than take responsibility. Blame is its own form of failure. But that's a story for another day. I want to talk about the person who's out there every day, trying to reach his or her goals, trying to achieve their sales plan. Add to that, most people are inadequately supporting their sales with realistic and applicable marketing tools.

Even if you're reaching your goals, even if you believe you're well prepared, here are some signs showing how many people have reached a plateau and then never rise above:

1. Your inability to set an initial appointment with the real decision maker.
2. Beyond price, your inability to uncover the real buying motive of the customer.
3. Believing that competition forces price reduction.
4. Poor social media participation that results in low or no personal branding and low or no personal reputation.
5. Poor follow-up after the initial meeting.
6. Long sales cycle based on presentations to low-level decision makers.
7. Prospects disappearing after the first presentation.
8. Prospects not returning your phone calls.
9. Blaming customers and prospects for the loss of a sale.
10. Failure to take responsibility for the circumstances you create.

I find it interesting that when businesspeople face one of these above situations, they rarely (if ever) take responsibility for creating them. If customers are not returning calls, there has to be a pretty good reason. Rather than blame the customer, find out why the customer isn't returning your call. If you are continually fighting price, it's obvious you haven't proven value. It's obvious that the customer perceives little or no difference between you and a competitive product or service. Businesspeople in general need to take more control of the selling situation by creating definitive next steps. If you give a proposal, and you don't have a firm appointment at a given time to reconnect, then you will chase that prospect and almost seem desperate to get a next meeting.

Here are a few things you can do to help your prospective customers decide to buy:

1. Prepare in terms of them, not just you. The customer must perceive that there is value in doing business with you rather than your competition. Customers only want to know how they win. Focus on ownership and focus on outcome. Too many people focus on what it “is” rather than what it “does” after the customer takes possession.
2. Prove it, don't just say it. It amazes me how many people do not use testimonials. Prove everything you claim so that a prospect can feel comfortable and justify value over price – all based on the words of other customers.
3. Be there after the sale to prove your worth. The biggest lost opportunity in any relationship is the absence of the business after the sale has taken place. Help the customer get started. Help the customer understand and take advantage of “best uses.” Transfer your wisdom, transfer your experience, transfer all your help, and the result will be continued successes.

Stop worrying about failing and start offering value ...

- at your highest and best level,
- with your highest and best effort,
- with your highest and best preparation,
- with a passion to the point the customer will only buy from you.

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