

TACTics

for Sales ProfessionalsSM



Sandler Sales Institute
180° From Traditional Sales Training[®]

WEEK 49

INTEREST, PRESENTATION

The TACTIC: Don't start — then you can't lose.

The STORY:

Do any of these scenarios seem familiar?

Bill knew he should do some prospecting, but it was getting near the end of the week. Heck, he thought, most of the people I'd call will be thinking about the weekend. Might as well put it off until Monday. Or actually, Tuesday would be better. On Monday I'm sure there will be a ton of stuff on their desks, and they definitely won't have time for me. Yeah, hit them on Tuesday between 10 and 12. That's the ticket. But maybe mid-afternoon would be better. I'll have to think about that over the weekend.

Jane, the sales manager for a sales force of 24, knew she could increase sales if only everyone followed the same sales strategy. With this in mind and the blessing of upper management, she had scheduled all of the salespeople to attend a mandatory week-long sales training session. Once that happens, she decided, then we can really start turning some numbers. Now all she wondered about was how to make sure that no one wiggled out of the mandatory meeting. She had, over the past day, decided on the steps to take if someone tried.

Nick, during the past two months, had watched his sales slide into a black hole. At first he figured it was the competition from across town that was causing it, but now he wondered. He was spending more time than ever before with prospects and former customers, actually tons of time, and with poor results. He was losing them all. "What am I doing wrong?" he wondered. I chat them up, and they dump me. All that time I spend with them and nothing happens.

The RESULT:

All three examples above perfectly portray "not starting." If you don't start the sale, you can't lose the sale. And losing is defined by 90% of the salespeople as "not getting the sale" or to put it another way, "I got a no."

Getting a "no" is not losing. Getting a "no" is success. Getting a "no" allows you to go out and find a "yes."

DISCUSSION:

There are hundreds of ways to avoid “starting,” and every one of them will seem perfectly reasonable at the time.

Bill wanted to make sure that his prospecting was done in a way to get the best results. He was convinced he was approaching it correctly. Result—no prospecting until next week. And, does next week ever arrive?

Jane truly believed that once everyone attended the sales training, sales would go up. Until that meeting happened she had decided to focus on getting people to show up. Result — no sales were expected in the meantime. But Jane was doing her job.

Nick felt that he should concentrate on establishing rapport with prospects. He believed that the more rapport he established, the higher the likelihood of a sale. Result — since all he was doing was establishing rapport, he never got around to selling.

APPROACH:

Just for the moment consider that you are a baseball player. You can take batting practice for weeks. But anything you hit during practice doesn’t count. The only thing that counts is standing at the plate during a game. Fortunately for the baseball player, he is eventually forced to stand at the plate and do something.

Unfortunately, salespeople are not forced to “stand at the plate” and do something. Short of running out of money and not being able to pay bills, salespeople and sales managers will have the best reasons in the world to avoid starting.

How do you start more often than not? By recognizing those behavior patterns that fill up your sales time and do nothing for you. Write down how many hours you work a month. Now keep track for a full month of how much time you directly spend with prospects. Compare the two. Then decide if you are “starting” or just “practicing.”

THOUGHT:

Start often. The sooner you get a “no,” the sooner you can get the “yes.” Start often.

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WEEK 50

INTEREST, PRESENTATION

The TACTIC: Successful professionals are not lucky.

The STORY:

Melinda did not consider herself lucky in sales. Of course, there were those in the sales meeting who felt otherwise.

"Look," said Tim, "it has to be luck. The people who come in . . . you're lucky that most of the ones who come in have already decided to buy. The rest of us just seem to get the ones 'just looking.'"

"Yeah," chimed in Jim. "Just yesterday you had that woman who came in. Before you came to work, she was in here every three months, and nobody could sell her anything. She walks in, you walk over and bingo, she's buying. We've softened her up for over a year, and you get the sale. That's the luck of the draw."

"So," said Melinda, "I don't want to upset you, but are you saying that if you had walked over to her instead, she would have bought?"

"Definitely. It just turned out one more time that it was your turn for the walk-ins. Luck."

"Do you know," asked Melinda, "how many people I talk to in a month?" Seeing the other salespeople shaking their heads "no," she went on, "I talk to an average of 200 prospects a month. How many did you talk to last month, Tim?"

"Let's see," said Tim looking at his notes, "about 75."

"Well," said Melinda, "do you see what I'm saying?"

The RESULT:

Many salespeople believe that luck is responsible for their success. Being in the right spot at the right time. Having just the color the person wanted. And so on . . . the list of "lucky" situations is endless. But here's the problem with luck — the top level salespeople never ascribe their success to luck.

DISCUSSION:

What's "being lucky"? Buying only one lottery ticket in your life and winning the grand prize. Opening the door to a store for someone and then finding out ten years later that that person left you a million dollars because of your one act of kindness. That's luck.

When salespeople ascribe their lack of success to someone else being lucky, well, the nice thing to say is that perhaps they aren't working properly. In the story, Melinda touched, talked to, and worked with 200 prospects a month, Jim only about 75. Melinda had organized her selling time to reach many more prospects and as a result, had more sales. She was not lucky, she had organized her time to make the most of it.

Every salesperson in the world has at least one story of how just by being there or having the right color shirt on, a big sale was made. These are true stories. Perhaps these are the result of luck. However, a salesperson cannot make a living by making one lucky sale. The sooner the salesperson gives up the idea of luck being the reason for consistent sales, the better.

APPROACH:

Sales has nothing to do with luck. Banish this term. Sales has everything to do with the salesperson making a commitment and following through on organizing his time.

Instead of wondering why more people don't come through the door; do something to get more people to come through it, or go out and find them.

Instead of complaining that you don't have as large a selection as your competitor, go out and tell someone you only stock quality, not quantity. Don't ascribe the success of your competitor to his being lucky because he has a larger selection. If that's truly the only thing holding you back from increased sales, get a job with your competitor.

THOUGHT:

Luck has nothing to do with being a successful professional salesperson.

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WEEK 51

CLOSING

The TACTIC: When a prospect is positive, strip line.

The STORY:

"I'm really interested in these three lots fronting the bay. How much are they?" asked Bob.

Stuart thanked his lucky stars that he had decided to cover the office late on Saturday afternoon, which was normally known as the "dead zone" by the rest of the staff. He couldn't wait to see their faces on Monday.

"Well, each one is the same price, \$125,000 apiece. There's no discount for buying three at the same time. Why do you want three?"

"Back in Connecticut we have ten acres, and we've gotten used to not seeing any neighbors. I'd like the same thing here."

"Well I could appreciate that," responded Stuart. "We do have owner financing available . . ."

I don't think we'd need any financing," said Bob, "Our plan is to sell everything in Connecticut and move here permanently.

"That's a very enviable position to be in. Tell me, have you looked at these three lots?"

"Yes. Last year when we were down here. Over the winter my wife and I decided to take the next step. What can you tell me about local builders?"

For the next 15 minutes or so, Stuart went through his list of local builders showing Bob pictures of the houses they had built. With each moment that passed, Stuart knew the sale of three lots was a done deal. Never had he met a prospect who was so thorough.

"Well," said Bob some 40 minutes later, "I've taken enough of your time today. Do you have a card with a home number on it so that I could contact you tomorrow? I know it is Sunday, but I'd like to get something going here."

Stuart kept his hand from shaking with anticipation as he wrote his home number down on the business card. Oh yes, he thought, volunteering for the dead zone was a smart move.

The RESULT:

Stuart cancelled his plans for Sunday and spent the entire day waiting by the phone. By one o'clock, he was beginning to wonder. By four o'clock he was getting angry. By seven that night he was wondering if the local fast food place still needed help. He could not figure out what had happened to his done deal.

DISCUSSION:

Every salesperson has experienced the positive prospect who makes all the right sounds and moves and is a sure thing. But then, usually within a few days or at most a week, never comes back. Or, when you call, never seems to be available. You wonder why.

“Just a tire kicker,” is one response.

“Didn’t have anything to do and just came in to waste my time,” is another.

Both of these may be correct. The problem is not so much that this positive “sure thing” didn’t buy, it’s that so much time was wasted for nothing.

There is, of course, the standard salesperson’s response that at least the positive prospect will remember me when he really wants to buy. So the time wasn’t really wasted.

But consider this from the prospect’s point of view. What did Stuart do? He wasted the prospect’s time by allowing the prospect to carry him away on his tide of good feelings. Why would the prospect want to come back in a waste more of his time?

APPROACH:

As tempting as it is to go along for the ride of good feelings, you have to stop it. You need to have the prospect understand that your time is valuable and that you are here to do business.

For example, Stuart could have asked, “I appreciate your being interested in three lots; do you have any idea of what the additional taxes are going to cost you for the next five years?”

At this moment, Stuart has interrupted the flow and brought an element of reality into the situation. He has paired what the prospect wants with some point that might cause the prospect to end the sale. If Bob were truly serious, would the taxes really matter?

THOUGHT:

Positive prospects should always have some minor point or points brought up that could end the sale. This puts you back in control by forcing the prospect to deal with you in a business-like manner.

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WEEK 52

PROSPECTING

The TACTIC: Don't talk to strangers!

The STORY:

"What's the first piece of advice that's given to every child by its mother?" asked Steve, the sales trainer.

After a few moments of silence, someone from the back of the room yelled out, "Don't talk to strangers."

"That's right," responded Steve. "And what did Mom teach you to do when you meet someone for the first time?"

The same voice yelled out, "Be polite, introduce yourself and don't ask a lot of questions."

"Now think about this," said Steve, "every one of you was taught to not talk to strangers, and if for some strange reason you did, you had to give your name and not ask questions."

Steve looked around the room and went on. "I've got to ask you something . . . seriously . . . was Mom in sales?" Pausing for a few moments, he could see some smiles of recognition.

"What's the first thing a salesperson has to do? Talk to strangers. So right off, you're in trouble with Mom. So how do 90% of the salespeople make up for ignoring Mom's first rule? They don't ask any questions of the stranger, and they hold a one-sided lecture. They bore the prospect to death and occasionally make a sale. What about the other 10% of the salespeople? Well, not only do they talk to strangers, they also ignore what Mom said about asking questions."

"Now here's the dilemma. Those 10% that ignore what Mom said make 90% of the sales. So, do you make money or pay attention to Mom?"

The RESULT:

Mom's not to blame for whether salespeople are successful or not. The success or failure of a salesperson depends on how well a salesperson can change his behavior in a sales situation. Recognizing situations that automatically make a person react in a certain way is the first step to becoming a consistently successful sales professional.

DISCUSSION:

Any psychologist or psychiatrist will tell you that the first five or six years of a child's life are the most formative. During this time, Mom and, to a lesser extent, Dad lay down all sorts of rules to follow. Not talking to strangers is Rule Number One. In fact, you see this rule being advertised on afternoon kids' TV. If a stranger approaches you, don't talk to him. Leave.

Not only did salespeople learn not to talk to strangers at a young age, so did every prospect you will ever approach. Nobody is raised with the rule, "Talk to every stranger you meet." So what is the result?

Salespeople have this conflict in their heads about needing to talk to strangers to make money and, at the same time, remembering what Mom said. Prospects are in the same situation. They may need what you are selling, but they were also trained not to talk to strangers.

So how do you both deal with the conflict you both have? By getting it out of the way right from the start.

APPROACH:

One method that you can try, if you are bold enough, is walk up to a prospect and say, "When I was little, Mom told me never to talk to strangers, is there any way we could get around that?"

If you can mentally get past the look you'll receive, put out your hand. Nine times out of ten you'll get a handshake, and the person will introduce himself.

Then go right ahead and ask, "The other rule she raised me with is never ask questions of someone I just met . . . would you mind if I ignored that one?"

Again, if you can deal with the look you'll get, the person will say, "It's OK -- go ahead, ask."

Then respond with, "Whatever brought you in here?"

Granted, this approach doesn't play at all when you keep an appointment to see someone. But it does work amazingly well when you call to make an appointment.

THOUGHT:

Spending your time talking to strangers and asking them questions is what sales is all about.