

63 POWERFUL TIPS FOR A HUGE INCREASE IN SALES



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INTRODUCTION

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

When our son was around three years old I began to notice that there were things he did and said that reminded me of similar things I have observed in salespeople. In 2005, I posted *Salespeople are just like Children* to my Blog, [Understanding the Sales Force](#). What I didn't realize at the time was that over the next 10 years I would write an additional 36 articles comparing our son to salespeople. While that may seem like a lot, it's really just one out of every 40 articles I wrote or an average of just 3 per year.

Achieving sales and sales management success has become exponentially more challenging. I have learned that when I use life and the many things that happen to us as metaphors for sales, sales process, sales management, sales leadership and sales effectiveness, readers get it and embrace it more than when I take a more direct approach to the topics.

I always attempt to entertain, get a reaction and provide a useful tip while hoping that you will get a glimpse into how I think about sales and sales management. If a tip resonates with you and you want to apply it, discuss it with your team, or discuss it with me, all the better.

The articles I selected for this book are entertaining, enlightening, insightful and useful. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed sharing them.

3 YEARS OLD

SALESPeOPLE ARE JUST LIKE CHILDREN

The best way for me to prove that salespeople are just like children is to share an experience I had with our son. While driving him to school I asked, 'Would you like to go shopping with me tonight and pick out a present that you can give to Mommy for Christmas?'

“Oh Yeah!”, he replied.

“What do you think she might like?”, I asked.

“I think she should like a pocketbook”, he said thoughtfully.

At that point I was thinking, “He gets it. He is already beginning to understand gift giving!”

He continued, “Or maybe she should like a train set for me.”

So maybe he is just like a salesperson. After all, salespeople are taught to ask questions to learn about the needs, issues, applications, problems and consequences that their prospects might have. And some salespeople actually ask one or two of those questions – almost as if they get it - and then they revert and present their capabilities, product, service or company. Just like our son, they can think about the other person for only so long before they backslide to thinking about what's more important or comfortable for them.

How do you break this child-like behavior? Stickers work for our 3-year old. Perhaps the corporate version of stickers would help to change the child-like behavior of your salespeople. The stickers your salespeople

will respond to would be spiffs or recognition - anything that would motivate them to behave the way you would prefer. If they ask the right questions, they get rewarded. If they ask enough of the right questions, they get rewarded. If their prospects provide the right answers, they get rewarded. If they perform those behaviors consistently they will generate more sales, earn more money and reward themselves.



Salespeople really are like children.

4 YEARS OLD EMERGING SUPERSTARS

The boy inside of our smart, cute, athletic, caring child is emerging right now. Last week he dialed 911, hit in the batting cages and scored a hole-in-one at mini-golf. He climbed out of bed to watch a Boston Red Sox game with me so that I wouldn't have to watch it alone. I could go on and on. But the toddler still lingers. A temper tantrum, a mess that doesn't get picked up, an uneaten meal, a David Ortiz Red Sox shirt covered in chocolate ice cream.

Salespeople are like this too. Emerging Superstar, Lingering Underachiever. While they bring in some business and get closer to hitting their monthly numbers, they drive you crazy with their mistakes, poor reads, ineffective questions, lack of new opportunities, blown closes, the put-offs they accepted, long sales cycles, discounting, ineffective follow up and overall general ineffectiveness.

Would you like to know why your salespeople have these issues? Why they don't become stronger more quickly? Why they don't change? If there's hope that you could save them? How much better they could become? What it will take?

You could eliminate your frustration by [having your sales](#)



Tip #2

[force evaluated](#) and get the answers to these difficult-to-answer questions. You deserve to have a sales force that over achieves.

4 YEARS OLD

SALES MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM ITALY

My wife and I returned from a trip to Italy with our son, his 4-year-old girlfriend and her parents. Italy was splendid but the trip was not without its challenges. Three of us are consultants and one is a doctor so, as we do in our work, we debriefed the trip and identified 43 lessons learned. By the way, if you strive for perfection, debriefing your coaching, accountability, motivational or recruiting events should always produce lessons learned or, as the doctor in our group would call it, morbidity and mortality rounds.

Many of the 43 lessons are applicable to sales management. I've shared twenty of them below:

1. Don't let four-year olds lock the bathroom door if you're not entirely certain they can get back out on their own. (In Italy, these are tiny rooms with real locks as opposed to the stalls we have in the US.)



Tip #3

It's great if your new salesperson lands an appointment with a desirable account. Just don't let them go in alone! You may find yourself having to kick in a door to salvage the day.

2. The locals are terrible at providing directions you can understand.



Tip #4

Don't let the veterans tell your new salespeople what they're supposed to do. You may find your new

salespeople golfing rather than prospecting for new business.

3. After a week, your four-year-old's first name will sound like a four-letter word.

Tip #5

If you repeatedly mutter the name of a new salesperson, it's time for a warning. Lay out some serious consequences.

4. If you need to drop your rental car off at a designated point in Rome, have a taxi lead you there and return you to your hotel - even if it is within walking distance.

Tip #6

If you aren't totally certain of your salespeople's ability to execute as planned, tag along and show them the way.

5. Kids who refuse to walk severely limit your range.

Tip #7

Salespeople who refuse to prospect severely limit your ability to grow sales. You must identify and weed out farmers prior to selection by using an [effective sales specific pre-employment assessment](#).

6. Pack fewer clothes to leave more room for goodies purchased on the trip.

Tip #8

Hiring fewer lousy salespeople or, [the science of sales selection](#), leaves more money to hire stronger salespeople that can have a more immediate impact. You can sell more with less.

7. The "no bickering rule", if applied day one, would have prevented many unnecessary temper tantrums.



If you clearly communicate your expectations for success, how to get there, and the consequences for failure to execute, you won't have to experience a temper tantrum of your own.

8. If you rent a villa, demand daily maid service with fresh towels and freshly sliced lemons.



When you hire new salespeople, demand consistent daily prospecting so that you don't need to invoke the Lemon Law.

9. Story telling at restaurants encourages good behavior during meals.



Tell lots of stories to pass on legacy information and to describe how to handle the various sales situations they will find themselves in.

10. Before you leave for vacation, make sure your friendship or relationship can withstand the stresses of kids, traffic, shopping, dining and multiple car accidents.



Do not attempt to develop friendships with your salespeople or the relationship will prevent you from managing the stress of poor performance.

11. Hope for the best but prepare for the kids to be on their worst behavior.



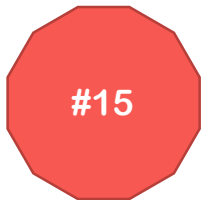
Always be optimistic about your outcomes but pessimistic about everything that can go wrong.

12. After two drivers and four car accidents, consider hiring a professional, local driver.



If your new sales force is a train wreck, hire an expert to help with your selection process and development.

13. There's a reason that 5-Star hotels in Rome don't allow children.



And there's a reason that most successful sales organizations don't hire salespeople without relevant sales experience.

14. If you order fried steak, you'd better expect fried chicken.



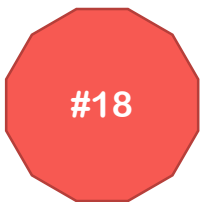
If you hire salespeople who possess a great resume and track record but don't subject them to a proper [sales specific pre-employment assessment](#), expect an underperforming fraud.

15. When you're in a foreign country there is nothing like a helpful concierge.



When your salespeople are in uncharted territory, there is nothing like an inside champion.

16. Gelato trumps ice cream. Kids will even behave to get some.



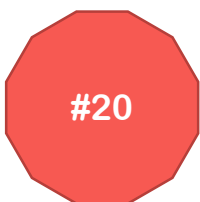
Don't forget to provide incentives and awards when performance blows away expectations.

17. Don't attempt to drive a 9 passenger van through streets no wider than a sidewalk.



Don't ask your salespeople to do anything that hasn't been done before, or that they're not equipped or skilled enough to do.

18. Don't attempt to navigate the streets, alleys and sidewalks of Rome with an inaccurate car rental map.



Don't expect your new salespeople to navigate their sales calls without a clearly defined, mapped and proven selling process.

19. If you're at the ocean, leave time for a sail or cruise.



If you're on a joint sales call, leave time to debrief the call.

20. Discover all of your villa's amenities on the day you arrive, not as you're about to leave.



Make sure your new salespeople ask all the right questions on their first call. You don't want to learn the prospects' compelling reasons to buy after they have awarded the business to someone else.

4 YEARS OLD

MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT

Today our son asked me to play baseball with him. It was a beautiful, calm and chilly fall day. He couldn't find the oversized whiffle ball that I usually pitch with so we used a significantly smaller, regulation size rubber ball. I told him it might take a little while to get used to the smaller ball and he would have to watch it very closely.

He swung, connected and crushed the first 4 pitches, hitting them farther than ever. He was more effective with the more challenging smaller ball. Wow!

When salespeople are struggling, management often changes the strategy in an attempt to make it easier on the salespeople. I'm guilty of having tried and failed with this strategy too. "Let's have him call on smaller companies." "Let's have her call lower in the organization." "Let's have him sell something smaller to begin with." "Let's give her the flexibility to sell it at whatever price she needs." You already know that these strategies don't work.

Why not give your salespeople a smaller ball? Make it more



difficult. Increase the expectations. Demand more. Raise the price. Aim higher in the organization. This serves to improve their focus, helps them understand that their job is on the line and serves notice that we expect them to perform even though they were previously unable.

Play small ball.

5 YEARS OLD

IF YOU CAN SPELL YOU CAN SELL

At kindergarten drop-off this morning one of the girls was spelling the names of her parents. One parent remarked that she didn't think her own kid could spell their names. Just then a boy said, "I can't spell my mom's name but I know all the letters: K-I-M".

Salespeople are like that too. They often have difficulty articulating exactly what they do. They have a process but they can't explain it. They ask questions but don't know when or why. They close but can't point to anything in particular that they always do to get the business.

It's important that you become consciously aware of the things you do



so that you perform with a purpose and unnecessary steps are eliminated. It's also important to identify, integrate and execute the things you don't currently do so that your calls are more thorough and you aren't skipping crucial steps.

The process for selling should be a lot like 1st-2nd-3rd and the protocol for asking questions should follow A-B-C...

5 YEARS OLD

COMPELLING REASONS TO BUY

My wife and I are very excited about the new school that we would like our son to attend next year. When we asked him if he was excited he said, “Yeah, I’ll have my own stapler!”

Who would have guessed it would come to staplers? We thought it might be the library, teachers, campus, new friends, new subjects or the science lab. But staplers?

We assume that we know why people will want what we have, but unless we take the time to ask the right questions and learn what their compelling reasons are, we have a great chance of being wrong.

Most salespeople don’t know two important things; 1) What are all of the possible compelling reasons their prospects might have for choosing to do business with them (read the chapter on Getting to 2nd Base in Baseline Selling), and 2) What are the best questions to ask, and when and how are they to be asked, in order to expose their prospects’ compelling reasons (also in the chapter on Getting to 2nd Base).

If we’re wrong about the compelling reasons, we’ll be wrong about the



ideal solution to present. If our son is thinking staplers and we start reinforcing what we think is his compelling reason - the library for instance - then how will he react

when we continue to speak about the library and all he wants to hear about are staplers? Let’s assume your prospect is most concerned with

how you will hold their hand through the process and all you talk about is the product you'll provide. How comfortable and confident do you think your prospect is about your ability to satisfy him or her? And don't assume that the prospect will just blurt out, "What about the hand holding?" It won't happen!

Make sure you fully understand how to ask the right questions to get at their compelling reasons. Take your complete list of their potential compelling reasons and create open-ended questions that will help your prospect identify their particular compelling reason, if they do indeed have one.

5 YEARS OLD

RELATIONSHIPS IMPACT PERFORMANCE

Our son has two girlfriends. This is one area in which he does not take after his dad! While he loves being with both of them, Mary drives him nuts while Sally simply causes him to float on air. He isn't really aware of how each girl impacts his behavior after being with her, but we sure are! He can be moody after being with Mary while he tends to behave like an angel after spending time with Sally.

I know adults who are affected this way too, the difference being that they usually possess an acute awareness of who makes them feel the way they feel. But what happens when one of your salespeople has a Mary (or a Bob) in his life? Moods can be unpredictable, self-esteem crumbles, sales calls are aborted at the first sign of resistance, and the ability to focus is inconsistent. These salespeople may spend time in the office being unproductive and you will see very inconsistent results at best. You may even be aware of the problem, able to understand the cause and effect of it all, although unable to help.

So what can you do if you have a salesperson whose unhealthy relationship is impacting performance?

Make the office his safe place, where he can get away from it all. Make it the place where she has the ability to perform in such a way that she can feel good about herself. Encourage him to throw himself into his work. Give her recognition when



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she earns it. Be the person he can share his problems with. But don't, under any circumstances, ignore the situation. Make sure he fully understands the impact of the relationship on his performance and get him to agree to leaving his hurt feelings outside the office door.

5 YEARS OLD

5 TIPS FOR SALES MANAGERS

We spent the past two weeks with our son and during that time he said and did some things that have a much greater meaning:

On Controlling Emotions: After hearing me repeat this a thousand



times since he learned the language, last week I heard him say, "it is what it is" rather than arguing or protesting as usual. Your salespeople must be able to take that approach instead of getting emotionally involved when things go wrong.

On Confidence: After opening a gift (gum making machine) from Santa



that he didn't ask for he said, "Wow, how did Santa know I loved gum? Now I know he's real. For a while I was wondering if he was fake but now I'm sure." Your salespeople must sell on faith. They must have faith that your strategy and coaching are right on and they must have faith that they'll get their desired outcome as they begin the call. When they encounter an obstacle they must have faith that it will be overcome.

On Sales Manager as Safety Net: His grandma gave him a



PlayStation2 and he's been spending a lot of time playing the Power Rangers game, intended for kids 10 years and older. He didn't have any trouble with the fighting segments of the game and mastered the kicks, punches,

shots and moves without any trouble. When it came to some of the tricky jumping he called me, thinking that I was an expert. Little did he know that I was only one step ahead of him. After doing the jumps for him, he came to rely on me to continue doing them whenever he encountered trouble. Finally, I said, "You can do this. Just run backwards to the previous point and start again." After repeating that several times, he started to do it himself. You can't let your salespeople rely on you to do it for them. They must be able to move opportunities forward and close them on their own or you run the risk of not developing them and having them rely on you as their safety net.

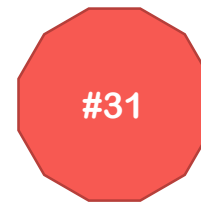
On Incentives: He realized that if his play improved the game rewarded him with more powers, a choice of Rangers, new music, and even a



different scene. He responded very well to these incentives and his abilities grew more quickly. You must be certain that your salespeople are properly motivated at all times. You can't allow them to become complacent -

ever!

On Goals: He said there were some things he would like for his



birthday. We discussed these gift ideas and he learned what it would take for him to get them. You must have your salespeople go through the goal setting process each year to identify those things they would like - a

lot. Then have them determine what kind of business effort will be required to reach those goals.

5 YEARS OLD

DEVELOPING SALESPEOPLE

Our son read 130 pages to us at bedtime instead of a normal evening where Mommy usually reads to him. He's always too tired to attempt sounding out words but tonight he read two 65 page books. And when Mommy helped him with the one word he stumbled on, he said, "It's OK, I don't need your help Mommy!" He laughed so much harder when he heard the funny words coming out of his own mouth. He reread one funny passage five times he liked it so much. And he was so proud of himself he just wanted to keep on reading, and reading, and reading. He was still reading when we checked in on him a half hour later.

The same phenomenon takes place with salespeople. Not only with new salespeople, but veteran salespeople too, who find themselves with new companies, industries, products or services, or calling into new markets.

At first, they just want to listen. Then they want you to go with them and help them do it. Finally, at some point, just when it seems like they can't do it by themselves, they successfully read the call, execute the entire process and have a great big smile on their faces, so proud of what they accomplished. Finally, they don't need your help anymore - you might screw it up!

As their manager, you must have the patience to allow this to happen, while at the same time having the urgency to push them along, coach and encourage them, provide constructive



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criticism, and make sure they're performing enough activity to drive results.

And then one day, when you aren't expecting it, they will surprise you and read the email they received from the new client or customer they just closed.

When you are consistently hiring the right salespeople, it gives you greater confidence to demonstrate the patience required to develop them. When you play the numbers game and know that half of the people you bring on won't stick, it's difficult to differentiate between a slow bloomer and a chronic failure.

5 YEARS OLD

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Our son surprised us again this weekend. First, he "accidentally" slipped into the pond, which explains how he got so wet and dirty. Then he reappeared wearing fresh, clean clothes and told us that he put his dirty clothes into the wash. What? We had to check this out.

Sure enough, he put his dirties into the washing machine, used the correct amount of detergent and fabric softener, put them into the proper openings, pushed the right buttons and it was running. Later, he even transferred those clothes into the dryer, pushed the right buttons there too, and completed the wash.

He has observed both of us putting laundry into the wash. He has even assisted on occasion. Yet neither of us thought that even with supervision he could correctly execute all the steps required for laundering success.

Mommy reads up to five books to him at bed-time each night. Last night he actually sounded out the words and read four books to us.

So for two hundred and seventy-one weeks he can't do this stuff and then in one day he can. Overnight sensation? Hardly. He has been preparing for these events his entire life.

It's the same with salespeople. Continue to tell them, show them, expose them, demonstrate to them, question them, coach them and motivate them and then one day, when you least expect it, they will surprise you with the deal you never thought they could close. Of all the words I just chose, the key word is "motivate." If they aren't motivated it just won't happen. Oh sure, they'll close the easy ones, those that would have closed regardless of who showed up. But if they are motivated and you continue to coach them daily, without fail, they will close the difficult sales too.



5 YEARS OLD

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

I spent much of this weekend pitching to our son, who is just nuts over baseball. He not only wants to improve so he can hit home runs, but he just loves playing.

I spent much of the past two summers trying to master the mechanics of the golf swing. I want to hit more fairways and I just plain love playing golf.

All of the golfers on the pro tour have coaches. Defensive and offensive coaches are as much a part of football as hitting and pitching coaches are a part of baseball. And these elite athletes, along with their coaches, practice every day. Since I'm more of a baseball guy, I know that the infielders take infield practice before each game. Pitchers throw side sessions between appearances to work on their mechanics. Hitters take batting practice, not only before each game, but in between games to work on their swings.

Of course, this is all leading to professional salespeople. The top 26% practiced to become great salespeople. They role-played, listened to audio, watched video and honed their craft. The rest just go out there every day and continue to go through the motions of selling, without a clear sense of what to ask, when and how to ask, and what to do if they don't get the answers they were looking for.

So what should you do to make your practice productive?

First, you'll need a practice partner, someone who is as committed to sales excellence as you are. Next, you'll need a practice schedule. Then you'll need to identify the various parts of the selling process where you need the most help. Break it down this way. Do you struggle most with getting

A red octagon with a white border containing the number #34 in white text.

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appointments or with closing the appointments? If it's getting appointments, do you struggle more with reaching a decision maker or scheduling a meeting or call? If it's closing, do you struggle more with getting them interested or getting them committed? Identify the 3-4 areas where you need the most help, tell your practice partners the kind of prospect they need to play, and practice asking the questions that you don't ask on real sales calls. Notice that I didn't say practice making presentations! You already know how to present. It's the rest of selling where you need the help.

If you don't know which questions you should be asking and at which time you should be asking them, that's another problem. Read the chapters in Baseline Selling on getting to 1st, 2nd and 3rd base and you'll have all the questions you need along with the ideal times to ask them.

Now go practice!

5 YEARS OLD

SALESPEOPLE AND THEIR FANTASIES

Our son decided to recite the names of the planets and was doing a great job. He said, "Pluto, Uranus, Jupiter, Earth, Venus, Saturn, Mars, and Krypton, where Superman and Krypto the Super Dog live."

We were so impressed that our little five-year-old knew seven of the planets and laughed so hard that he included Krypton. He still isn't old enough to know the difference between fantasy and reality in certain situations.

Just like salespeople.

Salespeople often can't tell the difference between a real opportunity and a fantasy. Some believe that if the opportunity has enough zeroes in it then it must be real. Some believe that if their prospect says "it looks good and we'll get back to you next week" that the prospect will actually call back and buy next week.

Your job, should you decide to accept the challenge, is to ask the right



questions so that you can begin to see the difference between reality and fantasy. Question everything. Punch holes in what your prospects say. Push back. Recognize put-offs and don't accept them.

Salespeople are just like children. You'll be more successful if you deal with reality.

6 YEARS OLD STARTING OVER

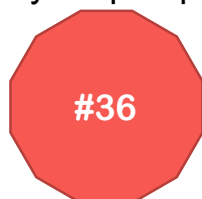
Like most young children, when our son was eighteen months old he began having temper tantrums. They peaked when he was three and now he stages them far less frequently. He is very stubborn and once he has committed to a tantrum he never, ever backs down. When he was younger, the tantrums wouldn't end until he fell asleep! Later, when he could begin to understand us, we could finally ask, "Would you like to start over?" Later still, he would finally ask us, "Can we start over?"

Starting over has its benefits. We get from point A to point B much more quickly, we always have a better outcome and we always finish things off with a smile. Lessons are learned, expectations for moving forward are set and behaviors change. Starting over can really be powerful!

So, when sales calls don't go well, why don't more salespeople ask if they can start over? What's the difference between the young child starting over and the salesperson starting over?

Not much.

If your prospect isn't engaged, if she hasn't shared any problems that



you can solve, if he seems to be distracted, if you are hearing obstacles instead of opportunities; If you are recognizing that you should have asked different

questions several minutes ago, that you took a wrong turn or that you didn't do what you had planned to do; Ask to start over. Try this:

“You know, this meeting is probably not going the way either of us had hoped. I don't think you're getting any value and I don't want to waste our time. Can we start over?”

You certainly won't be any worse off than you were before you asked and most prospects will recognize that they weren't helping things along. If your prospect isn't interested in starting over you can always stage a temper tantrum.

6 YEARS OLD

MOTIVATING BUYERS TO BUY

Our son identified a STAR WARS light saber – make that five light sabers – that he wants for Christmas. However, unlike the three he already has, which cost around \$20 each, these “replicas” were selling for \$89.99.

We attempted to explain the concept of “expensive” and he seemed to understand.

Then he said, “Why don’t you just get the money from the bank?”

We attempted to explain the concept of “banking” and he seemed to understand.

Then he said, “I have a great idea.

We asked what he had in mind.

He asked, “What if we didn’t have to pay for them?”

We asked how we could do that.

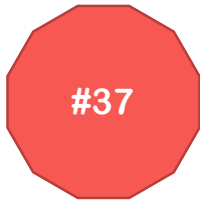
He proudly said, “The Internet!”

We attempted to explain the concept of Internet shopping and he seemed to understand.

Prospects are Like Children too.

When prospects want something badly enough, they can become quite resourceful. Think about what you've been willing to do when you wanted something – really badly – that you couldn't afford. Did you consider leasing, credit cards, financing, borrowing, putting something else off, going deeper into debt, budgeting for it, trading, anything – in order to get it? It's when prospects aren't particularly motivated to buy that it becomes so difficult to get them to take action, spend money or agree to buy.

If you agree that a motivated prospect will find the money, the question becomes, how do you help them become that motivated to buy?



That's where compelling reasons come into play. There are two kinds of compelling reasons and you need both of them. The first are the compelling reasons for them to buy what you sell. The second are their compelling reasons to buy from you instead of from someone else.

If you effectively identify their compelling reasons to buy, your prospects will find the money and take action almost every time. If you successfully identify their compelling reasons to buy from you, then you'll get the business nearly every time.

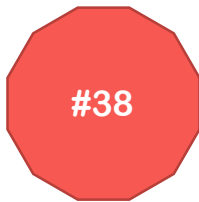
6 YEARS OLD

SALESPEOPLE AREN'T MADE OF GLASS

I suspect that most parents with young kids have kitchen tables with wooden tops, not the glass tabletop that we have. Our son and his friends manage to get more of a mess on the underside of the tabletop than on the top side. So, if the parents with wooden tabletops don't see the mess, does that mean it isn't there?

Many executives take the same approach with their sales forces. The problems that prevent salespeople from achieving the desired results are on the underside of the salespeople - under the skin. Executives may see symptoms, like failing to hit quota, not enough new appointments, or low conversion rates. They may even see subtler symptoms, like too much talking and not enough listening and asking questions. But they don't see The Mess, the underside, the reasons for that behavior. And if they don't see it, it must not exist.

That's where the uncertain economy comes in. As more companies are affected by the economy and more salespeople struggle to get business closed, executives begin to realize that there is a mess underneath; they just can't see it because their salespeople aren't made of glass. But there are fingerprints - their sales DNA - under there and there will never be a better time to get that mess cleaned up. **Have your sales force evaluated**, discover what's underneath, clean up your mess, and watch sales soar, even in an uncertain economy.



6 YEARS OLD

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Our son doesn't know the the full extent of what I do for a living. I have not told him that I'm a sales force development expert or explained the many facets of that. He knows that I have meetings (talk with people on the phone and in my office), that I do work (stuff on the computer), that I'm the boss of my office (12 people report up to me) and that I sometimes conduct training (show salespeople how to sell). I haven't attempted to explain evaluating, compensation, incentives, metrics, recruiting, leadership development, executive coaching, consulting, strategies, systems or processes.

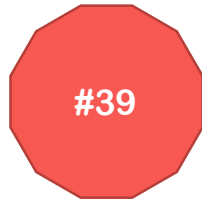
Thursday, after a full day of training, I picked him up from camp and realized that we had to return to the office to retrieve my laptop which I had left in the training room. He's been to the office many times but he has never witnessed any training.

While I was disconnecting the cables from my laptop, he sat down in the trainer's chair at the front of the room and in a loud, deep voice said, "OK people. Let's talk about selling. Let's talk about selling cars and homes. Come on now, let's talk about getting cars and homes sold, people!"

Think of all the dots he connected! He knew I showed salespeople how to sell but didn't know what that actually looked and sounded like. He has accompanied me to the Lexus dealer for the last 3 cars that we bought. He can't help but hear the non-stop news stories about home sales being on the decline. He strung those three data points together and brought the data to life in that chair in the front of the room. The data told him a story.

Data points always tell a story.

If you are fortunate enough to use our sales assessments in your



company or you provide them to your clients, you know that there are dozens of findings or data points. Individually each finding stands on its own but when you connect the dots and ask yourself, "what do these data points tell me?" there is always a story there.

It's the same with selling. If your salespeople are selling effectively, then rather than presenting features, benefits and capabilities, they are asking dozens of good, tough, timely questions. When the questions are good, the combination of answers and non answers are the data points. When your salespeople connect the dots and ask themselves, "What do these data points tell me?", there should be a dramatic story. If the story is compelling enough, the prospect will pay for your solution.

6 YEARS OLD

OVER ACHIEVING – WE HAVE IT WRONG

Believe it or not, our son is an over achiever.

He has spelling tests each week and his teacher offers bonus words to the class so that they can earn extra points. He loves the bonus words and extra points so much that he has duplicated the process on his math tests.

The teacher gives the class 20 math questions each week but there are not any bonus questions. Our son takes it upon himself to add 4 bonus questions because he feels he can do more.

This begs the question; how do you measure your over achievers?

Does a salesperson over achieve simply because she exceeded her goal? What if one huge deal, order or account drops in her lap? Does that make her an over achiever or was she lucky? What if a salesperson misses the goal because a large existing account declares bankruptcy, but brings in much more new business than expected? Does that make him an under achiever?

It's time to identify additional methods to measure sales performance in



satisfaction.

a more meaningful ways and place less importance on the gross revenue number, but varying degrees of importance on profit, new business, retention, effort, account growth, fit to the target profile, ability to leverage, and client

6 YEARS OLD

SALESPEOPLE MUST CHANGE

This morning our son asked if he could dress downstairs in front of the TV instead of upstairs in his bedroom. We pointed out that whenever we bring his clothes downstairs he never seems to get dressed, and then we run late, and everyone becomes stressed. So, in consideration of that, he should dress upstairs. To my amazement, he said, "I've changed!" He went downstairs and got himself dressed before he turned on the TV.

Yesterday, an employee was asked whether she would change and what that might look like. She said she will change and discussed what, specifically, those changes would be.

"I have changed", a belief and a statement of fact, versus "I will change", a belief and a statement of hope, perhaps even a promise.

All of your salespeople must change too, some much more than



others. Whether you are looking for new behaviors, more consistency, greater toughness in the face of adversity, or simply more hunting, it is ultimately change that you are after. So which of the two options would you prefer? "I have changed" or "I will change"?

"I have changed", while positive in that change has already taken place, is somewhat limiting because there is an assumption that no further change will take place.

"I will change", where no change has yet occurred, is somewhat more open-ended with regards to how much can change.

There are pros and cons to both and neither is as good an option as "I have changed, will change some more, and will continue to change because I am committed to being the best that I can be.

Can your salespeople change? Will your salespeople change? Do you have to change in order for any of this change to take place?

6 YEARS OLD

GETTING EXCITED ABOUT METRICS

As we encourage our clients to do each day, both of my companies have daily huddles for its salespeople and managers. The purpose of the daily huddles is to keep everyone focused on the measurable activities that drive results.

During the last couple of weeks, our son has been in the car for about 6 of these conference calls and it only took one huddle to get him hooked. He wants to report his numbers and he has them ready each time he is with me. It makes him proud to participate and because he is competitive, he wants to report numbers that are better than theirs.

I get a lot of push back from clients when it's time to implement the daily huddles. They don't think it's necessary. It will take too much time. It's too much of a burden. It's redundant. Yeah, right.

It only takes about two weeks until even the most resistant clients figure out that they not only have more control over their future revenue than ever before, but their salespeople are more focused and productive than ever before.



Even veteran salespeople will appreciate the boundaries, expectations, attention, peer pressure and relentless focus on doing what's important to drive sales every single day. Why? It's good for them and when it's good for them they'll earn more money.

6 YEARS OLD

MAKE IT MORE CHALLENGING

Last week we brought our son to the batting cages and for the first time he hit against Little League-speed pitching. Big deal? You bet. Up until last week, he was clobbering whiffle balls with whiffle bats from about twenty feet away. At the cage, he was wearing a batting helmet, swinging a heavy metal bat, and seeing baseballs thrown at 45 MPH from 45 feet away. It was a huge difference.

How did he do? He missed the first 10 pitches. He missed the second 10 pitches too. Then he made two adjustments. He moved back in the batter's box, started his swing sooner, and finally made contact. Then, as his confidence grew, he made better contact until finally, he was hitting baseballs with the same authority as when he hit whiffle balls.

At six years old he is way ahead of where I was when I was ten - very cool. Now the sales analogy.

Salespeople need to make adjustments. New competition, new



buying strategies, unfair competition, price competition and the resistance brought on by the uncertain economy all contribute to the changes in the way they need to play the game. It is crucial for them to make adjustments

too. They need to be quicker, sharper, more strategic and much more effective with their use of selling tactics (skills, not tricks).

How do your salespeople make these adjustments? Some, as many as 30%, can't and/or won't make changes and what you see is what you

will continue to get. For the remaining 70%, change can be as easy as showing them the way and as difficult as pulling teeth. Few have the strengths and skills required to simply sell differently and even fewer in management have the skills required to help them make these changes.

You'll need to bring in expertise from the outside to help an entire sales force make the complete transition from order takers and account managers to effective, proactive, impactful, consultative salespeople. Your expectations must be realistic too. You can't simply tell them what you want and show them how to do it and expect them to be able to go out and execute. It could take a few months of telling and showing before they'll be comfortable enough to try it themselves and even then, they'll probably be ineffective the first few times. There is a need for repetition and you won't see the impact on revenue for about six months plus the length of your sales cycle.

New salespeople ramp up at different speeds based on their ability



to figure it out. Some of the more talented new salespeople will quickly figure it out and out-perform your veterans, who failed to make adjustments to the changing sales environment.

Six-year olds are conditioned to change - they're expanding their sights and abilities every day. Veteran salespeople are conditioned for complacency - taking the known, comfortable way. Are you ready to challenge them?

7 YEARS OLD

GENERATING LEADS

Our son wrote a book today. He illustrated it too.

He loves to read and apparently, he must have felt that there weren't enough new books arriving in his room so he decided to create a Pokémon book to read instead.

I can't wait until he's old enough to sell something because this behavior translates! When there aren't enough new leads coming in he will simply create his own.

Don't you wish all of your salespeople made it that simple?

Don't you wish all of your salespeople understood the urgency of new opportunities?

Don't you wish all of your salespeople would simply generate their own opportunities without giving it a second thought?

Don't you wish they would do that without you having to set expectations for them, without having to tell them how many, show them how, remind them, remind them again, tell them you're not happy, remind them again, show them how again, reset expectations, make calls with them, coach them, remind them again, reprimand them, etc.?

Wouldn't it be nice if all of your salespeople simply made it their number one priority to find the opportunities required to keep their pipeline stuffed with quality opportunities?

If they had a stuffed pipeline, would the deals that have been put on



hold due to spending freezes be such a huge disappointment? No way. Those delayed deals are only big disappointments when there aren't enough opportunities in the pipeline to make up for them.

It really is simple. It's like the 70's again. Just roll your own.

7 YEARS OLD MASTERY

You like music and you probably have a favorite genre. Within that genre, you probably have a favorite artist or album. You may listen to an album by that artist dozens of times. By then, you know the music and lyrics perfectly.

You like movies and you probably have a favorite genre. Within that genre, you probably have a favorite actor or actress. There may be a movie you have watched many times over. By then, you have probably memorized all the lines.

Our son loves to act out the battle scenes from movies like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *First Knight*. In order to perfect the timing of every line, movement and pratfall, he has probably watched and acted out the battle scenes more than 100 times each.

Professional Golfers go to the range and hit buckets of balls. Professional Baseball Players take marathon batting practice sessions and may field hundreds of balls every day.

Exposure and Repetition.

We're talking about mastering the things you have a passion for.

Do you and your salespeople have a passion for sales? What is the thing you do that is equal to repeated listening, watching or practicing? What do you do to know your material inside and out? Do you attend training as often as you attend concerts, the theater or movies? Do you listen to sales training as often as you listen to music? You should be exposed to the

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#46

artist (sales expert) at least twice monthly and listening to their recordings (archives or supplemental material) even more frequently. In addition, you should be practicing (role playing like our son does) at least 30 minutes per day!

There are many sources of sales expertise. The differing methodologies are like genres and the sales experts in each genre are like the artists. You'll have a favorite or two whose style, examples, content or methodology work for you. But as with music, make sure that you also work with and listen to an expert who will push you out of your comfort zone. If you choose it simply because it reinforces what you already think or do, that's laziness. Everyone can improve. Even you!

Around twenty years ago I read a book about mastery called, believe it or not, [Mastery](#), by George Leonard. It's well worth reading.

8 YEARS OLD

LEAVING YOUR COMFORT ZONE

We asked our son if he was willing to help out and have a female classmate ride home with him today. He wasn't sure. If he didn't do the right thing and said no, it would hurt her feelings. If he did the right thing, he worried that he would be uncomfortable spending time with her. When they are eight years old, boys think girls are yucky.

This is similar to the dilemma that salespeople face every day, in every sales call and in every interaction. Do the right thing and ask the tough question that the situation calls for; or do what's comfortable and present.

Our son made the right decision and was rewarded for leaving his comfort zone. They had a great time together. The funny thing is that it was only the decision that was difficult. Once he had made the decision it was VERY comfortable.

The same will be true for your salespeople. The only part they will struggle with is THE DECISION to ask the tough questions. Once they've made the decision, asking the actual questions will be easy too.



Which of your salespeople get uncomfortable and when?

How can you get them to leave their comfort zone?

Simply role play it with them until it's easy for them and it comes automatically.

8 YEARS OLD

HOW TO TRAIN SALESPEOPLE

Our son wanted to help in the kitchen. More specifically, he wanted to dice the carrots. I don't really cook but dicing is one thing I can do well, providing a little of the manual labor while my wife creates gourmet meals. I have mastered the French Chef's knife.

Here are the steps I took to show our son how to dice the carrots:

1. I showed him how to hold the knife in his hand - the most important part - so that he had a feel for it, control of it, and couldn't hurt himself.
2. I showed him where his other hand should be - out of harms way.
3. I showed him what it would look like when he could do it for himself. I diced some carrots.
4. I showed him how to slide and rock the knife back and forth in slow motion (he loves slow-motion replays).
5. I did it with him - both of our hands on the knife together so he could get a feel for it.
6. I let him try and fail.
7. Then we repeated steps 2-4.
8. He tried it again and got the hang of it.
9. He diced on his own this week. I watched him and provided feedback.

This is exactly how to initiate salespeople, whether they are new to your company, new to their role, or new to sales. Don't vary at all from the steps above. More importantly, **don't assume that because they have sold for 10 years they'll know**



#48

what to do or be able to do it effectively. Follow the steps!

We also had a light snow fall that week and our son wanted to help out with the shoveling. We shoveled all of the walkways together - no problem. We have a large circle as part of our driveway and he suggested that we shovel that next. Normally, I wouldn't think of shoveling the circle. I usually clear it with the snow blower. The thought of shoveling even a couple of inches of snow from that circle seemed daunting to me, but not to him. **He didn't have enough experience to know that this was too much work.** So we shoveled the circle together and got it done. He was exhausted - one of the few times that I wore him out - but **I learned a valuable lesson.**

Don't share your self-limiting beliefs. Let them develop their own! Don't



tell your salespeople that they will waste their time calling on a person with that title, an individual from that industry, or a company that size. **Let them make those mistakes first and then help them recognize the errors of their**

ways and learn from them. They're going to do it anyway!

9 YEARS OLD

25 OR 6 TO 4

You're thinking, "You've got to be kidding me!" How could this title possibly tie in to selling?

I was talking with a client last week and we were comparing notes about how we both played competitive junior tennis back in the day. I remembered a particular tournament where I made the finals and was trying to determine exactly when that was. I recalled that around the time of that particular tournament, the band, Chicago, had its first big hit with the song "25 or 6 to 4". After Googling it for the release date, it turns out "the day" must have been in the summer of 1970.

25 or 6 to 4 brings me to 2 to 16. A friend and I were comparing notes on our 9-year-olds when I said that ours is 7 years away from driving and only 7 years removed from 2. Sometimes we observe mature, smart, 16-year-old thinking and behavior from him and other times we watch him behave like a 2-year-old, complete with tantrums. 2 to 16 means there is a 14-year swing and we rarely witness the behavior of a 9-year-old.

2 to 16 brings me to your salespeople. You will see the equivalent of that 14-year swing in most salespeople, on most days. Sometimes they will seem quite close to the salespeople you want them to be - scheduling meetings, asking questions, thoroughly qualifying, and closing. Other days they will act like rookies - getting beaten on the phone, talking features and benefits in their meetings, responding reactively to requests for quotes and proposals, and chasing the business down until a salesperson from another company closes it.

That 14-year swing is huge. You can't afford to have your salespeople behaving like facilitators, order takers, account managers and amateurs - ever. You need them to be proactive - selling consultatively, everywhere, and always.



Children grow out of their age swings but salespeople must be managed, developed, trained and coached out.

9 YEARS OLD

COMMITMENT AND DESIRE

Today I was helping a client understand the difference between Commitment and Desire in Sales and how the two findings were so striking in their contrast. He was concerned with the findings of a particular sales candidate's assessment.

The candidate in question scored extremely well on Desire (how badly he wants to succeed in sales); but very poorly on Commitment (his willingness to do what it takes to succeed in sales). The client asked, "How can he score so high in Desire but so low in Commitment?"

Great question.

I'll explain it in exactly the same fashion I explained it to him.

Let's take our 9-year-old son. He desperately (the equivalent of strong desire) wants an iPhone, but he hasn't been able to do the things he must do in order to get it. What things? Let's just leave it at normal kid behaviors that everyone wants from their kids at that age. As much as he wants that darn phone, he isn't Committed enough to pick up his dirty clothes from the floor, eat a fruit or vegetable, or go to bed when it's time. Very typical 9-year-old stuff.

Salespeople with strong Desire, but weak Commitment, want to be successful, win awards, earn big commissions, garner recognition and be the best, but they won't do the things that are uncomfortable or difficult for them. Those things entail anything from prospecting, to having the tough conversations about money and budget, to challenging prospects or

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#51

pushing back at appropriate times, to qualifying, asking about competition, and asking personal questions.

With all of the new rules for business, changes to the way businesses buy, the difficulty in reaching decision makers, the resistance to spending money, the economic challenges, and the competitive landscape being more difficult than ever, a salesperson without strong Commitment is simply unable to overcome these challenges.

9 YEARS OLD

IMPORTANCE OF REINFORCEMENT

Our son watched *The Lion King* about 250 times between the ages of 2 and 4, and saw the Broadway show an additional 4 times between the ages of 3 and 6.

Then he got away from The Lion King, instead watching other shows and movies that captured his attention.

This past weekend, for the first time in 5 years, he watched *The Lion King* again - six times - and fell in love with it all over again. Only now, the scenes and dialogue that captured his attention back then have become completely different than those he remembered from years ago. Could it be that his favorite scenes and dialogue weren't in the original movie?

Sales and sales management training is an ongoing process - multiple sessions over a period of 8-12 months - followed by periodic "refreshers". The reason for the refresher is that your salespeople will hear strategies, tactics, words and phrases that weren't in the original training. The first time through, the salespeople are the 3-year-olds, capturing what they can from sales training, based on their context, reference points, and experiences, which are limited and varied. Later, when being refreshed, their context, reference points and experiences have changed - for the better - because of the original training. Now they recognize concepts that went over their head, that their old beliefs wouldn't accept, and that they couldn't imagine themselves actually doing months ago. Now they're experiencing selling scenarios that had never previously



#52

occurred and they need strategies and tactics for these new levels they are approaching on their sales calls and meetings.

You can watch a movie you haven't seen for a while and appreciate the things you missed before. You will experience the exact same benefits from rereading the book, having refresher training, and focusing on the areas they didn't apply and execute the first time around.

10 YEARS OLD GAINING TRACTION

On a recent coaching call, I was explaining how to handle the prospect who won't admit to having an issue that the salesperson could solve. During a first call where the salesperson is taking a consultative approach, it's not unusual for a prospect to become protective or defensive by denying the existence of any issues. At this point, most (74% according to Objective Management Group) salespeople will choose one of the following three paths:

1. They hang up - no problem means no solution - good bye.
2. They get combative - of course there's a problem - we just haven't found it yet, so let's fight.
3. They revert to selling their features and benefits, hoping to generate interest.

It should be obvious that options 1 and 2 don't work. Option 3 will generate some interest, but only when salespeople are fortunate enough to stumble upon the combination of good timing and luck.

Instead of those 3 choices, salespeople should choose the invisible option 4. Of course, only 26% have the Sales DNA and skills to effectively utilize option 4. So what exactly is option 4? It's a **second effort**, and it's the **art of selling**.

As I explained on the coaching call, option 4 is very much like talking with your kids or grandkids. Let me provide an example of a similar conversation with our son:

Me: How was school today?

Our Son: Good.

Me: Really? What made it so good?

Our Son: We played football, I was the quarterback, I made two great plays, they served pizza for lunch, it was Daniel's birthday so he brought in cupcakes, and I got to draw a baseball diamond in art class.

Me: That's terrific. It sounds like it was a fantastic day and you have a lot to be excited about. So what part of the school day didn't you tell me about?

Some prospects need to feel proud of what they have



accomplished. Let them brag. Let them say they're all set. Let them tell you that they're doing great. Congratulate them. Praise them. And follow that up with, "So that's the good part of the story. What's the part you haven't told me about?"

10 YEARS OLD SALES COACHING

As evidenced by one of my book titles, [Baseline Selling](#), I have frequently borrowed from baseball when the analogy is more useful than a traditional sales message. Although the following stories may appear to be about my son and/or his baseball team, they are actually about coaching and adapting.

Baseball - I brought my son to the batting cage to work out a swing flaw after his line drives had morphed into weak ground balls. He was bailing out (stepping toward third base instead of the pitcher), causing him to take weak swings at the ball. After he stopped bailing, he began leaning away from the pitch with his upper body, causing him to take an off-balance swing. When that was fixed, his front shoulder began opening too quickly, the head of the bat moving through the strike zone too slowly for solid contact. When that was finally corrected, he began crushing line drives again and was able to carry that into the next game for 2 doubles and 3 RBI's.

Sales – This sequence of analysis and tweaking works in exactly the same way when coaching salespeople. You should be able to immediately identify what went wrong, when it went wrong, how it went wrong and demonstrate how to prevent and fix it. The last two steps must take place through role-playing. Are you doing that effectively?



Baseball - I took some swings for the first time in 20 years. I immediately realized that I couldn't track the ball with bifocals, so I removed them. Without the glasses, I could barely see the ball at all! My son said, "Dad, you don't have it any more." That's all I needed

to hear. I wasn't going to let my 10-year-old get away with that, so I adapted. I accepted that I couldn't see the stitches or the spin of the ball anymore, but I could see the fuzzy little round thing heading in my direction and resolved to just see that and hit that. He said, "I guess you still have it after all."

Sales - Your salespeople must adapt when the existing approach with a prospect isn't effective. Instead, most salespeople take one of two actions. They either continue to do what isn't working (stupid human tricks) or they give up (typical human behavior).



Baseball - As their coach, I offer 1-2 minutes of one-on-one pre-game or in-game coaching to each boy on the team. They get more from their one-on-one time than they could ever get from a 90-minute practice and we see immediate results in that very game.

Sales - Sales Managers must provide their salespeople with one-on-one time before upcoming calls and debrief calls that have already taken place. There is no area that will have more impact on sales than coaching.



Sales and baseball are nearly the same except that far fewer ball players make it to the major leagues, but those who do so get paid a lot more money.

10 YEARS OLD SELLING STYLES

We were invited to see and hear a friend's son perform in the Royal School of Church Music of America. We were very impressed with the voices, performance and beautiful church service. It was very memorable. While we were there, I noticed that some of the choristers appeared to be in trances; lost, disengaged and almost catatonic. However, as soon as the choir director lowered his baton for the first beat, those children suddenly morphed into the most passionate, powerful, wonderful, young singers I had ever seen. You just wouldn't believe the transformation!

Terrific salespeople make that transition too. They morph from laid-back and confident, to powerful, animated and charismatic when the time comes to present. Most salespeople however, don't make that transition because it doesn't feel authentic to them or they fear that they might look and sound like salespeople. Isn't that sad? Salespeople worrying that they might be mistaken for salespeople?

If you've met me and heard me present a keynote address, you've witnessed this transformation. My **one-on-one style** is a direct contradiction to my **public speaking style**. Why? If I appeared on stage with my one-on-one style, I don't believe anyone, regardless of my message, would really pay attention. If we were to meet - just you and me - and I began with my public speaking style, it would feel very threatening and inappropriate. You would hate me.

There is a balance to all of this and the proper selling style, at the proper time, in the proper place, with the proper people, will work quite

effectively. However, most salespeople have only a single style and they aren't even aware of it! If they aren't consciously aware of it, they usually aren't able to adapt to the situation in which they find themselves.

This is where video recording can be quite useful. The ability to show salespeople how they look, sound, act and respond to varying situations is just the medicine they need to adapt, make the necessary changes and become more effective.

Steady and predictable is generally a good formula for success, however, when we need to convince people to buy what we have, flexibility and the appropriate style will always be more effective.

10 YEARS OLD

GETTING A SECOND CHANCE

Can you remember a time, back in school, when you did something so embarrassing that you wanted to run away and hide forever? Of course you do - it was all about you. But I will wager any amount of money that you are the only one who remembers. The others who were there that day and anyone you might have told have long forgotten. **It - wasn't - about - them.**

The same phenomenon applies to selling.

You and your salespeople have made dozens of horrible, embarrassing calls to prospects and companies. While you and your salespeople remember your acts of extreme failure, the prospects don't. They wouldn't remember you, your salespeople or your horrible attempts if their lives depended on it. Doesn't that mean you could try again and nobody would be the wiser?



Why not make it next month's initiative?

With prospects whom you thought you'd never call again:

- Prize for most conversations,
- Prize for most (qualified) meetings scheduled.
- Prize for most opportunities entered into the pipeline,
- Prize for most accounts closed/opened/sold,
- Prize for the largest sale and/or
- Prize for the first sale.

Everybody wins!

They won't remember. Treat it like a first call.

11 YEARS OLD

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

How many times has this happened to you?

A salesperson tells you about a great-looking opportunity that has been forecast to close this month. "We're definitely getting this and it's an awesome opportunity for us. We're going to knock this one out of the park!"

At the end of the month, the deal hasn't closed and you question your salesperson about it. You are told that the decision-maker has been away on vacation, but as soon as he returns, the deal is sure to get done.

A month later, nothing has changed. This time, the salesperson admits that he has had a little difficulty reaching the decision-maker, but he is sure that nothing has changed. You are assured that everything is good.

Six months later, when the deal still hasn't closed, you force the salesperson to archive the opportunity with the salesperson still not understanding what went wrong.

The exact same thing happens in baseball - especially with Little Leaguers.

When the pitcher throws the ball toward the plate, no pitch looks more enticing, easier to hit or simpler to track than the one thrown at eye-level to the hitter. The hitter has an extremely short time to react and decide

whether or not to swing and the pitch is simply irresistible. So the undisciplined young batter swings - and misses - every single time.

We know why they swing - the pitch looks so, so good. But why do they miss?

A ball thrown at eye-level is out of the strike zone and much too high to hit. When thrown fast, it is pretty much impossible to hit. A Little Leaguer will swing underneath the high fastball and be late swinging every single time. So, rather than teaching them how to hit that pitch, it's important to teach them how to **not** swing at that pitch.

Back to your salespeople. The very opportunities that look so good to them - the high fastballs of opportunities where they hear what they want to hear - cause them to skip steps and milestones. Along the way, they fail to question things like competition, decision-makers, timelines, compelling reasons, things that can go wrong, incumbents, preferences, pricing and more. Just like with the Little Leaguers, your salespeople must learn to lay off of those great sounding opportunities - until they are completely qualified. It's not a matter of helping your salespeople hit these opportunities out of the park as much as it's a need to disqualify these opportunities so that your salespeople don't swing and miss.



Salespeople are just like Little Leaguers, only they should know better. Why don't they? They share a weakness where they both get excited or emotional, and when that happens, their judgment can be faulty. It takes discipline to lay off the high fastball and ask the necessary questions when the prospect is saying that they are ready to buy.

Discipline and consistency - two qualities that great salespeople share.

11 YEARS OLD

REJECTION

For a change, rather than contributing to all the noise about inbound replacing outbound, inside replacing outside, insights replacing sales steps, buyers' processes replacing sales processes, let's talk about something that has a huge, relevant impact on selling, regardless of how the opportunity came to be.

Most of the other sales Bloggers don't write about rejection, but when it is mentioned it's usually in the context of fear, as in fear of rejection. Objective Management Group (OMG) measures the difficulty one has recovering from rejection instead of fear of rejection. Fear is real, but it's more telling to understand whether a salesperson jumps right back on the phone, is completely stable for the next meeting, or requires 10 minutes, 10 days or 10 weeks to fully recover. When viewed as fear, we can assume that a salesperson will avoid scenarios where rejection is possible, but fear makes all salespeople with that weakness identical. Looking at recovery, instead of fear, allows us to see the difference between short and long recovery periods.

Recently, rejection has become an even more impactful weakness than it already was. Today, prospects are much less inclined to take a salesperson's call, return a voicemail or an email message, engage in a conversation, schedule a call or meeting, share important information, return calls near the end of the sales process or make decisions. That's an awful lot of misery for a salesperson who finds it difficult to recover from rejection!

But rejection isn't very well understood by salespeople, their sales managers or even their sales VP's. Do you know which of your

salespeople have this problem and how severe it is? Do you know which activities, questions and steps they are unable to execute as a result of their rejection weakness? Do you know when their rejection problems get in the way?

Rejection is relative. The greater the risk, the more likely it is that an individual will avoid possible rejection.

Our son is relentless, fearless and passionate about anything he wants from us. Nothing will stop him. Ever. What if Mom and Dad say "No"? No problem. He'll ask again. Another way. He'll beg. He'll threaten. He'll cry. He'll use logic. He'll use emotion. He'll keep at it.

However, raise the stakes, and everything changes.

When it comes to a certain boy showing interest in a certain girl, it took weeks for him to gather the courage to ask the question even with the aid of today's technology where he could text the question instead of actually getting on the phone or asking face-to-face.

What if she says "No"?

Even worse. What if she doesn't respond?

In my opinion, not knowing is even worse than the finality of a "no" and that's why salespeople are finding it very difficult to cope with unresponsive prospects and prospects who go into hiding after expressing a desire to do business.



Further relating this example to sales, the stakes go up for some salespeople relative to the:

- Title of the decision maker or contact,

- Revenue of the prospect company,
- Name brand of the company,
- Size of the opportunity,
- Existence of resistance,
- Size of the carrot being dangled, and
- Increasing likelihood of a sale.

Sales training will not make rejection-related weaknesses disappear. With most training, the salespeople are given new words to use, but still have the weakness. As a result, they fail to use their new words, continuing to do what's comfortable, rather than what's most effective. Even though effective sales coaching can help, you must first know who is susceptible, how severe it is, how often it occurs and exactly when it will get in the way.

A [sales force evaluation](#) provides the answers to those questions and more.

12 YEARS OLD

COLD CALLS

Yesterday, I was coaching first base in the game that would determine the Little League championship for our town. It was late in the game, we were down by 4 runs, and had runners on 1st and 3rd. The runner on 1st base would need to steal second and perhaps draw a throw that would allow the runner on 3rd base to score. A double steal! There was only one problem. The runner on first base had been reluctant to steal all season. When given the sign, when asked, when told, he just wouldn't go. After all, one of the 10 Commandments is "Thou Shalt Not Steal." He couldn't defy God for the sake of baseball, could he?

I had a private chat with him at 1st base and told him that this wasn't about him or what he was comfortable with. This was for the team, we were playing as a team, and would win or lose as a team. He should want to steal - for the team. He didn't go.

Another chat, another reminder, and another non-attempt.

A third chat, another request. Still no movement.

The count on the batter was 2-1 and it was time for a desperate fourth chat. This time, I demanded, with dire consequences (that I won't reveal here), that he steal. He went! The catcher threw to second base and he was safe and the run scored. A momentary victory in the game within the game. It was a play that will change him, even though it wouldn't change the eventual outcome of the game.

This morning, thinking about that play again, I'm reminded of two nearly identical selling scenarios.

First, there are the salespeople who just don't want to pick up the phone and make calls. How similar are they to the kid who won't steal 2nd base? We're not asking these adults to steal, but we are asking them to talk to strangers. Is it possible that when faced with the task of making calls, they revert to their lessons from early childhood?

Today, kids don't even talk on the phone. They text. We can't get our son to make a phone call under any circumstances. What are the chances that he would make calls if he entered sales as an adult?

The second scenario involves all of the entrepreneurs out there who, according to a **December 2013 Forbes** article, number around 20 million! Most entrepreneurs don't give selling a single thought until they have already started their businesses. It's only then that they realize they might have to sell something in order to eat.

12 YEARS OLD LEADING A SALES FORCE

I miss baseball already. Although I can't watch it right now, I still think about it. I look forward to next season when, together with my wife, we'll watch our son strike out other kids, hit lots of home runs, and improve his baseball skills while playing close to 100 games!

Once again, I'm writing about the similarity between baseball and sales. If you're not interested in baseball, you might not see the same things that I see, most of which can be applied to leading a sales force. For example,

There are five levels of professional baseball: a short season A team, a full-season A team, and then, as the player becomes adjusted and ready for the two higher levels in the minor leagues; AA and AAA. Then, if and when he's good enough, he'll be promoted to the Majors.

Most people can see the differences in the caliber of play when comparing a Little League game to a high school game, or a college game to a professional game. Most people aren't able to recognize the differences between each of the 5 professional levels. They may be watching a minor league game, but it all looks like baseball to them - minus the 35,000 fans in the seats. Pitchers make the pitches, hitters hit the ball, run the bases, and everyone make the plays. It is professional baseball, but in the minor leagues, pitchers don't command their secondary pitches. While they already have a major league-ready fast ball, they have not yet mastered the ability to throw their curve ball, change up or slider to the exact spot it needs to go. Hitters in the minor leagues are able to hit a fastball with authority, but may not be able to consistently recognize, adjust to, and hammer breaking pitches.

#61 Most sales leaders can easily differentiate between salespeople who are awful and those who are not awful. They have difficulty differentiating one awful salesperson from another. If you're asking yourself why I'm placing this in the context of awful, rather than good, it's because 74% of the sales population is awful!

Based on Objective Management Group's (OMG) statistics, a sales force of 10 would typically have:

- 0 elite salespeople who make up the top 6%,
- 2 good salespeople who make up the top 26%, and
- 8 salespeople who are awful, making up the remaining 74%.

A typical sales leader looks at the sales force and can differentiate between the 2 good and 8 bad, but isn't able to explain why. Sure, they can point to sales numbers and activity, but those aren't reasons, as much as differing results.

It's very difficult to coach someone up when you don't know the cause of their ineffectiveness.

For example, let's take 3 awful salespeople who are each underperforming at a company we recently evaluated:

- Bob has a full pipeline, but despite all of the opportunities, his win-rate is pathetic.
- Mary has a nearly empty pipeline, but closes most of the opportunities she does uncover.
- Bill has a poor pipeline - half way between Bob and Mary - but most opportunities get stuck and don't move through to closure.

You can easily determine that Bob is a successful hunter, but an awful closer.

You can easily determine that Mary is a successful closer, but an awful hunter.

You can easily determine that Bill isn't very good at anything.

Now let's pretend that they are your salespeople. That shouldn't be a stretch because you probably have 3 salespeople who are similar.

Do you know why this is happening? Do you know how to figure out why it is happening? Do you know that a seminar on prospecting or closing won't change anything? Do you know what is in their Sales DNA, their Will to Sell, or their Sales Competencies that are responsible for these outcomes? Do you know if they're trainable? Do you know if they're really coachable? Are you effective at developing salespeople with these mysterious issues?

Of course you don't know. You're not even supposed to know. If you did know, they would each have been either fixed (because you knew what to fix and how to fix it) or replaced (because you knew it couldn't be fixed or you weren't capable of fixing it).

12 YEARS OLD

WHAT COMMITTED SALESPEOPLE DO

This week in April, we found ourselves sitting in camp chairs, bundled up in warm coats, wearing winter gloves and covered in blankets, to watch our son play a Middle School baseball game. The only thing this team could win is a Bad News Bears Look-Alike Contest. He also plays on a very talented travel team, so this school game was not only awful in comparison, it was doubly awful because of the winter weather. Yes, there was snow in the air. We will attend nearly every single one of the 100 games he will play for 5 teams this year. Many people would say that...

- We aren't required to go (some parents simply drop-off.)
- He doesn't ask us to watch (he's very independent.)
- We don't have to attend as many as we do (half would be more than most parents.)
- It is rarely convenient (some games are at 3:30 PM.)
- Games are rarely played in beautiful weather (too hot in July and August, too cold in April, and too wet or humid the rest of the time).
- There is rarely comfortable seating (thus the not quite so uncomfortable camp chairs).
- There are other things we need to do.
- Double Headers on Saturdays and Sundays take up most of the weekend.
- School games and Little League games on the same day take up most afternoons and evenings.
- It's baseball - a slow, boring game for those who don't know the game within the game.

So why do we do this?

Commitment. Many people misunderstand the role that commitment plays in successful selling. Read any of [these articles](#) for more on commitment.

We are committed to doing whatever it takes to give our son whatever he needs in order to thrive. With his talent in this sport, baseball is one of the opportunities we provide him with and doing whatever it takes to watch him play is one of the unconditional commitments we make. Speaking of baseball, check out these new [visual statistics being provided by MLB](#). Does it get you thinking about the additional things you could measure in sales?

In sales, most salespeople, especially the bottom 74%, don't do



whatever it takes to succeed. For example, if the company, quota, expectations and goals were your child, and you had similar values for your son or daughter, would you:

- Postpone filling your pipeline?
- Give up when you finally get a decision-maker on the phone because the prospect is too difficult to convert?
- Not advocate for yourself when faced with tough competition, a tougher prospect, or objections?
- Not thoroughly qualify an opportunity the way you would qualify the friends your son or daughter hangs out with or a trip they might take?
- Not challenge a prospect when their thinking or strategy isn't quite what it could or should be?
- Not talk about money because it's uncomfortable?

- Not point out, defend and brag about the value the way you would brag about your children?
- Not do whatever it takes to get a closable opportunity closed?

But that is exactly what the majority of salespeople are doing. They half-sell. They aren't thorough, or effective, or efficient, or memorable, or resilient, or tenacious, or assertive enough, because they aren't comfortable doing those things. They don't equate those things as being the business equivalent of their own children, for whom they would do whatever it takes. Especially if it's uncomfortable. Whatever it takes. That's what commitment is. It's not work ethic. Anyone can put in long hours. It's about doing all of the necessary things despite being uncomfortable. Whatever it takes.

12 YEARS OLD

SHOULD SALESPEOPLE BE PUNISHED?

My wife and I watched with a combination of fascination, sadness and shock as the coach of our son's 12 and under AAU baseball team made them run suicides after the double header they won on Saturday, and again after the double header they won on Sunday. Why would he punish them after winning four games this weekend? And how does this apply to sales? You'll be amazed by what you read.

On Saturday, the team had a chance to win both games by the mercy rule (the game ends if one team is ahead by 10 runs or more after 4 innings), but let the other team back into the game both times. The coach didn't like their effort and execution and taught them a lesson by making them run suicides for 20 minutes after the second game.

On Sunday, the team won the first game, but allowed the other team to tie the second game forcing extra innings. They eventually had a walk-off win, but once again, he thought they were flat, didn't like their effort, pointed to mental mistakes, and made them run suicides for 30 minutes after the second game.

To us, this punishment overshadowed a very impressive ball-crushing performance by our son. But for the coach, the team's performance comes first. The coach is paying more attention to behavior, attitude, and effort, than he is to the score. He believes that by focusing on these three things, he will drive home the lessons he wants them to learn.

Shouldn't sales leaders be applying these lessons with their sales organizations? While the best sales leaders do, in fact, follow this strategy, many sales leaders pay too much attention to sales results -

the numbers - while ignoring the significance of metrics and conversion ratios that lead to revenue.

For example, Bob leads the team in sales this quarter with \$500,000 and he is praised, recognized, and presented with an award for his outstanding performance. But it's a sham. Bob landed one deal the entire quarter instead of the 6 he should have closed. Although his quota for the quarter was only \$300,000 and he killed it, if this deal hadn't come through, he would have been dead last. Additionally, this deal was forecast for the previous quarter, so he really had nothing going on this quarter. Had sales management looked more closely, they would have seen that he did not add any new opportunities to the pipeline in the quarter, and had only 6 conversations on just 12 outbound attempts. Where was his effort? What's with his attitude? And where was the behavior? Should Bob have been the hero or should it have been pointed out that he sucked all quarter and happened to get lucky once?

Clearly, it benefits the entire sales organization to call attention to a big deal and a quota-buster. We want to make sure that everyone knows that these results can be achieved and **should** be achieved. At the same time, if the other salespeople approach Bob and ask how he did it, the opposite effect will occur. They would learn that it is OK to not make calls, to not have many conversations, and to not convert those conversations to meetings. Additionally, they would learn that ineffective qualifying and forecasting can pay off, and letting prospects off the hook, not closing the door, and being passive and mentally lazy can work as well.



The scenario with the Bobs of the world is no different than what happened last weekend with the baseball coach. We can't reward results unless the attitude, effort and execution that led to the results was consistent with those results. In addition, we shouldn't punish salespeople who put forth the proper effort, attitude, behaviors and execution, only to come up short. When we identify the most meaningful KPI's, and recognize salespeople for achieving those, the results will come.

BIO

DAVE KURLAN

Dave Kurlan is a top-rated speaker, best selling author, radio show host, successful entrepreneur and sales development industry pioneer. He was inducted into the Sales & Marketing Hall of Fame in 2012.

Dave is the founder and CEO of Objective Management Group, Inc. (OMG), the industry leader in sales assessments and sales force evaluations and named the Top Sales Assessment Tool from 2011-2014. Dave is also the CEO of Kurlan & Associates, Inc., an international consulting firm specializing in sales force development. He possesses 30 plus years of experience in all facets of sales development, including consulting, training, coaching, recruiting, systems, processes, and metrics.

Dave has been a top rated speaker at Inc. Magazine's Conference on Growing the Company, the Sales & Marketing Management Conference, the Sales 2.0 Conference, Inbound, AA-SIP and the Gazelles/Fortune Sales & Marketing Summit.

He has been featured on radio, television and in print, including *World Business Review*, *Inc. Magazine*, *Selling Power Magazine*, *Sales & Marketing Management Magazine* and *Incentive Magazine*. Dave is a regular contributor to *Top Sales Magazine* and the *Salesforce.com* Blog, *AlisterPaine.com*, *EvanCarmichael.com*, and *CustomerThink.com*, *SalesCoachesWorld.com*, *SoldLab.com* and *SellingPower.com*.

He was the host of the weekly business radio show, *Meet the Sales Experts*. He is the author of *Mindless Selling* and the best-seller, *Baseline Selling – How to Become a Sales Superstar by Using What You Already Know about the Game of Baseball*. He created and wrote *STAR*, a proprietary recruiting process for hiring great salespeople, and he writes *Understanding the Sales Force*, voted the Top Sales & Marketing Blog from 2011-2014. He is a contributing author to *The Death of 20th Century Selling*, *101 Great Ways to Improve Your Life, Volume 2*, *Stepping Stones*, with coauthors Deepak Chopra and Jack Canfield, *Sales Hack* and *Mastering the World of Selling*.