

Every Call an Opportunity

Learning is the habit of champions

Editor's Note: In this column space of *Vet-Advantage*, we will give you insight into both basic and advanced tactical selling techniques that will help you serve customers better than ever before. But let us preface this with a warning. The material in these articles is not for salespeople who are not ready to push themselves harder than ever before. It is for the professional who seeks constant improvement, fresh ways to serve customers, and constant learners who are never satisfied with being average. If this is you, it's great to have you on board. Now let's get to work!

Take a minute right now and think of the last sales call you made. Now grab a pen and write down five things you did well and five things you could improve on. What's that? You can't remember? Because your last call was a couple hours ago or maybe even yesterday? Perhaps you're thinking, "Get real Sullivan! My day is packed with voicemail, e-mail, proposals and quotes. I'm luck to remember my own name at the end of a long sales day, never mind be able to recall every little detail of my last presentation."

If that thought went through your head, here's the good news. You have a serious upside to your sales career. All you need to do is develop the habit that great athletes, actors and salespeople have learned and now deliver. The world's top performers never miss an opportunity to learn and then document their findings. Think of your favorite sports team. What is the first thing a coach does to prepare for the next game? Correct. They replay the previous game in their mind. They watch the game film. They take notes. Then they work to repeat what they did well and improve on areas that need fixing. Now you might say, "I think about what I did after every call." But is your post-game evaluation detailed enough so you can turn that learning into better sales habits?



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For example, while recently working with a sales manager and his rep on a sales call, I subtly took notes about what I saw. I couldn't wait to get the local Starbucks to hear the two debrief what was learned. And here is how the coaching session went:

Manager: So how do you think the call went?

Rep: Pretty good. I think they are going to buy it.

Manager: I do too, but how do you think your presentation went?

Rep: Not bad, I asked a few questions and then went through the key benefits of the product.

Manager: I agree, now let's make sure we get the quote out to them by tomorrow morning.

Rep and Manager: A high-five, chest bump, knuckle punch, and Skinny Vanilla Latte' later they were done.

Handing out grades

First, let's start with the good. At least there was an effort to learn from the call. But the good stops there.

Mistake No. 1 – The post call evaluation was not specific enough. In fact, most post call evaluations are littered with generalities like this. As a result, salespeople

repeat the same mistakes and miss the opportunity to improve on each call

Solution No. 1 – Have and USE your sales process your company trained you with. And frankly, it doesn't matter what your process is. As long as you have one! Some of the more popular sales processes are:

SPIN: Situation, Problem, Implication, Need Pay-Off

LOCATE: Listen, Observe, Combine, Ask, Talk, Empathize

IMPACT: Investigate, Meet, Probe, Apply, Convince, Tie-Up

LAPR: Listen, Acknowledge, Probe, Respond

PRECISE: Prepare, Respect, Engage, Convey, Indecision, Secure, Explore

See a pattern here? These are specific steps that, when broken down specifically, will yield a ridiculous amount of learning.

Mistake No. 2 – Learning lessons not written down. Stop! Don't start that car! Because by not taking five minutes to

break down the call and make notes, you are missing what may be the most valuable part of your sales day.

“Life is an error-making and an error-correcting process.”

– Jonas Salk

Solution No. 2 – Create a journal of progress. And then make it a habit to make notes after every call. Think about it. How many times will you have to write down “Forgot to ask who the key decision-maker is,” before you get sick of writing it? Your next step is to review your journal before your next call and pick one or two things that you will absolutely do better. Then go perform, make more mistakes, and repeat the learning process.

So this month, take control of the greatest asset your company has. YOU! Because the difference between top performers and the rest of the pack is they have a repeatable way to perform. And perhaps more importantly, a repeatable way to LEARN each time. Repeat your learning and you will repeat as the top performing salesperson in your company year after year. ■