

# Mid-Year Checkup

Ten ways to clean out bad habits and start fresh

This time of year means green grass, bright flowers, blue skies and “time to clean out the garage.” It’s also the time of year when salespeople need to clean out old habits and discover and create better ones. Below is a list for your Mid-Year Checkup.



By Brian Sullivan

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**1. Remove complaints from your daily vocabulary and mind:** Did you know that research shows exposure to 30 minutes or more of negativity actually peels away neurons in the brain? One tip to help remove complaints from your daily routine is to swap your watch (if you wear one) to the other wrist each time you catch yourself. Try to go 20 days without switching your watch and you will have created a complaint free mind-set.

**2. Prioritize high-value activity and de-prioritize low value:**

Make a list of the 10 things you do at work each day. Then rank the highest value activity vs. the lowest. Then make a list of where you actually spend your time, and match up the two lists. Over the next month, look at that list each day, throughout the day, and make sure you’re not wasting time on activities that make you feel busy but don’t increase your commission check. A good example is prospecting. Most salespeople rank it as high-value but it is low on their list of actual daily activity.

**3. Set or reset 2014 goals:** What do you want out of this year? How much do you want to sell, how much commission do you want to make, and what award



are you striving for? Think now about what would make this a successful year and review your list monthly to see if you are on track. You have to define your success before you achieve it.

**4. Plan study time each week:** There are only two things that separate the best from the average...knowledge and skill. Set a time each week to do nothing but learn. It could be learning from conversations on a LinkedIn Group, reading a sales book, taking an online learning module, studying a product manual or digging into a clinical study. Do this each week and next year at this time you will be 52 hours smarter. And that new knowledge will make you better at serving customers.

#### 5. Define call objectives before

**you make a sales call:** Too many salespeople just show up to a call (or pick up the phone) without defining what they want the other person to do as a result of the call. A good objective is what you want the buyer to do as a result of the call that gets you closer to gaining a sale. An example of a good call objective is: *The objective of my call is to get the customer to agree to a more detailed meeting sometime within the next 14 days.* If you write this down before, you will increase the chances your mouth will actually say, "Based on what we talked about, would you be willing to set up a more detailed meeting sometime over the next two weeks?"

**6. Question and listen more:** I recently had four separate salespeople call on me who were executive level salespeople. I was again amazed at how they were more interested in telling me about their product than they were in learning about my needs. As former General George Marshall put it... *Listen to the other person's story. Listen to the other person's full story. Listen to the other person's full story first.*

**7. Know your pitch:** Most salespeople do a poor job of quickly and confidently answering the question,

"What makes you or your company better than everybody else?" If somebody asked you this question 10 times, would your response come out 10 different ways? It shouldn't. If you or your company doesn't have a classic "elevator pitch," create one. Because you can have the greatest company and products in the world, but if you can't articulate your message, you'll have a difficult time being successful.

**8. Know how to respond to common objections:** Make a list of the top five objections you regularly hear. Then write down the perfect response to each objection. Then practice those responses. I will say it again – practice those responses. The next time you hear a

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customer object, you will be amazed at how much more prepared you are to help them get over the objection.

**9. Never give without getting:** You want the best possible sales margin on each sale, correct? And customers want you to have the least possible sales margin. Professional buyers know that they should always ask you to either lower your price or throw something in. It doesn't mean you have to do it. Learn to say no and if you have to negotiate, be prepared to ask for something in return.... always.

**10. Smile!** People will say yes to you based more on your attitude and enthusiasm than anything. Be the energy in the room, make somebody's day, help a co-worker and have fun! The result will be more customers, more orders, higher margins...and more friends. ■