

# No Retreat

Why going on the defensive is not an option

**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!

A few months ago, my 10 year-old son and I went on a Father-Son Male Bonding Road Trip. Jake had been learning about great leaders in American history and thought it would be worthwhile to visit Washington D.C. We started our trip at the gates of the White House and talked about some of the great leaders who lived in that building. I asked Jake to name a president who he thought was particularly great, and his pick was President Kennedy. I asked why he thought JFK was great. "He wanted to land a man on the moon," Jake said. "That is cool. And what was cool is that nobody thought it was possible." He then asked me to name one that I thought was a great leader, and I mentioned President Reagan. I told him how Reagan fought the oppression of communism as he stood at the base of the Berlin Wall and loudly said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall!" And the wall eventually came down.

Our next stop was the Washington monument. As we approached, I asked Jake to tell me what he knew about George Washington as a leader. He said he learned that George Washington was somebody who stood up to the British and was so good at it that he eventually helped start a new country. "He must have been



By Brian Sullivan

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tough!" Jake said with squinted eyes and a clenched fist.

Next, we visited the Lincoln Memorial. After skipping a few rocks off the water of the Reflecting Pool, we walked up the long flight of stairs and stared at Lincoln sitting in his easy chair. I asked Jake to tell me what made Lincoln such a great leader. "Lincoln was brave," he said. "He thought slavery was bad and tried to convince everybody that it was wrong. And he didn't back down."

As we walked out of the Lincoln Memorial, we found ourselves standing in the exact spot where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, and imagined what it would have looked like through MLK's eyes. I asked Jake what he thought made King a leader. "He told others that black kids and white kids should be able to go to school together," Jake said. "And Dad, didn't he get killed because of that?"

## **From memorials to battlefields**

With tired legs and hungry stomachs, we jumped in the car and headed north to the battlefields of Gettysburg. The next morning, we stood together at the top of a hill known as Little Round Top. He asked me to tell him what happened here. I told him the story of

Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, who led the 20th Maine regiment in one of the most famous battles of the Civil War. I shared with him how, despite being outnumbered by the Confederate regiment and almost out of ammunition, Chamberlain did something that most would consider to be a stupid move. Rather than retreating, he ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge down the hill. I told him how historians believe that had Chamberlain retreated, the battle of Gettysburg would have been lost and the history of our nation would have been much different.

As we wrapped up our trip, I asked Jake to tell me what he learned about the greatest leaders in history and what made them so special. He responded with, "Dad, I noticed that almost every time one of these guys became famous, bad stuff was going on. But I think it's pretty cool that each time, none of them retreated. They were all on the attack! They didn't wimp out."

I thought about what Jake said and realized he nailed it. That in almost every example, these leaders became famous because they chose action over complacency ... despite the risks.

## **The battle plan**

So what does this mean in sales? Well, in this down economy, now is the time to attack your business. Here is your battle plan:

- Invest in yourself and your company now more than ever. Go to that meeting or seminar that you thought to avoid and learn something new that will make you a sales or leadership weapon.
- Salespeople, make at least three extra sales calls each day, knowing your competition is waiting for things to "get back to normal."
- Manager, seek out that "A" player on your team and find new ways to help make him or her even more valuable to your organization
- Keep attacking!

You only have two choices in 2010. Retreat or attack! Choose to attack and you will look back at this year as the period in your career where you became smarter, more productive and more assertive ... the time you became famous in your company and industry. ■

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Brian is author of the book, *20 Days to the Top – How the PRECISE Selling Formula Will Make You Your Company's Top Sales Performer in 20 Days or Less*. To watch Jake Sullivan's Attack interview on the Gettysburg Battlefield, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2alg3bkADk>. Visit us at [www.preciseselling.com](http://www.preciseselling.com).