

The Brain Game

Tips to sharpening your mind and memory

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!

Have you ever forgotten somebody's name 30 seconds after meeting them? When was the last time you were at a party and elbowed your significant other while telling him or her, "If that person comes up to us, make sure you introduce yourself first, because I forgot the name of that guy I met three other times." Or have you ever pulled up to the ATM and found yourself staring at the buttons as you tried to recall the same PIN that you have been using for the last 12 years?

Think back to that recent sales meeting where you had seven new product presentations and walked out with 26.5 pieces of literature. And wait! What about the 32 new FOCUS promotions (yea, right) you have going on that are guaranteed to make you rich, rich, rich? How on earth can you remember all this stuff? It's just not possible, is it? Actually, it is.

Memory as a skill

I recently interviewed a guy named Dave Farrow, who was diagnosed with dyslexia and ADD in high school, but who went on to become the two-time Guinness record holder for best memory. Dave memorized the order of 59 decks of cards (that's 3,068 cards in all) shuffled together to make the claim of having the World's Greatest Memory. He also memorized



By Brian Sullivan

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and then recited the names of the entire studio audience of the *Regis and Kelly* show.

What a gift, right? Not exactly. I asked Dave if his memory was a gift and he said, "I don't have a gift. Memory can be taught because it is a skill. Most people think your memory is just what you are born with, but once you learn how your mind really works, a whole world opens up. Anybody can learn this stuff. You see, you either have a trained memory or you don't. It's the difference between pushing a car and getting in to drive it. You have the same tools in both situations, but one you're pushing with a ton of effort, and the other you're applying good strategy to succeed."

So what can you do to make sure you do a better job of remembering not only names, but also phone numbers, product information and your mother-in-law's birthday? Try the Brain Game.

Name Brain

Never have to call that guy, "Dude" or "Buddy" again.

- **Associate names with a picture.** For example, what picture would you create in your mind for names like Frank, Sue, or my favorite... John? Another technique is to picture them in a costume. Sounds goofy, right? Well it works.

Number Brain

That phone number belongs in your head, not in ink in your palm.

- **To remember numbers, create associations.**

For instance, I recently forgot the code to get in my car. The number is 99513. My 11-year-old son Jake said, “Dad, it’s Wayne Gretzky, George Brett and Bad Luck.” How could I ever lock my keys in the car again?

“Office-Time” Brain

Tips to use your brain to get your projects and office work done more quickly and creatively:

- **Don’t see a task as one big job;** break it up into small tasks. For instance, if you have to write your Sales Territory Analysis and it will be 15 pages, set a timer to go off in 15 minutes. Write as quick as possible for 15 minutes, then stop and move onto another task. That task might be another part of your analysis or a completely different task. (I used this technique when writing my book, *20 Days to the Top*, and if I didn’t, I would still be writing). Also, don’t focus on critiquing your work (spell checking, editing) until you have put all the ideas down. Remember, short bursts of activity keep your brain fresh and creative.
- **Take short breaks.** Think of the story of the lumberjack who worked all day but his friend who worked half the day and chopped twice as much wood. His secret was he took regular breaks to sharpen his ax. Even if it is closing your eyes for a second or having a sip of water, take a second out of work and then come back to it fresh.

PIC Knowledge Brain

(Know your Product, Industry, and Competition). Tips to help your brain gain and retain maximum knowledge. British author Samuel Johnson said it well when he said, “The true art of memory is the art of attention.”

- **Focus your attention** on that sheet of literature, brochure or clinical study you are viewing. For information to move from short-term memory into long-term memory, it takes focus.
- **Try to study** in a place free of distractions such as television, music, email and other diversions.

Presentation Brain

The more you remember, the more you can convey in a presentation (when needed).

- **Rehearse and role play** the information you have learned. To recall information, you need to encode what you are studying into long-term memory. One of the most effective encoding techniques is known as elaborative rehearsal. So if you want to be great at prospecting for ECG sales leads, you need to rehearse what will happen on game day.

Fit Brain

An out-of-shape body often means an out-of-shape brain.

- **Exercise** increases oxygen to the brain. More oxygen, more memory. Exercise also can reduce stress. Stress affects short-term memory by producing an enzyme called protein kinase C. This enzyme weakens short-term memory and other functions in the prefrontal cortex, the executive-decision part of the brain.

So this month, give your brain a well-needed workout by trying some of the techniques mentioned above. While I can’t promise that you will show up on *Regis and Kelly*, I can promise you will remember more names, numbers, product information and more. And by doing so, you will save a ton of time, gain more confidence and avoid calling you’re a customer Randy when her name is Sandy. Now don’t you forget it! ■

To listen to Brian interview the Guinness Memory World Record Holder, David Farrow on his weekly radio show, go to www.preciseselling.com/Radioaccess.htm. You don’t want to miss this!

To learn how to become a top veterinary industry performer, go to www.preciseselling.com.