

**SIMPLE STEPS TO SALES SUCCESS**

# BLOK

Profiles  International<sup>®</sup>

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1. a book published on a **weblog** in a series of **installments**
2. a **printed book** derived from a **weblog**

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## ABOUT PROFILES INTERNATIONAL

We offer assessment solutions that enable organizations to select the right people for the right job and develop them to their full potential.

We work with clients across the employee life cycle to enhance the productivity and performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. Our solutions can help clients screen-out unsuitable candidates, match others with jobs that fit their inherent capabilities, understand the strengths and limitations of successful onboarding, and identify opportunities to enhance performance and maximize their long-term contribution to the organization.

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# DEATH of SUCCESS

**“Salespeople are born,  
NOT MADE.”**

**Do you think this is a true or false statement?** According to a Harvard Business Review article by Steve W. Martin, 70 percent of top salespeople are born with natural instincts that make them successful, and the other 30 percent are self-made and must learn to be successful. Martin goes on to state that for every 100 people who enter into a sales job without natural sales traits, 40 percent will fail or quit, 40 percent will perform at an average level, and only 20 percent will perform at an above average level.

Natural instincts or not, born salesperson or self-made salesperson, success comes down to one thing — how much do you want it? Successful salespeople are successful because they work continually on eliminating the most common reasons for failure. When a sales person fails or quits, it can normally be attributed to one or more of the following damaging behaviors:

## **1 Lack of Desire or Enthusiasm**

A sales person must love what they do and make

sure that it shows in their actions. If the thought of making a sale doesn't excite a sales person, then they are in the wrong profession and will not be successful. Salespeople need to constantly remind themselves why they love selling and make a point to celebrate wins.

## **2 Bad Attitude**

Professional salespeople face adversity every day. To be successful, they must have an unshakeable belief in themselves, or at the very least, the desire to work on developing such self-belief

— every day of their lives. Sales people should use tools, such as assessments, to find out what motivates them and what they need to do for development. They can then use this information to remain positive and overcome adversity.

## **3 Poor Sales Skills**

There are some basic sales skills so essential to success that even salespeople with natural talents will not get anywhere without them. Salespeople should use skills tests to determine



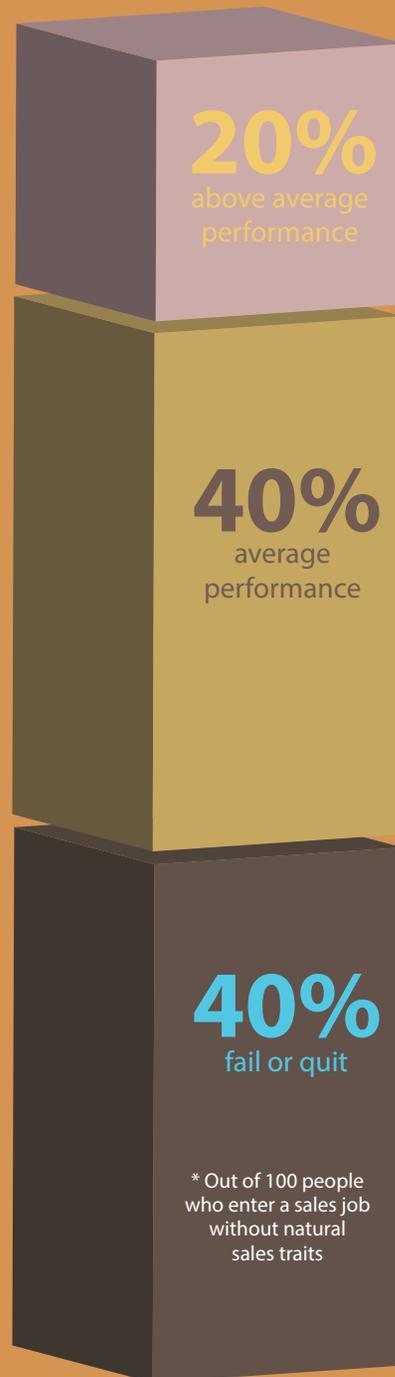
their skill level and then attend sales workshops, webinars, conferences, and training programs to improve their skills. Improving basic selling skills could be what gives a salesperson an advantage over his or her competition.

#### **4** Failure to Create a Plan

As the saying goes, "Fail to plan and you plan to fail." There are not enough hours in a day for a sales person to do all they need to do for success unless they plan well. To be successful, sales people need to develop a clear, action-based plan that includes the activities required to achieve their objectives.

#### **5** Failure to Learn Continually

Successful salespeople are constantly learning new things. Almost everyone has a smartphone or tablet, so there is no excuse for not being up-to-date with the latest sales tips and tricks. To stay ahead of the game, salespeople should read or listen to at least one new sales book per month,



watch videos of other sales people in action, or join sales groups via social media.

#### **6** Not Working Hard or Smart Enough

Being a successful salesperson requires long hours and working on days that people in non-sales positions are off. To get the most return on their investment of time and effort, the best sales reps work smart. Salespeople should periodically log everything they do over a week and then evaluate the log to find inefficiencies and time burners.

Although many salespeople are gifted with natural talents, the truth is that whether a salesperson is natural-born or self-made, there are some behaviors that can make or break their success. To be successful, salespeople must be enthusiastic about their job, have a positive attitude, plan accordingly, hone in their sales skills, continually increase their knowledge, and work smart as well as hard.





# WAYS TO INCREASE CUSTOMER FOCUS

*“Sales without customer service is like stuffing money into a pocket full of holes.”*

– David Tooman, Customer Service Expert

This quote perfectly illustrates just how important customer focus is to the success of America’s

most productive sales organizations. According to our latest study, *America’s Most Productive Companies: Large Sales Force Analysis*, the top three reasons sales close are: nurtured relationships, support and service after the sale, and product quality. These three

factors alone account for 50 percent of why sales close. Through comprehensive research, the *America’s Most Productive Companies* report classifies the “best of the best” organizations in sales, and then discovers why they are more successful than their peers. With nurtured relationships and quality post-sale support as top selling factors, we see that having extreme customer and market focus is absolutely crucial. It’s all about the customer!

For outstanding sales success, organizations need to continually invest in learning more about their customers’ needs and train their sales teams to accommodate those needs. Here are three ways to increase customer focus and become more like America’s most productive companies:

**1 Use 360-degree feedback and other** tools to help sales managers better understand their teams’ internal capabilities and assign the appropriate resources to the right projects. For example, the CheckPoint 360<sup>o</sup>™ is an employee leadership survey that can be customized to fit various organizations and gathers

responses from direct reports, peers, supervisors, and even customers. Managers need to know where their employees are excelling and where there is room for growth and development.

**2 Ask customers and prospects in-depth** questions to gain a thorough understanding of their businesses before making sales presentations. Again, it’s all about the customer. You need to know exactly what customers are looking for and focus on satisfying their needs.

**3 Train salespeople to offer unique solutions** to customer problems rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Selling is all about relationship building. It’s important to treat each customer with the special care they need and deserve before they find it somewhere else. That is why top sales organizations make sure to maintain extreme customer focus.

For more findings and best-practices from *America’s Most Productive Companies: Large Sales Force Analysis*, download the complete report.

# SHOW ME THE MONEY

## How to MAXIMIZE Sales Force Productivity

**Sales representatives** are the people who represent a company and sell the products or services that the organization offers. The job of a sales rep can vary greatly depending on the organization and types of products and services they

sell; however, sales reps are often considered some of the most important employees within an organization. Sales equate to money, so without sales an organization would cease to exist. The importance of a company's sales force cannot be understated in a competitive marketplace.

Finding good salespeople can be difficult and time consuming. Many organizations struggle to create, develop, and maintain a successful sales force. In another article, we will discuss what managers need to keep in mind when hiring top performing sales reps; this article will focus on what companies can do to maximize the productivity of the entire sales team once they have

hired sales employees. According to a survey conducted by Profiles Research Institute, there are seven actions organizations and sales managers can take to transform their sales team into lean, mean, selling machines:

### 1 **Address Negative and Disengaged Attitudes Immediately**

The nature of sales provides plenty of opportunity for negative emotions to surface: loss of a sale, loss of a client, rejection, and market conditions. In many different contexts, negative attitudes can lead to decreased levels of employee engagement, productivity, and morale. Managers need to address these negative attitudes before they have the ability to impact productivity.

**Sales equate to money,  
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would cease to exist.**

A positive atmosphere in a sales department is important for motivating employees to press through the challenges that accompany a sales job.

## **2 Set Valid Time and Activity Goals for Tracking Progress of Sales Employees**

Tracking employee performance is crucial for sales employees. Sales managers need to set clear goals and measure the progress of each sales rep. Performance-tracking tools help managers organize and follow sales, revenue, and client goals for each sales employee. The pressure to meet a goal can provide additional motivation for less productive employees.

## **3 Share Knowledge and Information Concerning the Sales Process**

Knowledge sharing is an effective way to increase the productivity of sales employees without removing them from their job. Technology provides many tools that allow for

sharing knowledge easily within a department. Online chat forums, training videos, webinars, and emails that publicly recognize and share tips and specific techniques from successful sales reps are used to help achieve success.

## **4 Implement a Systematic Process to Attain New Clients and Win New Business**

Organizations have a variety of goals and objectives when it comes to sales. These goals not only depend on the product or service, but industry size as well. Upselling existing clients is always one goal, but sales reps should always strive to win new clients and new sales. Planning and establishing strategies for obtaining new business will ensure long-term growth for your sales force and the entire organization.

## **5 Establish a Strategic Process to Grow and Increase Key Accounts**

It definitely costs more money and takes more effort to gain a new client than it does to

maintain an existing client. Organizations need to create strategies and processes that increase sales in key accounts. Growing key accounts and maintaining clients over a long period of time is significantly more valuable than finding one-time buyers or short-term clients. Sales managers and reps need to understand the importance of maintaining and growing existing clients and the financial implications that accompany that process.

## **6 Provide Targeted Training for Sales Employees**

Sales training is imperative. Organizations must select training programs that fit the strengths of the sales department and provide specific tools that will help the sales team meet organizational goals. Training should balance focus between interpersonal interactions, persuasive communication, and utilizing new technology to learn more about prospects and clients. Sales managers

and organizations must be aware of the needs of their sales force in order to select the best training programs.

## **7 Equip Sales Force with the Tools Needed to be Successful**

Sales managers are not responsible for forcing sales reps to do their job, but they are responsible for providing sales reps the opportunity for success. One way managers can do this is by providing efficient technology, access to market and client information, and additional sales training. Providing these tools can not only increase productivity, it can also help build trust, commitment, and loyalty between the sales manager and the sales team.

Organizations and sales managers often face challenges when trying to develop their sales force and increase productivity. By taking the steps listed above, companies can rise to the challenge of maximizing the productivity of their sales force and ensure future success.

# CUSTOMER SERVICE

## From Apple's Training Manual

**How does Apple maintain** such astronomical sales? Part of the secret is out. Apple's Training Manual, "Genius Training Student Workbook," has been leaked. The training guide for Apple's retail salespeople has been made fun of for being a bit cultish and manipulative.

But as Gizmodo points out, something about Apple's selling system works, however strange it may be. Everyone hired to work at

Apple's retail stores must complete an intensive 14-day training program. The training manual covers everything from "Using Diagnostic Service" to "Genius Actions and Characteristics."

There is another exhaustive set of instructions for how to behave on the sales floor. The manual lists words employees cannot say. An entire section is dedicated to reading a potential customer's nonverbal cues.

Who knew an unbuttoned coat signaled confidence? Empathy is of particular importance. Apple employees are instructed to be understanding of what a customer or potential customer is going through and express that understanding whenever possible. Apple employees are also encouraged to provide feedback to other employees if they notice their interactions with customers are not up to Apple's standards.



# “Everyone is in the business of achieving the company’s goals!”

Here’s one example:

**One Genius to another:**

*“Hi, fellow Genius. I overheard your conversation with your customer during that last interaction and I have some feedback if you have a moment.”*

This is the way employees are encouraged to approach each other.

## 1 Everyone in the Organization is in the Business of Selling

Apple’s guide states this verbatim, and we are sure CEOs everywhere would agree. But knowing this fact and integrating it into your corporate culture are two different things. If employees do not see how their job contributes to the bottom line, they can begin to feel

disengaged. Disengagement can dramatically lower the quality of employee’s work, decreasing productivity and eventually customer satisfaction. Remind your employees constantly how their job contributes to the overarching goal of the organization. Everyone is in the business of achieving the company’s goals!

## 2 Positive Language is Important in the Work Environment

Apple salespeople are not allowed to say that a device “crashed.” Instead, phrases like “stopped responding” are encouraged. Every employee should watch the language they use to describe their work. If an account or client is difficult, encourage your employees to replace words like “annoying” or “too much

work” with “opportunity to get better” or “chance to learn what we did wrong.” Positivity is contagious, and every failure is an opportunity to improve service to customers.

## 3 Empathy is Important with Potential Customers

Here’s another example:

**Customer:** *“This Mac is just too expensive.”*

**Genius:** *“I can see how you’d feel this way. I felt the price was a little high, but I found it’s a real value because of all the built-in software and capabilities.”*

This is a great model for any organization to follow. Customers want to feel that they are understood. Training anyone who has direct contact with customers to practice empathy is critical to retaining loyal customers.

Apple is not the only company to use strictly defined customer service tactics. Zappos goes to great lengths to ensure its

customers are happy. The company is one of the few online retailers that does not outsource its call center and whose customer service representatives do not read from a script. The company has numerous stories about how it goes above and beyond for customers.

One Zappos employee sent flowers to a woman who had ordered six pairs of shoes because she was trying to find one pair that would work for her feet after a difficult surgical procedure. Zappos also overnighted another pair of shoes to the best man in a wedding after UPS sent the original pair to the wrong location.

It is clear that Zappos values its customers. This degree of intensity is not innate in each customer service representative though: all Zappos contact center employees undergo seven weeks of training. This obsessive dedication to perfecting the customer experience is what sets companies like Apple and Zappos apart when it comes to customer service.

**When Vilfredo Pareto** formulated his famous 80-20 rule in 1900, I wonder if he could have guessed that 100 years later his rule would apply to sales in organizations like yours — “about 20% of all salespeople make 80% of all sales.”

Research consistently demonstrates that over half of those in professional sales lack the basic attributes required for success in this difficult profession, attributes that world-class salespeople possess as natural gifts or developed through training or single-minded focus. Of the

remaining half, half of these again have the potential for success in some form of sales but are currently selling the wrong product or service — leaving just about 25% who sell about 80% of the world’s products and services. Scary!

That’s why it is key that those of us with the responsibility of driving our businesses forward have a keen understanding of the attributes that make for world-class salespeople — so that we can hire more of them. It’s also crucial that we recognize where any struggling salespeople

on our team might need training or support.

### 1 They Have Irrepressibly Positive Attitudes

All of their glasses are half full and every cloud they encounter has a silver lining. Knock them down nine times and they stand up ten. Without this iron optimism, a life in sales is a stressful and daunting existence. Do your sales heroes live in a partly cloudy or partly sunny world?

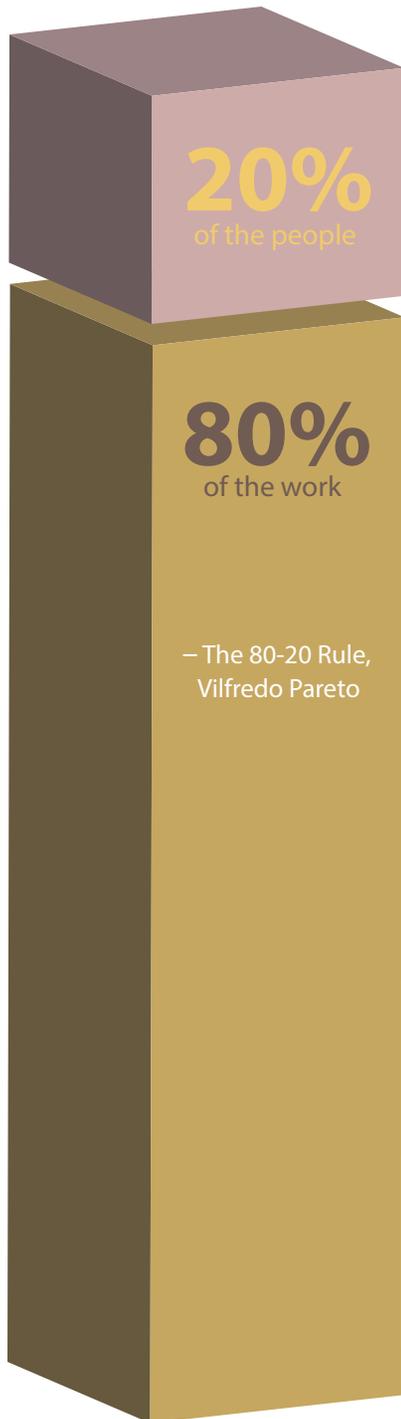
### 2 They Understand That Sales is a Numbers Game

They don’t lose their cool when a call goes badly, a deal goes south or a first contact ends in refusal — they simply focus more carefully on the next call. They know their hit rate from past experience — they know how many “No’s!” they’ll have to take on the chin to get to one “Yes.” Do your salespeople know the value of their calls?

### 3 They Live to Prospect

World-class sales people are prospecting all of the time, especially when things are going so well that other salespeople have stopped.

WORLD CLASS PEOPLE = WORLD CLASS SALES



They know that sales success is directly dependent upon continually filling their pipelines with well-qualified prospects.

Prospecting is their obsession, they never stop. Is prospecting 24/7/365 in your organization?

#### **4 They are Totally Sales Driven**

These people live for the chase that results in a closed deal. They are internally motivated to go to whatever lengths they must in order to win the business. They seem to have unceasing energy. Once they decide to do something, once they get the bit between their teeth, nothing slows or stops them until they have succeeded. Is your sales team in top gear?

#### **5 They are Competitive**

The need to win trumps everything else that they do. They don't like second, and they are not good losers. Sure, they know that they must affect a "good loser" performance from time to time for social reasons. But

deep down they need to win, and losses just stiffen their resolve. They can't be kept in second place for long. Is your team too good at losing?

#### **6 They are Obsessed with "The Next Step"**

Everything they do is about getting to "the next step," and getting to the next level of commitment that brings the client closer to the level of trust and confidence needed for the client to say "Yes!"

World-class sales people think solely in terms of specifics like "where," "when," "how," and "how much." Vague concepts like "sometime," "in the future," "later," and "whenever" are simply not in their vocabularies. Are your salespeople driving their case forward at least one step with every client or prospect they contact?

#### **7 They Know That They and Their Products are World Class**

Quiet confidence oozes out of top salespeople, and unbridled enthusiasm for

their company and their products and services gushes from them with everyone they meet. No one is left untouched by their passion when they talk about themselves, their companies, or their products and services. They evangelize. Have your people been to the top of the mountain?

#### **8 They Qualify Hard Before They Invest Time and Energy**

Time is too precious to waste on people who don't have the need for what top salespeople can provide. They understand their products and services inside out, understand the needs they address, understand why their offerings are so much better than their competitors, and know enough about their prospective clients that they rarely find themselves in front of someone who is not a genuine prospective client. Does your sales team look before they leap?

# How Assessments Help with Hiring Great Sales Managers

**When you're looking to** fill a sales management position, it's easy to just take the top performing sales person and bump them up to a leadership position. They have an outstanding sales record, they have that vibrant, go-getter attitude, and they deliver results. They'll obviously succeed as a sales manager right? Wrong. When it comes to hiring great sales managers, that is a common misconception.

Nearly 60 percent of frontline managers underperform during their first two years, and more than 50 percent would rather not manage people at all.

It is important to remember that the characteristics of a great sales person differ from those of a great leader. Top sales people tend to be somewhat unmanageable. Top performing sales people are typically assertive,

hardheaded, independent, and do whatever it takes to make the sale! Imagine having a manager with those identical characteristics. That could be a nightmare for both the new manager and the sales employees. Demands are different for sales managers. A new role as manager suddenly forces the once independent and self-motivated top sales performer into a position to lead and motivate others. A totally new set of skills and characteristics are needed to manage effectively, and salespeople can't just develop them overnight. To be great sales leader, they must:

- Have the interest and capability to lead
- Know their purpose as a sales manager
- Understand the people and sales reps they lead
- Understand themselves and how their leadership role impacts their sales reps

Poor, ineffective management is costly and hurts business. If the top sales performer just doesn't have what it takes to be an effective manager – or isn't capable of developing the crucial leadership skills – it will hurt both the manager and the organization. A top sales person who is failing as a manager is likely to leave the company and become a top sales person at another organization, and we know how costly employee turnover is.

When selecting sales managers, it is essential to know if the sales person will be or can develop into an effective leader. Here are six keys to unlocking potential managers:

1. Identify employees with the capability and interest to be good managers

2. Help your managers clarify their teams' goals and roles
3. Help your managers understand the people they manage
4. Help your managers understand themselves and how they impact their people
5. Don't assume your managers know how or when to coach
6. Minimize administrative work to give managers more time to develop people

After evaluation and assessment, if a top sales person has the right capabilities, characteristics, and is willing to take the management position, great! If not, that's okay too. You certainly don't want to lose a top performing sales person just because they won't fit in a management position.

# Simple Tricks to Remember Names

**How many times have** you been introduced to someone new, and just seconds later when it comes time to introduce them to someone else, you've forgotten their name? It's embarrassing to say the least. It can also make you look unprofessional and uninterested. With just a little extra effort, you can avoid that awkward moment of having to ask for someone's name a second time.

## 1 Switch Off the Internal Dialogue

As you're reading this article, take a moment to examine what else is flying around in your mind — lots of things, right? It's no different in social or business situations where you're meeting people for the first time. Instead of focusing on whom you're meeting, you're wondering if you turned off the coffee maker before you left the house, if you have everything ready for the presentation you have to give in an hour,

what time you have to pick up your child from soccer practice, etc. With all of that internal dialogue going on, it's no wonder you can't remember Karen's name. Or was it Kim? It should come as no surprise that you can't remember someone's name, because you didn't try to remember it in the first place. Be aware of your internal dialogue and make a conscious effort to focus your attention exclusively on the person you're meeting. When you find yourself drifting inwards, step out. Stay external by preparing to remember.

## 2 Listen

Good listeners rarely forget names. Look at all the people you know who are good at remembering names. Picture their conversational contribution and you'll find that it's weighted towards listening, NOT talking. Learn to listen actively. When a new person's name is introduced

into the conversation, be sure you hear it!

## 3 Bury the New Name in Your Memory

First, repeat it in a sentence. Simple everyday courtesy phrases like, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Marie," will do it. This has two effects. First, it puts the name immediately into your short-term memory. Second, it makes the new person feel good. After all, Dale Carnegie said that "the sweetest sound in any language is the sound of one's own name." If it's an unusual name, ask them to spell it. This implants it even deeper in your memory and builds rapport. Finally, think about the name itself. Does it sound like anything else? Is there any way you can make a memorable association? Some names are easier to remember than others. If there's no obvious association, then consider what their name sounds like or if it rhymes with an easier word to remember.

# “The key to remembering people and their names is to WANT to remember them.”

## 4 Make Eye Contact

When meeting someone, look at them. Make eye contact and smile. Imagine the name of your new acquaintance written in big luminous letters across his or her forehead, then observe. What makes their face interesting and different? Does he or she have an interesting hair or eye color? You don't have to stare them down to do this effectively. All of this can be picked up in a few quick glances if you take the time to notice.

## 5 Bring it all Together

Now you've got the name, you've got some memorable association, and you've got some distinguishing

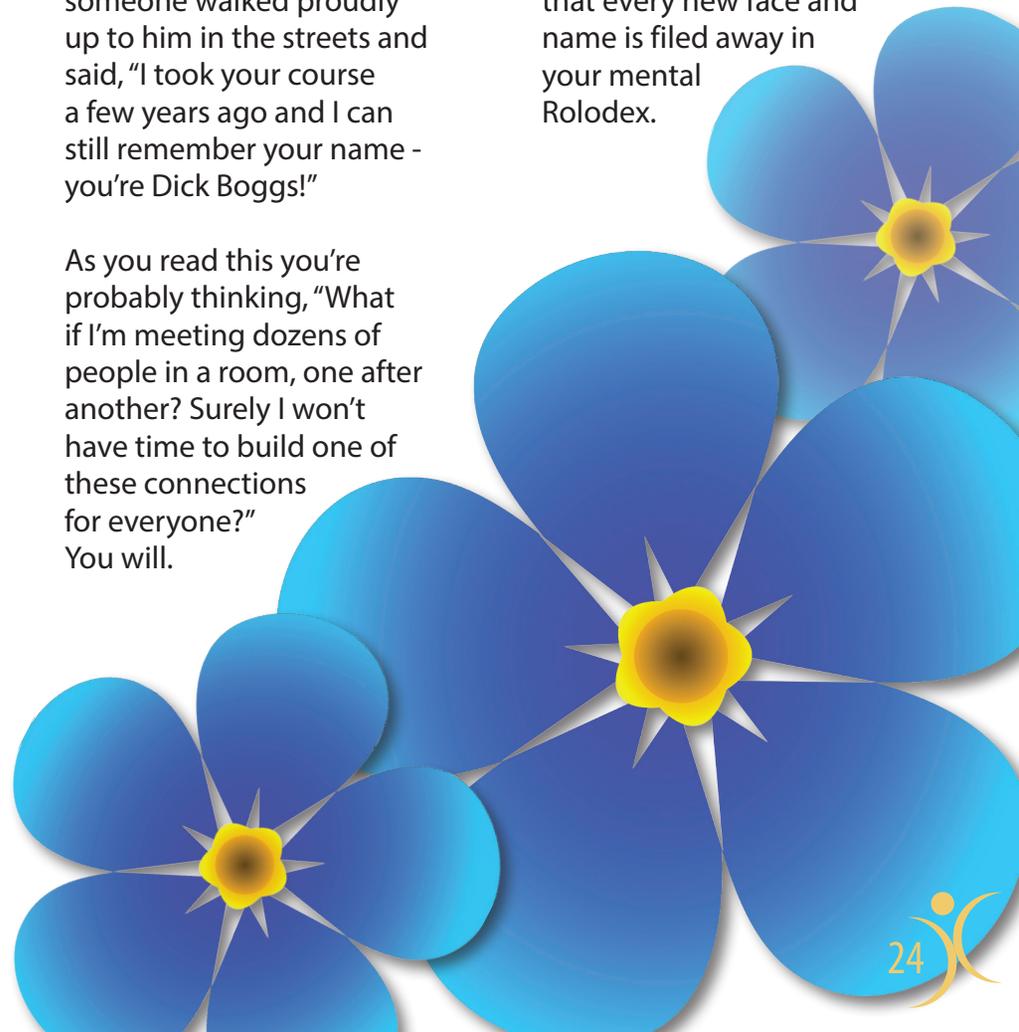
physical features (avoid using jewelry, clothes etc. since they may not be wearing them the next time you meet). Construct a mind-picture for this person. Connect their unique physical features with their name's association to create a picture that will pop into your mind next time you meet them. The sillier you make the picture, the better. This is an absolutely infallible system; apply it and you'll never forget someone again.

Richard Marsh of Dale Carnegie instructed a class using this technique, using his own name as an example. "To remember my first name, imagine me in the armor of King Richard

the Lion Heart...see my face inside the elaborate visor... now, to remember my surname see me emerge in my full armor from a marsh, a bog...notice how the weight of the armor is making me sinking in the bog." From meeting many people over the years who had attended a Carnegie program, he knew this worked quite well - until someone walked proudly up to him in the streets and said, "I took your course a few years ago and I can still remember your name - you're Dick Boggs!"

As you read this you're probably thinking, "What if I'm meeting dozens of people in a room, one after another? Surely I won't have time to build one of these connections for everyone?" You will.

With a little practice this becomes so automatic and instantaneous that you'll find a mind-picture pops into your head pretty much instantaneously for every new person you meet. The key to remembering people and their names is to WANT to remember them badly enough to make the extra effort. After that, the approach above will ensure that every new face and name is filed away in your mental Rolodex.



# 3 STEPS

## to Help Sales Managers Prepare for Difficult Conversations

### During times of budget

challenges and uncertainty, supervisors might experience an increase in the number of difficult conversations with their sales people. These could include delivering bad news about an employee's job, informing staff about work restructuring, or discussing other complicated and stressful work situations.

### 1 Preparing for the Conversation

Before going into the

25

conversation, ask yourself several key questions. Consult with Human Resources professionals, peers, and other appropriate resources to be sure you're comfortable with the answers.

Key questions include:

- What is my purpose for having the conversation?
- What do I hope to accomplish?
- What is the ideal outcome?
- What assumptions am I making about the other person's reaction to the conversation?
- What "hot buttons" exist – for me and for the other person?

- How is my attitude toward the conversation contributing to the intended outcome?

Practice the conversation. You can mentally rehearse it in your mind, or practice it out loud with your supervisor, Employee Assistance Program or Human Resources.

### 2 Holding the Conversation

A successful outcome will depend on two things: what you say and how you say it. How you approach the conversation and how you behave will greatly influence what you say and how it is perceived.

Acknowledge any emotional energy that might be fueled by the conversation. The emotional content is as important as the facts.

Keep aligned with the purpose of your conversation. Don't get distracted or sidetracked.

Suggestions for opening the conversation include:

- "I'd like to talk to you about ..."
- "I want to better understand your point of view. Can we talk more about ..."
- "I'd like to talk about (blank). I think we may have different ideas on how to (blank)."

# Contact Us

### 3 Working Toward a Successful Outcome

Approach the conversation with an attitude of inquiry and discovery. Set aside assumptions and try to learn as much as possible about the other person's point of view. Remember to listen! Let the employees complete what they have to say without interruption.

Acknowledge that you've heard what the other person is trying to say. The best way to do this is to repeat their argument back to them. You don't have to agree. Saying "it sounds like this issue is very important to you" doesn't mean that you have to decide the way they'd like you to.

Advocate for your position without diminishing theirs. State your position concisely and clarify points they may not have understood.

End with problem solving. Find mutual areas where you can agree on solutions and identify what steps need to be taken. If there is no common ground, return to inquiry.



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