

# The Profile of a Sales Professional

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I am a big believer that great salespeople generally realise their greatness, rather than being born that way. Yes, I know we've all heard somebody in sales who told us that they've been in sales all their life. It all started when they were young, selling second hand stuff in a jumble sale or in one case selling their mum's lemonade from their kitchen for five pence per glass. This is probably more a reflection of the family environment that they grew up in that may have encouraged or necessitated this than anything else. Even if you didn't start as a youngster or have had people telling you all your life that you're a natural, you still can be a highly successful sales professional.

I gave this topic some thought because this is an excellent exercise that I sometimes use when running sales training or persuasion courses with great effect. Reminding the delegates of the film *Weird Science*, where the adolescent boys use CAD to design their perfect women (Kelly LeBrock). I ask the delegates what they believe to be the ideal Profile of a Sales Professional. Their responses are in fairness quite imaginative, and sometimes a little misdirected as to whether Attitude, Skill or Knowledge based attributes are of primary importance. So I thought today, that I'd share with you what I believe to be the primary characteristics of outstanding salespeople.

## 1 - To have goal clarity

It may surprise you to know that fewer than 10% of sales people have written sales goals. Without a sales goal or a sales vision of what success looks like, your brain has nothing to direct it and therefore it chooses the direction and can meander through the day. This can lead to some seriously unproductive days. Days, weeks and even months can pass without achieving anything, just because you didn't have goal clarity or sales vision. You can think of strategic sales vision or goal clarity in terms of having an onboard compass, which is constantly giving you direction and focuses your efforts on a successful outcome. So you can have strategic sales vision or a "oh lets see what happens" type of attitude. I know which is going to get you the best results.

For the best results you need to use mental imagery to create vivid pictures in your mind

that will store easily in your long-term memory. Pictures are much stronger and create more powerful drivers to achieving your goals than just using words and numbers and writing them down.

## 2 - Create strategic plans

Our most important resource is our time. How we spend our time determines our success. Therefore this limited resource needs using well and planning in detail. In sales we never seem to have enough hours in the day or days in the week to be able to contact all our customers and prospects, plan our sales strategy, do all the necessary paper work and still find time for ourselves and our family and friends.

This is such a vital skill that you need to plan time to do the planning.

## 3 - Have persistence and tenacity

There are many analogies of great successful people in history who demonstrated these qualities. Edison with his light bulb, Col. Sanders with his chicken recipe and many other stories all demonstrating how important being persistent and tenacious is in our profession.

It is all too easy to give up on a client or prospect when the going is getting tough and we are not getting our own way. Jay Conrad Levinson in his book 'Guerrilla Tele-selling' tells of research that has shown that 80% of customers tend to buy after the 6th attempt to sell to them. Now that is an awful lot of rejection to face. Just think if at our first or second attempt at walking we decided, or our parents decided, that this was just a waste of time and we would never do anything in this area - what a disaster that would have been.

In our hectic lives where food is fast and demands are high we expect instant results, and we do not seem as geared up for coping with disappointment and rejection and these set backs often make us just give up.

## 4 - Understands and knows people

Of all the characteristics that people attribute to salespeople, this is the one that people are most often talking about when they describe a "natural". The ability to build relationships and maintain rapport is probably the single most

powerful skill a salesperson can have. The most flexible people can adapt and establish rapport with others from a multitude of backgrounds and cultures. The longer you can maintain rapport with more people, the more chances you will have to ask questions, uncover opportunities, and present solutions that make sales. And as with everything else in sales, this skill can actually be learned.

## 5 - Committed to personal growth and continual personal development

Great salespeople are always looking for a better way to do things and themselves. Improving their skills, their knowledge, and their attitude. There are many philosophies on what the 'best' approach to sales is. Some work better than others depending on one's own personal style, the product you're selling, and the customers that you sell to. Great salespeople know that they must look for the best examples of excellence, and adopt the individual aspects of this that they can use.

## 6 - Learn from their mistakes and treat feedback as food for growth

One of the ways to continuously improve is to seek feedback and learn from mistakes. Many who have been selling for years have developed sales practices that have worked in the past or actually work sometimes now, but don't change what they are doing when their strategy simply is not working for them. They either simply just don't notice their strategy is not working or don't know how to change, when those practices (habits) are not doing what they expect. John LaValle (author of Persuasion Engineering) taught me something very simple, years ago.

**1** Know what you want, **2** notice what you are getting and **3** if you are not getting what you want - do something different. It is certainly true that the definition of insanity is *to do the same thing in the same way and expect a different result.*

So here are some of the primary characteristics of a successful sales professional. All these attitudes skills and knowledge can be taught. You do not need to have been born a sales genius to learn and practice these characteristics and - they only work!