

The Critical Factor In Consistent Sales Success

"Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing."- Abraham Lincoln -I have recognized for years that I could teach and then drill selling skills into a promising sales representative and could help my client to create a climate for self-motivation and yet some representatives with extremely high potential for success still would fail at the selling process. To combat this unpredictable failure, I often have counseled clients to hire two representatives to end up with one good one or three to get two. Even though I believed that a new sales person would do well as long as he had been given the right selling and prospecting tools and the motivation to spur him into action, often I saw perfectly capable employees leave the selling profession, simply because of a missing ingredient. I couldn't quite put my finger on the elusive success component, but I did feel it had something to do with an individual's achievement drive. That's why I initially created our Getting An Edge workshop and self-administered reinforcement series (see <http://thesellingedge.com/manual2.htm>). After watching good people fail, I sensed that there was a missing factor in our sales training. Now research by Dr. Kevin Celuch, professor of Marketing at Illinois State University, has not only identified and clarified the critical ingredient to sales success, but he has made some vital suggestions on how to instill this factor into individual sales representatives. Dr. Celuch's has analyzed* 166 previous studies that had been completed on selling success. In his research he found that even with all of the vital selling skills in place and a motivational climate within a given company, a sales representative or service professional will often fail due to what Celuch refers to as "a vital mediating factor" between a sales person's selling skills and motivation. This mediating factor, is a sales person's own self-esteem. Celuch's study shows an extremely low correlation between sales success on one hand and a sales representative's aptitude, sales techniques, organizational skill and motivation factors on the other. Across a long list of diverse selling activities and abilities, the real indicator of selling success found in the Celuch study was a sales professional's perceived self-efficacy. A "belief in oneself" was Dr. Celuch's explanation for a salesperson's behavior and performance levels. He found that self-belief was the critical intermediary between a sales representative's knowledge and the professional's behavior. It is interesting that a gut feeling that I have had about sales success for the past 17 years has finally been proven by research. Achievement drive, the self-esteem that drives achievement, is critical to your company's overall selling success. Those of you that use testing before hiring new sales associates should make certain that this critical factor is assessed by your tests and weighted heavily as you make decisions regarding those that you hire. For those sales representatives already in place, you need to assess your programs for helping the employees crucial to the overall success of your organization to maintain and consistently improve their feelings of self-worth. The manual listed in the first paragraph can help anyone to alter negative feelings and attain a personal belief levels that will produce consistent sales success.* Source: Kevin Celuch, Illinois State University. Based on "Perceived Self-Efficacy and Salesperson Performance," presented to Pi Sigma Epsilon research fraternity convention.

About the Author

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