10 Minute Sales Discussion™

From: The Canterbury Sales ™

Question: Why is it important to stick to the selling system?

The Salesperson's Sacred Trust

I'm a big Humphrey Bogart fan. When TCM was showing the movie Action in the North Atlantic, starring Humphrey Bogart, it was a natural draw for me.

The movie dramatizes the heroic effort by the U.S. Merchant Marine to supply our allies during World War II, in the face of enemy U-boat torpedoes. The plot focused on one particular ship in a convoy, where Bogart was the first officer. The movie chronicles the desperate battles the ship faced against U-boats and enemy bombers, to successfully deliver it's cargo across the Atlantic.

A key sub-plot was the importance of the gun crew, which protected the ship from U boat attacks. The 4 man crew trained for 6 months, repeating the same behaviors over and over, so that they could perform effortlessly and promptly at critical moments.

Over 30% of the tonnage shipped across the Atlantic was sunk by German U-Boats. It was a very difficult, yet unheralded struggle. Without the supplies the ships carried, the allies could not have won World War II. The merchant marines were at great risk, yet were unacknowledged, silent heroes in WWII.

The movie, and the gun crew in particular, reminded me of the sacred trust of the salesperson. We are familiar with the saying "nothing happens until somebody sells something." The salesperson's efforts have a much wider impact, then the size of the commission check.

Our organizations are teams – including production, administration, R&D, shipping, management and quality control – who depend on the efficacy of the sales force. These different departments and functions may not realize it, but their jobs depend on the effectiveness of the sales force; in particular the new business development effort. In this team effort, the sales force has major leadership responsibility, and faces substantial psychological risk.

Selling is one of the few professions where you can fail more than half of the time and still be a great success. (Imagine if the payroll department made mistakes 50% of the time, or production shipped the wrong goods 30% of the time!)

The success comes at a cost, requiring salespeople to bounce back from failure, from rejection. Thriving salespeople have an emotional resiliency, often living on a psychological roller coaster, of great triumphs and devastating setbacks. They aren't

always appreciated. The failure, the risk, the psychological setbacks remind me of the unsung heroes in the Merchant Marine.

Sometimes salespeople don't appreciate the impact of their work, how they affect others; perhaps management has failed to make them aware. When salespeople go on a sales call, their entire organization is depending on them. Just as everyone else in the organization has a job, the sales team has a job to do. They have an obligation to deliver a "standard sales call", to do a complete job, to not skip steps. In this regard, I am reminded of the gun crew in the movie, who practiced a small routine of motions for 6 months to "get it right".

By contrast, salespeople have a very complex, interesting and exciting job. They must bond with and read people, understand and convey their offering, be effective business people, be masters of persuasion and manage their emotional rollercoasters. In a way, it is rocket science. And there are probably times, with the complexity and the stress, when a salesperson may feel like skipping steps in the sales process.

It is management's job to understand this and remind the sales team of their sacred trust – to "get it right", to do the entire job - as they operate in "psychological harm's way", because the entire organization depends on them.

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If you want additional copies of this essay, or would like to have them mailed to your sales team, call Andy Gole at 201 415 3447.

Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 13 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, Urgency Based Selling™, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at www.bombadilllc.com or by calling him at 201.415.3447.

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