

Why Sales People Fail

Are the right people in the right positions for sales?

Having a quality sales force in place is essential to the success of most businesses. As with most employees, there are always a few employees who just don't fit the position they are attempting to fill. And in some cases, people who are a good fit can fail as well depending on the circumstances. But why do sales people fail? We believe that these are some of the primary reasons:

- **Poor job fit.** The person is just not cut out to sell. Let's face it, not everyone can do this kind of work. No sense trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.
- **Poor management.** Since sales managers are responsible for hiring, training and overseeing sales people, it is logical that they would have a significant influence on a sales person's career. More often than not, sales managers do a poor job of hiring people who are cut out to sell. Just because a person is outgoing does not mean that person will be a good sales person.
- **Laziness.** Selling requires hard work and long hours. Some people just are not willing to put in the time necessary to travel, complete paper work, plan, follow up on problems and issues and develop relationships. Field sales people working less than, say, 60 hours per week are probably not going to be highly effective. Many sales people work 50, 60 and even 70 hour weeks. Most poor sales people put in far fewer hours. There are expectations to this, but not many. Selling is hard work and requires long hours to do it right.
- **A short-term mentality.** Sales people who view sales as a way to put a lot of money in their pockets in a hurry tend to have short-lived careers in any given organization. Why? Because they view the customer as a cash machine that they can tap quickly and at whatever cost is necessary. This type of approach leads to weak or no relationships with customers. A long-term, relationship-oriented approach is far better. The sales person's income over the short-term might not be as significant, but over the long-haul is much better. My largest customer, whom we have the best relationship together, took me four years to finally get in the door and close. We are both very happy.
- **Lack of follow-up and service orientation.** Sales people who leave customers hanging when there is a problem or a question lose credibility with their customer

base. Good sales people are highly customer-oriented and service-oriented. They bend over backwards to take care of their customers even if it means working longer hours and fighting a number of battles to get things done.

- **Focusing on customers they are most comfortable with.** Sales people sometimes are fearful of working new or lesser relationships to the extent they need to be worked. They often gravitate toward customers they have a strong relationship with. However, some of those customers might not buy much. They just like to chat and make the sales person feel good about the possibility of buying something.
- **Having no plan.** Sales people need a plan each and every day. This plan should be priority-driven and should guide the sales person as much as possible.
- **Lack of organization skills.** A good sales people is organized and deals with details. There is a school of thought that good people are not detail-oriented. That can be true in some cases, but if the sales person is not detail-oriented, he must work harder to deal with the important details.
- **Inability to multi-task.** Sales people are required to deal with a number of issues at the same time. Some people can't handle the pressure of this type of work.
- **Poor training.** Sales people need excellent product training and sales training. A sales person needs to understand how your business operates and how to sell your products or services. They also need to learn basic selling skills even if they are experienced sales veterans. The longer you are in sales, the more likely it is that you will forget these basic selling skills or even take many of them for granted. For instance, veteran sales people can forget to listen because they have heard nearly every problem their prospects can throw at them, so they are anxious to jump in with a solution before the prospect has a chance to articulate their problem. While the solution can be the correct one, the prospect is put off because he may feel that the sales person didn't give him time to explain and felt disrespected, or worse, that the sales person did not appreciate the prospect's concerns and was just recommending something without full understanding or consideration of the prospect's exact needs.
- **Bad support from the company.** In some companies, the sales people do a good job, but the company fails. Processes are slow and inefficient. Customer service people don't support them well. Shipments are slow and inaccurate. The list goes on and on. Even a good sales person can fail if the company fails them. It is important for a sales person to know the company's deficiencies so that he will not over-promise and under-deliver.

There are some of the key reasons why sales people fail. How do your sales people stack up against this list? How well does your company support your sales people?

Good luck and good selling!

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