Fostering Success through Goal-Focused Leadership
Sara Jansen Perry, PhD, Lars U. Johnson, PhD, L.A. Witt, PhD, and Daniel P. McDonald, PhD

How Screen Time Affects Sleep and Work Performance
Haiyang Liu, PhD, Yueting Ji, PhD, and Scott B. Dust, PhD

Reducing Social Anxiety to Boost Sales Performance
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Making the Brand-to-Customer Relationship Work
Claudio Alvarez, PhD, Danielle J. Brick, PhD, and Susan Fournier, PhD

INSIDER: Sales Secrets
Isabella Ip, MBA Candidate

INSIDER: Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know
Tyler O’Mary, MBA Candidate
INSIDER: Sales Secrets
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Starting a sales career can be a daunting experience, especially since sales can include a variety of situations and individuals as well as numerous different sales approaches. While there are an overwhelming number of resources available to help one build a successful career, it may be easier and more effective to turn to experienced individuals who have demonstrated great success in this field. In “Sales Secrets,” author Brandon Bornancin shares advice and perspectives from 104 accomplished sales individuals to help novice and experienced sales professionals alike succeed in what can be a long-lasting and lucrative career.

THINK POINT #1: Focus on the Customer

The sales experts in “Sales Secrets” agree: the customer is at the heart of every sale and should always be a salesperson’s priority. It is important to understand the desires and goals of the customer, which will look different in each transaction. By asking questions and listening, salespeople may understand the customer’s point-of-view and authentically learn to help customers reach their goals. Too much emphasis on one’s personal sales goals can take the focus away from the goal of customer satisfaction.

Asking quality questions is at the core of being able to understand the customer at a deeper level, but there is an art to asking questions. It is important to first note that quality questions are concentrated on understanding customers’ issues, their priorities, and why these factors are significant to them. Additionally, when selling in specific markets, using common jargon within the field will allow for a more comfortable and familiar conversation with your customer. This may involve including context in questions to help customers understand the point-of-view from which you are asking questions. Although quality questions are important in understanding the customer, actively listening to the customer is also vital. Instead of thinking of the next comment or question, listen carefully to what the customer is saying. Learning to listen from this perspective allows customers to complete their thoughts on the topic.

Another tactic recommended by sales experts is to reiterate a summarized version of the customer’s statement in order to eliminate misconceptions. Listening primarily involves verbal cues, but a vital component to listening is also understanding nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice. To allow the customer to be more comfortable, it may be helpful to match or mirror the customer’s projections of body language and verbiage.
Complete solutions that work toward clients’ goals emerge from a deep understanding of your clients. In some instances, though, there may be components of customer needs that cannot be met. In this situation, it is important to identify a solution that may assist the customer in taking the next steps. By focusing on the customer’s best interests, even when you may not be able to make the sale, you will build trust and an authentic relationship with your customer. This trust could allow the customer to be more comfortable with you as their salesperson or agent and could result in a sale in the future.

THINK POINT #2: Practice Makes Better

Sales does not always come naturally, but skills can be greatly improved through consistent practice. Experts in Bornacin’s book insist that practicing through role play increases confidence, improves flexibility, and simply enhances sales skills. Practice also helps project confidence and improves salespeople’s tone and effectiveness in their body language. Sales is a skill; therefore, it will take continuous practice, discipline, and incremental growth to improve.

Experts recommend role playing with various individuals and in different settings. For example, it can be valuable to role play with peers to practice common objections and methods to address them. On the other hand, role playing with more experienced salespeople allows for observational learning and mentorship. A formal setting generally allows for formal feedback in the form of a scoring rubric or direct feedback. Managers can also use this time to review a recorded call and talk through improvements. Role playing can also be very helpful in an informal setting as a practice without consequences. Informal role play and practice can range from 5-15 minutes and should be a part of a daily or weekly routine.

THINK POINT #3: Perspective is Key to Success

Failure is common in sales and can lead to burnout and a lack of motivation. Therefore, it is important for salespeople to have qualities of passion, perspective, and perseverance. First, salespeople should have passion to sell to improve the lives of their clients. This passion enables salespeople to remain driven, even in spite of disappointments. Passion should be paired with authenticity and honesty, because without these two factors it can be easy to simply focus on passion.

Perspective allows salespeople to interpret different situations and learn from them. For example, when problems occur, it is important to take ownership and focus on how the outcome could have been improved. Constructive thinking and positive interpretation are effective responses to problems that arise.

Perseverance—or focusing on the bigger picture and pushing through even when quitting seems better—is also vital for sales success. A persevering mindset fosters motivation for competent
and complete work, as well as the ability to evolve through changes in the environment. Most of the time, perseverance simply involves showing up, being present, and being invested.

**THINK POINT #4: Narratives Elevate the Message**

In order to sell, an agent must be able to convey his or her message to the client. Using a narrative or a storytelling approach may lead to increased sales performance. Storytelling involves recounting a problem and its solution that has occurred in another customer’s life. Narratives also clarify for the client the value of the product or the service. These stories can also be used to produce examples of how purchasing this product or service will benefit the customer.

Salespeople should have stories within their portfolio to use for introducing themselves, completing the sales pitch, identifying and resolving objections, closing the sale, and managing relationships with customers. Although telling stories can be very useful in persuading customers, it is important to share authentic stories and testimonials. Storytelling should be used only under the umbrella of serving the customer to the best of the salesperson’s ability.

**THINK POINT #5: Constant Learning is the Secret Ingredient**

At the end of the day, sales and the sales environment are constantly evolving, which indicates that salespeople should likewise be consistently adapting. Constant learning should happen each day, and this learning will compound little by little to create a significant impact. Constant incremental learning also helps prevent fatigue and burnout. Constant learning consists of three main components: constant calibration, being curious, and seeking help.

Constant calibration encourages salespeople to continuously test what they know or don’t know. This constant revaluation allows for transparency to identify the lack of knowledge or the need to shift perspectives. Being honest with one’s knowledge gap will help to create motivation to constantly seek new information and knowledge.

Being curious causes salespeople to learn more about the environment in which the sales effort works. For example, it can be vital to continuously learn about the industry, competing firms, potential sales, and how each person (clients and agents) may vary. Although reading does not have a direct relation to sales, reading for long periods of time can increase concentration span as well as the ability to be curious.
Although constant learning is individually motivated, sales should not be an individual task. It is important to ask for help when necessary. Find a mentor to assist when situations seem hopeless or difficult; seek out peers who are going through the similar situations and assist others with the knowledge gained through continuous learning. Asking for help or seeking a network is not a sign of weakness, but rather it can lead to strengthening resolve and sales performance.

Real Estate Implications

Real estate agents should focus on learning customer needs and preferences through quality questions, listening, and paying attention to body language. Similarly, real estate agents can practice with their peers and mentors in order to increase confidence and skills. Understanding the success of practice, brokers and managers can also require and implement informal and formal forms of practice in their firms. Through practice, real estate agents can also use narratives or storytelling to help their clients imagine themselves in these new spaces. Perspective and continuous learning also assist real estate agents as they work through disappointments and learn to adapt to the changing real estate market.

Although common threads were found within the 104 narratives within this book, it quickly becomes obvious that none of these individual threads are simple. Each factor, component, and element of advice given by these mentors is filled with layers of wisdom that can be applied to real estate sales.

Recommended Reading

Bornancin, Brandon (2020), Sales Secrets, Independently published: Brandon Bornancin.

About the Author

Isabella Ip, MBA Candidate
Baylor University
Isabella Ip is a graduate student from Coppell, Texas. She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Fellows and Economics with a secondary major in Biology from Baylor University in May 2021. Isabella is currently pursuing an MBA at Baylor University with a concentration in Healthcare Administration with hopes to work as an administrator in a hospital after graduation.