

How to change habits to improve sales performance

Have you tried repeatedly to change a habit, but nothing has changed? Frustrating, isn't it? Given up accepting the habit, though it prevents you from achieving your sales goals? Justified the decision by telling yourself, *"I am too old to change...I have always been like this and It's too late to try and change."* Believing this, or using other excuses only keeps you stuck.

What are habits?

Habits are thoughts or behaviours, that directly impact on what you accomplish or do not accomplish. Every habit began with a thought. No habit is greater than a thought.

You learnt your habits so what you learnt you can unlearn. It has nothing to do with willpower, but repetition of the habit. By trying to change a thought or behaviour through willpower only reinforces what you do not want.

A brilliant coach told me - *"Your habits are what you get or do not get in life."*

Why can habits be hard to change?

Your brain learns through the process of repetition and the process creates the habit. A habit is a habit, and nothing more. Do not personalize and make it part of who you are. Example: *"I am no good at business development because I feel uncomfortable."* Can you imagine the challenge of replacing this habit if you repeated it one hundred or a thousand times over say, ten years?

Habits do not judge whether good or bad, helpful, or hinder. The habit becomes part of your subconscious, so you function in autopilot.

The longer you do not act on a habit, ill ease increases. As soon as you act on the habit the impulse goes away, but it is reinforced because the habit has been repeated. In addition, the brain has a multitude of chemicals such as endorphins and serotonin it releases to make you feel good strengthening the habit.

Habits are powered by the primal part of the brain that is all about survival. It is not logical. It thinks the new habit is a threat to survival and will use emotions to convince you not to change. Once a habit has been learnt and triggered it will be maintained on a continuous loop.

Be mindful of how a habit 'talks' to you. Your internal dialog can work for or against what you want to achieve. Create habits in line with the outcomes you want.

How to replace a habit with a new habit

1. You need to be sick and tired of the old habit and driven to act.
2. Be kind to yourself and patient. It will take multiple times to finally succeed. If you have had a habit for fifteen years do not expect a change in two days. When you fail it is part of the process, so do not let it stop you. Keep going.
3. Be conscious of the primal brain using emotions to keep you in the old habit.

Techniques

The following are not a complete list, but preferred by our clients:

- 1. Meditation** - There are a multitude of meditation apps available that provide instructions on how to meditate. Meditation is about bypassing the conscious analytical mind and connecting directly to the subconscious.
- 2. Association** – This is the new habit built on an existing one. Example: For five years you have had coffee at 9:30am. Place a post-it-note on your computer screen to remind yourself you will phone prospects and arrange meetings at 9:30am the next morning.
- 3. Start small** – This builds confidence. Example: You want to lose 10kilos to have more energy and concentration during sales meetings. Break the 10kilo number down to a smaller unit per month. It will feel achievable, and through repetition you will stay in the new habit.

Post-it-notes; time or habit tracker apps; someone to hold you accountable to keep you on track can make the journey easier.

When the new habit is repeated you create new neural pathways in your brain. It can take up to ten repetitions before the new habit is formed.

The old habit created neural pathways and will always be there. By not reconnecting with the old habit, you will remain in your new neural pathway.

Reward yourself – For living the new habit. Your brain will automatically produce ‘happy chemicals’ reinforcing the success of your new habit.

What habit do you want to change?

If you would like to discuss anything covered in this article or have any questions, contact me directly. If by email use the word Sales Article in the subject line.



Kurt is a sales practitioner who created sales records in five industries and won major sales awards including Salesperson of the Year. The products and services he sold were newly released, consultative, relationship and retail. He is a recognized sales expert, successful author and respected sales and personal development coach who has guided organizations and salespeople to vastly improved sales performance and profitability. His clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

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