



Sales Consultants

Sales Competence | Great Relationships | Outstanding Results

Sales Article #88

July 22, 2024

Developing Sales Competence - Myths and What Really Works

The time, effort and money often invested in identifying and then implementing strategies that end up failing, or at best provide limited sales improvement is staggering.

Two of the most common myths I have come across are:

1. You can be competent in anything you put your mind to.

This originates from the power of positive thinking movement. Example, practice makes perfect. Practice in itself does not create perfection. Another is if you don't succeed try, try again. The question is why? The same mistake is often repeated over and over.

2. To increase sales, weaknesses need to be addressed.

If this were true, elite athletes would do it, but they don't. They continue building on their strengths. When concentrated effort and energy is focussed trying to address weaknesses, the best-case scenario is average performance. The question is, is it worth the time and the frustration?

Key definitions:

Strength

A strength is a consistent near flawless performance in an activity. The combination of talent, knowledge and skills become integral to a strength.

Weakness

A weakness is anything that prevents consistent high performance.

Talent

Talents are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour that can feel effortless.

Knowledge

Knowledge can be factual or experiential. Factual knowledge can be obtained through reading books, researching the internet or in a structured classroom environment. Experiential knowledge is acquired through lessons learnt through doing.

Skills

Skills are the applied steps of knowledge. This does not mean excellence or talent.

Uncovering Strengths:

1. Passion

A passion can start early in life and create a powerful attraction toward a desired profession or activity.

2. Fast Learning

Learning easily, and effortlessly may be an indication of a good fit. The sheer volume of study to achieve an outcome does not diminish enthusiasm.

3. Enjoyment

Internal feel-good endorphins are triggered as a result of an activity.

Talent

These include and are not limited to the following traits:

Expressive, focused, responsible, optimistic, analytical, assertive, self-assured, cooperative, passionate, intuitive, achiever, harmonious, and self-disciplined.

Weakness

An indication of a weakness is when difficulties occur repeatedly during the implementation of an activity. Identifying the weakness is a process of separating the required knowledge, skills, or talent.

Strategies for Managing Weaknesses:

1. Work to Improve

This requires determination and at times being out of your comfort zone. It requires patience and persistence. Example, inconsistent recording of information on CRM that causes other flow-on issues. Allocate regular time and methodically do the updates.

2. Develop a Backup

This can free up time to concentrate on strengths and increase sales productivity. Example, instead of returning to the office to do a task, develop a close working relationship with an internal customer support person and ask them to work do it for you.

3. Use a Strength to Overcome a Weakness

Example, if you have a talent for being self-disciplined and a high need to achieve but do poorly at business development then use the attributes you have as the foundation to improve this skill.

4. Infield sales coaching

I have written about infield sales coaching in Sales Article #86. If you want a copy please refer to the Sales Consultants Website.

The infield sales review is the most impactful method for developing sales competence. It does, however, require the sales coach or sales manager to be a highly competent infield sales coach.

As a salesperson experiencing how a skill was transferred and given the chance to apply the skill is one you will always remember. The reasons are:

- Learning is in live prospect and client sales situations
- The high level of mental and emotional engagement required
- Predetermined skills are chosen, objectives mutually agreed
- The salesperson witnesses firsthand how a skill was applied by the sales coach or sales manager
- Any doubt the salesperson may have had about a skill has been dismissed outright
- The salesperson is keen to apply the same skill on the next sales meeting.

The infield sales coaching process achieves learning outcomes in a significant shorter timeframe and considerably more effective compared to the traditional safety of a classroom environment. Weaknesses and in some cases perceived weaknesses are identified quicker and can be addressed accordingly.



Kurt is a sales practitioner who won major sales awards and created sales records in five industries. Products and services include newly released, consultative, relationship and the competitive field of 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. Kurt is the author of *21 Timeless Insights for Sales Success* and *The Most Unlikely Salesperson*. Both are available in paperback or e-book versions online, in bookstores and www.salesconsultants.com.au. A third publication of *50 Inspirational Sales Articles* will be released in July 2024.