

Becoming a Sales Superstar – 10 Critical Areas to Master

Becoming a sales superstar is ALL about the choices you make as a salesperson. There is good and bad news to this statement. First the bad, what got you here today will not necessarily make you a sales superstar tomorrow. Now for the good news, you can be a sales superstar if you start making choices today – like a sales superstar.

Sales superstars don't just suddenly show up or arrive out of nowhere. They design their paths to superdom using hard work and thinking about their choices ALL THE TIME! They develop a winner's edge on the mental side and learn the skills to insure winning. So, how do they do this? By working on ten critical areas that create sales success in today's highly competitive world. To become a sales superstar, you must decide to improve your skills in these ten critical areas:

1. **Learning** – Sales superstars have one thing in common – they are always learning. Their learning can take several avenues. One, they learn about their customers, in depth, so they can understand the current and future situations they will face. They are also readers. Remember this – leaders are readers! They read about selling, business trends, leadership issues, economic trends and industry trends. They are the first to sign up for extending training and development sessions. They know that they need to sharpen their skills everyday – if they want to keep winning in the game of selling.
2. **Business Acumen** – In the modern world of selling, salespeople MUST be able to speak in terms that are important to customers and especially the “C” level customers. These terms are the world of Business Acumen – revenue growth, cost of goods sold, gross margin, related costs, turnover ratios, velocity and net income. If you are just talking about features and benefits – you are in the world of commodity selling and price alone rules.
3. **Preparedness** – Like the Boy Scout motto, Be Prepared, top salespeople know that customer research is done before meeting with customers. You validate what you have learned while in the presence of customers – which shows the customer that you are different and will not waste their valuable time. Using web search engines to find information about your customers, their customers, financial data and trends – allow you to be more knowledgeable than your competition.
4. **Industry Knowledge** – This should be a no-brainer, however, you will still find sales people with little industry understanding. To be a sales superstar, knowing the industry is a requirement. It assists you in understanding trends, cycles, what is old or new, best practices, and who are their customers. Industry knowledge allows for knowing the little secrets of success and most importantly the ability to anticipate trends within the industry –allowing you to guide the customer to better decisions about their business.
5. **Questioning Skills** – Here is the big one. Most sales people talk too much. Yes, they talk too much and actually bore the customer. Why? Because the customer will have opinions about things and they will Believe Their Thoughts over Yours! This is a form of bias, yet, the best sales people have learned this fact. They use questions to uncover these biases, use different questions to guide or educate the

- customer, and even different types of questions to learn what specific benefit or advantage certain solutions would provide for that specific customer. The key is using questions to become customer centric rather than boasting about what you think you know. This is a required skill in modern selling, this is the land of the sales superstar and they have learned the importance of this skill.
6. **Listening** – Closely related to the questioning skills is the ability to actively listen to the customer. By focusing on exactly what the customer is saying, opens the door to understanding what is going on in the customer’s world. The sales superstars have taken listening to a higher level. They listen for things that are not clearly defined by the customer, what should have been said – but was not. They hear general statements and respond with a clarifying question for specifics and clear understanding of the situation. Another interesting effect comes from listening to the customer – they like you more!
 7. **Think like an Owner** – This means connecting all the dots. How does your team finish the sale with the customer? Does the customer feel satisfied after the sale or does doubt and frustration rule? Coordinating other functional areas to satisfy the customer is another critical issue that most sales people overlook – yet it is the one that influences the next sale to that customer the most. Take time to think about customer satisfaction and what it takes to insure success with each customer.
 8. **Creative Problem Solving** – The key here is “creative.” This is not by-the-book or policy type of problem solving. It is about looking at the customer’s situation and thinking about different ways to solve the problem they have. Then choosing the one idea that will create the most effective solution for both the customer and your company. Hint: Your biggest opportunity customers will test you concerning problem solving – before they buy – just to see if you are looking after their best interests. This is a guaranteed test.
 9. **Practice, Practice, Practice** – The sales superstars do not practice a new or improved technique on a critical customer. They work on the skills using role-plays, application exercises and even video a customer stimulation. Using video in the practice sessions is the fastest method to gain immediate improvement in selling skills – yet – it is the least used due to egos and fear of failure. Focus on becoming a superstar.
 10. **Self Confidence** – The final critical factor is both a means and an end to succeeding in the other nine factors. Confidence is the key to having the winner’s edge. Most importantly, customers want to work with confident people to get the results and outcomes they need. If you do the first nine, confidence will come. Or use self confidence in demonstrating the discipline needed to make the choices that lead to success and sales superstar status.

The world of sales is changing rapidly. As a sales person, you need to decide if you want to stay in sales for the long term or do something else? Strong words, yet, truthful words based upon the change that has already started in several industries. Commodity selling will be ruled by the internet and price decisions rather than best value solutions. Make a decision today to become a sales superstar and master the ten critical factors of success.

About the Author:

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