

Finding the Formula

The six essential success traits of top-performing tire and service salespeople



STEVE FERRANTE
Contributing Editor
steve@saleawayllc.com

As a professional sales trainer, I get asked regularly what it takes to be a top-performing salesperson and the fact is there's no simple answer to that question.

Having spent 25+ years in the sales industry myself, I have seen a wide variety of salespeople, from dreadful to truly great with most somewhere in between. Of course, top-performing salespeople are invaluable to any business as they typically represent the 20% of the team that generate 80% of the revenue or thereabouts.

While there's certainly no magic formula for producing sales superstars, I have found that there are proven principles that are directly applicable to high-achievers.

Here are my six essential success traits of top-performing salespeople:

1. BELIEF: Belief is the foundation of success. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Vince Lombardi said, "If you don't think you're a winner, you don't belong here." This quote fits perfectly with the attitude of top-performing salespeople. They possess a "champion mindset" and believe they are the best or capable of being the best.

Along with the confidence in themselves, top salespeople also have an absolute belief in their com-

pany, industry and the products and/or services they sell. Whereas the belief in oneself is primarily personal, the belief in the company and

ice and as a member of a winning team culture, but attitude also plays a major role in sales performance.

The sales profession is predomi-



When things are at their busiest, salespeople with strong skills and a great foundation will always be top performers.

its products/services is something that is created by way of the corporate culture and experience with the ownership and management of the business.

2. ATTITUDE: I have written plenty on the importance of having a positive attitude. It certainly relates to providing world-class customer serv-

nantly one of rejection, with far more people saying "no" than "yes" to product and service offerings. That's not particularly pleasant for any normal person to experience on a day-to-day basis. Poor to average performers tend to take rejection personally and that translates into a negative, pessimistic attitude that weakens their sales interactions.

Top-performers have mentally conditioned themselves to maintain a confident, optimistic attitude. They realize that those inevitable rejections are par for the course and treat them as the stepping-stones to success.

ALONG WITH CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES, TOP SALESPEOPLE ALSO HAVE AN ABSOLUTE BELIEF IN THEIR COMPANY, INDUSTRY AND PRODUCTS.

3. RAPPORT: Sales research supports that, in most cases, more than 75% of a customer's decision to purchase is based on having good rapport with the sales person. Conversely, one of the main reasons customers ultimately decide not to purchase (even though they may need the product or service) is that they don't feel a genuine sense of rapport with the sales person. So, yes it's true, people buy you first and your products/services second.

Top sales performers are also models for what I refer to as "Masters of Human Relations." They possess the "people skills" to effectively communicate and connect with customers and build superior trust. Whereas a typical salesman will be a talker, a top performer usually excels at listening, enabling them to gather more information to aid in the selling process.

4. GENUINE: Going hand-in-hand with rapport, top-performing salespeople also tend to genuinely care about their customers' best interest, as opposed to poor/average salespeople that tend to care more about making a sale.

Nearly everyone loves to buy, but no one likes to be sold. When a customer senses the salesperson really doesn't care about them personally, they perceive the exchange as salesy schmoozing, not sincere communication and only performed because the salesperson was trying to sell them something.

Obviously, this behavior damages trust and harms sales performance.

Top-performing tire/auto service salespeople are genuinely customer-focused and take pride in helping customers solve their vehicle problems and meeting their needs.

This caring behavior is true empathy, the ability to assume the customer's position and adapt behavior to their feelings. This is especially important in a tire/auto service business, as the majority of customers have some sort of vehicle problem that is causing them some amount of stress and/or grief. Top-performers maximize their effectiveness by always practicing empathy and keeping the customer's feelings in mind.

5. AMBITION: The drive to suc-

ceed is essential for top performance. It never ceases to amaze me how many people in sales – probably 80% – are not true students of their profession.

Other than sales activity during the day, they do little, if anything, to improve their skill set along the way. This is the equivalent of playing a professional sport and only showing up for the games, not practicing and expecting to win.

With so much competition selling the same products and services, it is critically important that front line employees are well trained and regularly maintained.

Top-performers – that 20% – understand this and invest the time to expand their knowledge base and hone their selling skills. They strive for continuous improvement and are committed to becoming an expert in their business/industry/products and a master at their craft – selling.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY: Poor performers often blame everyone and everything else for their lack of success. The marketing department isn't doing a good enough job getting shoppers to visit the store, the economy is weak, the store manager is a jerk, the computer system is slow, the coffee is too weak, the list goes on and on.

Top sales performers do not focus on any of this or let anything outside of their direct control affect their performance. They spend their time and efforts focusing on results: How to beat the competition; how to improve/work around operational issues; and how to capitalize

on the selling opportunities they do have.

In my sales training, I teach and preach the importance of working with PRIDE, an acronym for Personal Responsibility In Delivering Excellence. Top-performers 'get it' and have the mindset of what I refer to as "YOU Inc."

They take ownership as if they are in business for themselves (not by themselves) and assume 100% responsibility for their success or failure to control their own destiny.

Seek these six success traits in your new hires, instill these principles in your existing sales team members, and reap the rewards. ■

Steve Ferrante, CEO of Sale Away LLC, is the producer and host of the Pinnacle Performance sales and customer service training program for the tire/auto service industry. He can be reached at 866-721-6086 ext. 701 or steve@saleawayllc.com.

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