

The New Sales Revolution

by Chuck Mache • American TonerServ Corp.

There's a revolution going on and we're all part of it. The new sales revolution is here. Walk up to the front door of most businesses and you'll see a sign that says "No Solicitors." What used to be rare is now the norm. Get too many phone calls at night from people trying to sell you something? No problem, just call an 800 number and get on the "do not call" list and theoretically that takes care of that. Thinking of buying a car? Do all your homework on the Internet. Pick the make model, color, and choose your accessories. You can even find out what the dealer is paying for the car. Then go visit the dealer. Trust me, you have all the leverage. The advantage goes to the buyer.

There's a revolution going on all right. Selling, as we once knew it is dying, and the hard-sell "pusher" that we once recognized as the stereotypical salesperson is dying right along with their archaic strategy. Today, potential buyers, clients, customers, call them what you want, are more sophisticated, intelligent, and informed. Information is at their fingertips and they are able to access it quickly. Because of this, they are armed, ready, have far more options and limited time and patience. You had better be good at what you do because most potential customers have done their homework. Buyers are sizing up the salesperson, and unless the salesperson is truly a Performer or a Professional, they are in trouble. Now is not the time to get caught being a Caretaker

or a Searcher (more on the four types of salespeople to come). There's a revolution going on all right, and the switch has been flipped.

Look closely at your market segment and you'll find the revolution in full force. The savvy sales and marketers are focused on an attraction model that pulls customers in, rather than a "push" model that has salespeople spending hours and hours each day pounding the telephone and streets. Old school hard sell peddlers are quickly falling by the wayside, in fact, they're dead and they don't even know it. Worse yet is a management team that hasn't caught up to the revolution and still operating under the push model of hard selling. Old-school selling is very intrusive on the prospect's time. Buying on the other hand is done on the customers' time. Those companies and salespeople who have joined the revolution spend their time attracting buyers versus selling and pushing for new customers.

If you own a company, are leading a sales team, in direct sales, or all of the above, here are a few warning signs that you are dead in the water and don't even know it:

- You spend the majority of your time cold calling.
- A key measurement by your manager is the amount of cold calls that you make.
- The entire marketing strategy of your organization is push, push, push.
- You and your peer group are proud of your ability to "pitch" your

products and your hard-sell approach to closing customers.

The last impression that I want to give you is that you or your sales team should not focus on new relationships. The lifeblood of any company is bringing in new business and a sales rep that doesn't get new business, well, isn't a sales rep. However, if the only thing you are doing is targeting and talking, then you have a lot in common with the evolution of the dinosaur and will come to intimately understand their plight. This point leads me to my next question: Do you honestly and truly understand what type of salesperson you are? Managers, do you know your team well enough to understand what types of sales people you have working for you?

Surprisingly, most companies don't know who they have working for them – I mean they don't know really who they have working for them.

Salespeople are not all alike. There are four different kinds, and only four! Each must be managed differently in order to unlock their maximum selling potential. What follows is the equivalent of a sales organization's Rosetta Stone — the key to understanding the make-up of a sales team.

The Performer is a top producer who is emotional, extroverted, intuitive, impatient, competitive, passionate and egocentric — a natural-born salesperson if ever there was one. These mercurial individuals live on an emotional rollercoaster of very high ups and downs, and they generally drag the rest

of their sales team along for the ride (whether they want to go or not). As their name suggests, Performers love the limelight. These superstars are exciting, energizing people to be around, but they're equally capable of ruffling feathers and leaving an office full of hurt feelings in their ego-propelled wakes. But when they're out selling, be sure to wear sunglasses, because they are dazzling! And their sales numbers, (as Performers love to point out to everyone), prove it. When they're in a down mood though, they are really down. This part of the rollercoaster ride devastates them and bumps them out of their optimal selling zones.

The Professional is another of the company's top producers. These reps are even-tempered, analytic, logical, quietly competitive and internally passionate. Their egos are tightly reined in. A fear of making mistakes, however, causes Professionals to play it safe and avoid taking risks. Their conservative natures block them at every turn from reaching their fullest potential.

The Caretaker. These are the salespeople who are deeply mired in their comfort zones. They are passive-aggressive by nature and will not do the difficult things that effective selling requires. Caretakers hate change, love to blame the world for their failures and are inconsistent producers at best. The average Caretaker is in total denial about how self-destructive their attitudes and behaviors are, and they surround themselves with a support group of fellow "victims of life" (other Caretakers, of course). But here's a fascinating fact: many of them are sleeping Performers or Professionals. And there's only one way to find out who's got the right stuff.

The Searcher. This individual, the last of the four types of salespeople, began in sales believing it was an easy career path. This mindset is obviously

out of touch with reality. Searchers avoid doing what it takes to be successful. They watch the Performers and Professionals at their company with envy and bewilderment, because they make the job look easy. What Searchers don't see is the astounding amount of time and energy these top sales reps pour into their careers and the passionate love they have for selling. This last essential ingredient, a passion for sales, is completely absent in Searchers. They may like the idea of succeeding at sales, but as for actually selling? When Searchers become gut-level honest, they will admit that, deep down, that they really hate it.

Success in sales in today's hyper-competitive economy demands more than just talent and a set of skills. Natural talent is a valuable asset, but it must also be followed by a commitment to self-honesty, open-mindedness and a willingness to grow beyond one's comfort zones. This difficult and, at times, painful path is not for everyone. The sales leader, whether he/she is owner or sales manager, plays a key role. The sales leader must first identify and understand the types of sales people they have in their company, then they must motivate them, each in their own way. Lastly, they must isolate and manage those searchers and perennial caretakers out of the business.

For sales to improve, initiative starts at the top. Company leaders and sales managers who practice the same degree of self-honesty and commitment to change as their sales reps will achieve this ultimate goal: a growth-oriented environment that thrives on constant improvement and the creation of momentum that endures and deepens, regardless of the economic conditions.

The new sales revolution requires that you only staff your company with Performers and Professionals — those who will and are top producing. Suc-

cessful salespeople today — I'm talking about the top 20 percent — in any industry are heavily executing on an attraction model focused on pulling in customers because they are:

- ▶ Focused on a clear customer profile.

- ▶ Using extensive marketing efforts designed to "attract" customers that meet the profile.

- ▶ First and foremost relationship builders who focus on solving problems and meeting the needs of those they attract.

- ▶ Fully engaged in marketing efforts designed to promote their visibility and capture most customers via an attraction model.

More importantly, the companies that the best salespeople are working for are fully engaged in this new revolution. In the old days, it was about "how many calls did you make today?" Push, push, push, push. Those days are dying. The new sales revolution is on us right now. Selling, as we once knew it is on its last legs. Customers will buy on their timeline, not on the sellers. The best salespeople, those select few Performers and top Professionals, will think strategically about their position in the market, their ability to attract to their customer profile. Smart salespeople will focus on visibility as they promote their unique approach to meeting customers' needs. Smart salespeople will be there to pull their new customers in when they are ready to buy. They will market to create visibility by using multiple resources. They focus on solving problems for their customers — removing the customer's pain with their solution. I know all about hard-sell salespeople. I used to be one, but I joined the revolution. **R**

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