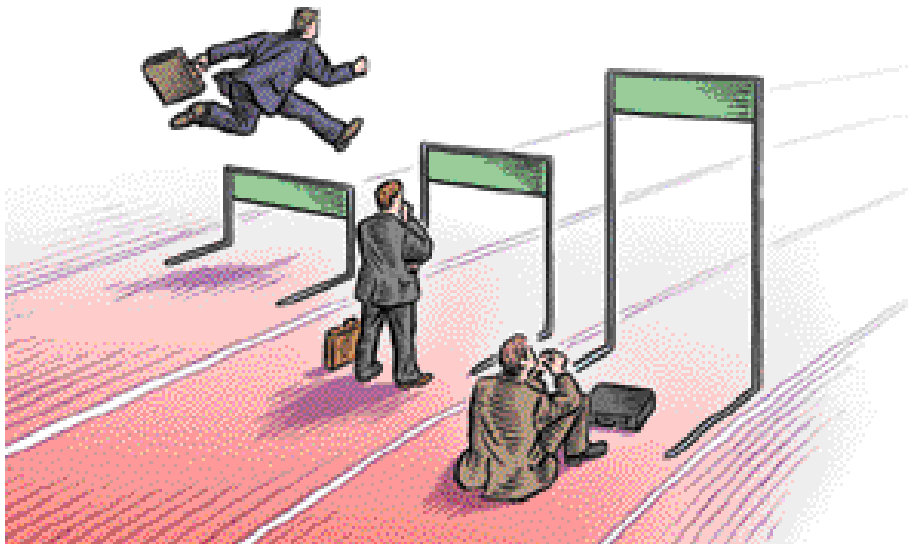


Get Real

What's the difference between an average and a great salesperson? Often it's what they expect from themselves and from the deals they make. By Rick Davis



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One of the biggest obstacles to sales success might be between your own ears. If you truly want to achieve more sales success, start by adjusting your expectations. Compare your expectations to reality and you might discover you are the primary obstacle to your own success.

Expectation No. 1: "My market is the toughest market." It seems that everywhere I travel, I hear this claim. Salespeople believe they're victims of an unusually tough market. They assert that there is an abundance of competition or not enough housing starts or unusually tough (tougher than everyone else's) price competition or overly lofty service expectations or all of the above.

Reality No. 1: All markets are tough. The pressure on salespeople from one market to the next is very similar, and in all markets the majority of salespeople are average performers, eager to blame their slow sales on external factors such as a market downturn or price pressure from an incompetent competitor. Rarely, by the way, does a salesperson believe he or she is that average, humdrum competitor. Conversely, in every market there is a small

percentage of salespeople who differentiate themselves and rise above the group. These Sales Leaders are the ones who accept market realities and deal accordingly.

Expectation No. 2: "If I lose the sale, I have failed." Too many salespeople approach the sales process as one in which a sales "transaction" is the objective.

Reality No. 2: Gaining a temporary relationship by closing one or two deals is not nearly as powerful as gaining a long-term relationship with a new customer. A lost sale is not failure, but merely a sign that the prospect simply has not become a new customer ... yet. It is better to slow the process and achieve a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship than rush in and make an instant sale. Most Sales Leaders agree that the saying "easy come, easy go" applies to the process of selling and that an easy sale usually indicates a customer will have bad credit or lack loyalty. Thus, rather than push for instant results, recognize that you are not supposed to win them all and that it is better to open a new relationship for the long term than it is to close a short-term sale.

Expectation No. 3: "It's all about price." This is the most ridiculous statement made by a salesperson ever. It can't be *all* about price. If it were all about price, then only the lowest price goods would be sold; nevertheless, higher-priced brands of products continually are market leaders.

Reality No. 3: The reality is that many factors enter into the discussion and price is only one component of the decision-making process. Consider that many salespeople attempt to sway prospects away from the competition when the competition is doing a good job. If it ain't broke, why fix it? Trying to sway builders to use a new supplier when they have no problems with their current supplier is an uphill battle that is sure to lead to frustration.

Total Cost (including price, delivery schedule, and dealing with mistakes) is more important than price alone. Profits (e.g., ROL, gross margin, etc.) are more important than price. Confidence in a supplier's long-term ability influences decisions, along with a multitude of factors. When you feel it is only about price, you have probably moved too fast.

The next time you fail to make a sale, remind yourself that it was never supposed to be easy. And remember that it wasn't a lost sale, but rather a prospect that hasn't become a customer ... yet. ■