

Planter's Punch

It's time to embrace a new concept of the qualities you need from a Sales Leader. By Rick Davis



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The notion that salespeople should be hunters, besides being trite, no longer applies to our profession. I suggest we retire the idea of recruiting hunters and start hiring and developing “planters.”

Hunting was a great concept that reminded us of how important it is to go out and seek new business. The image we conjured up was one of a warrior aggressively pursuing new opportunities and fearlessly hunting for prey.

Promotion of the hunter mentality implies that a sale is merely an event, and that the capture of the prey is the goal. But we live in a world in which our relationships with clients are ongoing, and transactions are hardly a singular event. Thus, we must change our thinking.

Clients are not prey. They are valuable sources of business growth who we must nurture and cultivate. Moreover, the metaphor of a salesman as a hunter implies that the sale ends once the transaction is complete. In reality, the sale begins only when the first transaction has taken place. In other words, we can leave the concept of closing the sale to the used-car salesman and

recognize that our job is to *open* relationships, not close deals.

Now, consider what's required of a planter. A planter must survey the fields and evaluate the soil, much like a salesman should survey a market to identify opportunities and evaluate conditions. A planter must diligently nurture the seeds that are planted, for without water and important chemicals such as nitrogen, there is little chance that the plants will produce. Similarly, a salesman must diligently cultivate relationships through ongoing sales calls that build trust and serve to strengthen relationships that, ultimately, will bear fruit.

Hunting kills prey; it's a single transaction that is gratifying for the short term. Planting, on the other hand, develops a regular source of food—ongoing revenue. Hunting is about an event, while planting is about careful planning and persistent attention to a disciplined process of work.

The last thing any dealer wants is a salesman who focuses only on the initial transaction and fails to consider the long-term implications of a business relationship. A highly valued salesman

recognizes that many issues must be discussed before beginning a business relationship. More important, the most valued salespeople are not merely bidding on a single product that the builder may purchase, but rather are striving to sell as many products as possible to each client.

The planter is the salesman who recognizes that success is based on calm and persistent diligence to a plan. The planter focuses on cultivating mutually beneficial, long-term relationships that produce ongoing revenues. The planter cultivates relationships that grow. The planter enables opportunities to nourish and continually create new sales possibilities within those relationships.

Ask yourself what type of salesman you want calling on you. If you want to be hunted as prey, then by all means continue hiring hunters. But if you want sales representatives who treat you as a valuable resource of mutually beneficial growth, then consider that your customers and prospects feel the same way.

Treat your customers as you want to be treated. It's the oldest rule in the book. ■