

---

# Staying Motivated In Challenging Times

by DAVE KAHLE

One of my “Ezine” subscribers recently sent me this question: “I really struggle with the highs and lows of field sales. Most days I feel like the weight of the world is on my shoulders. In this economy, especially, it’s difficult to stay positive. Any suggestions?”

**T**his is one of those rarely voiced issues that every salesperson must confront sooner or later. Sales is an emotional roller coaster, and unless you figure out how to manage those emotions and keep yourself motivated, you’ll have a difficult time succeeding.

I can empathize with the anxiety felt by the reader. It’s easy to lose our motivation.

However, even though the world around us may be dreary and depressing, that, in no way, reduces our personal need to do the best we can. It means that we all have a responsibility to stay motivated.

It is amazing what a difference a few degrees of attitude adjustment can make in our performance. Try this little exercise. Tell yourself these things: “Business is terrible. All of my customers are struggling. No body wants to see me, and when they do, it’s just to complain.” Now wallow in those thoughts for a moment, and note how much energy and enthusiasm you have.

---

## Adjusting Your Attitude

---

Now, think the opposite: “I have great opportunities. My customers need me more today than ever. I have valuable solutions for them. It’s a great time to have this job.” Roll those around in your mind for a while. Note how much energy and enthusiasm you have.

As you reflect on this exercise, it’s clear that your energy, enthusiasm and drive to succeed come as a result of your thoughts. And here is one of the most powerful truths known to mankind: You can control your thoughts. Succeeding in difficult times depends a great deal on our motivation.

Staying motivated requires us to take charge of our thoughts.

I’ve heard dozens of salespeople say, “I’ve tried positive thinking. It just isn’t me.” I agree that it is difficult to patch a bunch of positive thoughts on top of an essentially negative personality. The issue is deeper than that. Let’s, therefore, examine the deeper issues.

At the heart of motivation lies a pair of powerful beliefs that you must embrace if you are going to successfully motivate yourself. Without a wholehearted commitment to these foundational beliefs, all the techniques and tactics for self-motivation are like spreading wallpaper over crumbling plaster. It may hold temporarily, but it is soon going to deteriorate into a mess.

---

## Accepting Responsibility

---

Here’s the first foundational principle. You must believe that you can do better than you are now doing. The second is this: You must accept that it is your responsibility to do so.

---

Sounds so simple and common sense. However, the more I observe people, and salespeople specifically, the more convinced I am that the majority of people do not share these core beliefs. Rather, they are in the habit of making excuses for their situation. Or, they believe that it's really fate that determines their success, not their own actions. Or, they believe that success is for someone else, not them. They never really grab onto the first of these foundational principles.

Others believe that they can achieve greater degrees of success. They embrace the idea, intellectually. They accept the first principle, but they never internalize the second. They become content with their situation, no matter what it is, and remain in pre-established comfort zones. Or they look at their manager as the person who is responsible for their success, or lack thereof. Or, it's their parent's fault, or their spouse's, and the list goes on.

Whether you are struggling with a lack of energy that accompanies a bad day, or you're depressed and frustrated with your lack of progress on a larger scale, the first thing to do is to examine your core beliefs. If you really accept these two principles, you have the keystone in place to become highly motivated.

---

### Motivational Techniques

---

Having said that, there are some specific techniques that you can use to keep yourself motivated day-to-day. Here are a couple proven techniques.

- Have something you are working to accomplish.

This can be an important and compelling goal, like saving enough money for a down payment on a house. When you are working toward something like that, your emotions of the moment have a tendency to be lower priority than your drive to achieve. If you are trying to make money for a home for your family, so what if you're tired or depressed? Get out and do it.

The same thing is true of a compelling purpose. I believe that every salesperson should have a clear articulation of his/her purpose in life. I once began a 10-week sales training program with a requirement that everyone write a two-sentence life purpose. Why is that? Because it gives power and focus to every-

***You can control your thoughts.***

thing you do. In the job of the salesperson, there will be lots of times when you find it to be difficult, when things don't go your way. You may lose a big deal, or be unable to get anyone to return your calls. At times like those, it sure helps to view them within the context of a larger perspective, a life purpose.

By the way, I've run across a book that helps you with this project. I've put it in the recommended resources portion of my web site. Check out *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren.

- Proactively put positive thoughts into your mind.

Make a point of taking charge of your mind and the kinds of thoughts you choose to think. Wise and thoughtful people for ages have discovered an extremely powerful principle: Your actions arise from your thoughts, and you can choose your thoughts.

Controlling and managing your thoughts are among the basic tenants of Zen Buddhism, for example. In the Christian context, the apostle Paul said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Philosophers, educators and thinkers of every generation conclude the same thing.

But the power of this truth is not reserved just for philosophers. Salespeople can make use of it as well.

The reason you may feel depressed or anxious is because you are thinking depressing or anxious thoughts. Change your thoughts, and you can change your feelings. Change your emotions, and you can change your behavior. Change your behavior and you can change your results.

It's not as difficult as it may sound.

Do this — invest in a couple of audio programs. Acquire good, positive stuff like my *Smart Selling*, or *How to Become a Master of Distributor Sales*. Or, find something at the local library. Then, as you drive between appointments and on your way home after work, listen to those tapes or CDs. You'll find yourself thinking positive thoughts. Those positive thoughts will lead to a more positive attitude. That attitude will evidence itself in more focused actions. Those actions will lead to better results.

Read educational and inspiring books and periodi-

***Here's the first foundational principle. You must believe that you can do better than you are now doing. The second is this: You must accept that it is your responsibility to do so.***

---

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

*Dave Kahle is a consultant and trainer who helps his clients increase their sales and improve their sales productivity. He has trained thousands of salespeople to be more productive in the Information Age economy. His new book, 10 Secrets of Time Management for Salespeople, was just released by Career Press. For more information, or to contact the author, contact The DaCo Corporation, 15 Ionia SW, Suite 220, Grand Rapids, MI 49503; phone: (800) 331-1287; fax: (616) 451-9412; e-mail: [info@davekahle.com](mailto:info@davekahle.com); web site: [www.davekahle.com](http://www.davekahle.com).*



icals. There are literally hundreds of good sales books published each year. Spend 30 minutes at your local Barnes & Noble, Borders or business bookstore and you'll find several works that will interest and stimulate you.

The World Wide Web is awash with resources. In addition to my own monthly ezine, I'm aware of at least five regular electronic publications for salespeople, and there are probably dozens more.

There is no realistic limit to the amount of positive educational material available to you. If you are not regularly exposing yourself to some of this, it is because you are choosing to not be motivated. If nothing else, sign up for my monthly ezine at [www.davekahle.com](http://www.davekahle.com). All of these sources will give you ideas, stimulate your mind and encourage you. The result will be more positive thoughts. And the result of that will be a motivated, successful person.

Succeeding in difficult times requires you to take charge of your motivation.

Now is the time to take this most important step to becoming a true professional. □

Copyright © 2004, Manufacturers' Agents National Association  
One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630-2283 • Phone: (949) 859-4040 • Toll-free: (877) 626-2776  
Fax: (949) 855-2973 • E-mail: [mana@manaonline.org](mailto:mana@manaonline.org) • Web site: [www.manaonline.org](http://www.manaonline.org)  
All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.