



FUELING THE ENGINE OF SALES SUCCESS

EDITORIAL | DAVID McNALLY

WHETHER YOU ARE 'SALESPERSON OF THE YEAR' OR A ROOKIE JUST STARTING OUT, YOU'VE PROBABLY EXPERIENCED THOSE LOW POINTS: THE SINKING FEELING WHEN YOU LOSE A HARD-FOUGHT COMPETITIVE BATTLE, THE DISCOURAGEMENT OF HEARING A STRING OF CUSTOMER "NO'S," OR THE STRUGGLE NOT TO TAKE A TURN-DOWN PERSONALLY.

gone baby gone



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When these low moments hit, some salespeople, despite considerable talent and potential, find it difficult to pick themselves up and jump back in the game. They seem to lack the elusive quality of *motivation* — the ability to soar above these temporary obstacles and keep moving forward. Instead they lose momentum, avoid making calls, and spend more and more time in the safe havens of their offices or automobiles.

On the other hand, there are salespeople who appear to have a natural ability to generate the motivation and resilience to make every customer call as enthusiastically as if it were the first. These individuals have such a desire to succeed that they are able to leverage even “ordinary” skills and abilities to achieve extraordinary results.

For the majority of us who fall somewhere in the middle of this motivational spectrum, there is a wide-open opportunity to increase “motivational intelligence” by keeping in mind a few simple principles. These are a handful of emotional “critical success factors” — keys to sustainable motivation — that seem to be almost instinctive for highly successful sales professionals.

Motivation is completely and entirely an inside job.

No one, no matter how inspirational, has the power to motivate others. The fact is that motivation — the movement to action — is a decision that can only be made by the individual. Many things can cause a lack of motivation, but the most common are fear and lack of confidence. The solution — courageous action. Obstacles and pitfalls are sometimes more apparent to us than the positive forces that can help us succeed. Consistently summoning the courage to move forward in the face of fear is unquestionably the single most important difference between highly motivated achievers and those who give up easily when confronted by a challenging situation.

Motivation requires a meaningful “motive.”

For many Olympic athletes a medal is their clear, meaningful motive. For some, however, the opportunity just to participate in the games is enough to keep them dedicated to years of disciplined, rigorous training. What is meaningful varies with

individuals and their circumstances. This personal sense of “why” we act often gets confused with the “what” we need to do — often defined in terms of external goals such as making a quota, or closing a particular sale.

Getting truly motivated begins with willingness to get to the truth of what we want for our lives and careers. It’s important to ask what has meaning and long-term value for you. Is it growing and developing your skills and knowledge? Do you find meaning in building long-term consulting relationships with your customers? Is it meaningful to know you can genuinely help your customers solve problems? Whatever it is, the real power of personal motive comes from a deep connection to your values and who you are as a unique individual, not from short-term external incentives.

Motivation is propelled more powerfully by faith than by fear.

We talked about actions driven by the fear of negative consequences. Fear can be a powerful motivator and is a highly appropriate response to threatening circumstances. But waking up fearful every morning is debilitating, highly stressful and, ultimately, soul-destroying.

Faith, on the other hand, is the belief that what you aspire to is attainable. Moving forward in faith, however, again takes courage. The size of our highest aspirations is usually matched by the size of the obstacles to be overcome. As always, we are left with a choice between being motivated by fear that stifles imagination and leads to stagnation, or motivated by faith — in ourselves and our abilities — that frees us from limitations and leads to great expectations and the highest level of achievement.

Motivation is influenced by expectations.

In those low moments we referred to earlier, the idea of having great expectations might seem naïve or unrealistic. Yet research bears out what most of us know intuitively — that we tend to live up to what is expected of us. When parents, teachers — or sales managers — set high standards and expect the best possible performance, they are far more likely to get it than if expectations are low.

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The highest level of motivation, however, comes from the expectations we set for ourselves. There is great power in setting challenging personal and professional goals and being committed to do what it takes to attain them. When you set expectations that stretch you and expand your knowledge and skills and then hit your mark, there’s nothing more satisfying — and motivating — than that inner sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, expecting little is a great motivation-killer, and becomes both an excuse and a cause of lower standards, lower levels of performance, and shrinking results.

Motivation is inspired by a larger purpose.

It’s normal to respond positively to incentives such as a bonus, a big commission, or the reward of a trip to Hawaii after a great year. As gratifying as these external “motivators” may be, they are short-lived and provide precious little fuel to the motivation engine when you’ve just lost a big sale. One of the secrets of sustaining self-motivation and drive — through good times and bad — is to have a larger *purpose* that defines the contribution you want to make. Combined with high expectations and a sense of what is truly meaningful for you, your sense of purpose can be a constant source of renewed commitment to act and to perform at your best.

Steve Jobs once said, “I want to put a ding in the universe.” Your purpose need not be stated quite so loftily — but it needs to be something that truly inspires you, and represents the absolute best part of who you are.

A purpose provides a “cause” for our lives — it calls us to action. The most powerful motivator in the world is such a cause. Knowing your purpose answers questions most of us

leave unspoken: “What is my legacy?” “How will my efforts make a difference — to those around me as well as in the larger world?” If you have answers to those questions, they provide the most compelling, satisfying, and inspiring reason for getting up in the morning — the intent to create and contribute something of value.

These five keys to sustainable self-motivation are a starting point, not the end, of creating a “motivational system” that will carry you forward to achieve immediate results and long-term life and career success. They require consistent thought and renewal. It’s especially useful to re-visit these ideas when you hit one of those low points.

Here are five questions to ask yourself — especially when you feel your motivation slipping and your enthusiasm waning:

- ✦ **Am I tapping into my own inner resources?** Is there a courageous action I should take right now to overcome an obstacle?
- ✦ **What’s my “meaningful motive?”** Am I focused on what has meaning for me?
- ✦ **What’s driving my thinking right now?** Is it fear? Or is it faith in myself?
- ✦ **Am I setting high expectations for myself?** Am I challenging myself to reach my personal best?
- ✦ **Is my purpose clear?** Do I have a clear image of how I want to contribute and to whom?

If you can answer these questions clearly and with conviction, you have the tools for gaining and sustaining the motivational engine to drive success in your life and career. 