



the numbers game

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It's 11:35 a.m. on Monday and Chris Wilkerson is smiling. Having completed his second sales call of the day, he finds himself two-for-two — two appointments, two sales! As he strides toward his car, having hit his goal for the week, he makes a cell phone call to reserve a 1 p.m. tee time for an unexpected but well-deserved round of golf. **And in the blink of an eye, a great day begins to take a quick slide toward an average week**, all because Chris started his process by setting the wrong goals.

Everyone knows the importance of setting goals. The problem is in the *type* of goals people set.

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There is a better approach that can dramatically increase the performance of anyone who employs it, and it involves the following steps.

Stop Setting Yes-Goals and Start Setting No-Goals

In other words, stop setting goals for the number of sales you intend to close or dollars you want to generate, and start setting goals for the specific number of prospects who say, "no" to you. Operate with a failure quota rather than a success quota. Admittedly, the process of setting no-goals requires a radical change in thinking. While the concept can be difficult to embrace initially, the results can be immediate and dramatic.

The Inherent Pitfall With Performance Quotas

You need only to look up the word "quota" in the dictionary to see the problem. "Quota" is defined as "a proportional share" which makes sense; everyone should be responsible for his or her proportional share. However, the definition goes on to say, *"the highest number or proportion."*

Therein lies the problem. Most people treat their quota as a shut-down mechanism — the ceiling of their perfor-

mance — rather than the floor it is intended to be. That's the insidious thing about quotas; they often end up limiting sales rather than propelling sales upward. Maybe the worst part of Chris' example is he's just ended what is commonly referred to as a hot streak!

So how does setting no-goals make a difference? Again, let's take Chris' situation and see how no-goals would have changed the outcome.

What Chris Should Have Done

With a two-for-two start, the first thing Chris should have done is take advantage of his momentum! After all, when you're hot, you're hot! And the last thing you should do in the midst of a hot streak is slow down, or even worse, stop! Having set clearly established no-goals would have helped Chris avoid this.

Instead of starting with a two-sale goal for the week, Chris would have set the no-goal of gathering 12 rejections. After going two-for-two, Chris would have found himself saying, "Wow! Monday is half over and I haven't gotten a single *no* yet! I've got to step up the number of calls if I'm going to get to 12 for the week!"

If this were the case — whereas before Chris's success would have led to a decreased number of calls for the week — the same success will now lead to an increased number of calls. Chances are good Chris will obliterate his quota for the week, and if he keeps it up, for the month, quarter and the year as well! That's the power of setting no-goals!

The Great Irony of Business and Life

This points to one of the great ironies in business (and life): having too great of an emphasis on achieving success can lead to failure, while placing a greater emphasis on increasing your failure can often lead to massive success! Success can often become our greatest enemy, for


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with success comes complacency. As Ben Franklin said, "Success has ruined many a man!"

Is this to suggest that salespeople should ditch their success quotas entirely? Perhaps. In fact, there are many top performers who never set traditional "yes" goals, opting instead to focus solely on the behaviors needed to generate results. They understand that the act of setting yes-goals and/or quotas of any kind — consciously or unconsciously — could become a self-

fulfilling prophecy, placing artificial limits on their income and their performance.

Face it — few managers plan to shift from years of traditional quota-setting in favor of a behavior-based process like no-goals. So, when you get your next quota handed to you, look at it, smile, and set it aside in favor of aggressive no-goals for the number of times you plan to fail. When you shift your focus to achieving your no-goals, the results — the yeses — will come. They always do! 

sales pointers from an expert



"Hey, do you need anything today?"

Let's face it; we have all entered a sales call with this question as our opening greeting, preceded only with "Hey, how's it goin'?" Often this type of greeting is excused by the erroneous assumption that "we are great pals and he does not want to be sold. I get tons of his business without any pressure." Sound familiar?

Order-taking is fine in some situations, although I can't think of any right off the bat. Even in the most seemingly routine environments, if you are in your customers' location, you are selling — consulting. In the words of Jeffery Gitomer, "Your customers don't want to be sold, they want to buy!" We have all heard the saying that people buy from those whom they like and trust. Let me also add that they will buy more if what you provide them helps them make more money, and be more competitive in the market.

You call on your customers for 2.5 simple reasons:

1. So you can make money.
2. So you can help them make money.
- 2.5 Because it's your job.

Hint: You can make more money if you help them make more money first.

So, what do you bring to the table? Four things:

1. Your knowledge of their business.
2. The state of the economy in which they are doing business as it relates to their competitors, customers and your competitors' offerings.
3. Your knowledge of the products you have to offer to help them compete and make more money.
4. Any information you have accumulated from previous calls on that customer.

"Hey, do you need anything" is a key indication that you have no clue why you are calling on them, or what you bring to the table. Ouch! How in the world do you be everything for everyone? Short answer, take good notes and keep them organized. Longer answer, good information leads to great consulting. This good to great transition is made possible simply because any information you bring to your customer is more information than your competitor is bringing to them. You will be a superstar if, during each visit, you bring added value to your meeting. Bring them information regarding industry trends, new products outside of your current offering, the title of a good business book you recently read, a web site where they can improve their business or personal skills, etc.

Taking and maintaining good notes from each sales call will enable you to be seen as a resource rather than just a sales guy. Pre-call planning is where you review previous notes from previous visits with that client. If your notes are detailed and accurate, you will walk into their office prepared to help them grow their business. If you don't have good notes, or any notes for that matter, you will fall back to "Hey, do you...?" You get the point.

All of us need something. It's your job as a consultant to find out what they need and then find a way to assist them in acquiring it. What's more, oftentimes they will want to buy your product or service too, and you did not even have to sell it to them. You already knew they needed it and had an offer in hand to make it happen.

Take notes, pre-call plan and you will make more money. **+**

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