

Every month, I run a Coach Call on two different topics. On this month's second call, I listed the Top 10 things that the top sales pros do that most of the others do not. Since I recorded this call, I have had dozens of people respond that the call opened their eyes to the things that are necessary to stay on top. Furthermore, many of the respondents commented that the Coach Call helped them get back on track to re-start doing the things that they used to.

In either event, due to the overwhelming response to this call, I have decided to write a corresponding article for those of you who are not part of the Coach Call program.

The Top Sales Pros are a special breed of cat. They engage in decidedly different activities on a regular basis. Although they walk and talk the same, at first glance, they do very unique things every day that in and of themselves are not overly special. But combined, these things create a vortex of success that attracts the best customers, the most referrals, the strongest relationships and the highest commissions!

For many years, I have been fortunate to be a sales professional that others have placed in the "Top Sales Pro" category. In addition, I have the pleasure of working with many top sales pros (and many more on the other end of the spectrum) every year in my business as a speaker and sales coach. In doing so, I have witnessed some of the best practices that are consistent among the top sales professionals. The 10 things that I have compiled below are not the only things that these Heavy Hitters do but they are, in my opinion, the most important:

1-They Take Full Responsibility

The Best of the Best never place blame on others for their failure or misfires. They realize that the only one responsible for their success or failure is the person that they stare at in the mirror every morning. By accepting responsibility for everything, they NEVER become the victim of competition, market circumstances, pricing, or any other issues that are attacking their competitors who whine, complain, and sit around waiting for the next *big bad wolf*.

2-They Guard Their Attitudes with Their Lives

The Top Producers understand that their Attitude is their most important asset to their success and they do everything they can to make sure they bolster it and protect it. They never hang around with those who choose to place blame, point fingers, complain, and bellyache. They go out of their way to associate with winners and successful people. Although they may get invitations to the pity parties, they never choose to attend. In

addition, these cats NEVER feel that know it all. In fact, they always seek other's opinions, knowledge, and experience. They believe anything is possible and you know what...most of the time, they are right!

3-They Feed Their Brains-Every Day

The Best of the Best got to that spot on purpose. They did not just wake up one day on the top of the heap. They actually worked hard to feed their brains the things that it needs to grow. They realize that the marketplace never stands still. They realize that customers needs will always change and they choose to stay ahead of the curve. Consequently, they read books, articles, and reports in the areas that demand their attention. They constantly "sharpen their axes" in the areas of salesmanship, customer service, empathy, and differentiation. They seek to become an expert in their field by purposefully increasing their knowledge every day.

4-Plan-Prepare-Practice

The Top Producers always seem to have a plan. It all starts with major clarity of their goals. They are very clear on the *WHY* so the *WHAT* and the *HOW* become their focus. The Heavy Hitters go into every call with a purpose and a higher level of preparation than their competitors. They have run through all the "what-if" scenarios. They have thought through, written down, and practiced the questions that they will ask. They have mentally run through everything from the customer's prospective. They are prepared to "open" the customer more effectively and have practiced transitioning for the "close" of the sale. They know the solid IMPACT statements and questions at the right time because they plan them, prepare them, and practice them ALL the time.

5-They Brand Themselves in Their Marketplace

The Cream of the Selling Crop make sure that they are "known-for" something in the marketplace. They create a buzz about who they are and what they know or do by becoming *visible* to those who may use their product or service. They realize that being a vendor is a tough gig because vendors are a dime a dozen, unless the customer only wants to pay a nickel. The Best of the Best want to be known as the *EXPERT*. They do the things necessary to position themselves in the marketplace as *THE CHOICE* rather than *A CHOICE*. They take the time to write articles and have them published in magazines and newsletters that their customers read. They get out of their comfort zones and look to speak at industry events that their customers attend. They constantly and consistently "touch" their prospects, customers, and clients in a variety of creative and value-add ways to ensure top of consciousness in the minds of the buyers. Top Pros always seek to create "Only Me" value to the sale.

6-They are Willing to Lose

All too often, most salespeople don't take the risk of asking for the YES because they are afraid to hear the NO. The Top Sales Pros understand that they are in the NO taking business. They also understand that their success is highly dependant upon their willingness to "crash and burn" in failure. Jeffery Gitomer once sated that "Most people won't risk because they *think* they fear the unknown. The real reason that they won't risk is because they lack the preparation and education that breeds the self confidence (self-

belief) to take a chance.” The great Wayne Gretzky once said that “You miss 100% of the shots that you never take.” And so it is with the best salespeople: They get out in front and risk it all for themselves, for the customer, and for their career because they know that most of their competition will STOP when the pressure of the potential loss gets too high.

7-They Recognize Opportunity and Take ACTION Faster

Top Sales Professionals do not get more opportunities than all the rest. It just seems that way because they are always on “high receive” looking for it. They put themselves in situations where opportunity tends to be present. They understand that opportunity at first can look like problems, challenges, or adversity. They further understand that CHANGE is often at the base of opportunity. They realize that this is true from their perspective *and from the customers*-and thus, there lies the opportunity. They don’t hesitate. They don’t sit around strategizing. They take action! When most people are wondering *if* it will work, the Top Sales Professionals are getting the awards for getting it done! Events get attended with different purposes. Articles get read with different eyes. Conversations get heard with different ears.

8-They are a Resource

Top Producers are the *go-to* people for their customers. They have the answers to their customers’ questions and the solutions to their problems. They realize that world is full of “Takers” that will come in and “take” the customer’s time, “take” the customer’s order, and “take” the customer’s money, but rarely, if ever, add anything of value to the relationship. Top Producers realize that, in order to continually be valuable to the customer, they need to become more than a vendor. They need to know the customer’s world as well or better than they know theirs. The Best of the Best always “bring something to the table” that changes the outlook of the customer and makes them think or perform in different ways. The Top Pros are there for more than the order; they are there through thick and thin, providing the value of their expertise and knowledge to those whom he cares about the most-his/her customer.

9-They Take Time to Re-Charge

The Heavy Hitters do a lot of things that most salespeople will not. This takes time, energy, passion, commitment, and focus. Their results come from hard-work and dedication to the job. The Best of the Best not only know when to do these things, they also know when to “shut it down” and re-fuel. Even the fastest cars (the ones that are winning) in Nascar races have to make their occasional pit-stop to re-fuel and get ready for the next leg of the race. They cannot continue to win the race unless they do. So it is with Top Salespeople. In order to keep winning the race of professional sales, they need to have a quality of life outside the selling marketplace. The Best of the Best know that the only reason to be in this game (sales) is to have a better life and *more of it!* We find that these cats take longer/better vacations, schedule more time with their families, dig deeper into “outside work” passions/hobbies, and overall get more out of life than those who “work the grind.” They realize that enjoyment and passion are synonymous with Success and if too much WORK goes into one area over another, the enjoyment and the passion start to fade.

10- They Take What They Do Very Seriously Without Taking Themselves Too Seriously
The Best of the Best in sales realize that they are in a *profession*. Just like all professionals, there are expectations that customers hold them to. A doctor has expectations that not only will she have a good bedside manner, but that she will know her area of expertise to such a degree that human lives may be placed in her care. A lawyer has expectations to know not only the law (today's law) but to also know everything else about his area of expertise such that success or failure at the hands of a jury is entrusted to him. And so it is with sales professionals: The Top Pros know that *The Profession of Sales is for Sales Professionals*. As professionals, they know that the 9 areas that I have listed above require their constant attention. They realize that the solutions that they can and do provide for their customers can change lives. And yet, with all of that in mind, they go into the battle each day with a light heart and a sound attitude knowing that they will hear no. They realize that having FUN is a vital part of the game and that most people would rather do business with a friend than with a salesperson. And so they strive to be light hearted and heavily focused to gain the trust of the people with whom they choose to engage.

It has been said that Success Leaves Clues. Hopefully these success strategies of the Top Sales pros will give you some clue as to where you can get back on track to superstardom in the profession of selling.