



The secret sauce of successful sales people:

Why is it that some people excel in sales where others do not? Have you ever hired a “sure ringer” only to find 6 months, and \$20,000 later that you misread that person’s ability to succeed? I have spent my career in the sales profession, much of it searching for that “silver bullet”, that trait which will predetermine sales success. The answer is not readily apparent, as there is no single overriding attribute that can predict success in sales. Effective Salesmanship is a complex connection between your knowledge, your attitude, your skills and habits (K.A.S.H.). The reason most sales people fail is not a skill issue, nor is it knowledge deficit. The primary underlying issue that causes sales people to fail is their inability to confront the limits of their own comfort zone, and manage their own K.A.S.H. account

Generally failure on a salespersons part is because he or she has a self-limiting belief in one or several areas. One’s self concept dictates how far we rise in our sales profession. Consider the typical maladies suffered by underperforming sales people:

- An inability to obtain new opportunities
- Activity marked by roller coaster results
- Procrastination
- Accepting a prospects objections too readily
- Chasing disinterested prospects
- Calling too low within an organization
- Discomfort speaking about money issues

develop habits to support this self-concept. Few sales people or managers make this connection, so they attempt to cure the problem by masking the symptom. As a sales rep falters, the manager places the rep on a performance plan; focusing on key metrics such as quantity of calls, number of appointments, number of proposals and time management. They focus on what is happening, but fail to deal with the underlying question of why it is happening. Consequently, both the rep and the manager are frustrated and disappointed that things are not turning around, or if they do, it is merely a temporary cure and within 3 months the sales person reverts back to the same old habits. Sound frustratingly familiar?

This brings us back to the secret sauce of sales that supports the concept that **K** and **S** are not nearly as important as the **A** and **H** in the **K.A.S.H.** model. Certainly knowledge and skills are critically important to be successful in sales, but the foundation upon which you build top performers is finding and developing people with a strong self-concept, (**A**ttitude) and displaying successful **H**abits. Anything else is a house of cards, which at some point will inevitably crumble. We can train or teach a skill and reasonably intelligent people can expand their knowledge. People by nature however are less able to remold new habits. One's attitude and resulting self-concept are deeply rooted and thus virtually impossible to change. We can teach **S**kills and convey **K**nowledge. Frankly these are pretty straight forward and will offer a quick return on investment with moderate change. **H**abits, being hard to break, require sustained nurturing, coaching and self-awareness. The benefits of coaching are enormous, as good coaching creates substantial change long term. **A**ttitude however must be identified before you make an offer to that person, as it is virtually impossible to change. Your sales development model breaks down to this simple mantra:

Teach **S**kills and **K**nowledge, **C**oach to habits,
And hire (or fire) for **A**ttitude

K.A.S.H: So let us look at those attitudes and attributes that top performers share:

We have found that the most powerful indicator of sales success is a strong Utilitarian attitude; that is an attitude that every investment I make must provide a greater return in time money or resources. Sales reps possessing a Utilitarian Attitude best utilize resources, measure return on their investments, and apply resources creatively and effectively. They are zealous of their time, use wealth to measure their performance and maximize their resources.

A second important but lesser motivator which successful sales people possess is an individualistic attitude; a desire to advance to a position of power, authority and influence. Their motivation is to achieve power and position, and be seen as a leader amongst peers. They are quite adept at forming personal relationships to advance their position and seek to be held in high esteem.

Depending upon the particular position (territory development, large account support, account maintenance) as well as the industry (high tech, relational, transactional) we find that other attitudes must be considered in predicting success. There are 10 other motivators and attitudes which we measure.

K.A.S.H: Habits are a compilation of those behaviors which, over time, we have adopted. Behaviors, while a reflection of our attitudes, are not nearly as deep seated as attitudes and thus are more amenable to change. To be sure, understand that behaviors although easier to effect change, are still very challenging to modify. In truth sometimes you cannot change one's behavior. If a person hopes to change their behavior they must possess humility. In other words they must own their own deficiencies, and be open to adapting and respect

the input of others. If humility is lacking, walk away from coaching because you cannot coach or change someone who does not see the need to change or feels in their heart that they will learn nothing from their mentor. Assuming you determine your sales person is coachable these three of the top behaviors upon which you want to improve;

- Urgency: *Decisiveness, quick response and fast action.*
- Competitiveness: *Tenacity, boldness, assertiveness and a "will to win" in all situations.*
- Customer Orientation: *a commitment to customer satisfaction*

Again depending upon the position, the behaviors may differ, however these three are fairly universal

K.A.S.H. This brings us to the body of truths that one has accumulated over their lifetime as well as the skills that their experiences have provided

- Self-starting: *demonstrating self-control and an ability to manage time and priorities*
- Resiliency: *the ability to overcome adversity and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful*
- Self-Management: *Demonstrating self-control and an ability to manage time and priorities.*
- Results orientation: *The ability to identify actions necessary to complete tasks and obtain results. Maintains focus on goals. Identifies and acts on removing potential obstacles to successful goal attainment.*
- Goal oriented: *energetically focusing efforts on meeting a goal, mission or objective*
- Personal accountability: *A measure of the capacity to be*

answerable for personal actions. Accepts personal responsibility for the consequences of personal actions.

The requirements of the job will require additional competencies, but these are the core competencies of great sales performers

Secret Sauce? As you can see the secret sauce for top sales performers is an extensive recipe. Assume you are looking for an Estimator, who can sell, or an HVAC repairman who can sell, or a Designer who can sell, a CPA who can build business, or a rocket scientist who must sell? The recipe becomes even more refined. I have endeavored to provide some universal K.A.S.H. components that must be present, in differing degrees to assure sales success. However, understand that the sauce will vary depending upon the territory, account complexity, technical acumen required, and many other components.

This is a good starting point, and will serve you well, but you must find the appropriate K.A.S.H. model for your particular sales team. We build the recipe through an extensive benchmarking process which defines the key requirements of the job and the attributes needed to win. Over the years we have created those benchmarks for many positions. If you would like to view a benchmark for your organization, send me an email with the position title, and I will try to match it to our library of benchmarks.