

GOT ANY GOODIES TO GIVE?

Ray seeks revenge on his evil prospects

Caution: Story Rated PG-13

Ray was selling time share properties and while commissions were high, too many people came for presentations simply to sit for 45 minutes, then collect their free gift.

The gifts ranged from weekend stays at resorts to cash to bowling balls and back up in value to a rare automobile give-a-way.

The sales reps ranged from those using persuasive skills to old-style types with heavy-handed battering rams for mouths.

It's too early to tell at the beginning of a presentation whether a prospect is just fishing for gifts or is truly interested in an investment in time sharing.

But this couple tipped their hand as early as one could imagine. The husband filled out their form. Ray sat opposite the couple and began some friendly chit-chat.

"So how long have you two been married?"

"Four years" and "seven years" came simultaneous answers. "Well, we lived together first a few years." Clarified the man.

"How many kids?" Ryan asked.

"Two" and "three" spoke husband and wife. Again the words were spoken simultaneously.

Ryan glanced at his manager who was sitting nearby. He shook his head in disgust. This was no married couple. The "husband" even wore a wedding ring.

Ryan's manager suddenly spun out of his seat and left the room. Ryan's conversation went right to business - locations, the joy of time share, the lifetime value of an easy, low-cost investment.

Outside the office, the manager glanced at the couple's paperwork and dialed their home number.

The man's wife answered the phone.

"Hello, this is Mr. Roberts at the Vacation Store. Your husband is here talking to us about vacations and he is eligible to win a brand new Jeep Cherokee. However, we need his wife to be present for you two to qualify for the car. And you win a weekend trip at a nice hotel for showing up, even if you don't win the car."

"I had no idea. I'll be right there." The real wife replied.

20 minutes later she arrived and was led into an office where her husband and his girlfriend were moments away from receiving their free holiday weekend.

As they say in wartime on the battlefield "all hell broke loose."

POSTMORTEM: Ray and his boss had encountered one too many horrible prospects. They decided they'd had enough and took their own form of revenge. While I can't endorse their behavior, I can't ignore the opportunity to share the story with other reps. And I can't help but point out the fact that these actions signify a poor decision-maker in a sales role.

See, selling is all about decision-making.

Sales pros have to make decisions.

Sales pros have to help buyers make decisions.

When we sell, we are making decisions all day long - loads of choices. Every one you make can have a significant impact on your performance. In fact, look at the list below. The volume and variety of these selections are sometimes simple, sometimes intense.

Decisions in an ordinary day of selling...

How you dress, or present yourself, to your company, customers and prospects

What self-talk you feed your brain throughout the day

What you eat to nourish and energize yourself

How you'll rest and recover throughout the day

How you'll nourish your sales soul with the radio, books, audio, training events

Then, of course you have all that normal decision-making such as;

How to talk your way past the gatekeeper

Your opening words on a call; by phone or face-to-face

How and when to qualifying (and disqualify!) prospects

Best questions to ask during a sales dialogue, related to budget, decision-making, timeframe, real needs, etc.

How to respond to (or ignore) objections

How to respond to rejection

When to give up on that prospect

What literature (if any) to share with someone

When (and if) to ask for referrals

Which associations/groups to join – and which of their activities to attend

Communication efforts include; email, phone, letters, literature mailings, fax (HINT: use fax, nobody does anymore and it'll get attention better than an email)

These don't even include things like planning your day, prioritizing activity, setting goals or whether to lie to your boss (or yourself!) about your production.

When I began to list all the judgment calls we make during an ordinary sales day, I was overwhelmed. Selling is not as simple as you might imagine. In fact, that list above barely skims the surface of all the good calls we have to make - to be successful.

So how do we make the best decisions, in order to attain success faster and more efficiently?

I found Waldo.

Waldo knows the answer.

Waldo Waldman is a friend of mine who flew F-16 fighter jets in Yugoslavia and Iraq. He completed 65 combat missions, went on to become a flight instructor, attained his MBA, then served as a vice president of sales for both a major software company and a mergers and acquisitions firm.

When I first met Waldo he was pumping his fist in the air at a conference shouting, "I kicked Sugar Ray Leonard's ass!"

As the story goes, Waldo was being considered to speak at a sales conference. The corporate sponsor called to apologize for the bad news, but they were going to hire boxing hall-of-famer, Sugar Ray Leonard.

"Sugar Ray? Are you serious? Do you know how much money he makes, whether he loses or wins a fight? He just has to show up and get paid. How's that role model for salespeople?"

"Well, Waldo, the meeting committee..."

"Hang on, one other thing. Do you know, in combat, if I make the wrong decision what happens? I don't make it home for dinner that night - I die. I can't afford to lose. That's how you want your sales team to think. So my question is which message would you like to send to them?"

The next day the committee reversed their decision and hired Waldo.

Here is a guy who has some serious consequences to his decision-making. He has fractions of a second to make a choice. If he's wrong, he's the one who pays - with his life.

How's that for an incentive to make the right call, the first time, every time?

Waldo, and fellow pilots, go through what they call "Mission Rehearsal." They know exactly what success looks like, but they create a contingency plan that covers multiple "what-if" scenarios;

Engine failure - at what point do you solve the problem or hit the eject button?

Weather changes – if you fly above or below the weather, it affects fuel consumption, flight time and more

Airfield changes - hey, if you're landing strip is bombed and you can't land, you'd better know what's second choice and how fast and far to get there

Plane loss – whether mechanical or combat-related, who takes the lead when the leader is gone?

These scenarios are played out so that the pilot knows EXACTLY what to do in the heat of combat.

So does Waldo rehearse doing his mission perfectly? Not much at all. He spends most of his time practicing for disaster.

That runs a bit counter to the concept we've been taught in life – picture your success, imagine everything going smoothly and it will.

Waldo rehearses the mistakes, then practices the fixes, until each possible problem is handled to 100,000% perfection in his mind.

Some rehearsals are done in a flight simulator. However, “chair flying” is done in his head long before doing it for real or on the computer. He chair flies at his desk, in his car, even on the toilet!

These preparation skills have transitioned Waldo Waldman in a tremendous success on the sales battlefield. By religiously rehearsing every possible bump in his selling road, my pilot friend is never surprised. He therefore comes across as confident and authentic. And that breeds trust, a critical tool to sales success.

How do we Waldo ourselves into making the best possible decisions during our sales day?

WE PREDETERMINE OUR RESPONSE TO EVERYTHING.

“Come on,” you're thinking “that's more complicated than building an F-16 from spare taxi parts.”

Remember the old joke, “How do you eat an elephant?” One bite at a time.

First, of course there are surprises that show up, but those make up a minuscule portion of our day. For all else you can simply select the most important things you address each day and decide, ahead of time, how to handle them.

Maybe it's your top objections. The tricky part for you is to respond, based on your blueprint of choices. *You must sound spontaneous when doing so. Nothing turns off prospects more than a snappy, pre-planned response to their concerns.*

If you don't begin to predetermine how to deal with each piece of your sales pie, you'll get eaten alive with frustration and surprises. You want to save surprises for birthdays and special occasion. In the business world, surprises are disruptive and expensive. When you can anticipate the actions of others and know exactly how to handle them, your life will be more relaxing, enjoyable, profitable.

Begin to build a master map of how you'll view and handle each decision in your sales existence. Look at it as a fun project that is powerfully useful as well. You might even get help from other sales pros and entrepreneurs as you create your personal masterpiece – a customized blueprint of the best decisions for your selling world.

GREAT SALES PROFESSIONALS PREDETERMINE RESPONSES TO EVERYTHING.