

300 and the unstoppable mindset

Fantasy Sales League (FSL) is a narrative series of real-life business scenarios, using made-up companies. The object of the game is to develop your company's sales force and sell your way out of trouble. Every month in SmartCEO, FSL presents a new challenge. You are cast into the role of CEO of a different business in a variety of industries, each with significant sales issues that can only be solved by your skill in leadership as it relates to sales.

This month, you're the CEO of a 300-person mortgage banking firm called Sparta Mortgage, Inc.

Do you think I'm giving you the short end of the stick with this assignment because you're new? You're right. But if you're going to get good at this game, you're going to have to go through the wars.

Everybody knows about the bloodbath the mortgage industry is in right now. Every day it seems the media is firing off sensational stories about bankruptcy activity, massive secondary loan sales and crumbling acquisition deals. Firms like yours are seeing their debt ratings downgraded and are getting sued by investors. You personally have struggled with liquidity and access to capital. The bad climate is scaring customers away.

The pressure is on. But you are Sparta. You will not go down without a fight.

UNDERDOG INSPIRATION

So, how are you going to leverage your sales team to get your company out of this mess?

300 is one model for how to do it. *300* is the film adaptation of Frank Miller's graphic novel *300*, about a small band of Spartan warriors who take on the Persian King's million-soldier army. The 300 fighters make the ultimate sacrifice, but not before they inflict enough fear and doubt in the enemy to save their homeland.

In their first fight, the Spartans position themselves shoulder-to-shoulder and use shield, spear and sword to repel wave after wave of attackers. They defend their position, while sustaining minimal losses. The front line achieves the statistically impossible.



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Likewise, your fantasy company, Sparta Mortgage, Inc., has a front line with the capacity to succeed in a climate of hostility and dismay. How you prepare, train and deploy your sales force will make all the difference.

Make no mistake, however: You will fail if you do the obvious. The obvious thing would be to show the movie *300* to your sales team, then give a rah-rah speech and pass out "*300*" buttons afterward. That's the great weakness of the recent "*212*" fad embraced by so many mediocre teams, often with mediocre results. The problem is, if you are wearing a button to promote your concept, you are approaching it from the outside only.

Instead, look within.

Ask yourself: How can I prepare my team with the skills they need for these challenging times? How can I design a structure that aligns them with the mission and values of the organization? How can I inspire them to achieve the impossible?

The answer? Concentrate on the hardest quality to master, the most elusive asset anybody has, both in their personal and business lives: mindset.

You must develop, in your team, an unstoppable mindset.

THE STRENGTH WITHIN

An unstoppable mindset is a mindset of achievement, one that stays focused on find-

Seen in:



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ing the customer's needs, protecting those needs and being willing to give it all to fulfill those needs.

Developing a winning mindset is a process. Begin by coaching your team to be consultative sales people, which includes understanding the difference between the prospects' ends need (their deepest driving need) and their means need (what they first say they need).

Show them how to get in, and stay in, rapport, and how to ask open-ended questions. Teach them to ask probing questions. Let them discover how asking enrolling questions brings specific direction to conversations, and how it guides prospects toward what is most important to them.

Here's an example. Your sales consultant is out networking. A qualified prospect tells her, "I need a \$150,000 mortgage."

When customers believe your solution brings value, the sale become a foregone conclusion.

It would be tempting to take the order, fast, and move on to the next opportunity. But your consultant pauses. She considers what she knows about maintaining the mindset of achievement. Dropping any fear of offending the prospect, or being nosy, she asks, "What will the loan be used for?"

And here's how the prospect answers:

"I need the money to collateralize a \$2 million cash infusion for my business."

Now, there's the type of business you can really serve. Thanks to her unstoppable mindset, your salesperson has moved the decimal point. And her victory will inspire

the entire team.

Unlike every other mortgage banker, your team knows how to create something of value, both in the short and long term. And when customers believe your solution brings value, the sale become a foregone conclusion. And so are referrals and profits and many other opportunities for you.

Well done, captain. By embracing the strategy of the unstoppable mindset, your sales force outmaneuvered the army of competitors, withstood the hail of arrows and survived the first major test.

Your fantasy team lives to fight another day.

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