

are you playing FULL OUT?

Sales is a game. Are you playing full out?

The focus of these articles over the past few years has been on the Pareto Principle (the 80/20 rule). This is a really interesting phenomenon, because it's true — 20 percent of any given sales force *usually* does account for 80 percent of that company's revenue. My focus through this journey we've been taking together has been on helping the 80 percenters become 20 percenters — and helping the 20 percenters understand why they are in the top 20 percent.

Today I want to address that top 20 percent. I want to speak to the naturals who have always been that small minority that pulls in most of the revenue for a company — and to the newly minted extraordinary salespeople, the ones who have been studying, practicing, reinventing themselves and have broken through to the other side. Here's the question I have for you — breakthrough thinkers, twenty percenters, rainmakers — where do you want to spend your career? To what kinds of companies do you want to commit your best efforts? You're a star player, and — because you're in sales, because you're a 20 percenter, because your mindset is reliably in the right place to make you successful anywhere, and because you also have a formula for success (covered in the last several articles) — you're a free agent. You can be anywhere you want to be and be successful there. You could even join the team of an *EntreQuest E.P.I.C.* company (more on this later). So why do you keep ending up in companies where you're the golden child? The answer: one word — ego.

In Jim Collins' instant classic *Good to Great*, Collins describes a certain breed of companies that out-perform their competition and the stock market, often by large multipliers. In every case Collins studied, the "Good to Great" companies possessed what he called "Level 5 Leadership."

A great salesperson may be Highly Capable (Level 1), a Contributing Team Member (Level 2), a Competent Manager (Level 3), and an Effective Leader (Level 4) — but a precious few of even the greatest salespeople are Level 5 Leaders. A Level 5 Leader is an executive who builds enduring greatness through a mixture of personal humility and professional will.

At this point, you might be thinking,



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"This doesn't apply to me ... I don't want to be CEO of Gillette. I just want to stay on top, retire early and comfortably put my kids through college without having it hurt my lifestyle," etc. But I'd like to offer you another alternative — play life full out. At your company, you're a big fish in a small pond and that (among all of the other reasons listed above) is why you're "the man" or "the woman" at your company.

I can tell you from personal experience: It is good to be "the man." But I can also tell you that moving from high school to college football, humbling though it may be, is a phenomenal experience in personal growth. My path was from high school to Yale, where suddenly I was not the smartest kid in the class anymore. It was humbling, but the rewards of that experience are still paying dividends today, both literally and figuratively, because I got into an environment where I was being challenged constantly, where my best often was not good enough, academically or athletically. I enrolled in a team where I wasn't ever going to be the star, and I had to play life full out just to keep my spot.

If you're willing to put your ego in check, to swallow hard, to step out of the limelight and go to work for a team of your peers — as opposed to just accepting the praise of people who marvel at how you do what you do — if you're willing to play full out, you will be rewarded far beyond your current compensation package. But how do you recognize that *EntreQuest E.P.I.C.* team from a distance? Here's a great formula for interviewing your next company. Find out: Are

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they *EntreQuest E.P.I.C.*?

Embrace Change – Does this company embrace change, or is it just happy with how things are and how they've always been? Companies that embrace change grow, and they will challenge you at every step of the way.

Progressive Leadership – Have the leaders created a systemic mindset throughout the organization? Are they radically committed to the notion that the world is not flat, and do they have an unwavering commitment to walking the walk and being Level 5 Leaders — humble, willful and totally committed to an abundant mindset geared toward growing the people around them, with no fear of personal obsolescence?

Innovation – Is the company innovative in its field? If the answers to the two questions above were "yes," then the answer to this question is likely "yes," too. But now look outside of the company and compare it to others in its field. Is it innovating at a rate superior to its competition?

Culture – Is the company culturally driven? This matters, because everything above must be pervasive throughout the whole organization, not just at the top. If a culture of embracing change and demonstrating progressive leadership and innovation exists, this equates to a long-term outlook that will carry the company through the ups and downs that are a part of any business' life cycle. A company's culture is its most important component, but you'll never see it on the balance sheet — it's the people.

Once you've made the choice to be more than just an extraordinary salesperson, to become a Level 5 Leader and stop being the biggest hitter in the bush leagues, once you've found that *EntreQuest E.P.I.C.* company, that locker room full of future Hall of Famers, there's just one thing left to do — try out.

Jason Pappas is the CEO and co-founder of *EntreQuest*, a Baltimore-based sales development firm focused on driving profitability and productivity of companies.