

training toward actualization AND CLOSING THE GAP

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We're continuing down the path toward becoming an outstanding sales person, so get ready – because this is where the rubber meets the road. Last month, we built on the previous four articles – predictability, visibility, defining the sales process and reverse engineering. We learned the value of performing a near-constant GAP analysis to measure where you are and where you're going, while discovering what it takes to get from here to there. So let's assume that you've made your sales predictable through increased visibility into your sales funnel: you've defined your sales process and reverse-engineered a number of prospects that you need in order to actualize your numbers, and you have a full understanding of what your GAP is. Let's say that your GAP analysis determines that you need to meet five new prospects each and every week, and that those prospects will likely come from high-dollar networking events. In order to get from estimates to (self) actualization to closing the GAP each and every day, it comes down to three little words that a certain shoe company uses as its slogan – "Just ..."

That may sound easy to some of you. "Just do it." And it can be easy, but if it was always so simple, everyone would be an all-star sales person. Reality proves that everyone is not. In fact, 80 percent of all sales people are barely scraping by, while the other 20 percent are pulling down the big numbers for the company.

Once sales people know what their GAP is telling them, they need to exercise time management and discipline in order to close the GAP. The challenge is that most people in sales live their work days by interruption, not by schedule. They take the shortest path between point A and point B, and they constantly move to where the action is, usually at the expense of closing their GAP (or the company's GAP). The result is often all foam and no beer... light and no heat... a lot of action and very few meaningful results.

Some of the symptoms of living by interruption include experiencing peaks and valleys in the sales numbers, having to generate numbers through sporadic and unfocused activity, performing a juggling act where there are always six balls in the air – and five of them usually drop. Every day you are building up momentum, only to have to start over again tomorrow, because there was nothing collective about your efforts and therefore it will never be more than the sum of its parts. Rather, it probably



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won't even reach the sum of its parts, because of the high amount of dilution in the effort. This is a world where every effort is independent, not interdependent. Everything is an enormous, frustrating effort. Sales people are pushing a rope.

Said another way, you know what your GAP is and you're running away from it rather than toward it. Why would sales people do that? Why would they know exactly what their GAP activities are and sub-consciously (or consciously) avoid them? This behavior speaks to their personal belief systems (which we've covered in previous articles), so I'll refrain from digging into that here and simply focus on two factors: time management and discipline.

Lance Armstrong, after winning the

Tour de France seven times, wakes up every day for his morning ride and first measures the angles on his bicycle, just to make sure that the seat position or angle of the handlebars didn't alter slightly during the previous day's training. He manages his time effectively and with masterful discipline. And you can bet that he always knows what his GAP is, and that his every breath is aimed at closing that GAP.

Here's how this applies to our situations as we try to become outstanding sales professionals:

First, do a brain dump every week; make an honest assessment of what you didn't do over the previous week, while making preparations for the coming week.

Second, take those activities and turn them into the outcomes you've set for yourself. In this sense, the activity might be to make twelve phone calls to follow up with people in your sales funnel. The outcome would be \$120,000 in new business with your name on it. If you don't do this, you are liable to confuse activity with achievement. Remember, the outcome is to close the GAP.

Third, schedule these GAP-closing activities as if they were a client meeting that could not be moved. Remember, if you are living by interruption, these activities might never be performed ... and the GAP might never be closed.

Think of this as a training regimen: discipline yourself to be constantly closing the GAP between your estimates and your (self) actualization.

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