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CHUCK TALK: Top salespeople: Are they born or made?

Whether hard-driven or analytical, answer might surprise you

BY CHUCK MACHE

I've often heard sales managers say "I'm looking for born salespeople," or "I want a natural." You know the kind of salespeople that I'm talking about. They are absolute experts in their field and in command of their every move.

Our perception is that it comes so easy to them. Experienced in their art, they are rarely flustered by what their day brings them and always at the top of their game. They're instinctive and intuitive. They are born to be in sales.

So, are great salespeople born or made? I've been asking that question for many years to executives, managers, salespeople and would-be new hires that I've encountered in the interview process. While I'm certain I know the answer to the question, I'm always amazed at the consistent response I get from salespeople.

First, there is the response, "Oh, they're definitely born." Consider the type of salesperson that I get this response from. Almost always, they are top-producing people who have very outgoing personalities.

You can feel their competitiveness, and their track record supports the feeling. They speak about the passion they have for what they do. They admit that they struggle with patience and likewise with sitting in meetings. They are on the go, have things to do, calls to make, people to see.

Their minds are working quickly, and they are ego-driven. A conversation about them and their success really stimulates the discussion. What I get back 100 percent of the time though is, "Sales people are born, not made." They are like the great athlete who was always the fastest, biggest, strongest and most talented and who plays a game that comes easy to them. They are naturally born salespeople.