

Chapter

1

BEFORE



As he stood and watched them enter the room, he couldn't help but reflect on his passion for sales people. Each of them was special regardless of their sales rankings within the company. He valued the fact that, on some level, each of the participants was trying to improve themselves.

Some viewed the meeting as a chance to take a break from the grind of their day to day selling. Some came looking for pearls to push their top-producing performance even higher, the best trying to get better. Some were on the way up and looking to take their selling to a level that would place them among the best. Some were top producers who, by nature of their style, were struggling with internal and external conflicts, and wanted to redirect some of their negative thinking and actions. True, they were successful, but they wanted to move to the next level and didn't know how to change. Some were there as a last-ditch effort to see if they could turn

things in the right direction. And some didn't really know why they were there. They just knew that the meeting was mandatory, and they were doing what they were doing because that is what the herd was told to do. Nevertheless, he knew that on some level they all wanted to get better, do better, feel better, and leave with some tangible way to improve their selling lives. This he knew for sure, just as he knew that some wanted it more than others.

After all, at the end of the day, he was one himself: a sales person. After nearly twenty-five years in sales and marketing, from selling tires to radio advertising to mortgage loans, to sales management, to executive management, and boards of directors, he knew this much: nothing—absolutely nothing—happens in a company until somebody sells something. Until that happens, it's just a start-up that hasn't started anything. Or it's a company that is about to go out of business because it has no business. He knew this because he'd been in start-ups, small companies that he'd made large, and large companies that grew even bigger. He'd been on the streets selling and in the boardroom selling, and there was no place he'd rather be in business than right here, right now, watching sales people walk in. He was ready to prepare them

Now he was faced with another new challenge. As the new executive vice president he was hired to get revenues on the fast track of a company that had experienced modest growth in the past two years. It was his kind of opportunity. It was another chance to be the architect of breakthrough achievement.

He had learned a lot while leading, managing, and mentoring sales executives, sales managers and sales people. First of all, if you are any good at all in sales, your life is demanding. You are a very busy individual who has to prioritize and multitask each and every day. There are not enough hours in the day and no time management course can provide you with more. You need more time. Secondly, the very best sales people did not choose to get into sales because it was easy. Only those who have failed began their journey thinking it was easy. They were mistaken. The very best don't think about easy. They think about successful selling. Easy is what

the strugglers think about. In fact, if you made a list of what it takes to be successful in sales, it would include, among other things: cold calling; overcoming objections; long, focused hours; dealing with rejection; constant change; developing product expertise; gaining trust; finding the need; withstanding threats from the competition; working with unpredictable customers; and learning, learning, and more learning. Now match that with what most struggling sales people hate to do: cold calling; overcoming objections; putting in long, focused hours; dealing with rejection and constant change; developing product expertise; finding the need; overcoming competitive threats; learning quickly under pressure; and so on. You get the picture. The lists are identical. The trick, he had learned, is that the most successful sales people learn to love to do the difficult things that most people hate to do.

As the large meeting room began to fill, he reflected on the familiar faces in the crowd. With the exception of some of the sales vice presidents and managers who now worked directly for him, he did not know them by name. In fact, the majority he had never even seen before. The familiarity came from the similarities between the sales people in the room and those he had worked with and managed throughout his twenty-five years.

It caused him to reflect momentarily on the journey that had brought him to this place. Today would be about taking the company to the next level; about growth beyond anyone's current thinking. Today was about personal growth which would in turn lead to company growth. He knew the formula for such success because he began using it many years ago. It was a journey that was not without its pain and difficulties. He hoped that the people in the room would get it a lot sooner than he had, but he knew that breakthrough achievement required pain, or major discomfort at the very least. He also knew that it had great reward that would far outweigh the anguish of getting there.

He found himself recalling the time that he was a vice president in a growing company and the CEO had decided to bring in a new Executive Vice President to take over exactly what he was

charged with doing; expanding the sales organization. He recalled the hurt that he felt being replaced, and the pain associated with knowing that the leader of the organization did not have enough confidence in him to get the job done. Although he'd kept his position as a vice president of sales, his role had been reduced and his position in the company knocked down one notch. He recalled the decision that he had to make; leave and take his talents elsewhere where he would be more appreciated, or stay, learn from this experience, and throw all of his efforts into getting better. Move on to the next opportunity, or elevate all aspects of his profession. He thought about his direct boss, the COO, walking by his office late one evening as he was busy taking his game to the next level, stepping in and saying, "I'm glad you decided to stay in the fight!" He didn't know it at the time, but his pivotal decision to attack his new assignment was the beginning of breakthrough achievement. Through the pain came the maturity, but only because he began unknowingly practicing some of the keys to personal growth. Keys such as rigorous self-examination, honesty, and the willingness to do the things that were uncomfortable, yet made him better.

He had many similar experiences and challenges throughout the twenty-five years. Some would have positive outcomes, while others would not. Many times, he would be completely in the way of himself, unknowingly blocking any opportunity to break through. It's been said that we're only ready when we're ready. This he knew too well.

He would share some of his experiences in this meeting as examples that emphasized the point he was trying to make. He knew that if he was going to be the leader of the movement to dramatically grow this company that the vast majority of the sales team would have to buy into the challenge. He knew from his experiences that they would have to personalize their own journey to breakthrough achievement. He knew that each of them would have to have a customized design for reaching new levels. He knew that they had to see and believe that there was a payoff for changing their thinking and their actions. He knew that if he were

to be successful, he had to do more than just turn the “strugglers” around. He had to help the best want to get better and he had to give them the tools to do it.

“Comfort zones have no prejudices,” he would say, “They dwell in many areas and on every level.”

He thought about how our true intentions guide our lives, whether we know it or not. There is always an opportunity to change our intentions, but again, that requires rigorous honesty, self-examination, and the willingness to deal in the truth about our real beliefs. What we truly believe is currently guiding our actions. Our results are a product of our actions. Our actions are a result of our intentions. Our intentions are made up of our thoughts and beliefs from the conscious and subconscious mind. And, if you want to change your life, you have to change your mind.

He chuckled to himself as he looked out, observing the various sales people in the room. “Look at them all,” he murmured softly, with a fondness in his voice. “They remind me of me.”

He had read once that there were thirteen million sales people in the United States. Yet, as he discovered some fifteen years ago, despite all the shapes, sizes, and styles, there are only four kinds of sales people in the whole world. Not three, not six, not five, but four. He had spent the last fifteen years validating his belief as he developed sales organizations, grew companies, and created motivating environments by getting sales people to recognize which of the “Four Kinds of Sales People” they were. And in all of his years of managing, speaking, leading, mentoring, and monitoring, nobody had come up with a type that wasn’t on his list. It came down to four. Recognizing oneself requires rigorous honesty. And knowing which type you are and what to do makes all the difference.

While “The Four Kinds of Sales People” wasn’t an exact science (and, interestingly, that was one of the things that sales people liked about it), it was, without a doubt, an effective tool for sales people to use to assess themselves and their real agendas in their

careers. It provides sales people an opportunity to pause from the daily tasks of selling to look in the mirror, get honest, determine exactly who they are, and what they are really after in their sales careers, and most importantly, how to get it. He wanted them to feel the empowerment that comes from determining which of the “Four Kinds” they were. Clarity—honest clarity—can take you places.

He was excited to share his discovery with a new group of people. His passion for helping people was his purpose and his destiny. He knew that there were over two hundred people expected to attend today’s meeting. As he watched them enter the room, he was fascinated as always by the way each of the people carried themselves. While their demeanor was only part of the picture, it was one of the keys to which of the “Four Kinds” they were.

Sitting toward the front of the room was a gentleman who appeared to be organized, really organized, and prepared for the next two hours. His laptop was in front of him and powered up, a clean yellow pad with two number two pencils to the side of the pad. He was neatly attired in business casual clothes and appeared to carry himself with confidence. The man looked like he had focus. Looks couldn’t tell the whole story, but he seemed like an even-tempered, analytical individual with a fairly controlled ego.

The leader watched the man as he interacted with two others in the room. From this distance, he couldn’t be certain, but it appeared that the man was giving them some sales advice. The three of them were definitely engaged in sales talk and the man was giving his opinion to the two attentive listeners. In any event, personality was just one of the indicators that guided people in their determination of which of the “Four Kinds” that they were.

To the rear of the room sat a woman who apparently had brought nothing with her to the meeting but her cell phone. She was greeting people as they walked by, regardless of whether she knew them or not. When she did see someone she knew, she bel-lowed their name, got up and gave them a hug. She appeared to be a happy person. He wondered how happy she really was. He won-

dered how much dirt she got on her uniform when she played the game of sales. He wondered if she was stuck in a comfort zone or really after it. Strong and smart work ethics were factors in determining which kind of sales person she was. It certainly was not the only factor, but he wondered what she actually did with her days. Was she generating meaningful sales volume, or not?

He looked to the right of the room about halfway back and saw a gentleman doing his best to blend in. With what looked like a forced smile, he nodded his head to everyone and anyone who would come in eye contact. As he watched the man, who never spoke to anyone, it was as if he could feel him questioning his own presence there. He envisioned the man as full of self-doubt: "Why am I here? How did I get into this job? I hope things really turn around for me. Hopefully it will get easier."

Granted, these were all just first impressions and observations from a distance, and first impressions can be wrong. But the leader had spent the last twenty-five years in the souls of sales people, and he had no doubt that fear resonated from that gentleman.

The auditorium was nearly full and he was about to go through his brief pre-meeting ritual. As the side doors were closing and people began to anticipate the start of the meeting, the crowd buzz began to die down. He looked to his left and saw a man push through the closing door as he spoke on his cell phone. His words, coincidentally timed with the quieting of the crowd, carried much farther than he'd anticipated.

"Thank you," he said to the person closing the door, and then resumed his call while he walked briskly. Lowering his voice just a notch, but purposely keeping the volume loud enough for the crowd to hear, he said, "I have to go. I'm late for my meeting. People are staring at me. I'll call you at the break and we'll figure out how to save it. Don't worry, they aren't going anywhere."

Most in the crowd seemed to know him and they gave a chuckle. He was slapping hands as he made his way to a seat that had been saved for him. He was obviously an extroverted individual who appeared to be emotional, passionate, and probably packed

a pretty big ego. First impression? He seemed like a natural-born sales person.

Differing personalities were just one of the criteria that the leader used to determine which of the “Four Kinds” that sales people were. The picture would get clearer when people examined their work ethic. He had learned that this alone didn’t tell the whole story either. It was very possible to work exceptionally hard in sales and get poor results. Oftentimes, sales people in this position would put in endless hours but had a flaw in their selling process and, therefore, would continue to underperform. They were stuck in their inability or unwillingness to change. These were the hard cases. Getting sales people to examine their actions, actually what they do each day, begins to complete their profile as one of the “Four Kinds of Sales People.” It is possible to stay extremely busy doing absolutely unimportant tasks that will never close a sale.

That is why actual sales results are so important. There is no hiding from the numbers. Based simply upon the numbers, a sales person is either:

- A top producer who ranks among the best;
- An up-and-coming top producer who is new – or newly aware;
- An individual stuck in a comfort zone refusing to go beyond his current level of productivity;
- An individual who is lost and doesn’t belong in sales.

He had shorthand names for each of them, names that brought them alive and would help the audience to understand which they were.

For now, he thought about the question he was asked so often. “What if you are a good solid producer who isn’t actually a top producer but does get consistent results month after month? After all, isn’t the world full of those?”

He reflected on the answer he’d given time and again. “Yes, the world is full of sales people like that, and they are one reason I’m standing in front of you. If you are one of those kinds of sales

people, you are in a comfort zone and you've refused to make any changes. Take the challenge and step out of that zone."

But now it was time to start the meeting. He pulled a laminated card from his back pocket; it was a card he carried for just this moment. He read it quietly to himself.

- I intend to help sales people understand exactly who they are.
- I intend to help sales people determine exactly what they want.
- I intend to help sales people find their personal path to breakthrough achievement.
- My overall intention is to inspire people to make a positive change in their lives.

He slipped his list of intentions back in his pocket and walked up to the podium.

As the crowd settled down, he poured himself a glass of water from the pitcher on the podium and looked out over the group. He used this moment to picture each of the four kinds of sales people, as he always did before kickoff meetings.

Today, as always, he followed his instincts and thought of the people he'd seen as they came in. He caught a glimpse of each one as he scanned the crowd: there was the highly organized gentleman, with his laptop open and ready; the friendly woman with the cell phone, but maybe no drive; the man working hard to blend in, and wondering why he's there. And then, there was the man who'd just entered, on the verge of late, performing in the center of his own universe. A Performer. That's where he'd start today.

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