

## CHAPTER 1

### ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Before we even look into the skills that generate proactive sales success, the first step for most sales people (either new or experienced) is to recognise the relationship between attitude and skill in terms of the extent to which they contribute to success.

So what I would like you to do is take a blank piece of paper, or use the back inside cover of this book, and think about people who have generated outstanding levels of success, either in a sports environment or in the business world and ideally, in the latter, in a sales environment.

The sorts of people you might consider would be Sir Steve Redgrave, Dame Kelly Holmes, Jonny Wilkinson, Alan Sugar, Richard Branson and hopefully a couple of people that you work with as well!

So I am asking you to write down a list of approximately ten **traits** of top performers. Just use one word and create a list.

## Done?

So your list is complete?

Now that you have completed your list, what I would like you to do is to just look down the list and evaluate whether the traits that you have put down on your list are an attitude or a skill?

If it is an attitude place an A beside it, and if it is a skill place an S.

Finished?

How many of the traits were **SKILLS?**

How many of the traits were **ATTITUDES?**

What you tend to find when you complete this exercise is that approximately 80% of the words on your list relate to attitude and that the balance relate to skills.

Now that is not to say that skills aren't relevant, of course they are, especially if the sale that you are involved with is a sale of a technical nature.

What it does say however, is that the difference between mediocre performance and outstanding performance is down to the attitude or mindset of the individual who is using those skills.

What is very clear is that people who are successful in any field must have certain skills but most importantly they also have to be, for example, determined, tenacious, focussed and committed. In order for people to achieve success or achieve their full potential in a sales environment, they have to demonstrate these traits **consistently**.

Placing great emphasis on having a positive attitude and mindset may seem slightly unusual bearing in mind that this book is devoted to the development of sales skills! Selling does require high levels of skills but it is the ability to access those skills when it really matters that makes people stand out.

What I propose to do later on in this chapter is to cover one or two very simple concepts that are used by top performing sales people across a variety of different industries. We have also produced what we think would be a useful reading list for you in terms of developing your knowledge of some of the areas that we have talked about.

So if attitude is everything in terms of generating sales success then that is excellent news. The reason it is excellent news is that **we** all control our own attitude and mindset.

Once you recognise this you will also recognise that it is **you** that control the level of success that you achieve!

All you need to know is **HOW?**

This book will help with the **HOW.**

In many respects winning business can be likened to a horse race. Even those of you who are not interested in horse racing will have some memories of the Grand National and of one horse in particular, a horse that was a great favourite and who won the event on three occasions.

Most people would be able to identify that it was Red Rum that won the race, however, what most ordinary people wouldn't be able to tell you was by how much. The winning margin becomes far less relevant as time progresses than the fact that the person or individual or in this instance the horse, actually **won**.

This is clearly the case in either transactional or key account selling. A top performing salesperson will do whatever they can on a consistent basis to put themselves in a position where they **win**.

Now the winning margin may be simply by the horse-racing equivalent of a nose or it could be more substantial than that. Top performing sales people are consistently looking for ways to put themselves in a better position to win.

Top sales organisations invest in the success of their people.

**BUT**

What if this training investment is not available?

What if the training is irrelevant?

Under these circumstances average performers will find numerous reasons for not taking any action.

However, top performers will take action.

## **What would you do?**

A recent survey in the UK identified that the average person reads half a book per annum. Now that statistic applies to all books including any “novels” that people may take on holiday.

So this means that if you are able to read more than half a book a year on a self development subject, sales skills for example, then this is likely to put you ahead of most of the people you are competing against.

The old adage, “leaders are readers” definitely holds true and this is borne out by the number of different self development books you are now able to buy in a variety of different locations on a variety of different subjects.

To put reading into context, if you wish to complete a master's degree then you would be expected to read perhaps thirty or forty books.

I have worked with sales people who read thirty books a year as a **minimum.**

**The fact that you have got this far, with  
this book, is an indication of your  
commitment to your personal  
development!  
Read on!!**

We'll look at some simple, peak performance strategies a little later in this chapter.

### **HOW ARE SALES PEOPLE PERCEIVED?**

Let's just take a little time to contextualise the world of sales and sales people in particular. The good news is that

increasingly sales people are managing to shake off the negative perception that other “professionals” have of them. Having said that, most people still display a degree of wariness when they find themselves near a “dreaded” salesperson.

Why do sales people attract such a negative press?

There are a number of reasons which I will expand on later in the chapter.

Very few people starting out on a career in sales, when asked what they do at a social function, would happily put up their hand and say **I AM A SALESPERSON**. Think how many other titles there are for a salesperson? We have Business Development Managers, Relationship Managers, Marketing Executives etc etc. Anything but **SALESPERSON**, although they probably all have a sales target!

There must be a number of reasons for this. The public at large, specifically people that do jobs other than in a customer service or sales environment, say that their general perception of sales people tends to be negative.

So still nothing new? When you seek to understand why this might be the case, you get all the usual answers that one would associate with, for example, a stereotypical car salesperson.

Whenever a customer gets anywhere near somebody who is in a “sales” role then their perception is that:

- They are going to be badly treated
- They are going to be sold something that they don't want
- They are going to be put under a lot of pressure
- The whole experience is going to be unpleasant
- It is going to cost them in some way

The risk is that no one (not even a salesperson) wants to be associated with such an unpleasant profession!!!

## **THE SALES/SERVICE BALANCE?**

While some people may be wary of being in **SALES**, they are happy to be in a **SERVICE** role. For some people the definition of **SERVICE** means being **RESPONSIVE**. So when a prospect or client phones up, they are happy to **RESPOND**. Some people like **RESPONDING** because it means that they do not have to **INITIATE** anything. Some people do not like **INITIATING**.

I have included an example of something that happened to me. Read it and evaluate the level of service on a scale of one to ten where one is poor and ten is excellent

I recently asked for some time with one of our professional advisers. Having spent fifteen or twenty minutes discussing some plans that I had for our organisation and their potential impact on this particular gentleman's area of expertise and when we were bringing the meeting to a conclusion and I was in the process of leaving his office my professional adviser said "Bryan, while you are here, I would like to mention X, Y and Z".

He then proceeded to sit me down and talk me through an idea / opportunity that he believed had the potential to be of benefit to us as an organisation.

This opportunity had been created by a change in tax legislation.

We discussed the potential opportunity in some detail. He highlighted the likely benefits to us as an organisation, and he also very clearly articulated what it would cost in financial terms and in terms of our time commitment, to implement this idea.

Having looked at the pros and cons of the proposition it was obvious that this was something that would be of benefit to us.

I made the decision to act on his advice on the spot.

He suggested that we should review it on an annual basis to establish whether or not it was still relevant.

## **So the question is “Had I received good service?”**

Rate it out of ten

**All DONE?**

Undeniably the professional adviser had brought the idea to my attention. It was something that was of potential value to me and I did ultimately agree to invest both time and money in the acquisition of his idea.

So how did you rate the service I had received?

One could definitely argue that I had received good service **but** one could also argue that I had actually received very **BAD** service.

## **Or had he actually been selling?**

Let's review what happened.

The adviser understood or knew our business and was able to bring something to my attention. He recognised that there would be a good fit between this opportunity and our business. In addition, he was able to articulate why it might be of benefit to me and how it could work within our organisation.

Arguably he had been selling. When I went to see him I had no idea that I would end up with this particular product. In fact I had no idea that it actually existed!

Would I have been worse off without his recommendation? The answer is that **YES** I would have been worse off without the recommendation.

Arguably then he had both provided me with good **SERVICE** and he had **SOLD** me something. So are **SALES** and **SERVICE** inextricably linked?

The answer is **YES**.

You cannot provide good proactive **SERVICE** without **SELLING** to your prospects or customers. The key

differentiator is linked to who **INITIATES** the conversation.

Let's review who initiated this conversation.

While reviewing this example of service/sales, there was one element to the whole event that made me slightly uneasy and this is why I only rated it as a three out of ten.

My slight concern was that it was **ME** who had initiated the meeting with this professional adviser.

My worry was that if I had not initiated the meeting with the adviser then I might have missed out on the opportunity.

Arguably he would have raised it at our annual review but the "opportunity cost" associated with not implementing the recommendation at the earliest opportunity is something that would undoubtedly have had a negative impact on our business.

So what would have made this even better?

Well, my adviser could have gone one step further in terms of **INITIATING** the meeting by proactively picking up the phone to me and suggesting that we get together to discuss an important change in legislation. When you proactively pick up the phone to one of your prospects or customers you are actually telling them that you are thinking about them. How often does that happen? Very rarely indeed.

When your prospects or customers know that you are thinking about them, they know that they are likely to get the best service from you.

All he had to say on the phone was that a recent change in legislation had created an opportunity that could be of interest to me and he would have gained my attention.

Why might he have chosen not to **INITIATE** contact with me?

- It could be that he did not have the time
- It could be that he did not want to bother me
- It could be that he had not thought about me

Whatever the reason, I would have been worse off if we had not had the opportunity to have that discussion.

Increasingly as it becomes more difficult to differentiate between products and services it is the **human dimension** that makes the **difference**.

This means that anybody within an organisation who has any contact at all with customers has the potential to positively influence both the service and therefore the sale.

**INITIATING** contact with the correctly profiled prospect or customer is the key to both successful **SERVICE** and **SALES**.

For those of you that are new to the art of proactive selling, think about it! Your role is to provide a service to your customer by proactively identifying the sorts of things that might be of interest to them. Approach them in an effective, understated and professional manner and then help them to see that the opportunities you have identified have merit. If you can do this, then you will become one of the most successful sales people in your industry.

That is what this book is about, consultative selling and

## **Helping you to become a great salesperson!**

### **ATTITUDE AND MINDSET**

We have touched on the importance of attitude and mindset.

Now there can be days when things seem to go wildly against us and there are occasions when our sales figures for example don't go the way we want them to go.

Conversely, there are days when everything just goes right, everything happens the way we want it to happen. From a sales perspective this sort of performance would usually be referred to as being "on a roll".

The only question is if you are "on a roll" then how do you stay "on a roll"?

And if you are not "on a roll", and your sales performance isn't going the way you want it to go, then how do you get back "on a roll"? All sales people work in increasingly competitive

environments. Whether you are selling cars on a transactional basis or managing key accounts for an aircraft manufacturer, when the buyer makes their decision to buy, the days of there being significant difference and competitive advantage between the products on offer are gone.

A little bit earlier we talked about how **WE** control our attitude and how **ATTITUDE** is a key contributor to the success that we achieve.

However, it is possible that, on occasions, circumstances beyond our control have an impact on our day-to-day selling activities. The classic example of this occurred with the stock market crash of approximately 2001. A client we were working with at the time sold stock market based investments to high net worth clients. Customers buy stock market based investment products for a number of reasons but one of the sales peoples' key perceptions was linked to the fact that clients buy stock market investments PURELY because of the investment returns.

The first consideration we had in working with this sales team was trying to understand how they could continue to operate in an environment where all that their customers were doing was

complaining about the investment returns that they were receiving.

What we tended to hear was that it was going to be impossible to sell anything to anybody because of the volatility in the returns that people had been receiving in the stock market.

Now, as we choose our attitude, we can choose to become de-motivated about an occurrence such as this. It is however worth understanding the extent to which the Situation (S) is within our control?

An outcome (O) is simply the result we achieve given a particular situation and, most importantly, our **RESPONSE** to that situation:

$$\mathbf{S + R = O}$$

Where this stands for situation + your response = the outcome.

In the example outlined above, the situation is the stock market volatility. The response is the salesperson's mindset or approach to managing the volatility. The outcome is being **DEMOTIVATED**.

It is obvious that an individual salesperson working within a sales team has got absolutely no control over what goes on in the stock market. What the salesperson does have control over is how they manage their response to events within the stock market. If the sudden volatility has reduced the value of their investments, investors are likely to want to **INITIATE** contact with their financial adviser.

There is no doubt that when the adviser meets the investor there is going to have to be a discussion regarding the investments in order for any additional sales opportunities a) to be identified and b) to be capitalised on. However, the difference between a top performing salesperson and an average salesperson is that the top performing salesperson will view that situation as an opportunity and they will seek to take advantage of the opportunities that have been created by the stock market volatility.

An average salesperson will sit at their desk and try to avoid answering the phone. They will also make up a variety of different excuses as to why they should not be sitting in front of a customer. So the next time something happens within your sales world that has the potential to impact upon your

results, identify whether it is a situation over which you have any control or not.

If you have control, then exercise that control to turn the situation to your advantage. If you have no control, then remember it's your response to the situation that will determine the outcome.

## **Remember S + R = O**

Always look for ways to exploit it!

I was a member of a sales team in 1995 that experienced a similar situation to the stock market volatility of 2001. This volatility in the market meant that our more sophisticated customers were disinclined to make lump sum investments. The danger of investing lump sums on any given day into the stock market is that it is very difficult to predict where on the volatility curve the market is on that day and your timing can have a huge impact on the number or the amount of investments that your money actually buys.

It was clear was that while our customers were not investing

lump sums our business was going to suffer. While our customers had money on deposit, they were possibly missing out on an opportunity. But what sort of opportunity does stock market volatility actually bring?

The solution was a simple return to one of the key principles of creating investment portfolios. Where a customer had a lump sum to invest in the market, we enlightened them to the potential benefits of drip feeding that lump sum into the market on, for example, a monthly basis.

What we were able to do as a sales team was to provide our customers with a means of not only protecting themselves from the stock market volatility but in many instances enabling them to exploit the volatility to their advantage by drip feeding their money into the market.

The example below assumes that the investor invests **£100 a month for three consecutive months.**

In example A, the unit price of the investment is stable. In

other words there is no volatility.

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Unit price	£1	£1	£1
Number of units the £100 can buy	100	100	100

So the total number of units bought over the three-month investment period totalled 300.

In example B, the investor is still investing at a fixed rate of £100 per month but the unit price is volatile.

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Unit price	£1	£0.80	£1.20
Number of units the £100 can buy	100	125	83.3

So how many units does the customer get in example B (Tip:

add up the numbers in the bottom row!)

The answer is 308.33 – this is more than 300 is it not? 300 was the number of units the investor received when the unit price was stable?

Does this mean that volatility is good? This example shows that it can work to your advantage if you are prepared to drip feed your capital into the market.

We were able to take this argument to our customers.

An additional feature of top performing sales people is that they will proactively seek out ideas that work. As soon as one or two sales people in the team started achieving success then there was the opportunity for all ten members of the team and the sales manager to sit down and discuss exactly how the strategy was delivered to the customer. The next step was to have the opportunity to practice it before taking it out into the field, with a view to using it to enhance both our customers' position and their perception of our sales expertise.

If you think back to the example of the professional adviser mentioned a little earlier in the chapter, then in essence what the sales team was now equipped with was an opportunity to phone up their customers to discuss the volatility in the market and then to float the concept about having an idea that would actually take advantage of this volatility.

Further on in the book, in chapter three, we are going to look at the use of the telephone with a view to engaging customers for customer appointments.

What was clear was that this underlying strategy of drip feeding was something that could be of interest to most proactive investors and therefore the salesperson had their reason or opportunity for being in contact with that customer.

What  $S + R = O$  meant in this instance was that by devoting time and energy to managing our **RESPONSE** to the stock market volatility we got a much better outcome.

## **LEARNING FROM MISTAKES**

“If you always do what you have always done you will always get what you always got”. This quote suggests that for anybody in any role in any organisation being unprepared or unwilling to change means that the results that they expect to

get are very predictable. Those that are more resistant to change might argue that there is no point in changing something that actually works. However, there are examples, particularly in the golfing world, where extremely successful golfers, by embracing change, temporarily reduced their effectiveness in order to take their game to a higher level.

Both Nick Faldo and more recently Tiger Woods have completely reviewed their grips. This resulted in a short term dip in their performance but ultimately led to greater success. It cannot have been a lot of fun for either of them to experience that dip in their performance. However, both people realised that this was a necessary step in order for them to move their performance to a higher plane.

The one thing that generally stops people from taking action towards the pursuit of any particular goal, whether it is a business goal, a public speaking goal or a sales goal, is fear of failure. When people undertake something new their perception is that they are going to get one of two results. They are either going to **WIN** or **LOSE**. Because of the way that we are brought up and conditioned from an early age our inclination is to avoid areas where we might **LOSE**.

If, however, we were to take the “lose” out of the relationship and ensure that no matter what we did we would generate a beneficial outcome, then there would be no reason to stop anybody from taking action in any area. So all that one has to do in the win / lose relationship is simply replace the word lose with the word **learn**.

So **WIN/LOSE** now becomes **WIN/LEARN**.

This simply means that every time we undertake something, even if we don't get the outcome we are looking for, if we actually learn something from it then that will take us one step forward. If we were able to enhance our efficiency by 1% a day then within just over three months we would have increased our efficiency by 100%.

Having coached a variety of different sales people it is interesting to note that when one approach doesn't work there is a lack of inclination to sit down and try and understand **why** that approach didn't work. The next time you have a fly trapped in your house watch it trying to get out of the window. The fly consistently bangs its head against the pane of glass.

What can happen in the sales environment is that once we have our “pitch” or our “approach” we don’t sit down on a consistent basis and evaluate how effective it is.

### **Are we therefore guilty of “fly mentality”?**

Top performing sales people will seek out opportunities to test their skills in front of a third party, a sales coach or a colleague, and will accept feedback in order to be able to improve their sales skills.

When you look at a premiership football team or a top performing rugby team and evaluate the relationship or ratio between the time spent in preparation and the time spent performing, what you tend to find is that the bulk of time is devoted to preparation.

In the sales coaching roles that I have undertaken, I have tended to find that the relationship is very heavily orientated towards performing. We are going to look at sales preparation in the next chapter; however it is very important to recognise the requirement to consistently devote time and energy to enhancing or honing both our skills and our mindset.

## Chapter key learns:

1. It is **attitude** and not just skills that contribute to top performance.
2. Most sales are increasingly won by small margins of either service or product performance.
3. The professional salesperson must consistently seek to provide themselves with these additional factors that contribute to success.
4. The sales/service balance. Service is not just being responsive. There is a requirement to be an **INITIATOR** in order to deliver exceptional performance or service to customers.
5. Remember **S + R = O**. More often than not it is the situation that we seek to control, when it is something over which we have no control. What we need to focus on, is our response to that situation.
6. Finally don't think **WIN/LOSE**, think **WIN/LEARN**. If we are able to take learning from everything that we undertake, then we are increasing our effectiveness on a daily basis.

