

Surviving Sales: 4 Kernels of Truth to Keep Your Chin Up

Pep talks, venting, staying hip on motivational advice or bouncing ideas off of a seasoned sales manager can absolutely help. However, there is additional light at the end of the tunnel with effective ways to go about staying positive when caught up in the sales minutiae.

Even better, my methods require little more than an open, willing mind. Keep your chin up, it's not all doom and gloom! The following four techniques can help to firmly plant yourself in a long-lasting, rewarding sales career without getting derailed when facing roadblocks:

1) Recognize That where you're at IS a Starting Point—Nothing More

Remember those “motivational words of wisdom”? What I'm about to say will go against 99 percent of them—accept your current abilities, and work within your present limitations.

Shocking stuff, right?

Okay, here's the catch—the keywords in the previous sentence are “current” and “present.” Just because your skills as a salesperson aren't now what they should be, doesn't mean change isn't possible.

What it does mean, however, is that you should recognize your weaknesses as a starting point and a growth opportunity. Instead of fighting them and losing energy, work within them to immediately gain access to a series of small successes. We all have weaknesses, it's what we do to adjust and grow to manage them that makes the difference.

As tempting as it might be to compare yourself to another salesperson, don't do it—everyone is at a different stage in their careers, and you are no different. Remember, you could very well be the person someone on the team is admiring, you just don't realize it yet.

Getting stuck on beating yourself up because you're not like the sales "star" next to you is not the answer. This is an opportunity to stop, recognize where you're struggling, understand what they do well and why and take pieces from it to make changes that will have a lasting effect for your career.

2) Own Setbacks, Learn from Them and Move On Already

Growing up, my head coach on the swim team had a terrific point —don't dwell on defeat. The second you give up on your mind, your mind will do the exact same thing to you, too.

Seeing as how the mind is the driving force behind every action you make, it won't take long for self-implosion to come about. As cliché as it sounds, there are no failures—only outcomes. It's what you do with said failures that make a HUGE difference.

Not a fan of a sales outcome? Take the time to understand the outcome and look to change the action that brought it about. This is how mistakes quickly become learning tools.

I live by Albert Einstein's definition of insanity as doing the same thing over and over expecting different results. Our sales lives are no different. If you constantly get caught up in a negative headspace, how will anything be better or different?

3) Maintain Control—Nobody Can Intimidate You

Oftentimes, salespeople miss out on success, because they're intimidated by the people who are ultimately responsible for determining it—potential customers.

Sure, they might be wealthy CEOs or department heads with years of experience and plenty of industry know-how to their names, but believe it or not, success is much more of a perception than a reality.

Removing everything superficial from the equation, and you're left with real people having a real conversation about something that may or may not make their business life easier—that's all there is to it. When you

strip away the excess layers, it's easy to see that a sales conversation is simply that.

As one of my mentors taught me early on, "you set the stage for how people are with you", truer words have never been spoken. This helps to maintain control and removes the intimidation factor from the equation. You can level set expectations resulting in productive, transformative dialogue...sales gold.

4) Keep Your Eye on the Prize

You've been in an interview or two, and you know what the questions are like: "Where do you see yourself in the future".

Having been on the receiving end of such a question multiple times, I'm going to assume that you have a stock answer in place. Dig through your mental archives and grab ahold of it—do you have it?

Okay, here we go ...

Tear them up; make them bigger.

Yes, you need to be wholeheartedly committed to realistic, long-term goals, but most of the time, salespeople build out their goals around a series of self-proclaimed limits or someone else's agenda set for them. Don't do this.

Think big. Think outrageous. Think about the impossible.

Write it ALL down.

Now, once you've done that, allow your day-to-day dealings (and sales goals) to reflect the baby steps you're willing to take to make it actually happen. Hold yourself accountable and don't rely on anyone else to do this for you. Small obstacles mean little when you're focused on something even bigger and better than an unhappy customer, failed pitch or bad day.

Conclusion

Did you notice something similar about each of the above suggestions? That's right—they're each a mentality. Though many struggling

salespeople continue to search for their industry's version of a magic pill, there's no cover-all cure for the "valleys" of sales.

As the old adage goes, "If it is to be, it is up to me." There's only one person who possesses the power to transform you into a powerhouse, and it's you. Use each of the above to make it happen.