

Stay ahead of the competition

The second of this two-part article explains how you can become a sales champion

LAST Wednesday, in part one of this two-part article, I shared three of the five steps of the learning cycle to achieve superior results that was taught to me by my mentor, Mr Tom Hopkins.

In my first year of professional sales working for a Fortune 1000

company, Mr Hopkins (regarded as one of the world's best sales trainers) inspired me to improve in my sales role each day and apply the strategies each week.

I quickly learnt new ideas that helped me out-think, out-sell and out-service my competitors. Within

weeks, I was on my way to becoming a top sales achiever and breaking through the sales targets management had set for my accounts and territory.

Within a short period of time, major account opportunities came my

way, then promotions to major channel sales, sales management and team leadership roles.

I learnt that by progressing from one step in the learning cycle to the next, a person could make giant steps in his learning and earnings. The first three steps are Impact, Repetition and Utilisation.

The last two of the five steps of the learning process are key to becoming a top-producing sales professional and a sales champion.

4 INTERNALISATION

When emotional intensity and concentration is applied to this step of the learning cycle, a major shift often occurs within a person.

We often learn best from watching others do what they do and from that, we engage those activities or habits as our own. Research has shown that we learn bad habits or "non success" activities much faster than good habits or "success" activities.

When we make conscious efforts to model successful habits and raise key performance standards that become our own, new enthusiasm and skills begin to emerge into our daily activities.

Using new skills and standards each day can help modify old behaviour traits and amplify new behaviour patterns.

Internalisation can propel a person to high achievements and it is also just one step away for that person to slide back into being an average producer.

5 REINFORCEMENT

After a person achieves a fair degree of success or status from their role in sales, it is easy to stop doing the very things that helped bring new standards and results.

In sports, phrases are often heard from team owners, managers, players and commentators such as "time for spring training" or "time to get back to the basics".

The mark of the highest-paid athletes is their ability to reinforce those success traits and methods that brought those results.

It is easy to watch world No. 1 golfer Tiger Woods hit golf balls around the 18 holes of a golf course and think it came to him naturally.

Woods has made sporting history as sports' first billionaire, but it was the untold number of golf balls he hit in practice sessions out of the public eye that helped him become the champion that he is today.

The principle is the same for those in sales or roles that help generate revenue in commercial business or retail trade. Learning and relearning is fundamental.

That is why it is so easy to get on a roll and then forget about the efforts you may have put in to get to a new comfort level. This is the danger zone that can take top producers into mediocrity and loss of confidence and achievement.

Once I learnt the five steps of the learning process in my first year of sales, I applied them to beat competitors, make more sales, earn a higher income and grow in my career.

It takes some adjustments in a few areas of your life to out-think your competitors. Here are two ways to use your time to get new advantages and a competitive edge:

Half days: When you go to work, go to work. My mentor taught me to work half-days. When I started putting in 12 of the 24 hours of my day into my sales activities, it didn't take long for things to really start changing for me in sales.

1 per cent group: Leaders are readers. Invest 1 per cent of the day, or about 14 minutes, to read a skills book in your industry or trade. Invest your time in the greatest asset that you own — your mind.

Article by Rob Salisbury, a corporate trainer, certified speaking professional and MICE industry MC. Website: www.strategicresources.com.au

Learn more about this and other related topics at the half-day seminar "Be a Sales Champion!" on Oct 26, organised by ST701. To register, log on to jobs.st701.com. ST701 members enjoy special prices (membership is free). Sign up now for early bird special prices.

To send article contributions, comments, views and story ideas, e-mail recruit3@sph.com.sg

When you contribute to CATS Recruit in The Straits Times, we take it that you agree, at no charge, to allow us to use, archive, resell or reproduce the letters and contributions in any way and in any medium.

Like a sportsman, you should reinforce successful methods and traits.



PHOTO: REUTERS