

YOUR SALES SUCCESS – VOLUME TWO

2 THE 100 DAY PLAN

There's an old adage that goes something like....those who fail to plan are probably unaware that they are planning to fail, or something like that.

It's true though, isn't it? If we don't spend appropriate time planning for an outcome, we leave things to chance.

Another adage that I like is the one that says....if you leave it to chance, the chances are you'll just leave it.

What sort of planner are you? How effectively are you harnessing your energy to consider what it is you're trying to achieve, and more

importantly, what strategies, actions and activities do you need to employ to achieve your goals.

When we first met with our financial planner many years ago now, my wife Liz and I were seated in his office and we had been chatting for about five minutes or so when we shifted into 'well, let's get down to business' mode.

Our adviser then asked us one of the most important questions that I had ever been asked....he wrote the word SUCCESS on his white board....he turned to us and then with a little dramatic edge to his voice, asked...."What does the word Success mean to you both?"

Well, Liz and I offered a number of answers including things like wealth, health, happiness, prestige car, travel, well educated and confident children, time and many other things that we brainstormed on that important day in our lives.

After a brief moment of silent study of these words that he had written on the white board under the word success, he turned to us and said..."Well, and he paused again, "One thing I can say at this stage is that you probably will never achieve it."

Well, before he got the next sentence out, you can imagine our reaction. Here was this financial adviser, recommended to us by trusted friends, telling us that we would never achieve success. My thoughts at this stage were suggesting to me that this may not be the type of person we would be doing business with.

But I was interested to know where this was going, so I said, tell us more.

His next words still ring loudly in my mind....he said, What I mean is that you will never achieve, or feel like you've achieved success, until you've defined it better than what you've listed here on my whiteboard.

"You'll never achieve, or feel like you've achieved success until you've defined it!"

He went on. If it's wealth, how much and to do what with it? If it's health, define that for me. If it's travel, how often, nationally or internationally, at the pointy end of the plan or in economy? If it's a prestige car, home, or whatever, let's get a little more specific.

Unless we're more specific, we can't plan strategies that we will be able to act on to earn and gain the types of tangible and intangible things that will make you both feel successful.

Wow. What an experience. In this short meeting, our adviser had been able to comfortably disturb us into realising that we had not set specific enough life goals and that if we hadn't set the goals, how could we possibly know whether we were undertaking the right strategies to achieve them.

He respectfully sent us on our way to do some homework. To spend time defining what we wanted to specifically achieve 5, 10 and 20 years in the future. After about a week we returned to the adviser and after some refinement, we prioritised our life goals and he helped us design a financial plan to help us achieve the kind of lifestyle that we dreamed of.

Now, this message is not about setting life goals, although I highly recommend, if you realise that you haven't spent time defining your life dreams, as a separate exercise, do that.

The fantastic singer songwriter Jana Stanfield has a line in one of my favourite songs “If I were brave” that goes something like “what if we’re all meant to do what we secretly dream?”

Well, one way of starting the process of turning secret dreams into realities is to clearly define the goals or dreams and then to decide on strategies that will help you achieve them.

A proven process to achieve goals

But let’s get more specifically focused on business, and in particular, let’s consider how you can use a proven planning process to help you achieve your goals.

Now, I would not be being honest with you if I was to try and suggest that I am an expert in time management. I respect time, I manage my time as best that I can, but like many people, I have many competing priorities that cause life to be a continual juggling act.

However, when it comes to business, many years ago I discovered an important paradox that has become a continual focal point in the way that we have structured our daily work life.

Structure creates space for flexibility

I don't know about you, but I am not a naturally structured person. However, what I have learned is that the more structured I am, the more flexible I can be. There's the paradox. Structure creates space for flexibility.

This is where, in business, having a structure to achieve goals becomes so important. While remaining flexible and open to the changing environment, you have goals and strategies to work toward and implement.

As sales professionals, of course there will be an annual revenue target that you will need to be working toward. And that's a given. I have over the years worked with many sales people who waste a lot of energy worrying and complaining about budgets and targets that they believe to be unrealistic.

Now don't get me wrong. I too in the past have wasted energy worrying and silently complaining about budgets and targets that I thought were unrealistic. But that energy is wasted on something that is outside of our control.

Sales revenue targets and expense budgets are quite often out of our control aren't they. Many sales managers also rarely have significant input to what they believe their team's annual targets ought to be.

However, what is in our control, is where we can place our energy, focus and activity.

The energy, focus and activity should be directed toward doing things to achieve the target, not focused on why we won't achieve the target. The philosopher Spinoza once said "In so far as the mind conceives a thing according to the dictates of reason, it will be equally affected whether the idea be of anything past, present or future."

As we think about these words, let me take a moment to explain my interpretation of what this great philosopher is suggesting.

What I believe Spinoza is saying, is that if we reasonably believe something to be true, whether it's based on something we have experienced ourselves or have heard of others experiencing, in the past, or in the present, or even if we believe it could happen in the future, our thoughts are so focused on this belief, that everything we see or do will be affected by that belief.

“In so far as the mind conceives a thing according to the dictates of reason, it will be equally affected whether the idea be of anything past, present or future.”

Spinoza

I remember the first day in my first sales role, my sales manager saying to me that “in the first year, don’t expect to make budget or bonus.” I didn’t realise it at the time, but those words really started to affect the way I went about my sales activities. Being young and somewhat naïve, I remember thinking that if my sales manager didn’t expect me to make budget or bonus, there’s probably a strong chance that I won’t.

Guess what – I didn’t. My first six months in a sales role was a disaster.

Fortunately, the second six months found me transferred to a different range of products and services, and a new sales manager. My new sales manager had a totally different outlook. Not only did she explain to me that her expectations was that the minimum standard of performance of any sales person was to achieve revenue targets, but that we would all work together to plan and act on ways to achieve bonus.

This is where I first learned of the 100 day plan. Recently, I was pleasantly surprised to find that in one of Australia's leading financial institutions, that they were very successfully using a similar type of planning tool.

Why a 100 Day Plan?

The 100 day plan is a way of looking at the number of working days available to you, taking away public holidays etc., in any six month period of a year. Now, don't get too caught up in the exact nature of whether that actually works out to be more or less than 100 working days. Use it as a guide.

You may already have a plan in process. If so, congratulations. Stick with it and you deserve to achieve the success you have planned for.

On the worksheets that accompany this program, are a number of questions and activities to help you review your existing plan, or to start the process of a new plan.

Here's a process that you will find of value:

You will already have your monthly, quarterly or annual budget. That's a given. What you need to do now is to think about the territory you are working in, and to start with existing clients and ask yourself the following questions:

1. What proportion of the sales revenue target was achieved last year from existing clients?
2. What potential is there from existing clients for this year?
3. How will I stay in touch with these existing clients to provide value and reason for them to do the same amount or additional amounts of business with me this year?
4. What amount do I need to find from new clients?
5. How will I identify these new clients?
6. What marketing and sales activities in the past did I or have others used to secure business with existing clients?

7. What marketing and sales activities and strategies will I employ to set up appointments or make contact in other ways with the potential clients I have identified, to discover and clarify where there might be potential for me to create value for them?

When you have answered these questions, you are well on your way to being able to complete your 100 day plan.

Once you've identified the activities that you will undertake, it's then a process of getting specific about what you will do on a monthly, fortnightly, weekly and daily basis for the next 100 days.

The worksheets are a guide for you, but you may like to design your own, or incorporate these ideas into your existing planning forms.

Planning is only one part of the process of goal achievement.

Planning without activity is a waste of time. Nike have the wonderful motto of "just do it". Take a leaf out of their approach and take the action, complete the activities on a daily basis.

Most importantly though, as part of the 100 day planning process, is to review your progress at the end of each week.

This may be in the form of a personal review of how you went in terms of achieving the activities you planned for, or it could be discussing your progress with a colleague or your sales manager.

The key to the success of the 100 day plan is your ability to not lose focus on your revenue targets, but more importantly, if you've planned for what you believe will give you the highest likelihood of achieving or beating your target, focus all of your energy on doing the plan.

As a marathon runner, the thrill (and exhaustion) of running over the finish line after 42 kilometres or 26 miles can only be achieved if the training has been effective. I remember the evening before I completed my first marathon, one of my clients sent me an email note that said....you've completed all the hard work in training for the past 16 weeks, tomorrow run well and enjoy your 42kilometre victory lap.

Well maybe that's a little too self indulgent on my part, but my point is that the plan, followed with the activity, has a much higher potential of achieving target than no plan or unplanned activity.

I know the 100 day plan process, or at least the questions that I have suggested to you in this program will add real clarity and value to your selling career. As Yoda, the great philosopher and teacher from Star Wars said, Try not. There is no Try. Do or do not.

Well, that's it for this message. Complete the worksheets and discuss your findings with your colleagues. You'll be surprised how much you can achieve over the next 100 days.

Worksheets and exercises:

Take a moment and review these thoughts, ideas and principles by completing the following exercises:

How would you rate your current success with planning and goal management?

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Goals or objectives need to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. In the space provided, write out two objectives that you are currently working toward achieving within the next 100 days.

Goal Statement #1

Goal Statement #2

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Strategies for Goal Statement #2