



Are Your Salespeople Hunters or Farmers? The Secret of Hunters

I recently read a quote from the great salesman Sid Friedman who stated, "The harder I worked, the luckier I got." I have never met a top producer, a hunter, who didn't have this statement as part of their sales DNA, while the farmers sit around, hoping to take orders and wonder how the hunters get so lucky. One word – prospecting!

Where have all the sales gone? Is the preeminent question that reigns in the corporate sales world as well as with the professional rainmaker. Remember a time when the phone would ring off the hook? Times where good, everyone was making money and in full swing of the longest running economic expansion in US history where even the average salesperson looked like a star. Poof! The world's turned upside down with the collapse of the dotcom's and the spiraling fall from grace of Enron, Tyco and others.

Ok, so what does an economic collapse have to do with sales? I began surveying corporate sales chiefs, business owners and management committees of professional service firms in the quest to understand what their biggest challenge in hitting their revenue goals for 2003 are. Most answered that their people had forgotten how to sell, or more to the point, they had forgotten how to prospect. In short, they were no longer hunters of new business; they were farmers. Networking had become a social event where salespeople and professionals hung-out to congratulate themselves on landing the big account. Salespeople now commiserate at networking events, desperately clinging to the ill-fated paradigm of waiting for the customer to call.

The economic expansion of the last decade allowed many hunters to rest on their laurels. These old hunters became complacent and bad habits took over where good habits once dominated. These new habits made farmers of the modern day salesperson. Now, they wait for the phone to ring and when they don't hit their numbers they use the economy as an excuse. I've heard it all from, budgets are tight to non-existent and the customers don't have any money to buy our products. What's funny is that these are internal sales objections from the sales people we're paying to sell for us. Guess what? Many of them haven't figured out a way to overcome their own objections. Isn't that what sales professionals do, overcome objections to discover the real needs of the prospect? They need to be a bit more introspective to discover the buying motives that will transform them from farmer to the all-capable hunter who understands that they must perform or starve.

I understand that it's tough out there and that mentally salespeople are expecting revenue shortfalls. This goes back to goal setting 101, keep your mind on what you want to appear. Let's face it, the salesperson of 2003 is a farmer, not a hunter, and he or she only knows one way to farm. I realize this comment will stir some emotions, but it's true. I've talk to hundreds of sales people who have rolled up their tent and blamed management for not doing the things necessary to help them in the tough times. However, there are a few shining stars out there. I recently spoke to a sales person who grew his territory 1200 percent last year in a highly competitive industry segment, where the rest of the industry was down and others who have been able to win new business like him. What's his secret? The rollout of a new product? Extended product financing with a discounted interest rate? Giving the product away – FREE? NO! The secret is not really a secret at all, they haven't bought into the thought of doom and gloom, his team is comprised of hunters who've figured out a way to do well through successful prospecting.

I happened to walk into the office of an international company in a highly competitive industry to visit one of these top performers and noticed his associates sitting around and talking, I'm escorted back to Phil's [not his real name] office, and there he sat wrapping up a call. The first thing you notice when you walk in is the absence of pictures on the walls, he looks up and says, "yea it's kinda empty in here, I keep it that way to remind me that I am here to work. I do not want an office that's too comfortable." Once again, he reminds me, "I'm here to work." I smiled.



Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.

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We had a great talk, one that I often hear from a two-percenter, a hunter. I asked him about the call he just made and he told me that he was in the process of calling 300 executives that worked for PROSPECT Corp. I asked, how long will that take you? "I've planned about four or five days, he smiled and continues saying that he really wants to land this account. I smiled too, you see Phil is a national accounts manager, he is not some rookie dialing for dollars, he has the fire in his belly to sell, a hunter who realizes that if he doesn't hunt, he will starve. Phil is a dream for every sales manager on the planet, selling \$750,000 in new business in 2002 when everyone else had mentally taken the year off.

Remember, the phone won't ring today or tomorrow. There is no one to blame but yourself if you fail to meet quota. Today to be successful in sales, you must dig down inside and rebuild the hunter mentality, the instinct for survival. Clients will not come to you, you as a sales professional, must make the effort of dialing the phone or knocking on doors. In the challenge economy it's about the numbers.

I remember having dinner with the great Tom Hopkins (internationally known speaker, sales trainer and author) a number of years ago, I had just been awarded "Salesperson of the Year" and I was feeling pretty invincible. During dinner, Tom wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it to me, saying that the secret of all top performers is written on the paper. It simply read, GOYA. I glanced back at Tom with a puzzled look, and asked what did it mean? He smiled and said "Get Off You're A..." No matter how effective all of the other sales models are, all the marketing your company does, none will help you hit your revenue goals if you don't apply the GOYA model. By the way, I still have the note!

Keep the end in mind, and know your outcome. If you stay focused on outcomes, you will begin to understand what it will take to create the win. It could mean going out and learning a new skill or it could simply mean applying the GOYA model with a positive attitude. The decision is yours and only you have the secret to unlock your success in 2003!

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