



## 7 Major Reasons for Salespeople Underperforming.

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Note:

The information provided in this special report is of a general nature and is in no way a guarantee of specific results. Application of the information should be considered in alignment with your personal contexts and individual industry, client situation, marketing, and sales environment.

## 7 Major Reasons for Salespeople Underperforming.



### Welcome to this Sales Mastery Special Report.

The catalyst for this report was a recent discussion I had with a General Manager of Sales for a leading pharmaceutical sales company.

The General Manager had told me how frustrated he was that his Product Specialists weren't achieving the sales targets despite the amount of time, money, and resources they had invested in sales training in the past.

We spent the next hour discussing why sales training can often not deliver the level of results expected, and other reasons why salespeople can underperform.

As I reviewed the discussion with that General Manager later that afternoon, I decided to share these 7 major causes of underperforming salespeople.

Whether you're new to selling or an experienced sales veteran, or a sales manager, you'll gain value from knowing these 7 major causes of underperforming salespeople, and even more value when you act on them.

### 1. Salespeople do not believe in the role of selling – they don't want to be seen as the negative stereotypical 'salesperson.'

If you were to ask most people to list the types of industries that are renowned for the negative stereotypical salesperson (slick, fast talking, untrustworthy, pushy etc.), the typical answers would include: Real Estate, Used Cars, Insurance, Telco's, Door to door and telemarketers.

Now if you're in one of these industries, please be assured that I am not for one minute saying that the perception is reality.

However, what I am saying is whether there is any substance to it or not, ignoring the perception can be problematic to say the least.

Sometimes, regardless of industry, salespeople aren't just competing against their industry competitors, they're competing against many potential client's perceptions of this negative stereotype of what a salesperson does or is likely to do in most selling situations.

This problem is compounded, when the salespeople themselves, either individually or collectively, also buy into the personal perception of this negative stereotype of what selling is (or isn't), and allow it to influence their thoughts, words, and behaviors in such a way that restricts their ability to meet sales targets.

Selling is not something that we do to people - it's something that we do with and for people.

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When salespeople are asked to implement a sales process or techniques that are not aligned with their personal values, the negative stereotype just gets stronger.

However, when company sales leaders introduce, reinforce and reward salespeople for implementing a value-focused sales process that is aligned with each salesperson's personal values, the negative stereotype of the slick, fast talking, untrustworthy, pushy and technique-based salesperson disappears.

The result is a sales team, individually and collectively, who are proud of the sales culture they work in.



So, here's the first question for you.

To what extent do you (or your sales team, if you're a sales manager) believe in the role of selling? Do you see it as a noble profession of helping potential and existing clients to clarify and experience the value they seek? Using the scale below, where would you rate yourself (or your team)?

Low belief

Strong belief

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

### 2. Salespeople do not believe in the value they create at the price they charge for the products or services they provide.

When a potential client makes an initial decision that they need to purchase a product or service, there are several elements they will typically consider before making their purchase decision. These include:

- a. The price of the product or service and how it compares to competitor pricing.
- b. The price:value relationship, or in other words, the customer's perception of the level of value they will experience for the price that they will pay.
- c. The brand of the product or service and what that brand stands for and delivers in the customer's perception – including things like quality, safety, peace of mind, image, and track record amongst others.
- d. Referrals or recommendations from friends, family or colleagues to a particular company or salesperson
- e. The professionalism of the salesperson – this includes an overall perception of the salesperson's product knowledge, intentions, motives, morals, and motivation.

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If buyers have concerns that the salesperson does not have a passionate belief in the value they can provide through their products or services at the price they are charging, there's a strong chance that will cause them to not make the purchase.

This doesn't mean every salesperson ought to own or want to use what they sell.

However, it does require a deep understanding and belief in how their products and services create value for clients.

The key then for salespeople is to find those clients who really can gain value from purchasing their products and services.



Here's the next question for you:

To what extent do you (or your sales team, if you're a sales manager) believe in the value of your products and services at the price that you charge?

Low belief

Strong belief

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

### 3. Salespeople have a lack of understanding of the activities required to successfully achieve sales targets

It is sometimes the case that through no fault of their own, relatively inexperienced salespeople may not actually know what they need to do in terms of sales and marketing activities.

The problem with this major cause of underperforming salespeople is that although they may be extremely active and busy, they are potentially being active and busy with goal obstructive activities rather than goal supportive activities.

There's an adage in sales that I believe has been lost in its translation over the years.

The adage is that "Selling is a numbers game".

However, with the rise of consultative selling and relationship selling approaches, it was almost taboo to ever say that selling is a numbers game.

But, it is!

And I don't mean that you've just got to get out and see as many people as possible.

What if you're seeing the wrong people? The result is lots of activity with little result.

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The key to the numbers game in selling is subtle, yet essential.

Successful sales and marketing activities are based on the aim of contacting enough potential buyers who want to buy your products and services, on a continual basis.

Having contacted them, it's being able to then identify and clarify their wants, needs and value they seek from the types of products, service, or advice you offer.

Finally, it's then being able to demonstrate and validate the value they can gain through the purchase of your products, services, or advice.

So, it's not just about seeing a lot of people.

It's about targeted activity to see only those potential clients who want to buy your products and services.

This is about clarity around who your ideal target clients are.

It's about research and segmentation of who these potential clients are and then formulating and implementing strategic and tactical activities that will enable you to contact them or be contacted by them.

It's than being able to use a sales process to uncover and clarify their wants, needs and value, and then to demonstrate how your products and services can deliver on that value.



And here's the next question for you.

To what extent do you (or your sales team, if you're a sales manager) understand what sales and marketing activities are more likely to lead to your ultimate sales success?

Low understanding

Strong understanding

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

**4. Salespeople understand the sales and marketing activities required but lack the competencies to complete them.**

Here's the good news.

Of all of the 7 major causes of underperforming salespeople, it is this one that is the easiest to remedy ... if there is a committed sales manager who believes in the value of quality training and coaching.

What's required here is a competency audit.

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I realize that sounds a bit 'H.R-ish', but once all of the sales and marketing activities and skills have been defined, it's a case of the salesperson self-assessing their competencies against the sales and marketing activities and skills.

Then, the sales manager observes and assesses the salespeople, individually and collectively and provides appropriate training, coaching, reinforcement, and rewards for competency development and achieving resulting targets.

There are a few potential problems surrounding this issue however, especially where companies have a wide mix of new and veteran salespeople.

The first is that some salespeople, and more likely those who have longer term experience, may not believe, or perceive that they require any further training in 'how to sell'.

And they're probably right.

Surely if a company has administered effective sales training, further sales training oughtn't be required – and instead, what is required is the coaching and reinforcement of what has already been trained.

This is why many sales training approaches fail.

They fail because it's not only what happens during the sales training that is important, it's what happens after the sales training that can make all the difference.

Another problem that can occur is that despite having longer terms sales experience, some veteran salespeople can have developed selling and communicating habits that may have been effective in the past, however, they may not be appropriate or as effective now or in the future.



And here's the next question for you.

To what extent do you (or your sales team, if you're a sales manager) believe that you have the competencies required to effectively complete the sales and marketing activities that will more likely lead to your ultimate sales success?

Low belief

Strong belief

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

**5. Sales Managers do not hold salespeople accountable for results and there is a lack of consequence management.**

There is a wonderful piece of wisdom I was taught as part of my undergraduate study in the psychology of adult learning.

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And that piece of wisdom is this:

“Behavior that gets rewarded and reinforced,  
gets repeated and retained.”

The long term effective development of habits of thought, words, and actions, require opportunities for practice first and foremost.

You can't develop a habit without repetition, and again, this is whether it is a habit of thought, words, or actions.

It is also difficult to develop a habit unless you experience a sense of reward.

Now that can be a sense of personal satisfaction on achievement, or in sales, winning a new piece of business, or receiving some kind of personal reward such as commission, bonus or congratulations and encouragement from your manager or colleagues.

But here's the thing. Many salespeople tend to perform at levels that they see themselves performing, and also are quite often heavily influenced by the level of performance that their managers will accept as satisfactory or expected performance.

If we want to develop a new sales or communication habit (thought, words, or actions), then we need to have good reason to do so.

If there is no consequence to us in developing a new habit or breaking an old habit, then the likelihood is there will be no change at all.

From a self-management perspective, this is important for all of us.

What it means is that when we challenge ourselves to pursue our potential, in whatever area of our lives, we need to be aligned with a purpose, reason and consequence to do so.



Without purpose, reason, or consequence  
there is a lack of internal belief or drive that will  
cause us to change.

This is extremely important for sales managers.

Without positive consequences (reinforcement and rewards) for positive behavior (for example, effective completion of sales and marketing activities) in salespeople, chances are the long term continuation of the positive behaviors are in jeopardy.

This is also true in reverse.

Without negative consequence (some form of disciplinary action) for negative behavior, the chances are the negative behavior will continue.

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And here's the next question for you.

To what extent do you have sufficient consequence, purpose or reasons to achieve your sales targets?

Low consequence

Strong consequence

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

### 6. The products or services are not competitive.

This is more difficult!

Especially for salespeople who have to sell in competitive environments – and who doesn't?

I have worked with salespeople and their sales managers in certain companies who really are struggling with an out of date, or inferior product or service, compared to their competitors.

This is not a sales problem - it's a marketing and product or service development problem, and the adage 'there's no use flogging a dead horse' becomes the catch cry for the sales team.

However, quite often, our research shows that sometimes when salespeople believe that their products or services are not competitive, it is more of an excuse than a reality.

In sales, we operate today in a world of sameness.

Because of continually growing competition, expectation of certain levels of quality and service delivery by customers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate in many markets and industries.

So how do salespeople compete?

Obviously one way is on price - be the cheapest.

The problem here of course is that it may not be profitable, and over the long run, a competitor may be able to match or better the price just to win the sale.

The issue that many salespeople convince themselves on, is that if they can't compete on price, then they can't compete at all.



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Sure, some customers will just want the cheapest. However, given that the price difference between competitive products or services are often not significant, salespeople need to be very skilled at helping clients clarify and articulate their wants and needs.

This is where the importance of 'value-discovery' questions becomes paramount to the success of the salesperson to be able to differentiate.

As salespeople, we need to draw strength and inspiration from the fact that our competitors are probably just as concerned about differentiating from us, as we are from them.

So, let's take the focus off trying to compete.

Let's change the focus on discovering the value that each client is trying to achieve and structure our sales process around helping them to clarify and articulate that value.

Then, through demonstrating how we can deliver that specific value through our products and services, the client no longer sees the need to consider 'shopping around'.



And here's the next question for you.

To what extent are you (or your sales team if you're a manager) focusing on discovering value for each and every client?

Low focus

Strong focus

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

### 7. The territory the salesperson is targeting does not provide sufficient opportunity to meet sales targets.

This is potentially more of a sales management problem than it is a salesperson problem.

However, not always.

Depending on the type of business that you're in, and as mentioned earlier in this report, long term successful selling is dependent upon the ability of salespeople to contact or be contacted by enough potential buyers.

If a salesperson, despite their best efforts to undertake and effectively complete the necessary sales and marketing activities, is genuinely in an area or location or territory where compared to others in their company, the numbers just don't stack up, it can be extremely demoralizing, and it may be necessary from a sales management perspective to reassign and distribute the sales territories.

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Having said that, once again, the key to understanding whether it really is a sales territory issue, or a salesperson issue, is through observation and or review of the sales and marketing activities being implemented by the salesperson.



Focused activity is the tangible glue to success.

The key is it must be a targeted and productive activity.

There is always potential for salespeople to get busy with busy work, or activities that they're comfortable with, and to avoid the sales and marketing activities that they're not so comfortable or confident in implementing.

Here's a challenge for you (and for your sales team if you're a sales manager).

Make a list of all of the sales and marketing activities that you can think of - even the ones that you don't believe are applicable to you or your business or industry (for example, conducting seminars to demonstrate the value of your products or services is a sales and marketing activity, but it may not be something that is done in your industry, or it may be that it's not done because many salespeople have a fear of public speaking).

Once you've created your list and discussed and refined it with your colleagues or managers (and even clients), then develop a new sales and marketing plan.

If you're not getting the results you want out of your territory, then you need to change something.

If you can't change the territory, then you'll need to change what you're doing.



And here's the final question for you.

To what extent are you prepared to do things differently?

Not prepared

Ready and willing

0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

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Summarizing the 7 Major Causes Of Underperforming Salespeople

Of course, there are other elements and issues that affect the performance of salespeople. However these 7 major causes have been provided to challenge you to consider your current level of success, and the potential success you seek.

If you're comfortable with your current level of sales success, then I encourage you to consider each of the 7 major causes of underperforming salespeople and to lock in your current success habits and don't let any non-productive thoughts, words or behaviors slip into your sales and marketing strategies and activities.

If you're not comfortable with your current level of sales success, then I encourage you to go over each of the 7 questions that I've provided to you in this report and to honestly answer them and take action.

I welcome any comments or feedback that you might have on this or any Sales Mastery Special Reports you might access.

Drop me an email – [david@davidpenglase.com](mailto:david@davidpenglase.com)

If you've got a Conference, Professional Learning & Development day scheduled, give me a call on +61 0418 400 369 to explore topics I could present to help you achieve your goals.

Until next time.....my very best to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David." with a stylized underline.

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