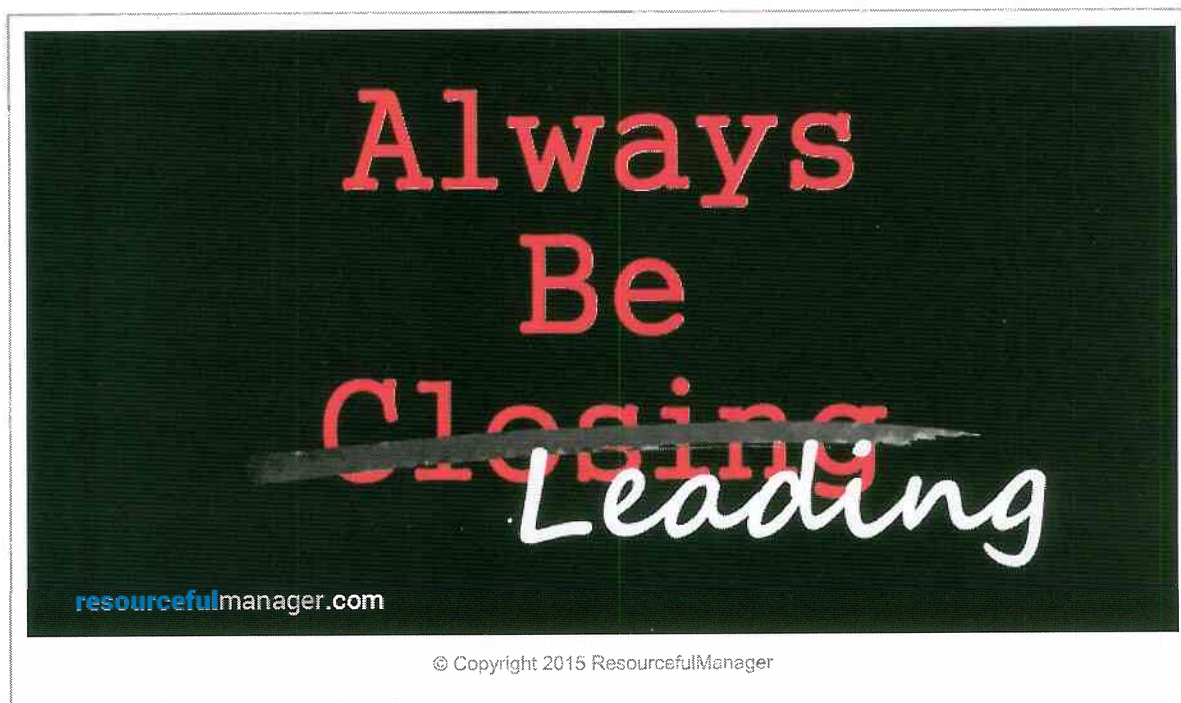


13 Leadership Ideas Worth Stealing From Your Sales Team

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Accomplished salespeople are some of the most highly sought-after (and sometimes misunderstood) creatures on the business planet.

And, coincidentally, the same is true for great leaders.

It's hard not to notice that great salespeople and great leaders have many things in common.

If you don't think so, consider this enduring and inspirational sales quote.

"All things being equal, people will do business with those people they know, like, and trust."

Now, let's change just a couple words.

"All things being equal, people will follow leaders they know, like, and trust."

Here's another.

"If you are not taking care of your customers, your competitor will."

Now, let's just reposition that slightly:

"If you are not taking care of your employees, your competitor will."

So, when it comes to leadership, it's clear there is much that can be "borrowed" from the world of business-to-business sales.

Here are 13 ideas to grow your leadership skills, borrowed directly from well-established and proven tactics from the B-to-B sales bible.

In each, we simply substituted "leader" for "salesperson" or "employee" for "customer", etc.

And they made total sense!

Put Some 'Value-Added' In Your Leadership

Salespeople rely on these six "value-added" selling techniques to get inside their customers heads.

Leaders can, too.

1) Take Time To Learn Your (Customer's Business/Employee's Job)

It's not something you can do in one interaction. The learning curve is long, and it's an ongoing process. It should occur over a period of time. Showing interest in your (customer's business/employees' job) will **produce a positive relationship**.

2) Come Up With New Ideas For Your (Customers/Employees)

Every (customer/employee) can benefit from helpful ideas. You have expertise and knowledge. You know what's happening in your industry, and you know their needs. Make a serious effort to **share your thoughts**.

3) Demonstrate A 'We're Here To Solve Your Problem' Attitude

(Customers/employees) want a **positive response** when they run into problems or have serious questions. You may not always be able to answer their questions. But you can usually help them negotiate a workable compromise and stay positive.

4) Don't Be Afraid To Say, 'We Can't Do It'

This is not the same as saying, "I can't help you." It's being honest. Don't stop there. Try to help the (customer/employee) get what is needed. It will **build their confidence in you**, and boost your credibility.

5) Ask Your (Customer/Employee)

If you want to improve your products or services, ask the opinions of the (customers/employees) who are **closest to those products and services** and who likely know more about them than you do. You'll get ideas on what your company can do. You may even get ideas for new products and services.

6) When You Make A Mistake, Admit It Right Away

Don't try to cover it up with excuses. The (customer/employee) knows what's going on, and the experience **will only serve to cast doubt** on your **credibility**. Once you admit the mistake, start talking about solving the problem.

7 Additional Lessons From Your Sales Team

Here are seven other qualities that are second nature to top salespeople, that leaders would do well to practice, too.

7) Confront Reality

Average (salespeople/leaders) wait for things to improve rather than admitting things have gone wrong. **Psychologists call this pain avoidance**, and it's extraordinary how strenuously (salespeople/leaders) try to avoid an admission of failure. One of the hardest things to do is recognize when something is not working and accept the **responsibility to change**. Great (salespeople/leaders) are always ready to make adjustments and move on.

8) Focus On Your Strengths

There's a certain logic in investing your resources in weak areas in the hopes you can correct problems and transform failure into success. That approach may only divert attention from more profitable operations. The inability of (salespeople/leaders) to focus on successful and profitable activities is the **primary cause of frustration**, poor performance and failure.

9) Accept The Inevitability Of Change

It takes courage to accept the inevitability – and therefore the necessity – of change. When a species fails to adapt, extinction is the result. In business, as in biology, the ability and willingness to adapt to shifting circumstances is essential to survival. **Change is the most daunting challenge** (salespeople/leaders) face in a dynamic marketplace.

10) Be Passionate

Attitude determines outcome. **If you don't believe what you're saying, it will show**. If you don't believe in your ability to meet your (customers'/employees') needs, they will know. That doesn't mean being the best in the world at what you do. It does mean being convinced that what you do has real value. **If you're not convinced**, your (customers/employees) won't be either.

11) Be Consistent

Like oxygen, consistency is one of those qualities that is easier to recognize when it's lacking. Nothing is more unsettling or disruptive than erratic behavior. Consistency builds (customers'/employees') confidence. **Consistency signifies reliability**. It's the foundation of positive relationships.

12) Value Continuity

In business, it takes experience and know-how to do a job well over time. A layer or two down the organization chart are people with deep insight into your company's most basic operations. **Talk to them**. The foundation of top salespeople/leaders is their ability to tap the knowledge of customers/employees and the people they work with and for.

13) Replace Fear With Faith

As self-fulfilling prophecies go, fear is a sure winner for salespeople/leaders. When we operate from a position of fear

we validate a belief in our own inferiority. **Faith is the belief in our ability to succeed.** It's the confidence to trust our intuition and to act on it. The difference between a goal and a fantasy is belief in its attainability. It's possible to expect victory and be wrong. But it's far more likely to believe