

4 Reasons Sales People Stop Selling

It's something that happens to most managers at some time. A problem that's likely to keep us awake nights, tossing and turning and seeing the business going down the drain. We're offering staff incentives. We're holding regular sales meetings. We try hard to maintain good relations with the staff. But one (or more) of our sales team isn't selling. And the frustrating part of it is that we can't see any real reason for non-performance.

A bit of lateral thinking can help here. For instance, what looks to you like an incentive can actually be a barrier to sales! Sounds crazy, doesn't it - but in the twenty-three years I've been selling real estate, I've found there are four BIG reasons for salespeople to stop selling.

1. Performance leads to punishment:

This happens more often than you'd think. Take the case of an auctioneer I knew, who told his sales team that every time one of them clinched an auction property, that salesperson could do the auction. He thought it was a great idea; what an incentive to work hard to get the listing! How many properties do you think were listed? That's right, none.

It turned out that every one of those salespeople lacked confidence when it came to public speaking. Because of that fear, performance would have led to punishment.

Another thing I've learned this far down the track in the real estate industry: Good salespeople hate paperwork. I knew this subconsciously for years, but didn't think about its implications for the business until I went to a meeting of the American Management Association in Chicago five years ago. A speaker asked a question: "Who wants to increase sales?"

Everybody did, of course. The response?

"Then all you have to do is take the paperwork off them!"

Are you punishing your sales team for performance by loading them down with paperwork?



2. Non-performance is rewarding:

It's hard sometimes to put aside personal feelings if someone you like isn't performing, but think: can anyone on your staff rest comfortably knowing that they'll be able to get by with just an occasional sale? Are they rewarded with regular

pay and a steady job whether they perform or not?

At Dougmal, we look at a minimum desk cost: to stay employed with me you need \$7,000 gross commissions every month. The philosophy here is that if you fall under \$7,000 for eight weeks in a row, we perform a 'career adjustment'. I did one of these recently.

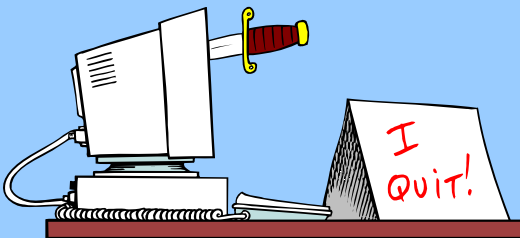
"We're both going out to the carpark," I told the salesperson. "And only one of us is coming back."

"Oh," said the salesperson, looking at me blankly.

"Which one?"

"Well," I said, "I'm the boss, so see if you can figure it out!"

You're running a business, not a charity. Give your staff every chance, extra training, help them work it through - but the bottom line is performance.



3. Performance doesn't matter:

Mankind must be the only living creatures that produce dividends from a sitting position. But in the sales and marketing industry, we can't just sit around. We have to list, we have to service, we have to sell.

I always make sure that if I want listings, then my incentive program is geared towards listings. In my opinion, the listing agent should get the bulk of the commission earned from the sale. Your

staff need to see not only that performance matters to you, but that it will be rewarded.

4. Legitimate obstacles:

Think for a minute about why we all stop doing things. No money? No growth? No FUN?

Really, adults are just kids in big bodies. You want your salespeople selling more? Then make it fun!

It's your job to look at legitimate obstacles to performance.

Are your sales meetings boring?

Inject a sense of fun, we're-all-in-this-together.

Just because you want results doesn't mean that your meetings have to be the life-is-real-and-life-is-earnest variety. If sales are down, you want to lift spirits, not depress everyone. Depressed people have even less chance of making sales.

Examine your incentive schemes.

Bigger rewards for staff could mean bigger rewards for you, too. Are staff recognised for good ideas that lead to sales?

Is the business stagnant?

Think of ways in which you could expand; make more sales. How could you help your staff to grow?

There they are, four big reasons for staff to stop selling. If your sales are down, one of them might provide the answer to your problem. Your business will be healthier, and so will you you'll be getting some sleep again!

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