

It's said that if you throw a stick anywhere in the West, it has a 50% chance of hitting a salesman.

It's possible I've made that up, but put "sales" into Google or Amazon and see what you get. A bombardment of exclamation points, grinning suits, and promises of riches to come that span from cheap psychological tricks to learning from Jordan Belfort to just shouting at you. So perhaps it's not that far from the truth.

Seems like people who work in sales are always looking for a better, smarter way to hit targets, sell more, or leapfrog the competition, and whole industries have come into being to support those efforts.

But there's one secret weapon I haven't seen mentioned; remarkable when you consider the thousands of books, courses, and consultants out there. Which either means I'm onto something that nobody else has figured out, or I'm so wide off the mark that for me, the mark is nothing more than a figment of my middle-aged, bemused mind. (I'll let you be the judge.)

The secret weapon isn't a startling new approach, it's not a trick, and it doesn't need you to sell your soul.

It's confidence.

Simple as that.

Real, natural confidence.

Here's how it works.

### People Are Smart

Being passionately in favor of local, organic produce and working in sales for Monsanto probably won't end very well. You might try to sell the latest, most beautifully engineered product, but the disconnect between what matters to you and what you're doing will wreak havoc with both your soul and your targets.

Fact is, people can smell sales patter a mile off, and if you're not able to get behind what you're doing, that's all you have. There's no meat for the potatoes; no yolk in the egg; no warmth in the soup.

But acknowledging, honoring, and expressing the things that matter to you is perhaps the most important way that confidence is found and applied. Think about it. Knowing what matters to you ten thousand feet down inside, and then using those things gives you a congruity that people pick up on and trust implicitly. You radiate rather than sell. That's real confidence—and that's what people are interested in.

### Targets Ain't Everything

Targets, numbers, and deadlines. The lifeblood of sales.

It's all about landing the sale and hitting the numbers, so you start to do things you think will deliver on those targets. Sometimes, the things you do might not be how you'd normally go about things. You might take a short cut or seven. You might leverage some bluff and bluster just to land the damn sale. You might play the role of a "successful" salesperson, even if that's just ego and hot air.

Point is, when your focus is all about extrinsic targets and outcomes, two things happen. First, your brain will create thinking it hopes will help you minimize risk (i.e., not hitting your target) and maximize reward (hitting your target), even if that same thinking has you behaving like a Trump-sized asshole. Second, you disconnect yourself from intrinsic motivations, and things like pressure, expectation, status, and validation take over. You start chasing a specific outcome because of the status it will offer, because you have a reputation to keep up (even if it's in your own head), or because that's the only measure of success you have.

Targets are important, sure, but these thoughts are not just unhelpful, they're soul-sucking chest-wounds.

Operating from a place of confidence allows you to cut through all that unhelpful stuff that keeps you on the back-foot, in the realization that you'll never be at your best while being motivated extrinsically.

Your best comes from the inside, not from the dangling of targets and objectives (a good manager will know this). It requires that you see yourself as whole, capable and resourceful right now, not when or if you hit your numbers. It's want, not need. It's flow, not stuck. It's ease, not struggle.

This "being at your best" is how you do great work, and it happens when you apply confidence to the moment you find yourself in, giving you a sense of being okay, no matter what happens. On that note:

### When it All Goes Wrong

Miss your targets, and suddenly the pressure to claw your way back up is on. Or perhaps the climate out there just isn't working for you and sales are really suffering.

What if I can't hit my next target? Is my job on the line? Why does everyone else find it so much easier? Is there something I'm doing wrong? What if I'm not up to it? What if I keep screwing this up? What if it doesn't get better?

Fear is a message that there's risk in the air, and it's a powerful motivator if you know how to use it. Otherwise, that same fear will call the shots and make your choices for you, which normally involve running away and hiding or thrashing around with fists and teeth in an effort to survive.

But confidence isn't running around reacting to the latest drama. It's being able to take that message of fear and decide what to do with it. Fear isn't there to be beaten or conquered like some marauding enemy. It's just a thing that happens from time to time, like getting drenched from a rain shower or having a craving for a brownie.

So when it happens, confidence is the element that allows you to respond by saying: If this fear is here to tell me that things are uncertain, then I can trust myself to do great work and deal with whatever happens.

Confidence isn't a trick or something you can use to get your own way. It's a mechanism for staying true to what matters to you and making deliberate choices and an opportunity to be at your best regardless of the circumstances.

And as sales strategies go, it's pretty damn irresistible—don't you think?

Source: The Muse by Steve Errey