

SALES STAR



Wayne Thomas: The Sales Expert with the Golden Touch

[By Akbar Ali]

Wayne Thomas is a man who dons many hats: CEO, management consultant, sales expert and trainer, speaker, and now published author. His professional objective as CEO of management consultant company Thomas & Company, Inc., is powerful in its simplicity: to help clients achieve their personal and professional goals. Thomas has been the driving force behind many top companies' efforts to revamp their sales forces and has produced formidable results which have earned him a reputation as a one-of-a-kind sales guru.

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Thomas traces the beginnings of his desire to work in sales back to his father, who worked for 25 years as a salesman for a men's retail clothier.

"He was always their top producer, and I admired him very much for his success and the hard work that kept him at the top of his field," he said.

Thomas's desire to succeed took him to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he spent four years engrossed in student life and various campus activities. He was heavily involved in the student senate and was also responsible for planning and executing many of the university's major political and social events. He also participated in hosting a vice president of the United States for a lecture series and even brought a Nobel laureate to the university. On top of all that, he served as class president for four years.

Thomas's sales career began right after graduation, though he would return to school years later after attaining a sales

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. This summer we traveled through 22 states and visited every national park in our path. I enjoy our family time, such as when my daughters, wife, and I took turns reading the entire new Harry Potter book aloud. Every once in a while, I have the chance to play a round of golf.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. An audio book by Vince Flynn about the adventures of Mitch Rapp, the CIA undercover operative known as the Iron Man.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Fine Homebuilding*. I'm trying to get some ideas to redo my home office.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. That's easy. *CSI New York*, *Miami*, and *Las Vegas*.

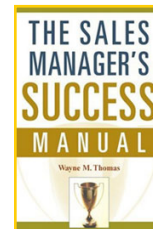
Q. Who is your role model?

A. A retired executive at my church. His ethics are above reproach; he's super thoughtful of others and goes out of his way to pick you up if you need it—even to the extent of bringing you to new deals when sales are down.

Q. What makes you laugh?

A. My two daughters giggling.

management position to earn his MBA and DBA (Doctor of Business Administration). He has also successfully completed the Columbia Graduate School of Business Executive Program, the Columbia Executive Program in Marketing, and the Kellogg Graduate School programs in sales management.



His first truly relevant sales job was with the IBM Corporation. His time there served as the fertile training ground where he learned the most fundamental of sales skills: selling, competing, and closing deals. He said his time at IBM helped him "experience the payoff of hard work and dedication to learning the craft of sales." But getting to the point of honing his craft was not quick or easy.

"During my initial one-month training program, I regularly worked 14-hour days to earn the class award for excellence in marketing as the top-performing rookie," he recalled. The payoff came every year for six years after the launch when he qualified for the 100% Club.

Thomas's greatest achievement came during his third year when he met the exceptionally

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difficult criteria and qualified for the Golden Circle, the top 0.1% of the IBM sales force. It was at that time, he said, that he “learned that working smart was at least as important as working hard.”

The path to such hard-won and rare success grew out of Thomas’s own innovatory sales techniques, which quickly found favor with many potential clients.

“I qualified for the Golden Circle by successfully applying a system-selling program that several of us pioneered. During one presentation, the CEO stopped us halfway through and signed the order,” he said.

Thomas attributes his success to understanding that working hard is important, but working *smart* is just as vital to any successful career. Regarding his time at IBM, he observed, “Working smart was smart *and* essential.”

At that point, Thomas added a high-profile part-time position to his schedule: executive counselor to the governor of Massachusetts, the state’s third-ranking constitutional office. He held this position for two years, working one day per week as executive counselor while still immersed in his full-time job with IBM.

“IBM was supportive,” he said. “However, I remained responsible for producing 100% of full sales responsibilities with just four days a week at work.”

Of the many notable mentors and colleagues who have influenced him, Thomas said, “In my training and in later roles as a specialist, I observed many successful salespeople and worked with them on their deals. This exposure to dozens of other salespeople was valuable as I developed a style of my own. In particular, a couple of senior salesmen took me under their wings to provide deep insights into the selling profession.” Their encouragement and confidence in Thomas helped his own professional confidence blossom, quickly leading to bigger and better opportunities which he had previously viewed as unattainable or never conceived of at all.

Aside from his many accolades for his work at IBM, Thomas has won awards from AT&T for helping create an expert sales team, including a spot in the President’s Club for helping generate more than \$100 million in sales. He was also named “American Marketing Association Marketer of the Year” and has been profiled in *Who’s Who in the Media & Communications*. Other big-name clients he has worked with include communications and software giants like Sprint, Nortel, and Novell.

In addition to his duties with Thomas & Company—which he manages with company co-founder and principal Susan Thomas, who also happens to be his wife—Thomas’s upcoming publication, *The Sales Manager’s Success Manual*, is slated to hit bookshelves September 30, 2007. Available at major retailers like Barnes & Noble, Borders, and Amazon, the book will highlight the necessary information and skills sales managers need to succeed in jobs that are constantly changing and increasingly difficult. The book covers a vast range of sales management topics, from forecasting and motivation to generational issues and developing intuition.

To up-and-coming sales pros looking to glean some useful information from his success story, Thomas offered the following advice:

“Work very hard to become established and successful at the outset of your career. The chances are that you will continue on your trajectory of success because you have tasted it and winning becomes a habit.”

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