

**SALES STAR**


## Richard Fenton and Andrea Waltz: Affirming Success through the Power of “No!”

[By Akbar Ali]

Most sales professionals are quick to admit that the hardest part of their job is rejection. The all-powerful “No!” is never far away in any salesperson’s career. But that negative reaction can actually turn out to be something quite positive, as both Richard Fenton and Andrea Waltz, co-founders of Courage Crafters, Inc., will attest. Their latest and most innovative approach to forging a fearless and resilient sales force is the “Go for No!” strategy, billed as “The Ultimate Way to Fail Your Way to Success!” An unconventional method to be sure, it features a completely unique and breakthrough way to conquer the perilous world of sales, proving that the only limits worth conquering are the ones which seem the most insurmountable.

Both Waltz and Fenton found their way into the sales coaching industry through non-traditional paths, displaying the necessary training skills needed to motivate others to success in their earlier careers. For Fenton, a career in sales was something she had never anticipated.

Growing up in Orange County, California, where she was a teenager whose professional aspirations included writing screenplays and books, and a career as a forensic criminologist, she managed to hit her stride in college as a straight-A student, a particularly noteworthy accomplishment in light of the fact that she spent much of her formative years skipping classes rather than acing them.

After graduating from Cal State Long Beach with a bachelor’s in criminal justice, Waltz decided that crime fighting wasn’t exactly what she wanted as her life’s work. She joined the nation’s largest prescription eyewear chain, LensCrafters, quickly rising through the company hierarchy as a bonafide leader. By the time she was 24, she had managed to become the youngest manager in company history to operate a \$3 million-plus volume location.

In light of her success as a manager, she was soon commissioned to train others in the company. It was during this pivotal stint in her career that she “got the bug” to teach success to others. She also got something more than just a new career: she met Rich while working at LensCrafters.

Waltz sharpened her coaching skills during the two years she spent as a training director for Los Angeles-based Centinela

Pet Supplies, where she developed sales programs and workshops to educate and motivate both staff and management.

Fenton, on the other hand, didn’t stumble upon his calling: he had nursed the dream of becoming a professional speaker and trainer since early in life. He recalls that as a young boy, “I set up plastic dinosaurs all over my basement and invited people over to hear me talk about them. As I recall, I charged everyone a nickel to get in.”

Despite his desire to teach others, his dream remained just that for the next 30 years — a dream. A paralyzing fear of failure prevented him from pursuing what he believed was his natural calling: “I was simply too afraid to fail,” he says.

Fenton would spend the first phase of his career in a variety of sales and management positions in the retail industry, ultimately moving up to district-level positions. Such noteworthy promotions aside, he continued to battle with his personal apprehensions about what was possible for him.

“I spent the greater part of my sales and management career with an enormous fear of failure,” he affirms. “As a result, I robbed myself of achieving true success. Now I spend each day not only accepting failure, but embracing it. And the changes in my life have been truly remarkable.”

In 1997, Waltz and Fenton teamed up as business partners after leaving their jobs in

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

**A.** We love playing racket ball and live for the summers in the Pacific Northwest — biking, walking, and berry picking. And of course Portland has some fabulous dining, another passion of ours.

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

**A.** Joel Weldon’s *Sell It* program. Plus the Kinks’ *Lola vs. the Powerman* [is] on our iPods.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

**A.** *Fast Company*.

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

**A.** We watch very little TV, but the shows we enjoy are *House* and *Entourage* (on HBO).

**Q. Who is your role model?**

**A.** We are always impressed and inspired by the work of Tom Peters, Wayne Dyer, Jim Rohn, Jack Canfield, and Dan Kennedy — a great marketer. Granted, they are all rather different teachers, but we learn so much from so many people all the time, it’s impossible to name [just] one.

**Q. What makes you laugh?**

**A.** Lots of stuff — we find humor everywhere. But for sure our cat, Courage, when he licks Rich’s head.

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the corporate world. Their initial venture was a business which helped create and deliver keynotes and “breakout sessions” for retail industry sales professionals and managers. While Waltz was charged with overseeing sales, marketing, design, and development, Fenton served as their official messenger, presenting their visionary techniques in conferences across the nation.

Three years later, they elaborated on their techniques in *Go for No!*, which revolutionized not only their business success, but, as is often the case with success, their personal lives as well. Both declare the publication of *Go for No!* to be the high point thus far in their careers.

“When we wrote it, we had no idea what we had created and that it was really a ‘niche’ in [and of] itself. We knew it was a great book. We believed that. But once we’d sold over 30,000 copies from our office alone over the last few years, and after getting the emails and phone calls from people telling us it was the greatest book they’d ever read and that it changed their lives and their careers, we realized that this thing needed to go to the next level.”

The initial success of the book has prompted the duo to take their message of the power of “No!” to as many individuals and businesses as possible. Currently, they are recording a three-CD audio training program which

dispenses all the details of what they call “the greatest success strategy in the world.”

“We want people to understand and adopt a new relationship to failure and success. That yes and no are opposite sides of the same coin. We believe that by learning to ‘go for no,’ people can get the results they are seeking. It works for us and it has worked for countless others as well.”

There have been other important lessons they’ve picked up along the way, many of which demonstrate the very things they teach in their program.

“From a more global perspective, we have learned to constantly be willing to try things even if you don’t know where they lead. We have learned to be willing to fail — we have learned to listen to our inner voice — and to follow the advice we so frequently and easily give others!”

Having shared so much over the years, Fenton and Waltz have grown to be more than just business partners — in addition to being a cherished husband, Fenton has also been an invaluable mentor to Waltz, which also happens to be the way they began their partnership.

Fenton credits many colleagues with having wisely guided him over the years, including the man who taught him the “go for no”

philosophy, known simply as “Harold.” He also cites several prominent speakers as teaching him the most effective ways to communicate his ideas, among them Mark Victor Hansen, Jim Cathcart, Jim Newman, and Dottie Walters.

For aspiring professionals in *any* field, Fenton and Waltz advocate an attitude of fearlessness and an awareness that though the opportunity to reinvent one’s career may present itself several times, you only get one chance.

“Our advice for anyone is actually a quote from Emerson [which] we included in the front of our book, and it goes like this: ‘Do not be too timid and squeamish in your actions. All life is an experiment.’ Fear of failure is like a fog ... it disappears once you get into it. So get out there and do great things with your life and what you create for yourself in your business and career. You have this one magical opportunity — do something *amazing!*”

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