

SALES STAR



Lee Salz: Saving Businesses from Extinct Sales Techniques

[By Akbar Ali]

If there's one thing you can bet on in the sales industry, it's that what works for the business today will almost certainly change tomorrow. If adaptation and innovation are the name of the game, then Lee Salz is one of the game's top players, teaching industry and business leaders how to maintain a competitive edge without falling prey to the pitfalls of stagnant strategies which have long since gone extinct. This concept forms the crux of his training methods at Sales Dodo, which demonstrates the consequences of failing to adapt. Indeed, Salz has succeeded in reinventing the sales strategies of several major companies by showing them how to "adapt and thrive," establishing himself as one of the industry's most accomplished sales consulting and training experts.

Salz is also a columnist for *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine's* online edition, and his blog is featured on SalesGravy.com. His sales and sales management articles are published on over 100 websites and frequently appear on Top10SalesArticles.com. He is also very active in the speaking circuit, sharing his message of "adapt and thrive" with business owners, sales managers, and salespeople across the nation.

In many ways, sales was a natural fit for Salz, who first developed the techniques he would later use during his college years, when he learned not only the best ways to present a product, but to establish and nurture that all-important client-business relationship.

"I went to college in upstate New York, Binghamton University. While the academic program is marvelous, what has helped me most in my professional career was my involvement in their Greek system. I was a founding father of the Binghamton chapter of Pi Lambda Phi fraternity. In essence, it was a start-up business. We needed to market ourselves and sell the benefits of joining our chapter.

"I later became president of the Inter-Fraternity Council. My job was to drive membership in the chapters. To do so, I needed to get 20 groups who fundamentally

were, in essence, competitors, to put their differences aside for the good of the overall system."

All of this experience helped shape the career which would follow his formal education.

"I spent over 15 years building sales organizations where I needed to use the skills learned while building a chapter and managing a large entity to be successful," he says.

One of the relationships he formed during his

college years led to the first real opportunity for Salz to break into the industry, allowing him to quickly learn the fundamentals of sales and marketing and solidify his professional ambition.

"While I was at Binghamton, I managed a gym. One of the members was a banker who had recently loaned money to a group for a chain of health clubs in Syracuse, New York.

"After graduation, he recommended me to that group to be their executive director of the chain of clubs. I had a ball doing that, and I learned so much about marketing, advertising, and sales. I also learned a lot about management as well.

"It is always important to keep your options open. I thought I wanted to have a career in the fitness industry. However, I found my true passion was in sales."

Because he is in the business of teaching others the best strategies to optimize their sales results, Salz has amassed a wealth of important lessons over the years, though one stands out as having taught him the most in terms of crafting an effective sales approach.

"Very early on, I learned an important lesson about sales. While running that chain of health clubs in New York, I had to handle a prospect tour as we were very busy and short

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Play with my kids and train in the gym.

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

A. Tony Bennett — *Duets*.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Muscle & Fitness*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *Seinfeld* and *Law & Order*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. I don't have one.

Q. What makes you laugh?

A. My children. I have an eight-year-old daughter and two sons, six and five. They are a constant source of entertainment.

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staffed. Following the tour, I shared with the prospect that we could save him \$100 if he joined that day. This 60-plus-year-old gentleman looked at me from over the top of his glasses and said something that stuck with me: 'Son, if the deal isn't good tomorrow, it isn't good today.'

"While the offer was genuine, I learned something about integrity that day: People don't want to be manipulated."

In June 2007, Salz realized his most notable career achievement with the publication of his first book, *Soar Despite Your Dodo Sales Manager*. Well-received by the industry, it details the most widespread problems Salz has encountered in training businesses over the years, the most prevalent and important of which being the frequently non-existent relationships between sales professionals and their managers.

"About ten years ago, I began writing sales tips for my teams. Seven years ago, I decided that I wanted to write a book. As someone who loves to write, the next seven years were a true labor of love. But writing doesn't get you published.

"Another lesson I learned in this process was the importance of networking. There are a ton of authors who lament about their inability to get published. There are books and courses

on the subject as well. Rather than send book proposals to tons of publishers, I elected to network. Any time I met an author, I would ask how they got published. They would share their story, and that would help shape my approach.

"My book was published because I was introduced by someone, who knew someone, who knew this publisher. There is no substitute for networking in business."

Additionally, a new book is in the works for Salz titled *The Sales Marriage*, scheduled for release in early 2009. This book will help business owners, sales managers, and recruiters make better hires for their sales team.

According to Salz, "Companies struggle to hire and retain salespeople as many of them look to hire great salespeople, not necessarily the right ones for their firm. Great salespeople can, and do, fail in great companies if the marriage isn't right. This book will help the reader define their ideal salesperson and develop a sales talent screening program to find the right salespeople."

Though he is himself a sales guru whose expertise is sought by business leaders and individuals from all types of companies, Salz has also benefited from the counsel and

example of others in his career, the most notable being Andy Miller, president of Sales Management Guru.

"He was a consultant for a company for which I ran sales. He was honest, genuine, and shrewd. And, he was doing what I ultimately want to do, which was to do consulting for sales organizations. Andy was gracious with his knowledge and time. He is also the author of the foreword of my book."

For those just starting out in their careers, Salz urges them to "think big" by not getting locked into a singular view of their careers, something which can keep aspiring professionals from doing what they really love.

"I've had the opportunity to give speeches at some colleges/universities about perceptions (or dare I say 'misperceptions') of a career in sales. Interestingly, folks coming out of school see a narrow choice of opportunities. They see few paths and feel they must pick from those. It's almost like a multiple choice question. It's not. There are unlimited paths for those electing to pursue a career in sales.

"That said, my advice is to keep your eyes open for opportunities and follow your passion. Passionate people are successful. Successful people are passionate. It works both ways."

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