

Inside BUSINESS

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The Canterbury Sales®

The Story of the Four Salespeople

Names changed to protect both the innocent and guilty

By Andy Gole

Once upon a time...there was a company with four salespeople.

This company was very successful and so were its salespeople. The company had a great product and the market for it was expanding. Each salesperson had a unique approach to selling, for achieving sales results:

- Salesperson A – Do or die (engage in non-stop activity until you achieve your results): try everything; innovate.
- Salesperson B – Follow the company's program: innovate when it is within the company program; put in a hard day's work.
- Salesperson C – Follow the program first learned years ago.
- Salesperson D – Wing it.

Not surprisingly, Salesperson A outsold every member of the team. But everyone had success, and both the salespeople and the owners were happy.

Salesperson D was a bit of a prima donna – he didn't follow the rules. The owners began to

wonder if they were allowing Salesperson D to work in a "country club" – banker's hours, plenty of golf or recreation and using the old-boy networking approach. But he hit his sales numbers, so the owners didn't complain too much.

Then the inevitable happened – there was a market downturn. It was caused by a combination of a recession (not unlike the current recession) and a decline in the product life cycle. The underlying fundamentals had shifted permanently.

Each salesperson still had the same unique approach to selling:

- Salesperson A – Do or die (engage in non-stop activity until you achieve your results): try everything; innovate.
- Salesperson B – Follow the company's program: innovate when it is within the company program; put in a hard day's work.
- Salesperson C – Follow the program first learned years ago.
- Salesperson D – Wing it.

But now the outcomes were markedly different. No longer was everyone selling effectively. Only salespeople A and B were prepared to shift with the marketplace.

In fact, salesperson D began to "stick out" like the proverbial sore thumb. The owners were now certain they were paying Salesperson D to work in a country club and didn't like this idea.

Unfortunately, Salesperson C, a hard worker, also wasn't hitting his numbers. He began to look like an order-taker and the owners thought Salesperson C worked in a country club, as well.

He worked hard, but was ineffective. The problem was that he stuck to an old selling program that no longer worked.

Only the innovators could survive in this environment. The predictable sales outcome followed:

- Salesperson A thrived.
- Salesperson B continued to grow.
- Salesperson C struggled and had declining sales.
- Salesperson D could no longer close and started conning the owners and himself.

In a very short time, the owners fired salespeople C and D. The tragedy is that it didn't have to happen.

The fault didn't lie with the salespeople, but with the owners, who didn't set the proper selling standards.

It's the owners' responsibility to set and monitor the proper selling standards. The owners should have insisted that all sales team members follow the company-endorsed innovative program, even in "good times," to prepare for the market setbacks.

This, of course, is a story. Real life is different... generally, substantially worse. Many companies – unnecessarily – have a team of C and D salespeople.

Take a moment to evaluate the quality of your selling team. Remember: the quality is a function of leadership. It's your job to shut down the selling country club today.

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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 17 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, *Urgency Based Selling®*, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at www.bombadilllc.com or by calling him at 201.415.3447.