

Inside BUSINESS

This is a publication of The Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce.
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Volume Eighteen, Number Four
April 2015

The Canterbury Sales[®]

**Why can it take so long to form a new business relationship?
The limits to grit – avoiding Atlas's fate**

By Andy Gole

In general, great salespeople are persistent. We celebrate "grit" in a salesperson.

Most business people are familiar with the maxim: 80 percent of sales are made on the 5th to 12th contact

This is very often with good reason. For instance:

1. Our prospect may be in a long-term contract with a competitor.
2. Our offer must be budgeted for the next year.
3. We need to wait for the next season – particularly for a cyclical product.
4. Sometimes the prospect needs to use up existing competitive inventories.
5. In a complex sale, we need to persuade a number of decision-makers; this can

take time.

6. Switching costs can be extensive and need planning.
7. If our offer entails significant organizational change, we may need to wait our turn until more urgent change programs are implemented.

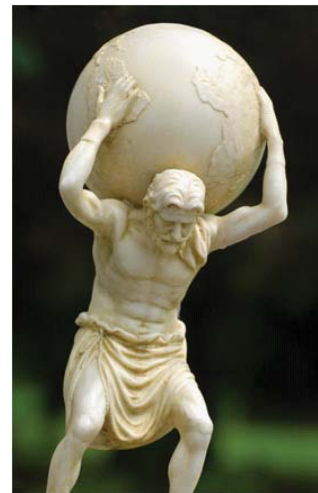
So persistence may be mandatory and can reap huge rewards.

However...could there be too much persistence? Is it possible salespeople are making too many sales calls because of unbalanced sales presentations?

At times, salespeople forget there are three proofs to be made:

1. The Salesperson – An authentic, credible source of solutions
2. The Offer (including economic justification)
3. The Company – Reliable

Presenting the offer should ideally include test drives, an economic justification drawing on your "WOW" toolbox.



Presenting the company should ideally include testimonials, case histories and reference checks.

When salespeople focus extensively or exclusively on selling personal relationship, we shouldn't be surprised it takes five to 12 sales calls. These salespeople are carrying too much on their shoulders – like Atlas.

Instead of using all the resources at their command, these salespeople are depending on their personal relationship. When the personal relationship has to also stand for the integrity of the offer and the reliability of the company – when the salesperson has to become identical in the customer's mind with the offer and company – it shouldn't be surprising the selling process with new customers gets extended.



SALES STATISTICS

48% OF SALES PEOPLE NEVER FOLLOW UP WITH A PROSPECT
25% OF SALES PEOPLE MAKE A SECOND CONTACT AND STOP
12% OF SALES PEOPLE ONLY MAKE THREE CONTACTS AND STOP
ONLY 10% OF SALES PEOPLE MAKE MORE THAN THREE CONTACTS
2% OF SALES ARE MADE ON THE FIRST CONTACT
3% OF SALES ARE MADE ON THE SECOND CONTACT
5% OF SALES ARE MADE ON THE THIRD CONTACT
10% OF SALES ARE MADE ON THE FOURTH CONTACT
80% OF SALES ARE MADE ON THE FIFTH TO TWELFTH CONTACT

Source: National Sales Executive Association

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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 19 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.bombadil.com, at www.urgencybasedselling.net/entrepren.html or by calling him at 201.415.3447.