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BUSINESS

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The Canterbury Sales®

Avoid Black Ice When Selling

By Andy Gole

You can predict the outcome on the highway...

Two cars are driving side by side – a 1950s vintage restored car and a state-of-the-art 2011 luxury car.

When it comes to safety, the vintage 1950s car has little to offer. The 2011 luxury car, by contrast, has seat belts, all-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes and airbags.

The drivers both approach a patch of black ice. The driver of the 1950s car slows down to a crawl – he knows he's in for trouble. The driver of the 2011 luxury car speeds along at 50 miles per hour. He goes into a skid, loses control, hits a tree and is killed.

What went wrong?

The driver of the safer car suffered from risk adjustment. Knowing he had a safe car caused him to embrace unsafe behavior, take unwarranted risk. This is risk adjustment

Here's a formula: Risk adjustment and black ice = disaster.

You can predict the outcome on the highway. Can you do so when you sell?

In a selling situation, the luxury car – the situation where you feel safe – is where you are the incumbent at a key account. Perhaps you have "owned the account" for years. You are the go-to person and feel safe.

In fact, you could be a bit complacent. You might just become a "social seller" – focusing on getting the prospect to like you and losing sight of the fact you are in a business relationship.

While you are sailing along on social autopilot, your competition might be creating some black ice – with a focus on material difference, a difference strong enough to change behavior. While you focus on social selling, your competition is focused on creating a compelling reason for a business relationship.

Approximately 25 years ago I was struggling to build a packaging business. My competition had a substantial head start – not only as the incumbent at a major prospect but as an industry standard for decades.

As a result, they reliably became social sellers and took the customer (my prospect) for granted. This opened the door for someone to create a black ice situation.

By contrast, I provided non-stop service and ideas to the prospect. I became a business advisor on a myriad of issues.

When the customer closed a major deal, he looked to me to supply the packaging. I remember visiting the customer one day when he received a phone call from my competitor, who advised him, "It's time for your annual packaging order. You want to

make sure you give us enough lead time to supply you with the product when you need it."

The customer ended the phone call and laughed. He would never again give my competitor a stick of business. He had become complacent.

How about you? How do you avoid becoming complacent and creating a "black ice" situation?

Through non-stop innovation and a focus on a compelling business case you stay ahead of the competition and avoid skidding on the black ice and crashing into a tree.

In a selling situation, the luxury car – the situation where you feel safe – is where you are the incumbent... While you focus on social selling, your competition is focused on creating a compelling reason for a business relationship.



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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.bombadillc.com or by calling him at 201.415.3447.