

Inside BUSINESS

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The Canterbury Sales®

The Do-or-Die Principle

By Andy Gole

I often hear business owners lament that their sales team has no sense of urgency: they wait for the phone to ring instead of creating business; they are order takers.

These owners want a sales team operating on the “do-or-die” principle rather than on “best efforts.” They know best efforts won’t fill your stomach with food or pay the bank loan. Do-or-die means you continue until you achieve your results.

Much of the blame for a “best efforts” sales team is attributable to the owners themselves who:

1. hire without testing for commitment to “do-or-die”;
2. don’t insist on rigorous selling standards;
3. embrace or accept a limiting view of relationships.

The conventional view of relationship formation – social selling – is a self-inflicted wound for new business development. The focus is on getting the prospect to like the salesperson, then trust the salesperson, and ultimately order from the salesperson. This process can take a very long time.

We need business NOW, which means we need to form new relationships NOW. While developing good rapport is one important aspect of relationship forming, it usually obscures the primary catalyst – urgent need.

It is management’s responsibility to ensure that the selling system focuses on the prospect’s urgent need, that we make a material difference to meet that need, and that the material difference is defensible.

Material difference married to urgent need catalyzes relationship formation. It reverses the normal cause and effect, giving the prospect a reason to get to know the salesperson personally.

It is management’s job to install and monitor a world-class selling system. It is the salesperson’s job to learn and implement this system, with a do-or-die perspective.

When we hire a sales team member, we need to set the do-or-die standard at the outset. Show the candidate what behavior is expected.

For instance: In one business, a salesperson creates new relationships by “Storming the Bastille,” waiting in the reception room until the buyer grants him an audience. In telephone selling, “Storming the Bastille” can mean calling the prospect until you connect, maybe as frequently as every 15 minutes.

Social selling might militate against this behavior. Do-or-die sets another standard. When we show a case history to new candidates, before hiring them, they know what is expected.

The do-or-die principle creates success in all our endeavors. Consider this story from a

retired salesman, looking for his first selling job circa 1950.

He went to the New York City chamber of commerce to determine in what business he would seek employment. Based on his research, he selected the paint business and men’s furnishings.

This salesman lived in the city and decided to apply for a sales job at a paint factory in Jersey City. Short on cash, he took a train to New Jersey, which left him seven miles from the paint factory, on a hot summer day.

This salesman walked seven miles to that interview, received a “not qualified” answer and then walked seven miles back to the train home.

He didn’t give up. He kept on “storming the Bastille,” applying at companies that weren’t advertising for jobs, until he finally got a break at a clothing manufacturer, where he told the company they “must have him.” The sales manager was impressed with his moxie.

This salesman had a do-or-die attitude. He didn’t wait at home for the phone to ring.

This is what all salespeople must do – take a do-or-die attitude. It’s an important lesson for us to learn. I was fortunate to learn this lesson from the retired salesman as a young man. My father is a great example of the “do-or-die” principle.



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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.