

## Introduction

### **Starving to death in the middle of the feast**

I have heard the story of a research study that involved the Northern Pike fish. The pike fish is a very aggressive fish which has a mouth full of teeth. The pike is a proficient hunter. According to the study, a pike was placed in an aquarium with a large supply of its natural food source; minnows. For two days the pike enjoyed dining on the minnows at will. He devoured the minnows whenever he felt the urge. He ate to his heart's content. On the third day, a glass divider was placed between the pike and the minnows. The pike would hit his snout against the glass every time he attempted to pursue a minnow. This exercise went on for two days. This had to be frustrating for him to be so close, yet so far. On the fifth day, the glass divider was removed. The pike had not eaten for two days. He was unbelievably hungry at this point. An abundance of food was now available. Now those hunger pains could finally be appeased.

Logically, we would expect him to pursue the minnows and provide sustenance to his body. Unfortunately, the pike fish refused to pursue the minnows. The only way this pike would eat was if a blind minnow swam into his mouth. This poor fish ultimately starved to death with food swimming all around him. All he had to do was reach out and grab it. The pike starved to death in the midst of a feast.

At first glance, it would be easy to say, "What a dumb fish!" Yet I have observed thousands of salespeople imitate that dumb fish. I have even imitated that "dumb fish" on a few occasions.

Let's compare the pike phenomenon to salespersons. Let's say for a moment the salesperson is you. You are in a booming economy and everything is going your way. Or you are on an unbelievable winning streak. Everything you touch turns to gold. All of a sudden the economy turns or you lose three or four sales that you were confident you would win. Like the pike, you become frustrated at the turn of events. You are tired of the rejection. You become fearful of being denied again. So you do nothing. You drive through your territory but you don't stop at any of the buildings which are laden with companies which may have a need for what you provide. You stop doing the things that once brought you success even though you are surrounded by opportunity.

You may be reading this book and are currently performing well in the sales profession. Congratulations on your success. However, you must continue your professional development in order to stay on top. This book will help to elevate your performance whether you are at the top of your game or struggling.

*Forget Patience, Let's Sell Something!* is more than just a self-help book. The purpose of this book is also to be a professional reference guide that you revisit on a regular basis. It is my desire and belief that you will walk away with innovative ideas, tremendous techniques, and sustainable skills that will elevate you to the next level in your quest to be the best.


 CHAPTER ONE

## Your Attitude and the Company You Keep

Let me start by saying that volumes have been written and spoken relative to the importance of a positive attitude. It is my sincere belief that the right attitude is truly the major differentiator between those who experience lives of happiness, fullness and consistent long term success, as opposed to those who fall by the wayside on the highway of life, never reaching their full potential or accomplishing the goals they set out to achieve. The statement was once made, "Whether you think you can or think you can't, either way you are right."

The proper attitude causes us to persevere while others quit. It forces us to move forward in spite of obstacles and fears, both large and small. It makes us focus on the things that really matter. A proper attitude helps us keep life's ups and downs in the proper perspective. Life does not care about the attitude we choose, for our life is only a mirror that reflects who we really are by our actions, more so than our words. The choices you make and the company you keep heavily impact your attitude.

***Get fired up about life and its opportunities, or you'll be hosed down by life and its obstacles.***

### A Story of Two Salespersons

Let me tell you the story of Mark and Madeleine. When I began my career in sales, a more experienced salesperson in my office by the name of Mark mentored me. Mark was a very likeable guy. He

was happy-go-lucky, and had a great sense of humor. He had one of the best territories in the office. However, Mark's performance and sales volume were mediocre at best. He complained about how bad the economy was. He was frustrated that no one was interested in our products. He felt our price was too high, therefore we weren't competitive in the marketplace.

Mark normally left the office around 9:30 a.m. to get to his territory. His territory was 45 minutes to an hour away from the office. Therefore, he usually made his first sales call around 10:30 a.m. He made a few cold calls and took off for lunch around 11:00 a.m. Mark would then go to one of the local restaurants and have a leisurely meal. After his meal, he would then find himself at one of the local video game arcades where he would unwind before continuing with the drudgery of cold calling on people who really didn't want to see him anyway.

He would always promise himself that he would only play video games for an hour, and then get back to work. The hour turned into an hour and a half, which turned into two hours. There were many times when Mark would meet up with another salesperson from the office and they would goof off together. Misery and mediocrity enjoy the company of others. Instead of being the beacon in the office that spurred others to increase their level of performance, Mark attempted to sabotage those around him to underperform. It was easier to mask his nonperformance if everyone else was underachieving also. Needless to say, Mark's activities (or lack of activity) during the day were the reasons for his lackluster performance.

After spending many dollars and hours being unproductive, Mark would make a few more sales calls, and try to leave his territory around 3:45 so that he could beat rush hour traffic and make it back to the office by 5:00 p.m.

Mark's day wasn't over just yet. He had to take another 45 minutes to an hour to falsify his call reports because of the calls he didn't make. ***In most cases, people work harder at trying to get out of work.***

It was always interesting to watch Mark the last week of the month. He would walk into the office totally focused. He had that "deer in the headlights" look in his eyes; afraid that he wouldn't make enough money to cover his draw, or make a commission check. What happened to the funny guy who kept us laughing, the one who was never in a hurry? This was the one week during the month that Mark would leave the office early and return late from his territory. If he only he had that attitude and sense of urgency the first week of a month, how different the results would have been. "I just need to cover my draw," was a common reply.

Some who read this may ask the questions, "What's the big deal? Who did he really affect other than himself? Actually, Mark impacted several people. Mark was cheating everyone. He cheated himself and his family out of a better quality of life. He cheated customers and prospective customers out of possible solutions that could help improve the performance of their staff, help their company reduce operating cost, and provide them with an improved image in the eyes of their customers. He cheated our company out of increased profits, and greater market share. During times of economic downturn, Mark's actions could cause many people to lose their jobs. The list of people impacted are:

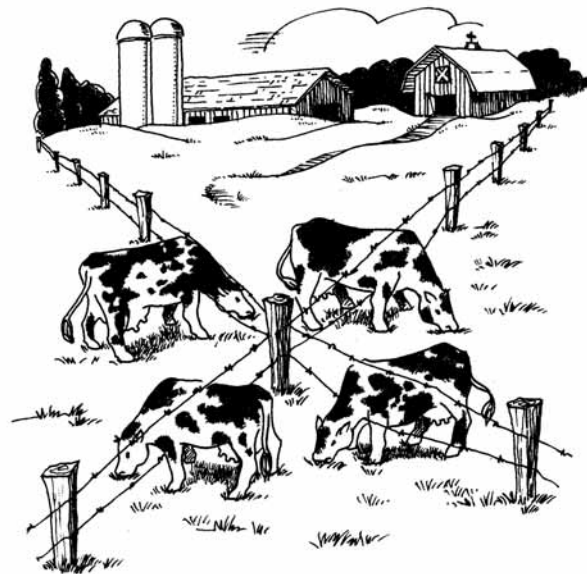
- Administrative and support staff
- Manufacturing staff
- Warehouse staff
- Transportation staff
- Service/repair staff

***“Nothing happens until somebody sells something.”***

Mark impacted impressionable new salespersons to underperform. Well, what was the outcome? Mark left the company, never achieving the true greatness that was in him. He starved to death in the midst of a feast.

Mark is not an exception. It is at this point in most careers when individuals who are failing decide to make a change. They change territories, jobs, careers, companies, cities, etc. They believe the problem lies with everything and everybody but themselves. They say to themselves and others, “If only I had this territory, worked for this company, lived in this city, things would be better.” Instead of changing his surroundings, he just needed to change his attitude.

Isn't it interesting how the grass usually looks greener on the other side of the fence? In many cases, once we get over to the other side where the grass looked greener, we find that it is greener because there is a lot more manure in the field.



**Figure 1. The grass always looks greener in the other pasture.**

Even if the grass truly is greener, it still must be cut. As a matter of fact, greener grass requires far more work to maintain. There is no easy way to long-term success. Why not apply that care to the territory or position you already possess and are familiar with rather than start anew somewhere else? The learning curve is far less and the return on your effort far quicker. We must eventually learn the lesson that it normally takes more effort to get greater results.

We often try to address the symptoms rather than the root of our problems.

The interesting thing about life is that it will return to you only what you put into it. No more, no less. It has been said that it is impossible to harvest corn if you planted tomatoes. I heard Zig Ziglar make the following statement:

***“If you are easy on yourself, life will be hard on you. If you are hard on yourself, life will be easier on you, and more enriching.”***

If you are willing to pay the price and sacrifice, you will be amazed how much more you can accomplish by having the right attitude.

Madeleine, on the other hand was very diligent in her work. She was always positive, and looked for the positive in all situations. She never got involved in the “pity parties” or “parking lot conferences” the rest of the salespersons engaged in. You know, the meetings where the group gets together and talks about how unfair the manager is; about how the company should have a better compensation plan, then we could really make some money; about how if it wasn't raining so much then maybe we could make more calls. Although cordial, Madeleine never

wasted much time “chewing the fat.” She had goals, and it was clear to everyone that she was intent on accomplishing every one of them.

She was conscientious enough to leave the office in time to arrive in her territory by 8:00 a.m. As a result, she was making her first sales call by 9:00 a.m. Most days she took less than an hour for lunch.

Madeleine also made a habit of making one sales call after 5:00 p.m. This proved to be a very successful practice because in many instances she would find the decision maker in the office alone. The decision makers were really impressed that a salesperson was actually working after 5:00. Another aspect of Madeleine making the calls after 5:00 was the fact that she caught the decision maker with his or her guard down as they were unwinding from the day. Also, in most cases, the phone was no longer ringing, which meant she had their undivided attention.

Madeleine would be the first to confess that she was not the most eloquent speaker, nor did she give the best presentations. “I’m not a race horse, just a plow horse,” insisted Madeleine. “I just keep plodding along.”

I would immediately think of the tortoise and the hare story every time she would make that comment. Remember the story of the rabbit and the tortoise were in a race? The quick hare took off leaving the slow tortoise in the dust by a mile. The hare was so confident of his victory that he took frequent breaks to goof off, and even took a nap, thinking to himself that he had plenty of time in the race. The tortoise was very slow but beat the rabbit by being methodical, steady, and consistent. Madeleine made

the most of every day, and every day gave her a bountiful return. How bountiful? Madeleine did three times the sales volume and made three times the commission that Mark did in the same territory. She got back in abundance what she planted.

It got to the point where it was embarrassing to get beaten by her every month for Salesperson of the Month. She won that honor 5 consecutive months. Madeleine raised the level of performance in the office by her example. It became obvious to the rest of the sales team that we were going to have to beat her at her own game. We planned to fight fire with fire.

Those of us with a competitive nature refused to stand by and be beaten every month. We began coming to the office earlier, getting to our territory earlier, taking shorter lunches, and making a sales call after 5:00 p.m. This was war, and war called for extreme measures.

Ultimately, no one person dominated as the top salesperson. The funny thing is we all started making so much money because of our newfound commitment to success that it didn’t matter as much if we didn’t win Salesperson of the Month. A large commission check was a worthy consolation prize.

The energy in our office soared. We became one of the top districts in our region, and in the country. Within a short period of time, everyone was promoted out of that office and into various management positions.

The first change in the non-performers was their attitude. The attitude adjustment provoked a change in action. The change in action caused a change in altitude.

### **Attitude + Action = Altitude**

It is a false belief that if you just have a positive attitude, you will go far in life. I have seen salespersons who are cheerful, outgoing, and possess a great attitude who never accomplish much. In countless interviews with prospective salespersons, they stated that their enjoyment in meeting people would lend itself to a successful sales career. The Greeters at Wal-Mart enjoy meeting people also, however, I may not hire them for my sales force.

Key Learning:

***You become like the people with whom you associate.***

Can one person make a difference? Absolutely! Are you making a difference?

### **The Reasons for Madeleine's Success**

Let's review the reasons behind Madeleine's Success;

1. Positive attitude
2. A strong work ethic
3. Focused on her goals
4. Excellent time management
5. Solid sales skills

The question comes to mind, why do we fail to achieve? In most instances, it is because of fear: fear of failure, even fear of success. Let's discuss these two fears in greater detail.

### **Fear of Failure**

Fear is a natural human emotion that affects each of us at some point or another in our lives. In many cases, fear can actually save our lives by initiating the "Fight or Flight" instinct. Whether we flee or fight, fear evokes action of some kind. The unhealthy

type of fear is the kind that paralyzes us from taking action. For example, if I know that I am usually nervous or fearful when it comes to giving presentations, I should use the element of fear to spur me to put in extra time practicing and rehearsing to ensure that the presentation goes well. The action taken will cause me to perform better. Unfortunately, many of us would allow fear to prevent us from giving presentations at all. If you are fearful about investing, take the action necessary to learn more about investing by reading on the subject, hiring a financial advisor, or becoming a part of an investment group or club. Invest in low risk vehicles instead of high risk vehicles, but take action. It is only natural to desire to avoid pain. Failing at anything is painful. It is one thing to fail at something when you are the only one aware of your failure. Unfortunately, that is not normally the case. I believe society has made us feel that mistakes are bad. The most successful people I know personally and have read about are the individuals who accepted their failures as opportunities to learn. What they learn gives them an opportunity to do that thing they have failed at in a different and better way.

### **Fear of Success**

I have worked with many salespersons who felt that success always seemed to be just out of their grasp. In reality, they were afraid of success. They were fearful of crossing the threshold into the realm of success. This type of salesperson is concerned that if they excel, then they are expected to perform at the higher level on a consistent basis. Their success brings with it added pressure to continue to exceed their goals, or to be a leader. It may even mean the possibilities of a promotion, which causes additional exposure. Therefore, it is safer to stay below the surface of excellence. There is a quote from the Bible that states, "To whom much is given, much is required."