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DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT SELLING

I REMEMBER BEING TOLD SO MANY THINGS I should do if I wanted to be successful in sales. Most of the sales managers I worked under intended to help me sell more stuff, but in reality, it caused me to sell less stuff. It seemed like good advice at the time. However, it was misleading at best. I'm sure many of you had similar experiences, and it's okay to admit you were misled—I was too.

The endless list of bad advice could fill up an entire chapter. I'll save you the time and summarize my least favorite "nuggets of wisdom" and end with the worst piece of advice I've ever received in sales. I was told, "Leave no stone unturned and sell to everyone you can." I was told, "Don't stop calling until they tell you to stop calling or until you get a NO." I was told, "Time kills all deals." I was told, "You have to assume the close." I was told, "Sales is a numbers game." I was told, "Follow the script word for word." I was told, "Relationships are the key to selling." And the absolute, most abhorrent, disdainful, antiquated, morally void piece of advice I ever received was, "Always be closing."

I know you may be thinking, "How does he not believe in closing?! It's ABC, baby! Always be closing!" Even typing out those words makes my skin crawl and my innards curl up into a ball, and I'm sorry to burst your bubble if you're a self-proclaimed "closer."

Here's a tip: Having a "closer" attitude makes other people's skin crawl. Your prospects, customers, clients, teammates, employees, friends, families, and pretty much anyone with a soul are put off by this display of egomaniacal bravado.

If you're unaware of how this repugnant sales practice became popularized, it started in 1992. It was, unfortunately, brought to life by the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Here's a quick overview based on Wikipedia's summary of the film: Four real estate salesmen are given low-quality leads by their office manager. They use unethical and high-pressure sales tactics to try to convince their targets to invest in new land developments. The company they work for sends the top salesman, Blake (played by Alec Baldwin), to motivate the four underperforming salesmen. Blake chides, insults, and verbally abuses the team, telling them that only the top performers will still have a job at the end of the month.[1]

It gets worse from there. Sounds like a wonderful environment in which to work. (I hope my sarcasm is leaping off the page here.)

Baldwin's character, Blake, is the epitome of a high-powered, low-empathy, egomaniacal, money-hungry salesperson who uses fear, intimidation, insults, and profanity-laced tirades to display his dominance. He says, "Because only one thing counts in this life—get them to sign on the line which is dotted. You hear me, you f**king f*****s." And after he continues to berate, emasculate, humiliate, and terrorize a group of his fellow salesmen, he utters the phrase that has collectively cost companies *trillions* of dollars in lost sales: "Always be closing. *Always* be closing."

Here's the scariest part, and I really want you to pay attention because this is not a joke. What he says next is what some sales managers say, think, do, and display. They may not say it verbatim, but this is what salespeople hear: "Nice guy? I don't give a s**t. Good father? F**k you! Go home and play with your kids! You wanna work here? Close!"[2]

Some of you reading this right now have had the wonderful and uplifting experience of working with sales managers exactly like this, if not worse, and I'm sorry to bring up horrible memories for you. For years, sales managers have subjected too many salespeople to this kind of behavior, which has become quite normal in many industries.

Sales leaders, managers, and some company owners watched this movie, witnessed this horrendous behavior, and said to themselves, "I love it! That's precisely who I want to be, and I can't wait to talk to my salespeople like this and duplicate this arrogance and self-loathing and display my superiority complex." I wish I were joking. Other sales managers thought to themselves, "Wow! This type of treatment will definitely build self-confidence in my salespeople. It will inspire them to reach greater heights. They'll be so much more effective, and I'm sure this is exactly what they're looking for in a sales leader." Obviously, this line of thinking is abundantly idiotic, and even fathoming that this type of mistreatment of salespeople will somehow inspire incredible results defies all semblance of reality.

This is precisely why the average consumer, for decades, has hated salespeople with a passion and thought of them as vile and loathsome. Many consumers feel like this because some salespeople think they're

God's gift to the world and that the only thing in life that matters is closing someone. (Puke noise.)

If you're in the world of sales in any capacity (sales, sales management, business ownership), you've been subjected to this closing garbage a million times. According to Blake from *Glengarry Glen Ross* (and way too many salespeople and sales managers), it doesn't matter who the prospect is, what their needs are, or whether what you're selling is right for them—your job is to close the deal and extricate the money from your prospect's pocket, no matter what. In the '80s and '90s, this abhorrent approach may have worked on unsuspecting prospects who'd never see you again. But fast-forward to present times and today's economic climate and marketplace, and things are a lot different, thankfully. The sad part is that you still see these egomaniacal, money-hungry, soulless, ABC fake gurus who peddle their fool-proof selling systems, magic funnels, and Ponzi scheme–like real estate scams that they claim will put you on the path to riches by tomorrow. Hollywood and social media have glorified these grifters and made it easy for them to take advantage of the naïve and downtrodden.

Most people in sales know *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which is based on a self-absorbed, drug-fueled, Napoleonic felon who stole hundreds of millions of dollars from unsuspecting investors and still hasn't paid back all the people whose lives he destroyed by stealing from them. He's added to his repertoire of grifting, which includes selling his "expertise" on cryptocurrency, NFTs, AI, and who knows what else. Many salespeople also know the name of the morally corrupt "uncle" who will 10X your life because he spent $100M on social media to create a fake persona and fake social proof of his so-called success. Yet most human beings find him nauseating and repulsive, and he wouldn't last a second in a professional business setting. If you subscribe to the ABC mentality, you may look up to these charlatans, and that's your business, but I feel sad for you. The thought of these people influencing salespeople and sales managers makes me ill. Unfortunately, plenty of people get hoodwinked and bamboozled into thinking these frauds are worth listening to. If you want to watch a sales movie—based on a true story—about a man who personifies grit, guts, determination, ethics, family, and pure, unadulterated effort and desire, watch *The Pursuit of Happyness*. That's a *real* sales movie. The movie is based on the life of a man named Chris Gardner, but unfortunately, most people don't know his name (please look him up). If you know and like this movie, and if you want to build a reputation in sales based on integrity, honor, conscientiousness, self-awareness, and putting the needs of your clients first, then this book is for you.

I learned this way too late in my life. Just because someone wants to buy something from you, that does *not* mean you should sell it to them.

You should never sell something to someone who truly doesn't need what you're offering. They may want it, they may think they need it, but if you know for a fact deep down in your core that selling to them is not the right thing to do, it's okay to walk away. You've probably heard the phrase, "They're so good, they could sell ice to an Eskimo." Selling ice to an Eskimo doesn't make you a great salesperson, it makes you an asshole; especially when they can get unlimited amounts of ice for free. I'm imploring you, on behalf of all the other human beings who occupy this planet, to please *stop* doing this ABC crap immediately. It's not helping you sell more; it's causing you to sell less.

We could spend hours and hours talking about what not to do and how this closing mentality is costing you millions in lifetime income. But instead of wasting our time on that, I will share something important with you that will help you become a world-class sales professional. The best professionals in the world of sales don't have to ask for the sale as much as others do. Why? Because their prospects *ask them*! "What's the next step, Cheryl?" Or "When can we get started, Andre?"

This is why you should consider selling in a more conscientious and consultative way. Yes, I understand that sometimes you do need to ask for someone's business. But the balance of power has shifted away from us as salespeople, and now it favors the prospect. The amount of research, data, and information available today is unending, and prospects are more informed and savvier than ever. The high-pressure sales tactics and one-call close BS don't work anymore because most people know they don't have to buy what you're selling at this exact moment. They have a dozen other options, providers, and vendors that can probably provide something similar to what you provide.

Many salespeople still hold an antiquated belief that all you need to be successful in sales is the magic-selling system from sixty years ago, which teaches some of the worst selling techniques I've ever seen. Teaching salespeople to use a sales technique called an upfront contract is ridiculous. This is a technique used to manipulate a prospect into thinking that, for some unknown reason, they *must* decide to give you a yes or no answer today. What?! Is this real?! Yep. Maybe this works in hypothetical situations with fake prospects in unrealistic role-play situations, but it should never be used by a salesperson with a real prospect in a business setting.

Here's what the upfront contract taught by this "magic" selling system teaches salespeople to do. They instruct salespeople to ask questions like, "Sonia, can we at least decide right now that if you're interested, we'll move forward, and if you're not interested, you'll tell me no?"

I swear this is real! This is the stuff that's taught to salespeople, and their companies pay for it! It's like walking up to a stranger in a bar and saying, "My name is Steve, and before I waste my time talking to you, can we decide right now that if you like me, you'll take me back to your place, and if you're not interested in taking me home tonight, you'll tell me no?"

What in the world? Who would ever do this?! And if that is the case, then why would anyone with a pulse or a brain ever think this is somehow an effective way to start a sales conversation with a prospect?! You can agree or disagree with me, but try this upfront contract jargon in any part of your daily life, and let's see what happens.

Even worse than using these old-fashioned, ancient, and mindless selling techniques from sixty years ago is the use of manipulative closing questions that will, somehow—apparently through telepathy—make your prospects buy from you. Please. It's a joke. That's why people make fun of these idiotic closing questions like, "What can I do to put you in this car today, Mateo?" Or "Tamika, is there anything that would prevent us from moving forward?" Argh. Many of today's salespeople really do say things like this, and they think it works. I'm *begging* you *not to use* these techniques and this old-school manipulative language.

What should you say instead? Before I share that with you, you need to ask yourself the following questions first as a salesperson before you can confidently ask a potential customer, acquire a new customer, or land the deal:

- Do I fully understand the needs of my prospect?
- Do I fully understand how their business works?

- Do I fully understand the marketplace and their position in that marketplace?
- What are their aspirations for the business?
- What are the issues and challenges preventing them from achieving greater success?
- When do they want to fix these issues?
- How will staying the same impact their bottom line or their life?
- Am I confident we can help them?
- Are we the right and best fit for them?
- Are there any red flags preventing us from taking on this client?

These are all questions you need the answers to before you can attempt to ask for their business with confidence. Your prospects will have their questions about you, which they'll need to answer before they are ready to decide and be fully comfortable moving forward. The most effective way to do this is to *seed* your answers to their questions throughout your presentation and focus on building massive amounts of value. They'll be asking questions like this about you:

- Do I trust them?
- Do I like them?
- Do they understand my exact situation?
- Can they really help us?
- Are they an expert in their field?
- Is their company reputable?
- Are they worth what they charge?
- Can they make my life easier?

After you feel like you've answered these questions to their liking, it's time to ask for their business—but not by spouting off some imbecilic closing question. This part of the sales process is incredibly simple, yet most salespeople make it complicated. I'm going to teach you one simple and effective way of asking for a prospect's business. I learned this from an amazing sales leader I look up to. It's eight short words.

"So, where do we go from here, Sandy?"

It's straightforward, to the point, with no fluff or manipulation, and your prospect has only two ways to answer this. They'll either say, "Yes, let's do it" (or some version of approval), or they'll give you an objection to explain why they're not ready to buy right now. That's exactly what we want as salespeople! Either a yes or a reason why they're not ready yet, which helps us figure out where we need to provide more clarity. At this point, you can use this information to address their objections and better clarify your value to them before asking for their business. Please remember this: Closing is not about manipulation, applying pressure, or using condescending old-school tactics. If you focus on learning how to build massive amounts of value in your presentation, and you seed the answers to the questions your prospects are asking themselves about you, you'll be surprised at how many more deals you land, clients you acquire, and income you earn. Try it!

Goals Aren't Helping You as Much as You Think

I can sense your trepidation, and I can feel your eyebrows furrowing as you read that heading. I can hear you saying to yourself, "How can this be true? We *need* goals. We're supposed to *set* goals. We need to *track* our goals. We should *write down* our goals. They should all be *smart* goals."

Just because you've been told the same stuff about goals for the last twenty years doesn't make it true. In fact, much of what we believe to be true isn't true. We live our lives based on our belief systems, but in most of those cases, our beliefs are not based on fact. Once we have a belief, we tend to cling to it, even when it is untrue. It's like Dallas Cowboys fans, who still think they have "America's Team." They haven't won anything in more than thirty years, but they act like the Cowboys win the Super Bowl every year. (They don't, in case you're not a sports fan.)

These delusional beliefs are caused by confirmation bias, which is the tendency to seek out information that supports what we already believe. We tend to surround ourselves with messages that confirm our preexisting opinions. For example, in the United States, many conservatives get their news from Fox (which leans right), and many liberals get their news from CNN (which leans left). If you're positive that some magic closing question increases sales, and some fake guru posts some doctored-up testimonials claiming their acronym-driven sales methodology works wonders, you'll believe it to be true, even if it's not.

These behaviors protect us from having to change our beliefs. Unfortunately, they may also keep us steadfastly believing things that aren't true. Despite our best intentions, it's easy to subconsciously buy into beliefs that feel right, even though they're not. Take a second to think about something you believe to be true. You may find that, in many cases, it's not actually true.

Columbus didn't discover America. Sorry, nope. Native Americans were here way before he "discovered" their land.

Napoleon Bonaparte was short. Sorry, nope, also not true. He was five feet six inches tall, which was the average height for men around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Sharks are blood-thirsty killers. Sorry, nope, this one's not even close to being true. Sharks kill about ten humans per year; humans kill about one hundred million sharks per year. To give you some perspective, falling coconuts kill 150 people per year. But you'll never hear a conversation like this: "Honey, we need to get away, so I booked us a trip to Fiji next month!" And the response from their loved one is, "Fiji?! No way in hell I'm setting foot there. They have coconut trees." Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Well, it's not as ridiculous as being afraid of sharks, but people's beliefs, even if they're rooted in completely inaccurate belief systems, cause them to make decisions that have no basis in reality. This is what happens when we've been told something over and over again, year after year—even if something's not true, we believe it to be true.

Here's my disclaimer: What I'm about to share (and this pretty much goes for the entire book) are my thoughts and my thoughts only. What you're about to read isn't a popular opinion. Many in the personal growth world would wholeheartedly disagree with me because it would invalidate much of what they're forcing down our throats. And even crazier than having a contrarian and extremely unpopular opinion on the uselessness of goals is the fact that I believe goals cause more *harm* than good. I hope you're ready for this.

Do you know what percentage of people *hit* their goals? I'm talking about all people, all goals. Fitness, personal, business, financial, you name it. Take a guess.

Is it 75 percent, 50 percent, 33 percent? Try 8 percent![3] Depending on the study, and you can do the research yourself, between 5 percent and 20 percent of people hit their goals. Goals Calling's study reveals that 6 percent of people achieve their goals.[4] According to a University of Scranton study, 8 percent of people achieve their New Year's goals.[5]

Let that sink in. Less than one in ten people accomplish their goals. Surprised? I'm not. If roughly 90 percent of the adult population is not hitting their goals, how do you think they feel every day? Inspired? Motivated? Driven? Happy? Hell, no! Most of them feel disappointed, inadequate, incompetent, misaligned, or worse. Talk to any mental health professional—almost all of them will tell you these emotions don't lead to high performance. More importantly, if you're a sales manager and most of your salespeople spend every day dealing with these destructive emotions and negative thoughts, what would make you think that will lead to greater results and higher performance?

Before we dive into the idiocy of quotas, let's look at the approximately 8 percent of humans who actually hit their goals. In relation to sales, let's say a salesperson hits their goal or annual quota in September. What do you think most salespeople will naturally do? Yep, you guessed it; they slow down. This is a natural function of the human brain, and it's almost impossible to stop it. Take any salesperson you know who's way ahead of their quota, who's already achieved their bonus, earned their commission increase, or qualified for the company trip, and guess what most of them do? They coast. They ease up. They take their foot off the gas. We all know it.

How can this ever be considered a good thing? How many times have you seen this happen in the world of sports? A team gets up big. The game is seemingly over, and there's no way they can blow this lead. Then boom—momentum shifts. Fundamentals break down. Bad decisions are made. Opportunities are missed. You're now the Detroit Lions, who blew a 17-point lead over the 49ers in the 2023 NFC Championship. Or even worse, you're the Atlanta Falcons, who blew a 28–3 lead against the Patriots in the second half of Super Bowl LI.

Some people may disagree with my next point, which is par for the course of this book: Goals are clearly *not* the determining factor in championship performances. Let's use the Olympic Games for this example. Depending on the year, site, and season, one Olympic Games has roughly three hundred different events. Roughly ten thousand athletes from around the world compete in these events. They come from different cities, countries, and continents, and they all have unique family histories, backgrounds, physical characteristics, and coaches.

What's the goal of every one of those Olympic athletes? You know what it is. Every single one of them wants to win the gold medal. That has probably been their goal since they were either six years old or since they started dominating their sport in their teens. It's what they've been told they should strive for throughout their entire life up to this point.

Now, let's look at whether goals make the difference between gold medal winners and everyone else. Of the three hundred events taking place in a given Olympic Games, how many gold medals are given out? Yep, three hundred. And how many athletes had the same goal of winning the gold medal? Yep, probably all ten thousand. So, if all ten thousand had the same goal and only three hundred accomplished that goal, it's *not the goal that makes the difference!*

What makes the difference between gold medal winners and everyone else? Well, it's not just one thing. It's a combination of many things, none of which include the goal. Here are some of the factors that drive gold medal–winning performances: preparation, effort, hard work, dedication, practice, mental toughness, facing adversity, sacrifice, more practice, eating habits, strength training, agility training, coaching, fundamentals, luck, genetics, timing, and execution. *Not goals!*

The athletes who perform to the best of their ability during a specific event will have the best chance to win a gold medal. Will they all? Nope. But if they stick to executing when they're on the track, field, or court, guess what will happen?

Here's another myth about goal setting: Your goals should be time-based. I'm not totally against thinking big and having dreams, but attributing a specific goal to a specific time frame, especially if it's more than a year away, is mind-boggling to me. If the average adult can't execute what they say they will do this weekend, what makes you think they can somehow execute some fantasy-filled wish that will supposedly take place over the next three, five, or ten years? It's insanity, if you ask me. The human brain is not designed to paint visions of a worry-free future and then easily lay out the yellow brick road we're supposed to follow to success. The human brain is the most powerful and most destructive organ we possess. As you're aware, when we don't follow through on what we say we're going to do (I'm sure you and I have never done such a thing), the negative self-talk kicks in, and we're doomed mentally for the next day, month, or even decade.

Unlike setting goals, writing to-do lists really works! We frequently use to-do lists to help us achieve our goals. You may use one; you may not. You may like them; you may hate them. Nevertheless, there are proven scientific, physiological, and psychological reasons why they're effective for most of the population. I'm sure you'll get differing opinions on this, and of course, you can find a study to prove or disprove just about any point someone could make. But to-do lists work because using them drives dopamine production in our brains, which triggers our brains to release the dopamine that tells us we're awesome.

Your brain tells you, "You rock! Great job! You did it! You're incredible!"

Negative self-talk is immensely destructive, but positive self-talk is incredibly uplifting. Which one do you think is better for salespeople, and which one do you think will lead to more sales? The crazy part is that by simply checking a box or crossing off a task on your to-do list, your brain tells you how amazing you are, and you'll be overwhelmingly more productive. And when your brain tells you how amazing you are, how does that make you feel? How do you think you'll feel the rest of the day? How will you show up to your family? Isn't that what life is all about?! Being happy?! This is why my favorite sales movie is *The Pursuit of Happyness*. And here's something the entire world of business needs to understand. Listen up.

Happy salespeople sell more stuff!!!

If it's true that happy salespeople sell more stuff, then why in the world would sales managers do everything in their power to ensure their salespeople are miserable?!

Let's go back to goals for a second, and then we'll address why assigning unrealistic quotas to salespeople defies logic, science, and common sense.

If 8 percent of people accomplish their goals, we can take that to mean 8 percent of salespeople accomplish their goals. We know the people who do accomplish their goals feel great every day, and their brains tell them they're awesome. Now, let's look at the flip side. If more than 90 percent of salespeople do not hit their goals, we know they'll feel disappointed, inadequate, incompetent, misaligned, and consider themselves failures. Their brains will be constantly telling them, "You're a loser. You're an idiot. You're a waste of space." Boy, that'll really inspire some self-confident, high-performing salespeople, won't it?

Quotas Are Dumb

Maybe we should start by defining the word dumb. You and I may have different definitions. When I say quotas are dumb, here's what I mean.

Quotas are nothing more than a fabricated goal based on some semblance of what may have happened in a prior time frame with a specific salesperson or sales team. Many people think I'm the dumb one for having this point of view, which is fine. But if you get a chance, ask salespeople if they are driven to sell more by the quotas arbitrarily assigned to them by people who've never set foot in the field. You'll only need to read their facial expression for the answer.

We'll come back to the stupidity of assigning arbitrary quotas in a minute, but first, let's discuss how quotas are created. Let's use a weather forecast as an example. You turn on the news to find out what the weather is going to be tomorrow. The meteorologist comes on and says, "We had a beautiful, eighty-one-degree day today, and I hope you all enjoyed some fun in the sun because we're in for a drastic change tomorrow. Unfortunately, it looks like it's going to be fifty-five degrees and rainy. I went and looked back at the weather we had last year on tomorrow's date, and it was fifty degrees and rainy." You would pause and ask yourself why they would need to look back to see what the weather was like on tomorrow's date of last year. That makes zero sense. What does the weather on May 3 of last year have to do with the weather on May 3 of this year?

You sit there, perplexed and flummoxed, trying to figure out the logic behind this forecast. The meteorologist comes back on screen and says, "Hey, everyone, I've done the research. I looked back to May 3 of last year—it was fifty degrees and rainy. So, with that knowledge, my forecast for tomorrow is fifty-five degrees and rainy. I calculated a 10 percent increase in temperature for no specific reason and with zero regard for logic and common sense."

WITAF? That stands for "What in the actual f**k?"

But that's exactly the logic behind how quotas are assigned!

For some inexplicable reason, salespeople are given a magic number to hit based on something that happened a year ago that has absolutely nothing to do with anything going on in today's selling environment. These imbecilic quotas are foisted on salespeople, and the people setting these quotas have almost no regard for what's happening *today*, in the now. Think back to one year ago from the day you're reading this. What has changed in the world? In your life? In your business? I'm going to go out on a limb here and say a hell of a lot has changed! Twelve months ago, salespeople may have

- had completely different products or services to sell,
- had completely different pricing models,
- had completely different sales cycles based on capacity,
- had completely different market conditions,
- had completely different supply chain challenges,

- been affected by completely different interest rates,
- had to execute completely different sales processes,
- had completely different contacts and buyers,
- built completely different relationships with clients, or
- had their champions leave the company.

Dozens of things could affect the amount of revenue salespeople generate from month to month, let alone from year to year. Yet, companies willingly and intentionally decide to ignore all of what I just shared and use some concocted BS percentage increase over the revenue generated last year. This is the quota that a salesperson is supposed to hit.

This unadulterated insanity is based on zero logic and no semblance of common sense, and it's still a standard practice in companies around the world! And if that's not bad enough, do you know what happens when a salesperson crushes their quota, breaks company sales records, earns a ton of commission, advances the company's brand, and generates their company a ton of profit?

They are *penalized*! Yep, you know it's true. They're penalized. *Not* rewarded. *Not* appreciated. *Not* thanked. *Not* valued. *They're penalized.* You've seen it. Hell, you may have even had it happen to you. I certainly have on multiple occasions.

Here's a real-life example that will make your blood boil. We had a client who would remain nameless. Their top salesperson was a woman named Yolanda. She was awesome. She was a go-getter, a driver, a powerhouse in sales, and an amazingly loyal employee. She was the number one salesperson on her team every year. After three consecutive years of crushing company records, her company decided to "alter" her compensation structure. She came to me for advice, and she was clearly distraught, disappointed, hurt, incredulous, and pissed off. I told her I would talk to the CEO and find out whether it was just a rumor or they were really considering doing something so insanely stupid.

I went to the CEO (we'll call him Todd) and said, "Todd, I heard through the grapevine you're considering changing Yolanda's compensation structure. Is this true?"

He said, "Steve, we can't have Yolanda making this kind of money. She's making too much."

I asked, "What do you mean she's making too much? If she sells $14M worth of equipment at a 15 percent gross margin, that means $2.1M in gross margin to your company, correct?"

Todd said, "Yes, that's right."

I said, "Okay, I'm fairly confident I understand basic math, and I know Yolanda made about $400K last year for bringing in $14M. Is that right?"

Todd nodded.

I asked, "Todd, what part of paying $400K and getting back $2.1M in gross margin is a bad thing for your business? Isn't she doing exactly what you'd want her to do as a salesperson?"

I'll never forget what Todd said next, and I promise you won't forget it, either. He said, "Steve, she's making more money than I am! We can't have a salesperson making more than her CEO."

I was stunned, shocked, and chagrined. I said to him, in not-so-subtle words, "Todd, let's get something straight. She's great, you're not."

They have yet to find a room in this country where Todd's ego could fit in, but when they do, I'll let you know. If I had stock in this company and I found out how he treats his salespeople and that he makes decisions for the company based on his fragile ego and weak-mindedness, I'd sell my stock instantly. When Yolanda told me they were planning to "alter" her compensation structure, she could already read the tea leaves. She gave her two weeks' notice before they officially penalized her and cut her pay for overperforming, and she immediately went to work for one of their direct competitors.

I'd like you to spend a few minutes thinking about this financial equation. The company wanted to cut Yolanda's pay by about $75K. Instead of paying their best, most incredible salesperson the money she deserved, here's what they lost:

- $14M a year in sales (if she continued to sell at that same pace)
- $2.1M a year in gross margin (if gross margins stayed at 15 percent)
- An amazing employee who always puts the company's needs before hers
- A great ambassador for their brand and a well-respected face of the company

I listed only a few of the things they lost—I'm sure you can imagine the list is a lot longer than that—but hey, at least they saved $75K. Even if her replacement could do 70 percent of what she could do, that idiotic decision cost that company at least $40M in top-line revenue and $6.3M in gross margin over ten years. The decision damaged their brand, strengthened their most direct competitor, and alienated their entire sales team. All to save $750K over ten years. Um, yeah. Good decision, Todd. But hey, we have to protect the CEO's ego, right?

Here's yet another reason quotas are monumentally idiotic. A quota is a made-up number. It's fairy dust. It's fantasy. It's created in some boardroom or on some Zoom call, and it's based on some formula, spreadsheet, CRM data, or historical performance. None of which has anything to do with what's happening *right now*.

More importantly, a quota is the company's goal, not the salesperson's. A quota is the private equity firm's goal, not the salesperson's goal. Take a minute and think about one of your neighbors. Just pick a name. Then, after you finish this chapter, walk over to their place, text them, or call them and ask for ten minutes of their time. Ask them to share all their goals and dreams for next year. Then, I want you to focus all your time, energy, effort, drive, and determination each day on accomplishing their goals. Does that sound exciting? Does it sound fun? Does it sound like something you can really put your heart and soul into? I don't think so.

Do sales managers and executives honestly think their salespeople go home at night, kiss their spouse good night, and say, "Honey, I don't know if I'm going to be able to sleep tonight. I'm so incredibly excited to wake up tomorrow and help our company improve its EBITDA! I can't wait!"

Let me fill you sales leaders in on a little secret from a salesperson's perspective. Most salespeople care about two entities in their lives: themselves and their families. That's it. And the best salespeople in the world have a third entity they care about—their clients. If salespeople are treated more like a number than human beings, and if they're looked at simply as a vessel for your company to achieve higher EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization), they're not going to perform better! Yet, for some unknown reason, sales managers and executives think that pressuring their salespeople to hit some arbitrarily assigned, fabricated quota will somehow magically inspire unbelievable results. It's incomprehensibly dumb.

DPIs > KPIs

For those of you in sales leadership, the metrics you choose to focus on can hurt your sales team more than they help. Most businesses track KPIs (a.k.a. key performance indicators) to measure performance, track trends, analyze data, and forecast future results. The inherent problem is that most KPIs are lagging indicators—not all, but most. Measuring lagging indicators to determine future success is not a good idea. Measuring *leading* indicators is more effective and a better indicator of future success. What's the difference between lagging and leading indicators? A lagging indicator is something that is *caused* by an activity. For most businesses, that may include revenue, units sold, or customers acquired.

In baseball, the metric that determines which team wins the game is the number of runs scored. But the number of runs scored is a lagging indicator. If you want your team to win more games, you don't tell them, "Hey, team, score more runs!" In a sales context, it's like telling salespeople, "Sell more stuff!" Focusing on runs doesn't lead to more runs. You need to focus on consistently executing the activities that will lead to more runs. In baseball, you score more runs by getting more players on base. How do you get more players on base? You teach, coach, train, and help them execute more quality at bats. If they execute more quality at bats than the other team, that will lead to more players on base, which will lead to more runs, which will lead to more wins. In business, you can't simply tell your team to sell more and think that will drive more sales. You need your team to focus on the activities that will lead to more sales (quality at bats), and you've got to create systems and processes to ensure they're executing those activities consistently and with proficiency.

Let's walk through a deeper example in a baseball setting. (You don't need to understand baseball for this.) In baseball or softball, if you try your hardest to hit a home run, what usually happens? You strike out. We all know trying to hit home runs all the time is futile and will lead to much disappointment, fewer runs, and minimal success.

What's the goal when you go up to the plate in baseball or softball? Take a second to come up with your answer. Is it to get a hit? Is it to hit a home run? Is it to get on base? Nope. Stick with me, non-baseball fans. Is it possible to help your team win a game without physically making contact with the ball? The answer is yes—a resounding yes.

Here's the real goal when you go up to the plate in baseball or softball. It's to have a quality at bat. That could be a walk. It could be a sacrifice fly, it could be hitting the ball to the right side to move the runner over . . . it could be a lot of different things, none of which is getting a hit or a home run. The single best example of a player having a quality at bat is making the opposing pitcher throw a ton of pitches. Once again, stick with me, non-baseball fans!

A starting pitcher in baseball these days throws about eighty pitches in a game. When they approach pitch number eighty, they start getting tired, they become less effective, and they need to be pulled from the game. Let's say it's Game 7 of the World Series (the winner takes all), and my leadoff hitter (the first batter of a game) is up against Randy Johnson. This guy was one of the best pitchers of all time. He was six feet eleven inches tall and left-handed. He won five Cy Young awards, two World Series, and he killed a bird with a pitch! Seriously, look up "Randy Johnson kills bird" on YouTube right now.

Back to the analogy. Randy Johnson threw twenty-six pitches to the leadoff hitter, the first batter of Game 7. The batter isn't swinging at bad pitches—he's fouling off curve balls. He's not swinging at the high fastball—he's laying off the slider and making Randy Johnson work extremely hard to get him out. On the twenty-seventh pitch of the at bat, Randy Johnson finally strikes out the batter. How would you rate that at bat on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the best?

It's a twelve! Why is it a twelve, you ask?

Because the first batter of the game made Randy Johnson throw one-third of his total allotment of pitches (twenty-seven out of eighty) for an entire game to one batter. Therefore, Randy Johnson will be tired much earlier in the game than normal. He'll become less effective, he'll lose command of his pitches, he'll throw more balls than strikes, and he'll have to be replaced in the fifth inning rather than pitching the whole game. And if your team can avoid hitting against one of the greatest pitchers of all time and rather hit against pitchers of much lower quality, can you see how their chances of winning would increase dramatically?

The leadoff hitter did an amazing job tiring out Randy Johnson. Here's the most important part (stay with me here). After he strikes out on the twenty-seventh pitch, he walks back to the dugout where twenty-four other multimillionaire professional baseball players are waiting to greet him. What do these guys do when their teammate gets back to the dugout? Do they admonish him? Do they humiliate him? Do they chastise him? Do they emasculate him? Do they call him a loser? *No!* They high-five him! They pat him on the butt. They congratulate him.

Why on Earth would they recognize and appreciate someone who struck out and failed?! Because they know exactly how important that at bat was, and they know their entire team will benefit because they won't have to face Randy Johnson later in the game. They will get to face a weaker pitcher because of the efforts of that leadoff hitter. Now, even though he didn't get a hit, his "failure" makes it possible for the rest of his team to win Game 7 and the World Series.

Let's take a step back for one second and look again at lagging vs. leading indicators in a baseball context. If you didn't get to see the game and looked at the box score the next day (that's a list of all the stats from the game) and saw the leadoff hitter's *result* for that first at bat, what would show up in the box score?

A strikeout. The *result* of his at bat would be a strikeout.

And if you weren't familiar with baseball and were judging a player's success or failure based on a result (a hit, a home run, etc.), you'd look at the box score and call it a failure. During the game—and this is the funniest part—there are two diametrically opposed reactions people have to that strikeout. The first reaction is the one from his multimillionaire professional baseball–playing teammates, who are so excited, happy, and thankful he made Randy Johnson throw all those pitches, which is why they celebrate his effort, give him high-fives, etc. The other reaction comes from the idiot in the fifty-sixth row who couldn't hit a baseball to save his life. And after he watches the leadoff hitter strike out, this guy is screaming obscenities, giving him the middle finger, and telling his buddy he's an overpaid stiff.

Now, I ask you, which one of these people is the sales manager?

Is it the guy in the dugout who recognizes the true value of that strikeout and how much the team benefits from their leadoff hitter's failure?

Or is it the clueless fan in the stands who simply looks at meaningless statistics that have no real bearing on future success?

I think you know the answer.

Back to sales. What types of activities in sales would count for a quality at bat? To tie it all together, quality at bats in sales are what we call DPIs, or daily performance indicators. If baseball players consistently execute at bats with proficiency, they'll get on base more often. And if players get on base more often, the team will score more runs. And if the team scores more runs, they'll win more games! In a sales context, if salespeople execute their version of quality at bats consistently and with proficiency, known as DPIs, guess what magically increases? More opportunities. More opportunities lead to more meetings. More meetings lead to more proposals. More proposals lead to . . . more sales!

Not all DPIs are created equal, which means that not every salesperson in every company will have the same DPIs. Here's a list of some common DPIs that many salespeople focus on executing every day:

- Number of quality contacts made
- Number of lunches/dinners/coffee meetings scheduled
- Number of thank-you notes sent
- Number of LinkedIn and other posts published
- Number of client check-ins tallied
- Number of referrals requested
- Number of role-plays performed
- Number of minutes per day their craft was studied (fifteen)

Salespeople who focus on consistently executing four to six DPIs every day will ALWAYS generate more sales than salespeople who don't. The companies and leaders who drive and reward these activities will *always* generate more revenue than the companies that don't.

I'm not saying you should totally ignore KPIs and never track them again. Some companies' KPIs really are DPIs; they just don't call them the same thing. KPIs, in and of themselves, are pointless, like quotas. Activities drive KPIs and quotas, not the other way around. Ask a world-class personal trainer what they think is most important to track every day. Is it someone's weight, body fat percentage, and inches lost? Or is it tracking the number of miles they ran today, the number of pushups they did, and the number of calories they consumed? I think you know the answer. Having arbitrary KPIs and quotas like the number of deals closed, the amount of revenue generated this quarter, or any other misguided metrics will *not* drive more sales and revenue for you or your team. They will, however, drive significantly more stress, pressure, corner-cutting, sandbagging, and commission breath. What *will* drive more sales and revenue are the DPIs and daily tasks that salespeople complete every single day. And if they do them enough and do the right ones consistently every day, they'll make more sales.

The Daily 100

We just finished talking about the daily tasks that will ultimately drive your production and performance as a sales professional to higher levels. Now, let's discuss a very important process that can be life-changing for you and your sales career. As we all know, the sales landscape is always evolving. Our team is constantly exploring new methodologies and strategies to drive performance, engagement, and productivity for our clients.

One such methodology that we see best-in-class organizations adopting is gamification. Why is gamification crucial in sales? Because selling is a performance-driven activity. Just like in games, we have targets, scores, competition, and rewards. When we inject the fun and engaging elements of games into sales, we tap into an innate desire for achievement, competition, and recognition. This leads to heightened engagement, motivation, and overall performance.

There is one tool we use to help our clients implement gamification into their sales organizations. It's called the Daily 100, which was born from decades of studying salespeople and identifying the most important activities that ultimately lead to success. Driving daily activity is more important than any other aspect of professional selling. Give me a salesperson who's a badass when it comes to daily activity over a salesperson who's got an amazing skill set any day of the week. The Daily 100 is a guideline for completing specific DPIs that will increase your activity and cause your performance and results to increase.

The Daily 100 is a daily checklist of the tasks and duties you need to accomplish every day, regardless of the outcomes. You're given points based on the number and types of activities you complete. For example, a new dial or contact is worth one point, whereas a meeting with the ultimate decision-maker is worth thirty points. And I can promise you this. If you increase your activity, you'll increase your sales. Not maybe. Not probably. Always, 100 percent of the time. You already know the results you've been getting without using a Daily 100. Now, let's see the results you can create in the next ninety days if you do the Daily 100, every day, for ninety days in a row.