

## Habits and Mindset of the Top 5% of Sales Professionals



It appears the top 20% of your sales team are closing 80% of the deals. This reality of 80-20 performance, where approximately 20 percent of salespeople produce approximately 80 percent of sales, can be disappointing. (Though it validates Pareto's Principle).

[Pareto's Principle](#) was named after Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), an Italian economist who observed that for certain economic conditions, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes.

Instead of accepting Pareto's Principle as a standard, I would prefer to see your team perform with excellence. Inspiring and leading a team to break away from average can be difficult if they are following the crowd and paying attention to what 'everyone' follows. I learned firsthand the importance of a network, excellent habits and a mindset of high standards when I grew a business from \$4 million to \$16 million over the course of four years.

Today I want to share thoughts, habits, and mindsets that help many to be a top 5% sales professional and potentially break Pareto's Principle.

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## Quotes to remember from inspirational trail blazers:

“Every sale has five obstacles: no need, no money, no hurry, no desire, no trust.” – Zig Ziglar

“The key to mastering any kind of sales is switching statements about you – how great you are, and what you do – to statements about them.” – Jeffrey Gitomer

“It doesn't matter how many times you fail. It doesn't matter how many times you get it almost right. All that matters in business is that you get it right once. Then everyone can tell you how lucky you are.” - Mark Cuban

“We found that the most exciting environments, that treated people very well, are also tough as nails. There is no bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo ... excellent companies provide two things simultaneously: tough environments and very supportive environments.” - Tom Peters

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## Creating new habits

A sale is not something you pursue; it is what happens to you while immersed in serving your customer. A top 5% sales professional learns to skillfully blend time, energy, perseverance and creativity to consistently achieve above-average results.

To gain or maintain these skills, we begin with assessing your current skills.

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## Defining a Top Performer

A survey conducted by Jeffrey Gitomer in the year 2000 found that if the following characteristics are mastered, a sales person improves performance beyond the rest. Please use it as a checklist to measure your qualities. Who on your sales team has:

- An unyielding belief in the company
- An unyielding belief in the product

- An unyielding confidence and belief in yourself
- Creativity to differentiate yourself from the competition
- A sense of humor that builds deep rapport
- The ability (and willpower) to promote yourself
- The ability (and willpower) to maintain price integrity
- Unyielding personal values and ethics
- Reliability and dependability – meeting your commitments
- A passion and desire to excel and be the best
- Exciting presentation skills (this is a learned skill)
- An ability to generate profit and loyal customers
- Attitude: Selling for the love of helping others get what they want rather than for the love of money
- Perpetual positive attitude and enthusiasm

If these are areas your team struggles with, review your support system, mentor opportunities, books, classes & workshops, and personal training opportunities. The skills and character your team needed to get to this point will not be enough to become a top performer.

The top sales professionals have a different approach to closing and understand that closing is much more than a single event. They understand it is a process of successful decision-making over time. A successful sale depends on whether they have added value to that decision-making process.

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## Four questions to ask after an engagement with a prospect:

*Caution. Yes or no questions are easy to answer. Pause and consider the answer seriously.*

- Did you sell with the intent to achieve a win-win outcome?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Did you carefully prepare before the meeting to create conditions for good decision making?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Did you spend less time talking 'at' the potential client and more time listening and discussing decisions that will best serve their needs?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Did you follow a simple and reliable process to have a clear understanding of when they will be ready to close?  
Yes - No - Unsure

Top performers have the skills, habits, and mindset - they answer 'yes' to each of these questions.

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## Here are characteristics and actions of top performers:

*(Give yourself a score, with 10 as best)*

- Remain flexible and creative.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Take more time asking questions to qualify and less time creating proposals.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ask high-value questions that probe to the heart of the issue.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Set high targets and high goals.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Diligently plan the quarter, month and week, as well as the daily schedule.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Set specific objectives for every sales call.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.

- Listen carefully to what prospects and customers say.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Clarify issues when meanings are unclear.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Wait to present a product, service, solution or idea until the prospect's situation is clearly understood.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Begin every presentation with a brief recap of the prospect's situation.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Can adapt a sales presentation based on how a prospect's situation changes.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Can properly and effectively position the product, service or solution.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do presentations with a primary focus on the prospect.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Well prepared for potential objections.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Always make an invitation to take the next step.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Consistently follow-up after a call or meeting.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Have the highest character – with honesty, integrity, understanding, empathy and thoughtfulness.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Treat others as a friend, family or royalty.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Continuously prospect and keep the 'pipeline' full.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Connect and communicate with the decision maker.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.

- Open to and seeking out new ways to stay in touch with customers.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Continually learning and developing new skills.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Always improving approach, techniques, and attitude.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Courageous, take action to move forward, in spite of any fear.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Curious and consistently asking “why”.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- First, seek to understand the customer before trying to be understood.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Consistently show caring about customers.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Are more than a “salesperson” and are a valued resource for their clients.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Are persuasive communicators.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Have confidence and a positive self-esteem.  
Your score: \_\_\_\_\_.

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The top sales performers enjoy working with people and have a strong sense of curiosity, great listening skills and the ability to see the big picture. Because the best sales people produce results, they prefer to be paid for performance and will want a compensation plan to support their results.

It is not enough to know the products and services well; the top performers have an excellent working knowledge of their company's operations and the ability to collect relevant data about their accounts within a CRM and other tools and translate the information into additional sales.

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## The last list of questions to determine if your team are top sales professionals:

- Is your goal in the sales process to solve problems?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you translate features of a product or service into benefits?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you consistently take action and risk rejection?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you believe the 'win' comes from 'showing knowledge'?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you depend on both rational and emotional characteristics?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Are you proactive with decisions and taking action? (vs waiting for response)  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you accept uncertainty as a norm?  
Yes - No - Unsure
- Do you identify both needs and wants of the prospect?  
Yes - No - Unsure

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Leading a sales team to become top performers is an excellent goal, but do you start with the bottom performers? Alternatively, do you focus first on those who are on the edge being great?

*Use this metaphor to help you consider the answer:*

*The football on the 90-yard line only has 10 more yards to score. If you had a choice between starting on the 10-yard line with 90 yards to go vs. the 90-yard line, the answer should be 'those closest to the score'.*

The same is true with your team. In your monthly workforce assessment, rank the team in the order of best to the worst. As you make the list, consider which have skills as their primary barrier and which have the "I don't wannas."

Focus on those who are close to becoming a top sales performer but need additional support, training, mentoring, coaching. You will be surprised at how many are on the edge of greatness but lack the current wisdom and experience to leap to the next level.

If you are interested in taking a good team to becoming top performers but need a map to do so, [please contact me here](#). I would enjoy talking with you about how to be prepared for what some say is "the next big recession".

For your convenience, [you can download a pdf of this article here](#). Feel free to print out and share with your team. I expect you will be curious about how they evaluate their own habits, character and mindset.

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"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity." – Albert Einstein

"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will." – Vince Lombardi

