

Make these choices in 2010 to help boost results

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What will you choose to do differently in 2010 to enhance your sales results? Here are three choices to consider — but adapt them only if you can fully commit to doing what’s necessary.

• Choose your “why.”

Many people get caught up in setting goals that are based on other people’s expectations, not their own. The conversation around a new goal is one of excitement and motivation — but it often lacks the real reason for changing or improving.

Business owners say they want to grow their businesses. Why? Salespeople claim they want to make more money. Why?

Here’s the reality: If your “why” isn’t big enough, you won’t do the work necessary to change and improve. You’ll talk a good game — and talk will be the only concrete action taken.

Take some time to reflect and figure out your “why.” Once you do, ask the second-most-important question: What are you willing to do to achieve your “why”? The most successful people in the world aren’t the smartest or most talented. They’re people who are clear on their “why” and willing to do the work necessary to achieve their goals.

“I want to grow my business” sounds like the right battle cry for a business owner. Are you willing to take the risk, put in the hours, hire the team, grow the team and invest in new resources?

Making more money is the politically correct answer for any salesperson. Are you willing to do the work, invest in yourself to get smarter and go through the discomfort that happens anytime you take your skills to a new level?

Or would you rather watch another episode of reality TV?

Get clear on your “why.” It’s the first step in executing what’s needed to succeed.

• Choose to slow down.

Most salespeople are very busy — networking, prospecting, selling. Sounds good — except too many busy salespeople aren't hitting their quotas. The problem is most salespeople are so busy that they don't take the time to analyze their business, current and future.

At the end of each year, track and figure out the source of your best leads. Is social media working for your industry?

Or are you spending hours on Facebook to avoid picking up the phone?

Have you updated your LinkedIn profile 20 times without making contact with a human being?

How about that association lunch you attend each month? Has that event yielded any sales results?

Evaluate your referral partners. Are they referring quality prospects or are they just nice people you should consider just friends?

Look at your clients. Which ones are your raving fans and refer you to their colleagues? Are you giving them “frequent flyer” treatment or are they being serviced just like your “C” accounts?

If you lost business to a competitor, what's the reason? If it's price, work on the selling skill of quantifying the pain or problem.

If it's talking to a non-decisionmaker, work on assertiveness skills, pre-call planning and managing expectations.

Steven Prentice, president of Bristall Morgan Inc., has a great presentation titled “Cool Down: Getting Further by Going Slower.” His research shows that organizations are more productive when they slow down. It allows creative thinking, which can happen only when the brain is given a chance to catch its breath.

Creative thinking leads to innovation, which keeps you ahead of the competition.

- **Choose generosity.**

If you want to earn more in 2010, establish a “give” goal. It's the old saying, “if you want to get more, you need to give more.”

Robert Childini's classic book, “The Principles of Influence,” shows research supporting this concept.

One of the principles discussed in his book is that of reciprocity. When you help others, they want to return the favor, they want to reciprocate. This is the foundation of strong, strategic alliance partnerships.

Good partners seek ways to help grow their partners' business.

Generosity starts at home base. Be generous with your fellow team members. Help the newbie salesperson with advice or mentoring. Give a hand up to a veteran salesperson who's in a slump by taking him to lunch. Give to charities.

Dover Management runs a mutual fund that invests in companies known for charitable giving. Dover's research shows that companies with a good relationship between philanthropy and operating earnings have outperformed the broader index by 3.5 percentage points a year during a five-year period. That's reason enough to write a check.

It's a new year. Choose wisely. Examine your "why," slow down and be generous.