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# Selling requires leadership -- as well as courage

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

Great leaders and great sellers have many traits in common. Top sellers influence others, lead the sale process, persevere in the face of adversity and build a strong following.

Do great sales leaders work from instinct or from learned behavior? The answer is both, because no one inherently has all the traits. Leaders continually work to give their personal best and either delegate or develop their own strengths.

"Do as I say, not as I do" isn't effective in professional selling. Customers are keenly aware of every action you take, reinforcing the old adage that actions are louder than words.

For example, talking too much sends the message that the customer isn't as important as what you have to say.

A good way to lead by example is first establishing an agenda for the sales call that's mutually acceptable. A sales call is similar to dancing: It's easier to follow a good leader than someone who has no direction or doesn't know the steps.

The first sale to make is you. People must first buy into the leader (salesperson) before they buy into their product or solution. History proves there's no universal style of leadership. Develop personal presence and persuasiveness by practicing these simple actions.

- Follow the platinum rule, which is to treat others as they wish to be treated. People skills and personal communication skills are the key to building comfort and early buy-in. In other words, sell to your prospect in the way they like to buy rather than in the way you personally like to buy. Some like more information than others, and some buyers take more time to feel comfortable before making a decision.
- Make others feel important by emphasizing their strengths and needs rather than your own. If your actions are self-centered, others will lose their desire to work with you. For example, are you telling more than asking questions? Do you know what they like about their current product, not how your offering is different? Great sales leaders give up thinking about themselves.
- Be personally accountable and admit mistakes. If your customer suspects you're covering up your own errors, you'll lose their trust, confidence and eventually their business. You will gain credibility and a follower by admitting a mistake rather than making excuses.

Great salespeople, like great leaders, are effective in selling their vision and conviction.

Authentic passion and deep personal conviction about the value of your offerings is the foundation of persuasion. You'll get results faster if you can convey the personal conviction of your offerings.

- Don't confuse enthusiasm with conviction. For example, conviction translates into being strong on pricing, and adhering to your selling and qualifying process and your principles for doing business.

When you wake up in the morning, are you excited about what you do? Are you excited about the fact that you have a new day to do it? Passion breeds and unleashes conviction. Harnessing the energy fueled from the passion of what you do provides for potential results that are infinite. Do you sell to live, or do you live to sell?

Leadership is courage. Selling is courage.

Courage means staying focused with a positive attitude in the face of adversity. Courage means taking risk, and going past previous limitations and breaking old habits.

Do you have the courage to stop chasing poorly qualified leads and find new ones? Do you have the courage to give up old networking groups that are nonproductive and find new ones?

- Assess risk by looking at best-case and worst-case outcomes. If you can't live with the worst-case outcome, don't take the risk. The most common worst-case outcome in selling is a "no." Can you learn to live with that?

Leadership isn't afraid of failure because failure isn't an option. Failure is only a turn in the road and a lesson learned on the journey to the goal.

Leaders understand the value of their choices and accept that every choice they make, big or small, has a direct impact on their results. They also understand that personal feelings and actions are a choice and keep them congruent with their values. Make that extra call, confront that nagging problem, ask that tough question, or make a courageous choice that will move you closer to your and your customer's goal.

Leadership in selling endures the test of time and adversity. No one excels in all the traits. But the more traits you develop, practice and apply, the greater your continued sales success.

*Garry Duncan is principal of Denver-based Leadership Connections, a sales training company. Reach him at 303-462-1277 or [garry@leadershipconnections.com](mailto:garry@leadershipconnections.com).*

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