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## Keep up your confidence level during slower times

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

Sluggish markets and slow summer days can challenge the best of sales professionals.

Even worse than slowing markets is the self-doubt and loss of confidence that can creep into your mind, sapping energy, conviction and effectiveness.

One reason sales often come in batches is because nothing is better at boosting conviction, confidence and persuasion than closing a good deal. Losing confidence increases the risk of losing even more sales. Remember that it's normal and healthy to question yourself. Occasional introspection creates the opportunity to assess one's self, make changes and grow.

Start with an honest self-assessment. It's easy to let weak habits and sloppy skills sneak into daily routines.

There's a story about two frogs. Each is in a kettle of water. One kettle is slowly heated while the other kettle remains cold. The frog in the cold water jumps into the hot kettle and immediately jumps out when he feels the heat. The frog in the heated water slowly dies, not recognizing the water is getting warmer.

Not unlike the slowly warming water, bad habits and sloppy skills go unnoticed until sales diminish. Difficult times may require new approaches. Some examples:

- If necessary, ask a trusted friend, colleague or manager for input and observation. Only with an accurate assessment can you know what to change or fix.
- Keep a personal fuzzy file to help you through challenging times. Everyone gets an unexpected kick or setback occasionally, but sellers must rebound quickly. A fuzzy file contains letters of recognition, records of previous achievements, awards, personal accomplishments, notes of praise, thank-you notes from customers and other reminders.

If you're new to sales, use similar reminders from previous endeavors. Review the fuzzy file as needed. This helps prevent your inner voice from becoming dogmatic and universalizing negative thoughts in all-inclusive ways, such as "I never," "I can't" and "I should." Fuzzy files remind you that you're in a temporary slump.

- Third, start journaling several times each week. Many successful people do so. Journaling is more than a daily diary, and helps clarify thoughts and set yourself up for change and action.

Jean Maxwell, founder of People Works LLC in Denver, suggests writing out frustrations first, and then a list of things you appreciate before you write affirmations and action plans.

Journaling is powerful because it brings clarity, focus and action. Keep it short and simple. Knowing yourself is an important component of self-confidence. By journaling three to five times a week for a couple of months, you'll build confidence and reduce negative thinking, procrastination and self-doubt. Journaling connects you with yourself.

- Find a way to do something special for someone else. Helping others produces self-esteem and gives an immediate confidence boost. Volunteer, send out notes of gratitude to customers, visit them or spend time at your favorite charity. It's amazing what giving can do for you and how quickly it works.
- Create small successes. It can be as simple as clearing your desk and getting organized.

Psychologists know that kids feel better about themselves when they clean their own room. Build a task list for a goal and start working on one piece at a time.

For example, one seller struggled getting the same high margin as her colleagues. Rather than attempting a large increase at once, she wisely increased her margin incrementally. By selling a few deals at each new level, she gained confidence to sell consistently at a higher margin.

When events seem overwhelming and you lose a few sales in a row, get back on track by dividing the challenge into smaller pieces and conquer them one at a time.

- There's a mind, body and spirit connection. Just as physiology controls tonality, physically acting and appearing confident contributes to being confident. Be aware of your posture, appearance and language. Stop blaming and be accountable. In sales, you can't control what others do, but you can control what you do, including your self-talk, actions and reactions to negative events.

Confidence is in your mind, and just like software, you have to program it and cleanse it, while also keeping the hardware working. Winston Churchill

said it best, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

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