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You are more than 'just a salesperson'

Recently, I heard someone introduce himself as "just a salesperson." I believe selling to be a noble profession that is essential to our economy and high standard of living. So,



C. David Shepherd

when I heard that person say he was "just a salesperson," I wanted to go over and give him a pep talk.

Instead, I'm going to use this column to discuss the contributions made by salespeople.

Let's start with the basics. According to management guru Peter Drucker, the purpose of a business is to "make customers and keep customers." With customers comes revenue; without customers, there is no revenue.

Without customers, any business will fail. And whose role is it to create these customers? For most organizations, the answer is the salesperson. Salespeople provide the revenue stream to support the rest of the organization.

Unfortunately, management may forget the relationship between salespeople and revenue.

Consider the case of Circuit City. In 1997, Circuit City decided to cut costs by firing 3,400 of its highest-paid employees. As a result, they fired many of their most-experienced and effective salespeople and replaced them with lower-paid new hires.

What was the outcome of this ingenious cost-cutting experiment? In November 2008, Circuit City filed for Chapter 11 protection followed by bankruptcy. Of course, this one cost-cutting move did not drive the company into bankruptcy, but it is often noted as one of the factors that contributed to the retailer's downward spiral.

It appears Circuit City management had to learn the hard way what Red Motley, publisher of Parade magazine, had pointed out more than 50 years ago: "Nothing happens until somebody sells something."

Or, as they learned at Circuit City, nothing happens if nobody sells anything. The success of any marketing plan, no matter how elegant, is dependent on the successful implementation of the plan by the sales force in the field.

Salespeople create customers by providing expertise, information and solutions to customers' problems. Salespeople are in offices, plants and even your local Home Depot every day answering questions about products and services designed to solve problems and address needs.

As a result, salespeople play a critical role in the diffusion of innovation in our society.

Salespeople also play a critical role in keeping customers. Salespeople are typically the primary contacts between the buying and selling organizations. As a result, the salesperson is central to providing quality customer service.

Further, because of their boundary-spanning role, salespeople serve as the eyes and ears of the company, providing their organization with important market information such as customer needs and competitive activity.

Finally, let's not forget the profound impact the selling profession has on our standard of living by providing employment. About 10 percent of the U.S. work force is employed in sales positions.

Further, in the foreseeable future, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for salespeople is expected to continue to grow, and these jobs are rated as relatively high-paying positions, not the low-paying positions found in many service industries.

In short, salespeople play a critical role in our society. They generate revenue for the firm, provide feedback about the needs of the marketplace, help customers solve problems and provide jobs and income. So the next time you hear someone say he is "just a salesperson," please correct him. It would be more accurate for him to say he is "the engine that drives our economy and our standard of living."

If you are also a fan of the selling profession or would simply like to know more about our sales education programs at Georgia Southern University, contact me at dshepherd@georgiasouthern.edu or 912-478-1961.

C. David Shepherd is a professor of marketing and director of the Center for Excellence in Sales & Sales Management at Georgia Southern University.

Road to success starts with a desire to change

Success is contagious. Jack Canfield talks about the "law of attraction."

This happens when a person's activities are on target with his or her goals and the



Helen Brown

universe naturally rewards the activity with opportunity.

In my own life, through goal-oriented activities, I have

met some successful power players who have taught me that true happiness is knowing my purpose, doing what I love and acting on it.

Here is a sample of the language of success.

"I am staying on track with my success goals (list them here), no matter what."

A successful person will make mistakes and priorities will change. A complexity of thoughts and emotions surface that are not always aligned with our goals. Roadblocks to success, we call them.

As a coach and counselor, I help people to tear down roadblocks and to overcome difficult life experiences as they strive for success.

Here are some tips my clients and I practice daily. They serve as reminders to keep us on track with our plans to be successful.

Dare to dream. Success often starts with a desire

Balance, balance, balance. Don't forget about the other stuff in your life that already brings you joy and fulfillment.

to change, to do something differently or better. Meditate on that desire and envision yourself successful. Know that there is risk involved in being the best you can be.

Many self-help coaches in the industry suggest creating a dream or vision board to cement your goal(s) for who you want to be. You can use this vision board of colorful pictures and inspirational words to keep you on the success track.

Create your support network. We all need cheerleaders as we make changes and go for our goals. These individuals may be supportive friends, mentors, colleagues, family, coaches, counselors. These are go-to people when you need them most.

Document your thoughts and feelings. What you are doing is courageous, and journaling allows you to chronicle an important time in your life. You can look at your writings later and remind yourself of your achievements and maybe learn something new.

Goal-setting is not part of our school curriculum, and we have to develop this specific skill on our own.

Find a workshop or

seminar or locate a life coach that reinforces your ideals and can provide you with helpful tools to achieve your personal and professional goals. The information is well worth the investment of time and money.

Balance, balance, balance. Don't forget about the other stuff in your life that already brings you joy and fulfillment.

If you are like me, your adrenaline never stops pumping when it comes to working on success goals. So, manage your time wisely and know that even when you are "off," you are still on track with your goals.

Know that personal and professional success is for everyone. If you want to experience joy, happiness, contentment, freedom, self-confidence, empowerment, passion, love and much more, contemplate your life and the success you can have if you want it.

Helen Brown is the owner of Helen Brown, The Success Coach. She offers life coaching services and life experience counseling focused on personal and professional success. She can be reached at helenbrown09@gmail.com or 912-373-4380.

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