

From Wipeouts to Winners: How Great Sales People Ride The Wave of Momentum

By Bette Price, CMC

Successful sales people stay ahead of their competition because they have momentum. They're not satisfied with merely making quotas, they maximize their efforts by performing every day with a set of intentional actions and an attitude that keeps their thinking focused on what can happen versus what hasn't happened. It's called momentum. Eloise Owens, President of The Momentum Company, and a nationally respected sales consultant who is known as the Momentum Maker, says, "Momentum is not gained and kept by doing one thing 100 percent better. It is doing 100 things, 1 percent better." In other words, little things do mean a lot. They know more. They do more, thus they become more.

Great sales people develop an attitude much like that of a great surfer—ever focused on the conditions surrounding them and paying attention to details that minimize their wipeouts and maximize their ride. A surfer's success is all about catching new waves and riding them for all they're worth. Like great surfers, great sales professionals don't wait for the phone to ring, for example, they are committed to creating their own momentum.

Here are a few of the most common momentum breakers, according to Owens, and ways to turn them into momentum making waves of success:

Sales Breaker #1: Thinking that since your sales skills have brought you this far, you have no need to change. Flawed thinking. The best of the best are always teachable and open to learning new things. There's something distinctive about sales people who value life-long learning. They are the one's you'll find in the winner's circle. Owens cites a tale of an old Chinese Master teacher who was sent a

student. Constantly during instruction the student would reply, “Yes, I already know that.” So the Master stopped the lesson and invited the student to join him for tea. As the teacher filled the student’s cup, he didn’t stop when it became full. Soon there was water everywhere. The student shouted, “Wait, stop! My cup is already full, it can’t hold anymore!” “Ah,” the Master replied, “As it is with learning. If you think your cup is full, you have no room for anything else.” Set your ego aside when listening for feedback. Stay teachable. Soak up feedback and be willing to empty yourself of the old so you can be renewed with the new.

Momentum Breaker #2: Selling becomes so routine that you think you can do it blindfolded, with your hands tied behind your back.

Routine can be dangerous, Owens warns. It can cause you to sell on automatic pilot and take the personalization away from each and every customer. Dare to rethink your sales approach. Take your job and break it. Sell differently, and avoid getting stuck in routine ways of selling.

Momentum Breaker #3: You allow paperwork to be a major momentum breaker.

Owens says that time and time again she has seen sales people interrupt their sales efforts for things like writing orders, producing proposals, filling out reports, writing thank you notes, and a bevy of other paper related tasks. It’s not that these tasks aren’t important to the job, but there are more productive ways to handle paperwork than allowing it to interrupt your sales process. Owens suggests, “Get into Rush hour and get out of paperwork blues.” Here’s how it works: Make a sign that reads: Please Do Not Disturb—I’m in RUSH HOUR! Make it bright yellow and laminate it. Throw every paper task you have to do for that day into your RUSH HOUR

basket until the designated time. When that designated hour arrives, post your sign and pull out your basket of paperwork. Focus only on paperwork until it is done. Let others know that you cannot be disturbed when you're in RUSH HOUR. Don't take calls unless they're an emergency. Stay totally focused and you will be amazed at how much you can accomplish.

Sales Breaker #4: You just landed an account you've been after for months so you decide you've earned to take the rest of the day off. When you've closed that hard-earned sale, that's just the time when momentum is in your court. You can feel it. And it feels great. So why break momentum. Why not take advantage of the feeling of success to call on some of those accounts you've been having trouble with? Use your momentum to break through these tough sales barriers. And, do it while you're on a successful high.

Sales Breaker #5: You think selling would be easy if it weren't for your manager. "Sales is a tough game for everybody, Owens concedes. But, ultimately, she explains, You are the one who determines what breaks your momentum or sparks it into high gear." Blaming a manager merely turns that power over to someone else. Plus, managers are people too; they're human, just like you. Internal tensions break momentum, so do what you can to reconnect with your manager and work as a team—help turn tensions into teamwork and you'll both gain momentum.

Momentum isn't something that happens on its own. Develop an attitude like that of a surfer—committed, open to change, and ever-focused on the conditions. With constant awareness and focusing on your client's individual needs, you too can ride the wave of momentum in success in sales.

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Bette Price, CMC, is an author, consultant and professional speaker and president of The Price Group. She is the co-author of True Leaders: How Exceptional CEOs and Presidents Make A Difference by Building People and Profit (Dearborn Trade Press). She may be contacted at 972-404-0787 or www.pricegroupleadership.com where you may also sign up for her True Leader Letter.