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## Dangerous Sales Myths (and the lessons to be learned)

To succeed in sales – in the long term – you need to know what you are doing and why you are doing it. When I ask salespeople do they know what it is they are doing and why they are doing it, their response clearly tells me that they are in fact, operating to a set of mis-conceptions and assumptions that means they will probably never reach their natural potential. At DEI, we call these mis-conceptions and assumptions, *dangerous myths*. We've identified at least 25 of them that are the basis of many selling operations. Here are six of the most common sales myths that I come across in nearly all sales teams.

**Myth #1: *The longer you hold onto a prospect the “warmer” it gets.*** The opposite is in fact true –that is, once the normal sales cycle is passed. Everybody *could* buy. But only a small percentage actually do buy *now*. Most salespeople spend too much time dealing with dead prospects. We hold onto prospects until we hear “no” but we never actually hear no! Prospects have a habit of not letting you know that they are “dead.” So, you have to have a rule for it. It's called your sales cycle. It's the date you start to worry that this sale is not going to happen. Drop the dead prospects. (By the way, this myth usually takes the form of “every prospect is different; it depends!”).

**Myth #2: *I don't need to prospect – anymore.*** Why? Because I have “built up” so many prospects already. Well, the reality is most of your prospects are long dead. You just failed to spot it. You should have replaced them. You should have replaced them four weeks ago, eight weeks ago. Now it's too late. You need to prospect all the time. All you need to know is the *number of times* to prospect. And there's a right and wrong number.

**Myth #3: *Salespeople need to be optimistic.*** And isn't it interesting that most sales forecasts are equally optimistic! The sales graveyard is littered with the hopes of optimistic salespeople. We depend on sales to happen based on the slimmest of evidence. “*We're certainly very interested. This looks like something we could use*” ends up as a forecasted sale. Then we find that we're 30% off forecast – every month. Work only with prospects who are working with you. Stop working with people who say the right things, but are not *doing* the right things to move forward. Be realistic rather than optimistic. You'll have fewer prospects but (far) more sales.

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**Myth #4: *I only deal with “qualified” prospects.*** Qualification! One of the great myths of selling. Follow this myth and you end up asking people to confirm in advance that they will buy by asking “qualifying” questions and then believing what you hear. You then attach the highest percentage possible to the forecast. The sale doesn't happen. You're shocked. “He sounded qualified to me!”

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The ensuing discussion takes up three-quarters of the sales meeting. Qualifying is short-cut selling. It's for amateurs who want only the easy sales. What most people call qualification should really be called list-building. Stop confusing list-building with qualification. Qualification *is* selling. Stop trying to find people who "promise" to buy before you start to sell.

**Myth #5: You can only sell to people who "need" you.** Amateurs sell only to people who need them – the easiest people to sell to. Professionals sell on a different level. *They look for what people are doing and then help them to do it better.* They get the extra sales from the people to whom it made sense to use your service – now – based on helping them do something better. There are a lot more people out there doing things that they could do better – using you - than there are people who know they need what you sell. Needs-based selling will get you some sales; it never gets you enough.

**Myth #6: Selling is a numbers game.** Does anyone know what this actually means? Which number are we talking about? Selling is not a numbers game. It is in fact, a ratios game, based on the *right* numbers rather than a lot of numbers. Professional salespeople know the difference intimately because they know their ratios.

***Selling is not a numbers game. It is in fact, a ratios game.***

**Lesson #1:** Most salespeople are very able, well-meaning people who end up operating to a set of myths and tricks of the trade rather than a logical proven process. And, because most sales "professionals" have never been *educated* in selling – never mind trained – they end up with too many tricks and too little trade.

**Lesson #2:** Be careful what sales training you use and re-evaluate your own internal training or even the training that you give yourself. Training can often reinforce bad habits, except it usually takes the passive form of "it was good to hear the basics again." It's often these mythical – and unchallenged - "basics" that are causing your sales team to be unproductive.

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**Lesson #3:** Before you try to train or re-train anyone, think first about education and re-education! Salespeople who operate to the myths outlined above, have had a poor sales education rather than poor training and need to educate themselves in a proven, transparent selling process.

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