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How To Use A Powerful Leadership Tool To Step Up Sales Results

By Brent Filson

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Summary: Brent Filson observes that sales people often achieve a fraction of the results they are capable of because they neglect to apply a powerful leadership tool that can be used in many sales processes. It's a tool he has taught to thousands of leaders worldwide for the past 20 years, and when used in sales, it can substantially step up results.

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Good sales people can close, but few "step up" for even more sales from that close. Yet stepping up should be one of the easiest accomplishments in sales -- that is if you know how to build the staircase.

Do it by applying a leadership tool I have taught thousands of leaders worldwide during the past 20 years. The tool is simply to foster a particular viewpoint, which is this: Challenge people not simply to do a task but to take leadership of that task.

The difference in results-producing effectiveness between doing a task and taking leadership of a task is the difference between the lightning bug and lightning.

This change in viewpoint may seem simple even simplistic; but when put into action many times daily, it can work wonders.

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For instance, I worked with a manufacturing leader whose workers were constantly falling short of productivity goals. I told him he was leading the workers in the wrong way; he was ordering them to get productivity advancements. I told him that he should have the workers sign on as leaders of productivity advancements. When the workers began seeing themselves as such leaders, they started hitting the goals consistently.

Now, let's apply this leadership tool to the sales process. I'll show you how to get step-ups in results that go far beyond the results achieved from closes. Here are three ways to do it.

(1) Don't Just Sell Products, Get Cause Leaders: Salespeople often fail to get step-ups because they have a short-sighted view of the customer. They view the customer as only a customer! Whereas, if we

want to get step-ups, we must see the customer not just as a customer but as a "cause leader," one who can lead our cause both inside and outside their company. Instead of aiming just to sell a product, to get a close, aim to turn your customer into your cause leader.

For instance, I consulted with a materials supplier that wanted to acquire new customers in the computer industry. The salespeople of the materials company not only worked diligently on closing with the engineer-customers but also on creating step-ups by persuading those engineers to be the cause leaders for their materials within the company.

Here is the way that they enlisted that leadership. They discovered that the engineers needed increased productivity and faster cycle-times — and to do it with fewer resources.

In response, the sales people developed a materials performance package for the engineers that increased their productivity and cycle-times. In addition, they brought in productivity experts from their own company to help the engineers streamline their design processes. They're not only selling their materials. They're selling productivity as well. Seeing that the sales people were helping them meet their vital needs, the engineers became the sales people's cause leaders within their company — unleashing a torrent of step-ups.

(2) Start Early: George Burns said, "I had to work hard for 20 years in vaudeville before I became an overnight success in radio." That's a lesson in stepping up. Stepping up sales results with my leadership tool doesn't just happen overnight. You must prepare to get those step-ups starting in the early stages of the sales process: when prospecting for new clients, identifying decision makers, and making initial calls.

In this early stage, ask yourself: "What is the close in this sale? And how can that close lead to the customer not simply buying my product but also becoming the product's cause leader, both inside and outside his/her organization?"

For instance, the sales people of the materials company I mentioned aimed to replace their competitors' materials with their materials in computer housing applications. With that focus, they would have gotten closes — but not step-ups. The differences between their competitors materials and their materials were negligible in cost and performance.

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The sales people continued to develop the traditional channels to their customers' purchasing departments. But they also began building step-ups early by including design engineers in their first-stage sales activities. They focused on being their customers' "design partners" -- not simply showing them where they could save costs and achieve performance advantages but also showing them how they could get market share through the innovative uses of those materials.

Getting in early as their customers' design partners, they not only got closes but step-ups from those closes by integrating their materials into new generations of housings.

(3) Link to "Must-Have" Results: Step-ups happen only when you answer the vital needs of your customers -- not the nice-to-have needs. Discover those needs by asking and answering: "What are your customers absolute must-have results?"

Those "must-haves" are your great step-up opportunities, because when you are delivering on the must-haves, your customers are more likely to become your cause leaders.

In the above example, the sales people were able to get step-ups because they focused on their customer's "must-haves", productivity and cycle-time.

Here's another example dealing with another business sector: I consulted with an insurance company whose growth had flattened out. We found out a key reason why. Their products were not meeting the must-have results of their customers. The must-have results of their customers were that they absolutely had to grow their businesses. Yet the company's products did not materially address the growth needs of their customers.

Only when the sales people convinced their own company to develop and sell products that met the growth needs of their customers were they able to turn those customers into cause leaders. Once those new products were offered to the customers, they far outsold the old products.

Don't sell yourself short by focusing exclusively on the close. Liberate the step-up opportunities that are embedded in most closes by using this powerful leadership tool of challenging people to lead not simply do. By getting customer cause leaders, starting early, and linking to must-have results, you can multiply sales far beyond what closes achieve.

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The author of 23 books, Brent Filson's recent books are, **THE LEADERSHIP TALK: THE GREATEST LEADERSHIP TOOL** and **101 WAYS TO GIVE GREAT LEADERSHIP TALKS**. He has worked with thousands of leaders worldwide during the past 20 years helping them achieve sizable increases in hard, measured results. Sign up for his free leadership ezine and get a free guide, "49 Ways To Turn Action Into Results," at www.actionleadership.com

On St. Valentine's Day, Or Any Romantic Interlude, Woo Your Sweetheart With Chocolates,

Roses ... AND A Leadership Talk

By Brent Filson

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Summary: Leadership authority Brent Filson asserts that wooing one's sweetheart can be done with a special kind of communication methodology which he has been teaching leaders worldwide for 21 years.

On St. Valentine's Day, Or Any Romantic Interlude, Woo Your Sweetheart With Chocolates, Roses ... AND A Leadership Talk
by Brent Filson

On Valentine's Day, or any romantic interlude, lovers should woo their sweethearts with chocolates and roses — but also a Leadership Talk.

My experience in teaching the Leadership Talk to thousands of leaders worldwide for the past 21 years confirms that the Talk is a boon for leaders of all ranks and functions in their jobs and careers.

But I've also learned, to my surprise, that many leaders are employing the Leadership Talk effectively outside their jobs in their personal relationships.

Giving Leadership Talks helps leaders get a lot more results in organizations. Leaders see how much more effective as motivational tools Leadership Talks are than speeches and presentations.

Speeches and presentations communicate information. But Leadership Talks have you establish a deep, human, emotional connection with your audience.

That human connection is important in getting great results in your job; but it is also important in getting great results in your personal life — even your love life.

If you want to win or sustain the fondness of a loved one, a Leadership Talk may just make it happen.

Mixing leadership and love may seem like mixing apples and oranges. But great leadership and love share common elements. For one thing, when you are wooing your lover, you may be taking the lead. And for another, using a Leadership Talk, you're fostering a deep, heartfelt relationship — as great leadership often does.

Here are a few pointers on giving a Leadership Talk that you can put into effect this Valentine's Day or any other interlude for love. Before you speak, simply ask three questions: Do you know the needs of

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your lover? Can you bring deep belief to the relationship? And can you have your lover take action? If you say `no' to any one of those questions, you can't give a Leadership Talk.

The questions apply to lovers as well. To foster a deep, human emotional relationship, you must know what your sweetheart needs, the deep belief you bring to the relationship, and finally, the action you want your sweetheart to take.

However, the questions are not meant to be stumbling blocks to your Leadership Talk but stepping stones. If you answer `no', step back and assess your situation. Think through what you might say so that you can `yes' to each question. Then speak. Give a Leadership Talk. And, by the way, don't forget the chocolates and roses.

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