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Prospecting – We are all subject to The Law

Of the Hierarchy of Habits©

By Bill Truax

Just like gravity, you are under the control of the Law of the Hierarchy of Habits whether you like it or not. But unlike gravity, many of us don't realize how important this law is to our performance in virtually every skill we perform.

The Law of the Hierarchy of Habits says that,
"Under pressure, you will do what you are most prepared to do."

Now this makes a lot of sense when you think about it. Look at someone who has never tried to play tennis. When they get out on the tennis court they look like a real klutz. The same thing with bowling or golf or really any other skill based activity.

Now most of you will probably say that this is common knowledge and it is easily overcome. First, you have to be taught the right way to hold the racket, or club or release the ball. Then you have to practice so you can do it better and better. That makes sense and is how most of us gain at least some proficiency in these sports. Also, how many teams do you know that perform well without practicing together? So the key factor here seems to be learning a skill and then practicing it.

Today we also refer to this as muscle memory. It is also the reason pilots train in handling emergencies over and over. So if one should occur, they are prepared to handle it correctly - they will respond as they "are most prepared to do." Most of us have trained our muscles to drive a car so we handle nearly every situation "automatically."

This is where the law comes in. Many situations you face put you under pressure to some degree. As a result, your performance will reflect the degree with which you are prepared to perform. If you have practiced and "trained" your muscles to act the way you want, then your performance will reflect that development. If however, you have not prepared yourself, then your performance will reflect that lack of preparation and you will be disappointed.

My golf game is terrible. Every time I play, I say that I will never play golf again. And I have seen Jack

Nicholas and Arnold Palmer and the other greats play lots of golf. I know how to play scratch golf, so why don't I play scratch golf?

The reason is simple; I don't prepare myself to play like they do. When the Law of the Hierarchy of Habits hits Arnold Palmer he plays as he has prepared himself to play, the same thing holds true when Bill Truax plays. I don't deserve to score as well as Arnold Palmer.

Now when you decide to Prospect and make cold calls, how can you expect to perform? The way that you have prepared, of course. The same thing holds true with your sales presentations and objection handling techniques, every aspect of your sales conduct.

One thing that has always surprised me is that a sales professional will practice his or her golf game, bowling, tennis, or soft ball, but will not practice their prospecting or presentations skills. Yet their prospecting and presentation skills are critical to their success and happiness. And also gives them the

opportunities to play those games!

When I go in the field to spend time prospecting with a sales person, I do all of the prospecting calls myself. The sales person is there to watch and answer technical questions because I don't know their products. Before we go out on the calls, I have to learn the wording for the prospecting call; I call it a BLITZ CALL®. So I write it out, practice saying it aloud, and ask the sales person if it makes sense. When it does, I am ready. You see, I have prepared myself for prospecting and making cold calls.

There is always some pressure on you when you are cold calling. If you are practiced and ready you will do well, if not, you will do less than well. The reason is simple. We are all subject to the Law of the Hierarchy of Habits.

Sell Well and Often,

Bill Truax

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Prospecting – Choices: Where will you choose to be tomorrow?

By Bill Truax

In sales it sometimes seems as if you are forced into a series of activities that don't help you accomplish your goals. Customer service, proposal preparation, you may feel as if you are trapped into a certain mode of conduct.

I once believed that sales was sort of a narrow vocation, especially if you have a small variety of products or services to offer. But now I am convinced that sales offers more options than any other job. It is all based on choices.

Choices are what got you to where you are today and the choices you are making today will get you to where you will be tomorrow. One of the problems faced by sales professionals is that you have the option of making far too many choices.

You make so many choices everyday that you often don't even consider them choices anymore, they are simply habits. Your daily routine each morning, your route to and from work, eating, exercise (or lack of it), etc.

Good or bad, you tend to follow a lot of habits everyday.

When it comes to Prospecting and making Cold Calls, you often choose to avoid making them. This is a bad habit, for obvious reasons. Yet I work with sales people all the time who make this choice, and know it.

Think how your life would be different if you had the habit of Prospecting on a regular basis every day. How would your sales life improve? With a continuous flow of prospects, would you have reduced stress?

Become a student of your self – learn how you work most effectively. Determine how you can add Prospecting to your daily activities. For example, I work best by segmenting my work. If I am telemarketing, I will make a series of calls for perhaps 30 minutes, then go onto some other activity.

I recently heard a speaker say, "discipline is not ability, it is accomplishment."

We have a small business. I am 100% of the sales force. We offer training programs, products, and services. There are many times that I can very easily justify not Prospecting for days and even weeks at a time. I have far too many things to do.

But when my work load slows a little, I am in the same situation I warn others about. Slowing business and few prospects. It becomes a really stupid cycle. Prospect like mad, get a lot of activity started, stop Prospecting and do the work. Then the work trails off and you have to Prospect like crazy again. You are simply going from peak to valley to peak and valley again.

Add to that the need for "crisis prospecting" because of cash flow problems and you have the

additional burden of trying to sell too soon in your relationship with those prospects. Crisis Prospecting occurs when you haven't prospected sufficiently and you are quickly running out of business.

All this can be prevented by simply choosing to set up a system of Prospecting on a regular basis. That is several times a week for me. It may be more or less often for you, depending on your product lines and markets. Regardless, a regular system of Prospecting and making Cold calls is one choice that will make life a lot more fun.

This also requires you to have an adequate number of leads. You can't call on people if you don't know who they are. Therefore get a good source of leads. I use the Ohio Industrial Directory by Harris Publishing. Add to that the Fortune 1,000 company listing, and observation when in the field and you should have a good backlog of companies to call on.

I put each lead on an index card with the phone number and place it in an index card box behind the date card that will remind you to call them. If you are in the field making calls, you can take you card box with you and make cold calls at companies as you see them. This is a great way to get your batteries "re-charged." It also creates a lot of new activity, so be careful not to prospect too much. You still have other responsibilities.

If you chose to make all of those prospecting calls 6 months ago, where would you be now? If you choose to start making those prospecting calls on a regular basis now, where will you be in 6 months?

So you see, it all boils down to a simple matter of choice. You are where you are today because of the choices you made in the past. Where will you choose to be tomorrow?

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