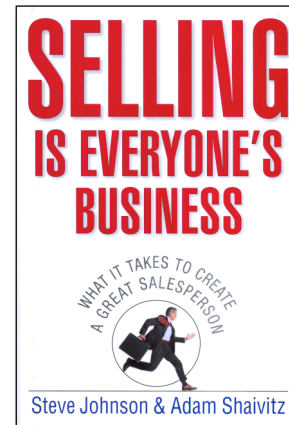


For Immediate Release

For an interview with Steve Johnson or a review copy of the book, please contact Dottie DeHart, Rocks-DeHart Public Relations, at (828) 459-9637 or DSDeHart@aol.com.



The Motivated Summer Salesperson: Six Ways to Stave off “Summer Slowdown”

Popular song lyrics aside, there is a cure for the summertime blues. Sales coach and trainer Steve Johnson suggests a wealth of practical ways to keep your sales team motivated on the “doggiest” of the dog days.

Hoboken, NJ (July 2006)—It’s that time of year again. The heat rising from the asphalt bakes our shoes and saps our energy. We gaze longingly out our windows when we hear the ice cream truck. We daydream about tropical breezes and crashing surf. And as the mercury climbs higher and higher, work ethics everywhere sink like stones. Yes, the dog days of summer can be sluggish ones. And for the men and women charged with bringing in new business, says Steve Johnson, this time of year often becomes the season of excuses.

“You hear people say it all the time: business is just slow in the summer,” says Johnson, co-author of *Selling Is Everyone’s Business: What It Takes to Create a Great Salesperson* (Wiley, 2006, ISBN: 0-471-77673-4, \$24.95). “For many sales organizations, it seems acceptable to slack off, to cut corners, to put off making the tough calls because ‘everyone’s on vacation’ or ‘no one’s in the mood to make big decisions.’ Well, naturally if you *expect* business to be slow, it *will* be slow.”

This attitude reminds Johnson of one of his favorite parables, the hotdog story.

“Sean didn’t have any formal business training, so he did what most people do in those circumstances: he went into sales” Johnson relates. “He opened a little stand on a street corner and all day long he yelled out, ‘Hotdogs! Hotdogs!’ His business prospered

so he bought a bigger griddle and put up a sign that read, ‘Hotdogs!’ Over the years, he made enough money to put his oldest son through college.

“His son returned from college with a degree in marketing and said, ‘Dad, we’re in a recession and business is tough. You’d better peel back a little.’ Sean thought, ‘My son’s a smart college graduate and must know what he’s talking about.’ So he went back to the smaller griddle and stopped yelling, ‘Hotdogs!’ After a few weeks, Sean returned home very dejected and his son asked, ‘What’s the matter, Dad?’ He said, ‘Son, you were right. We must be in a recession and it’s hit my business awfully hard.’”

So how can you keep your sales force from falling prey to the self-fulfilling “summer slowdown” prophecy? Johnson offers the following tips:

- **Tell your salespeople that summer is actually *the best time to prospect*. Yes, it’s true. Here’s why.** Although it’s true that many people do take time off in the summer, *someone* is watching the store. And usually, that “someone” is a head honcho—the person your rep needs to talk to in the first place. “The people who are in the office when everyone else is out tend to be the ones who *have* to make things happen,” reflects Johnson. “In other words, they are the most qualified, most discerning buyers of all. You know how people whine, ‘But I can’t make sales calls on a Friday afternoon?’ I say, *baloney!* That’s the *best* time to do it because even if no one else is in a buying mood, the decision makers will be.”

- **Impending vacations are not stumbling blocks; they’re catalysts.** When a salesperson calls a prospect and she says, “I’m getting ready to go on vacation so I can’t meet with you,” tell him not to give up. Instead, he should say, “It’s great that you’re going on vacation. That makes it even more critical that we meet right now, *before* you go.” Likewise, it’s okay for a salesperson to use his *own* upcoming vacation to speed things along. For example: “Look, I’m going on vacation in two weeks so we really need to get the ball rolling in the next few days.” Vacations create a natural sense of urgency and spur people to get as much done as they can before they leave town, notes Johnson.

- **Urge salespeople to work smarter so they can take advantage of the summer weather.** “Look, it’s understandable that people want to get outside and work in the garden or spend a few hours fishing,” says Johnson. “There’s nothing wrong with that. Tell your salespeople that if they want to take off early one afternoon, that’s fine. They can come in a few hours early and make lots of progress before they leave. It’s amazing how much gets accomplished when people really focus on their work, and those quiet, early-morning hours are usually highly productive ones.”

- **Give your salespeople spontaneous days off when they’ve earned them.** Even if you do this only on very rare occasions, it’s a gesture that packs a big wallop. Johnson, who coaches the Los Angeles Clippers sales organization, relays this story: “Everyone on the Clippers’ sales team had been working extra hard for weeks breaking records left and right. On the Thursday before Memorial Day, the executive vice president, pleased with

their performance, came in and jokingly made this announcement, ‘If anyone shows up for work tomorrow, you’re fired.’ He gave them a four-day weekend on the spot that was totally unexpected—and highly effective.”

- **For short bursts of motivation, create summer promotions.** “Contests are tried and true motivational tools, but they seem to be especially effective in the summer when people are naturally focused on having fun,” says Johnson. “Say ‘Meet this goal and you’ll get a three-day weekend, or a cash prize, or get in a drawing for a luxury cruise for the family,’ and watch how fast your sales team shakes off the summer blahs.”

- **But remember, creating true motivation is a long-term process. Work all year long to instill good sales habits in your people.** As Johnson discusses over and over in *Selling Is Everyone’s Business*, you must create systems that ensure your salespeople are developing and perfecting the right sales habits. For example, regular goal-setting meetings (GSMs)—in which coach and salesperson meet one-on-one to review performance from the previous period and commit to a game plan and short-term action steps for the upcoming period—help you keep an eye on what your salespeople are doing *consistently*. “Of course, you hold these meetings all year long,” he points out. “If you as a sales coach are doing your job right, your people won’t slack off during the summer in the first place. They’ll have an innate sense of motivation that knows no season.”

Of course, none of this is meant to suggest that your salespeople don’t need a vacation. Perhaps what you’re interpreting as a lack of motivation is something entirely different: burnout.

“We all need to walk away from the daily grind once in awhile,” says Johnson, who, practicing what he preaches, took his family to Europe this summer. “As a sales manager, you know when someone has worked his fingers to the bone and needs a break. Insist that he take a vacation this summer and he’ll come back more motivated than ever, not to mention grateful that you care about him as a person. It’s your job to keep your best people in fighting shape—so take it seriously.”

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About Steve Johnson:

Steve Johnson is one of the most dynamic leaders in the sales and service arena. He is co-author of the 15 times *Los Angeles Times* and Amazon.com bestseller *If You're Not Out Selling, You're Being Out Sold*.

Steve has been working with clients to increase their sales and service efforts for over 19 years as a salesman, sales manager, sales coach, and sales trainer. In his first 10 years in sales, Steve was a top award winner for one of the largest sales training companies in the world. He was recognized as being in the top 1 percent of a worldwide 1,000-person sales force. Steve has been on over 5,000 face-to-face sales calls and has dialed the phone over 150,000 times to schedule appointments, follow-up, and close sales. He is a top achieving expert in the trenches and knows how to coach others to become top achievers.

Steve has developed and implemented hundreds of selling programs for clients such as Morgan Stanley, Countrywide Financial, UBS Financial Services, A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc., RBC Dain Rauscher, Piper Jaffray, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Over 50,000 sales people have gone through many of the different workshops that Steve has created for clients.

Steve lives in Manhattan Beach, California, with his wife, Elisa, and two children, Matthew and Anna.

About the Book:

Selling Is Everyone's Business: What It Takes to Create a Great Salesperson (Wiley, 2006, ISBN: 0-471-77673-4, \$24.95) is available at bookstores nationwide, major online booksellers, or direct from the publisher by calling 800-225-5945. In Canada, call 800-567-4797.

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