BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

Executive Series
Consultative Selling Classroom

Leverage Strengths
CustomSalesTraining.com
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Learning is a challenge!

First we have to get over our natural resistance to allowing anything new into our, already too busy lives.

Secondly, we have the challenge of understanding all this new and unfamiliar information.

Finally, we have to deal with the forces of habit. The habits of routine, how we react, how we feel and how we think.

No wonder this process can seem just too much effort!
But the effort is worth it, and you are worth the effort!

As adult learners we have the added challenge of incorporating our life experiences and all the existing professional expertise we have accumulated into this new mix.

Learning is definitely a challenge, but one that you are up to, and you are not alone. Following are some very important tips that will help you through this process.
Following is our suggested framework for learning that will support you during the new experiences ahead:

- This is a DVD and Workbook learning package. You will need to spend time with both. Allow yourself the time you need to be successful.

- Watch the DVD on its own first! Allow you to watch and listen to the material without distraction. If you have the workbook in front of you, your attention will be distracted. Leave the workbook to one side for now.

- Put on the DVD, be open-minded to what you are about to see and hear. You do not need to take notes or do anything else at this stage.

- After you have watched the DVD once in its entirety, then collect the workbook.

- Watch the DVD and follow along with the workbook. You will notice that the titles on the top, right-hand corner of each page correspond with the blue strip titles that appear periodically throughout the DVD presentation.

- During the DVD presentation, a workbook prompt will appear. The image of the notebook is your opportunity to pause the DVD and turn to your workbook to read the appropriate section and complete the exercises.

  Some sections will have a small amount of reading; some will be quite a few pages.
Some exercises will require just a few minutes of thought to complete; others will be involved and require you to gather information from your real life work situation. Be prepared to take the time you need to complete the learning process thoroughly.

Each one of us has different learning styles and very different life experiences to draw from. Do not judge yourself against how long or how well others have worked through this material.

The goal is to advance your existing skills; this is not a test situation or a race to the finish. As we have said before, allow yourself to succeed. Understand the natural barriers we all face as experienced professionals in a learning situation and use these steps as a framework for success.

Finally, enjoy the process. Expand your knowledge and have a great learning day!
For thousands and thousands of years, people have been problem solvers. For our ancestors, the first problem to solve was acquiring the physical strength and skills needed to answer the basic questions of existence; “how will I find enough food to eat and where can I locate clean water to drink?”

Luckily, for many of us today, the basic survival needs are met without much effort. However, as our lives have evolved, we find that we still need to equip ourselves with survival skills of a different variety. This workbook will help you to identify your own unique skills and talents that will form the basis to build on your strengths and achieve the personal, professional consulting level you visualize.

Imagine Thor and Zug Zug, our ancestors, back in Europe thirty thousand years ago. Thor’s problem was how to find enough food to eat. He needed lots of protein to run all day and climb the trees quickly when the saber tooth tiger came. Zug-Zug, Thor’s hunting partner, needed to protect the game from the saber-tooth tiger when the tiger wanted to take it away from them. They had no time for anything but problem solving.

Over the last few years, in comparison to our history, in some lucky parts of the world people have been able to focus on talents and strengths. The Leonardo Da Vinci’s, Beethoven’s and Agatha Christie’s of the world have found what they love to do and do best. And look what it has produced!
Now that you have the ability to focus on your strengths and talents, how will you identify them and how will you make sure that you give them the time they deserve so that you will see the results you deserve to see?

We have evolved from hundreds of thousands of years of survival to a new place, a place where we can thrive. We thrive by identifying and focusing on what we do well.

Imagine being a young child. You are wandering through the house, trying to escape the hated piano lessons. Your brother is in the back yard playing baseball with friends. You watch them. You haven’t been allowed to play baseball other than a little catch with your beloved big brother. He told you that you have a great arm for a little kid. And he said that you catch pretty well too.

What do you do well?

What do you do when given the time to choose what to do?

What do you do as a hobby?

You continue to watch as Howie pitches and your brother, Jake, is catching and Arnold, what a duffus, is trying to hit the ball. You walk out into the yard. Your brother yells out to you, “Tobie, watch out!” Howie pitches a ball toward the plate. Jake gets his glove ready, you wonder why he couldn’t see where the ball was going, earlier. Arnold flails at the ball with an ugly swing, and he accidentally connects. Howie, seems so slow to see where the ball is going. You are already running to where you know it will be and standing with your hands up as it skitters along the ground. The ball hits lumps of turf, bounces up, you
shift your hands and in one smooth action, you catch and throw the ball back to home plate. All goes quiet; the three older boys are looking at you in shock. You have just discovered a personal talent!

We survive by solving problems. We thrive by focusing on strengths. We achieve superb performance by focusing on our own personal, individual strengths. As a child, would you have been better off taking piano lessons that you hated because of your tin ear, or focusing on hitting a round ball with a round stick?

The traditional management framework is based on working on weaknesses.

Fixing that big red X

This approach works, but only if the big red x is a critical weakness!

If a sales professional can never get their customers to commit to something that is in their best interest, then the sales rep has a critical weakness that they must overcome by learning how to obtain a customer’s commitment. If an outside sales person lives in LA or Las Vegas, or San Diego and cannot drive out to see their customers, then this is a critical weakness that will negatively impact their professional performance. Regardless of how good the sales rep is at every other aspect of their job, he/she must remove this critical weakness by learning how to drive, in order to succeed.
Today, I accept that I have a tendency to arrive late to meetings. This gives the impression that I am disorganized, lack respect for other’s time and perhaps is a form of control over situations.

I will not allow this to become a critical weakness.

As of today, I am more self aware that this is a part of me that I will change by taking personal ownership when I make an agreement to meet with someone.

I will take time to plan and prepare so I feel in control.

I will also discuss this issue with our team admin and seek moral support.

You probably have already identified and conquered your critical weaknesses. Next in line are those things that hurt you. You know what they are. Your managers, bosses, wives, fathers, mothers, cousins, and teachers have all pointed them out to you; perhaps you have heard that you are disorganized, or a perfectionist, or a procrastinator, or do not set boundaries, or are a little passive aggressive. Whatever it may be, the important step is to honestly identify the issue and put a plan in place to do damage control.

How? The first step is critical, and the hardest to accomplish; face up to your weakness, name it, evaluate it, own it by accepting it as part of you and take personal responsibility for it.

Next, put systems in place to prevent this vulnerable area from becoming a critical weakness.

Next, ask for help in making sure that it does not hurt you. For example, if you are slightly dyslexic and you are entering orders for a certain size ad in a certain area, make sure you double proof the ad and then have someone else check it too.

If you are not as strong on follow up as you would like and it negatively impacts your business, put follow up first on your calendar each day, to make sure that the rest of the day is free for the things you love and are good at.

Each and every single one of us has areas of weakness, and they contribute to who we are. The important point is to understand yourself enough to ask for support to control, contain, or perhaps just be aware of weaknesses so they do not become critical. Critical situations rob us of time and energy that we need to focus on our strengths.
Identify Your Strengths

Personal Skills Inventory

If you were to ask your boss and coworkers what you are good at, what would they say? Are you great at cold calling, asking for referrals, up-selling, creating rapport, overcoming objections, and winning out through sheer hard work?

Normally we have strong skills in areas where we have innate talent or where we have persisted and developed skills despite a lack of talent.

It can be a very useful self-awareness exercise to understand how we think others perceive us against the reality of how we are viewed by those around us. Later on you will be asked to gather some feedback from family, friends and co-workers, but for now, take a moment in self-analysis and then briefly answer the question below:

What do you think they would say that your strengths are?
Identify Your Strengths

Skills vs. Talent

Skills vs. talents. Which is better? What makes you a better person, employee, sales person? Before we move on, let us take a moment to understand the difference between a skill and a talent.

Skill refers to a proficiency that is acquired or developed through training or experience.

Talent refers to a marked inborn ability, such as for music or an artistic ability.

In many organizations in the past we would have all been told, as sales people, that to be successful we had to fit a certain mold. We all have to be organized and aggressive and be good at cold calling and closing. If we are all those things then we will be successful. Look around you. Do all of the successful people in your organization look the same? Are some of your co-workers great sales people but don’t seem to be aggressive?

Do you have co-workers who never miss a deadline and yet they have a desk you could stir with a stick? Do you have other co-workers who do very well and if you looked up the definition of an obsessive-compulsive neat freak in the dictionary, their picture would be there? Do you have co-workers who seem obnoxious but their customers love them? This is the wonderful thing. Value these differences as unique gifts. One is neither better nor worse or more valuable than another.

We all have unique gifts and the combinations of these gifts in various strengths make us who we are.
 Earlier you were asked to consider how your boss and co-workers perceive you. In this section, you will explore this further. For many of us it can be extremely uncomfortable to identify strengths. We are unused to patting ourselves on the back. This is not about bragging or showing off though, this is about understanding what we enjoy and are good at so we can organize our professional lives to expand on these strengths. So, see if you can get used to how it feels to say “I am good at…” Enjoy it! Revel in it!

I know that this is easier said that done, but if you want to maximize your effectiveness you will have to identify your strengths before you can improve them! Think about the parts of the job that you thrive at and that seem to be effortless for you. These are your strengths. What are the joyful parts of your day? Do you enjoy doing research, getting information on the web, practicing your counters to OGGI, the actual closing of the sale? These are your strengths. Think about what you do for a hobby. Do you work in local theater as an actor or director? Do you work on the books at your church or fraternal organization or do you love to call on businesses and ask for donations? When you are working in your home or garage, is it satisfying to make sure that every item or tool is in its proper place? Do you approach new projects in a planned, systematic way or is it a mad explosion of creative energy?

The following question sheet will help to get your thought process going. The list is not intended to be all inclusive, so feel free to continue on a separate sheet. The more self-discovery you do now, the easier the next sections will be.