



Success DNA - Why It's Critical for Sales Professionals

By Scott Zahn, Co-founder

For years, most sellers have agreed that people buy from people – they trust. While the phrase is outwardly simple, execution is always a bit more challenging as “trust” has such a broad definition. For the first time in over a decade, the current global economic climate will have a significant impact on all sales professionals across all industries. As spending is curtailed or eliminated the number of qualified selling opportunities is likely to drop significantly. Therefore, it will become increasingly important to win a higher percentage of the opportunities that are uncovered.

While many sales training and productivity firms flood the market with messages about how to boost performance, choosing which options to insure success this month, this quarter and this year is more challenging than ever. Industry experts are stressing fundamental selling skills as critical tools for surviving in this business cycle. Recent research shows that the best sales organizations are focused on how to leverage the key selling skills of their top performers to improve everyone else's performance.

What are the key attributes of the “A” player – their Success DNA - that makes the selling results so predictable? While the “B” and “C” level sales reps will struggle even more in this economy, the “A”

players will continue to perform well. How do they do it quarter after quarter and what knowledge, skills and abilities can be transferred to other reps who are not “A” players? Answering these questions will give proactive selling professionals a hedge against the uncertainty that is ahead.

While there have been many theories suggesting the explanation of peak performance, experts universally agree that peak performers simply connect better with each prospect or customer. This connection allows the seller to read the selling situation and modify his selling approach based on those observations.

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A Case Study: Aligning Buyer and Seller Behavior

An example of peak performance characteristics is best identified with a real selling scenario. In this case, our seller represents a line of production machinery that is used in the foods manufacturing process. The selling cycles are complex as the demand is traditionally generated at the manufacturing plants which are located in various geographies, but approvals often come from the corporate office

in a distant location. In addition to production and technical buyers, nearly every sale requires corporate procurement for the multi-year capital contract and service plan with ultimate approval from the finance department.

To be successful, the peak performer will isolate the buying preferences of his contacts and understand how this complex combination of individual behaviors will impact each unique sales campaign. By decoding the behaviors of each buyer, the peak performer will plan his sales strategies by observing fundamental assessments for each buyer.

For instance, in one opportunity, the local plant manager is focused on overall production results and it's obvious that he is relying on his project team for technical validation within this project. Armed with these insights, the peak performer is likely to find opportunities to discuss the plant production outcomes and how his offering will impact those measurements. The seller will look for situations to connect his offer with the bigger picture, but he will be careful not to burden the plant manager with the details he is not interested in knowing. The peak performer will try to observe the plant manager's drives and match these observations at all times. The peak performer knows that he can connect faster and more effectively if

the message he is delivering is consistent with the buyer's preferred approach, and absent the details that represent "noise" to the plant manager.

Contrast the peak performer's approach above to that necessary for success with the manufacturing manager who has budget and implementation responsibilities for the new machinery. In the seller's meetings and conversations with the manufacturing manager, he recognizes her focus on details. She asks about financing options. She asks about integration plans. She wants to understand the installation strategies and the resources required from her firm and third party contractors to install the new machine.

The peak performer knows that his selling approach with the manufacturing manager needs to reflect his observations of her behaviors based on her questions, actions and conduct. If he uses the same approach for both the plant manager and the manufacturing manager, one of them will not be comfortable. "Trust" will be compromised and the opportunity could be lost.

Therefore, the peak performer will subconsciously predict the ideal strategy for the manufacturing manager. He will invest the time and effort to help her understand the various components she is evaluating closely. It may mean one-on-one meetings, or specific customer references to provide greater insights or proof statements.

Finally, the peak performer may invest time developing detailed flow charts and projections to isolate and address the manufacturing manager's concerns. While the actual delivery is situational, it's clear to the peak performer that a successful sales campaign to both of these stakeholders will require completely different strategies.

In the scenario outlined above,

the Success DNA identifying the peak performing seller is quite complex. The peak performer observes each buyer within the framework of the opportunity. Through observation, he systematically is able to predict his buyer's tendencies and preferences within the context of the sales cycle activities.

Just because the plant manager had a macro lens in the scenario defined above, doesn't mean the contract negotiations will be high level and cursory. The peak performer understands that behaviors are activity specific and therefore his strategy is based on a series of short term predictions with very specific tactical planning tied to his predictive assessment at the activity level.

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Success DNA – An Objective Approach to Successful Selling

In this economy, an objective approach to selling is critical as the status quo simply will not work – often enough. Those sellers with the Success DNA capable of decoding buyer preferences consistently will outperform all other sellers.

However, because only 10-12% of most sales teams have developed the Success DNA needed to achieve peak performance results, something more is needed to enhance the selling results from a majority of the sales organization. Therefore, the real focus should be on helping the "B" and "C" sellers decode the buying preference they witness and then utilizing those observations effectively.

In a recent study conducted by the Sales Executive Board, researchers

showed how a 5% performance increase within the "B" and "C" ranks results in a 70% top line growth. When sellers filter out the distractions and focus on selling to each buyer, the results speak for themselves. These estimates are achievable by modifying counterproductive processes and adopting a fundamental approach based on sound principals and proven results.

No matter how large or small your company, the Success DNA of your sales professionals is a clear and consistent indication of selling results. By helping individual sellers understand and predict the buying preferences of their prospects with a higher degree of granularity, more sellers can enjoy the same level of success that the peak performers have enjoyed year after year.

Spring Lake Technologies offers solutions to measure Success DNA and most importantly help sellers decode the meanings across all selling environments and markets. The company's SmartSeries suite of on-demand sales performance applications is defining success for sales organizations like RightNow Technologies, Siemens and Advent around the globe across a wide range of industries.

To try SmartSelling from SLT to measure your team's Success DNA, you can click the "Try it Now" link on our web site, or email me at: szahn@springlaketech.com. This limited offer is free for now but, the results will last a lifetime.



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