



## THE BENCHMARK

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# 6 habits of successful salespeople

**T**he industry has changed dramatically over the past five years. We are truly in the new normal now. Part of that new normal is the importance and necessity of the salesman. Where we once were order takers relying on referrals, we have become hunters out of necessity.

What are the attributes and behaviors of the most successful hunters? I've had the privilege of working with more than 100 salespeople since 2008, including business developers and account managers. Through association and observation I've formulated the habits of successful salespeople. I share them with you in hopes that they'll help you improve your game. Here's what I have observed about the most successful salespeople:

**1 They keep the sales pitch simple.** They talk about benefits not just features. Saying you have dedicated account managers is certainly good. But it's a feature. However, telling the customers they get answers when they want them or, and better yet, they get answers before they have to call you is a very good benefit. The simplest pitch? "We manage your budget and minimize your hassle."

**2 They're grinders.** They schedule every week so it includes time dedicated to closing and presentation appointments, phone calls, emails, cold calls, proposals and network-

ing. They block and tackle every week, ensuring a sufficient quantity of time in these activities. Selling is long stretches of rejection interspersed with moments of glory.

**3 They're direct.** They ask targeted and consistent questions to qualify potential clients early (and minimize time invested on low probability prospects). They ask for the sale early to surface and deal with objections. They rarely accept "we'll get back to you" as a close or "we like your numbers" (these are kisses of death and low probability prospects).

**4 They use a list.** They make a contact and opportunity list and organize it from hot to cold. Then, they work the list every week (see No. 2 above) with the goal of advancing, eliminating and expanding "the list." They know the number of leads required to make one sale and they call until they get a "no." They document conversations and emails with the prospects and schedule tasks and dates on a calendar.

**5 They listen more than they talk.** Enough said. (Note: The best way to listen is to ask a question).

**6 They're prepared for every call.** They have an objective, an agenda, a sense for potential objections and things they're willing to negotiate *before* they get on a call. I rode along on a sales call recently. In the car, I asked, "What's the goal for this meeting?" *Meet with the guy!* "What's your agenda?" *Talk about the job!* "Why should he hire you?" *Because he likes us!* "What objections might he have to hiring you?" *I'm not certain!* "OK, let's say we get to the point of closing this today, what's your negotiation strategy?" *What do you mean?* I observed that he was not very successful on that call or, as it turned out, very successful in general.

There you have them: My observations. Not every successful salesman does all of these things all of the time. The best, however, do these things more consistently and frequently than the average guy. Happy hunting!

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