

Are You a Quitter?

I'm going to make a bold statement that you will probably disagree with.

You quit too early.

I don't mean the time you punch out or leave the office or stop calling customers and prospects. I'm talking about how much time and effort you invest when learning a new sales strategy. You see, most people make a few attempts to incorporate a new concept into their sales routine but they often give up before that concept has been fully integrated into their approach. They give up before they master that concept because they don't get the desired result as quickly as they want.

Allow me to share a personal example.

Last December I decided to learn how to play the guitar so I ventured into a local music store and rented an electric guitar and an amplifier. I also bought a self-study program that included a DVD. I returned home eagerly anticipating that I'd be playing a riff from one of my favourite rock tunes in couple of months. Was I surprised (and disappointed)!

Four months later I had made some progress but could only play a few bars without making a mistake. I had only learned to play three strings and several notes even after hours of practise. Unfortunately, I didn't take into consideration that I had NEVER taken a music lesson or learned how to read sheet music. I reluctantly returned the equipment fully believing that I was too old to learn how to play the guitar.

Then, a few weeks later I read a blog post by David Brock who talked about his struggle trying to learn some form of martial arts. He pointed out that he was still struggling to master some basic moves even after six months of lessons.

A subsequent conversation with a colleague reminded me that, on average, it takes 10,000 hours of practice to completely master a particular skill. It doesn't really matter what that skill is. It can be playing a musical instrument, learning how to write more effectively, deliver a powerful speech, or becoming competent in a given sport.

I have to say that I felt like a moron because I realized that I had quit too early. I didn't give myself permission to be a beginner or allow myself enough time to learn the complexities of reading music and playing a musical instrument.

This lesson is extremely relevant to sales.

Learning a new sales concept takes time. I'm not suggesting that it will take you 10,000 hours to learn how to sell effectively but understanding a new sales

concept is completely different than mastering it and most people don't give themselves enough time to become comfortable AND competent integrating new strategies into their routine.

When I work with sales people in my training workshops, participants often say that they have tried the concepts that are presented but they failed to achieve the desired results. In most cases, they made one or two attempts then gave up. But, like any other new skill it is critical to give yourself ample time to become comfortable applying a particular concept.

The only way to become proficient is to practise, practise, practise. We forget that progress is slow; much slower than most people desire. We have become accustomed to living in a society that offers easy solutions, quick fixes, and fast answers. But personal development doesn't happen that quickly.

Let me put this into perspective and share one last example.

A good friend of mine bought a Porsche a few years ago and took advanced driving lessons shortly after taking possession. He was surprised how challenging it was to learn how to handle fast curves and hard braking even though he was already a very competent driver and after an intense weekend of driving he only started to grasp the basics. He has since returned to the driving school and improved his skills.

Here's the lesson.

Give yourself time to become comfortable applying a new sales concept before you quit. Invest the appropriate amount of time to practise that concept. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. Yes, you will make mistakes. You will feel awkward at first. You will fail many times before you master that concept. But, if you stick with it you will eventually get better. You WILL master that skill.

Don't be a quitter!

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