

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

***“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence...
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”***

Calvin Coolidge

Several years ago I accompanied my youngest daughter on a school ski trip. She had never skied, and after a few lessons, stood atop the practice hill. During the next few hours she fell many times as she practiced her newly acquired skill. However, by the end of the day she was able to ski down the entire hill without incident. It took her dozens of attempts. She fell numerous times. But each time she got up, brushed away the snow, and continued her efforts. She refused to give up until she accomplished her goal.

Persistence is a critical attribute for anyone who sells for a living or who owns a business. In their book *Attitude, Your Internal Compass*, Denis Waitley and Boyd Matheson tell the story of a military leader who marched into battle against the opposition six times, and each time his army was driven back. Feeling somewhat defeated, the soldiers eventually took refuge in cave. As the leader pondered how

he could rally his troops to mount another attack, he noticed a spider trying to build its web. To get the web started, the spider needed to jump across an opening. The leader watched in fascination as the spider attempted to complete the jump. The spider failed to land in the proper location in the first several jumps but, undaunted, kept trying. On the seventh attempt it landed in its desired location and was finally able to place the first strand, then create the web. The leader took this as a sign that he must be resilient and engage the opposing army at least one more time. His resilience inspired his troops, and they conquered the enemy on the seventh attempt—and saved their kingdom.

In 2003 I ran my second full marathon (26.2 miles). I had trained for several months and felt ready for the race. At the halfway point I felt great; I was running at a comfortable pace and was actually overtaking many other runners, which prompted me to increase my pace. Three miles later I began running out of steam, but I still had more than ten miles to run. The desire to quit was almost overwhelming. However, I kept telling myself that quitting was not an option. Failure was not part of my game plan for that run. I slowed down and began taking walking breaks. Eventually, the finish line came into sight, and I crossed it with a huge smile on my face. I did not achieve my desired time but I did finish. Persistence won out.

So, how do these stories apply to sales?

I remember reading a study that found eighty percent of salespeople stop trying to contact a potential prospect after approximately three to five attempts. The same study showed that it

took an average of at least seven to nine contacts to close a sale with a new customer. That means that the majority of people give up too soon. They don't connect with a prospect after a few attempts, so they stop calling.

A close friend of mine was once embroiled in a business lawsuit. After a lengthy battle, he finally triumphed with a unique solution. When I asked how he thought of the solution, he told me it was the last thing he could think of. His refusal to give up helped him come up with the answer that would solve his problem.

Selling requires a tremendous amount of persistence. Obstacles loom in front of us on a regular basis. But it is what we do when faced with these barriers that will determine our level of success. A person will face the most challenging obstacle just before he achieves his final goal, and the most successful salespeople in any industry have learned to face the obstacles that get in their way. They look for new ways to connect with prospects. They are tenacious. They refuse to give up, because they know that persistence will help them achieve their goals.

SALES TIP

The next time you encounter a roadblock make the decision to look for a new or different approach. Keep trying until you have exhausted every alternative. This tenacity will often result in a sale.