

Dare to be counter-intuitive



By [Monika D'Agostino](#)

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Recently, I finished reading a book written by one of the "Housewives of New York", Carole Razdiwill. Don't judge me, I love watching these shows. It's one of my guilty pleasures. Contrary to popular perception, this book is excellently written, riveting and it takes you on a journey that is both intriguing and sad. The author is the widow of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' nephew.

The book is entitled: "What Remains", and it describes the story of four young people who were hoping to grow old together as close friends, just that "fate" wouldn't have it that way.

One of the characters in the book is JFK, Jr. and it goes without saying that the crash of his airplane is part of the narrative. As most people know and perhaps remember, the aircraft he was piloting crashed into the ocean near Martha's Vineyard.

It was determined that the crash was caused by "Spatial Disorientation", which is a condition in which an airplane pilot's perception of the plane's direction, height, speed, etc. does not agree with reality.

Perception vs. Reality

It was at that tragic point of the story where I decided to write a blog about sales and how many practitioners suffer from Sales Disorientation, which is a condition in which the sales person's perception of her/his sales approach does not agree with reality. OK, I just made that part up but trust me, it happens a lot.

In the situation where a pilot loses accurate perception of reality it would require her/him to act counter-intuitively and rely on objective, measurable criteria (instruments, radar, etc). Only in doing that, can the course be corrected and the plane landed safely.

In sales, the disconnect between perception and reality can also have very damaging effects, but to my knowledge nobody has died from it, although many sales practitioners might have crashed and burned.

The expectation of success

Those sales professionals who succumb to Sales Disorientation have plenty of time and resources to get themselves out of trouble, but they often continue on as if their determination to succeed at all costs blinds them to the multitude of options they could take advantage of.

Why do sales professionals who become aware of their sales approach not working continue to plunge ahead? An unfounded "expectation of success" appears to play a significant role in such cases. All too often we see salespeople go into sales calls without a back-up plan, assuming they'll be successful. Without really knowing their prospect's/client's real needs, without understanding what real value means, and without a Plan B, they have no other choice, truly, other than to continue on.

In doing so, we find these salespeople developing a kind of tunnel vision that seems to lock up the brain as their sales process with their prospect/client goes awry. And should salespeople be occasionally successful in such situations, their habits are reinforced, and they can begin to write off the not successful encounters to reasons that have nothing to do with their approach or style.

A counter-intuitive sales approach?

Why is it that we need to be counter-intuitive? Because we need to stay connected to our prospects and their world, rather than living in our "sales" bubble humming along.

Very often in sales we are taught to work as fast and as hard as we can and say "yes" at any cost. We are encouraged to please and to accommodate although it's really important to determine if the solution is a fit and if not, then to sometimes walk away from a prospective sale.

Let's look at some specific examples

Perception	Reality
1) Make as many calls as possible	Only effective if you have all the resources in the world, and you are only calling the companies that could profit from your offering
2) Target as many companies as you can	Don't boil the ocean. Be specific on who you want to target otherwise you will get lost in the ocean
3) Tell your prospect what you've got	Rather listen to your prospect and don't push features
4) Focus on the benefits of your offering	Ask the right questions and then develop a value proposition that your prospect can relate to
5) Brag & tell your prospects how great your service is	Focus on the areas that can help your prospect make money, save money, improve their business or their reputation within their organization and they will get excited
6) Convince your prospect that you are the right choice	Your prospect won't need to be convinced if you are the right choice. But what if you are not? Not every organization is a good fit for your service offering
7) Try to get a "yes" from your prospects	Rather go for honest responses, even if it's a "no". The sooner you find out, the better it is so that you can move forward or move on while leaving a good impression

In closing, I know that it probably takes a lot of courage to do things that seem counter-intuitive, but the results can be life saving or in the sales world, very rewarding and life-fulfilling!

Trust me. I know. I've gone down that path many times successfully. You can, too!

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