

The Strategy of Patience

How to Stay With the Game Plan

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As a business consultant and personal effectiveness coach, I find a number of sales leaders are increasingly impatient with their plan and strategy. John Wooden, in his book **They Call Me Coach**, has this to say about patience:

“In game play, it has always been my philosophy that patience will win out. By that, I mean patience to follow our game plan. If we do believe in it, we will wear the opposition down and will get to them. If we break away from our style, however, and play their style, we’re in trouble. And if we let our emotions command the game rather than our reason, we will not function effectively. I constantly caution our team, ‘Play your game!’ Eventually, if you play your game, stick to your style, class will tell in the end! This does not mean that we will always outscore our opponent, but it does ensure that we will not beat ourselves.”



What Wooden is telling us is good advice in sales. Many sales leaders put plans together and then become impatient when they don't see immediate results. The result is an emotional swing that knocks everyone off course and into scramble mode.

Instead of adjusting the strategy part that isn't working, we dump the plan but still expect to reach the goal. Instead of measuring activities that are helping us achieve milestones, we panic. Our confidence drops to zero while our anxiety levels increase. Our effort is high and our enthusiasm is low. When the sales goals are not reached, we blame the sales team. If sales goals are exceeded, we get lazy and expect to get lucky again next year. Either way, we become impatient with our strategy or fall into cruise control, an equally dangerous “MO.” Becoming impatient with the strategy may look like this.

- Telemarketing and cold calling strategies are initiated and then aborted.
- Sales professionals are not held accountable for their territory.
- Skills needed to sell are assumed.
- Sales lunches are conducted without a reason or agenda.
- We're confused about what is really happening in the field.
- Forecasts are unbelievable.
- We stop listening to what our sales team is telling us.
- We don't trust what the sales team is telling us.
- We pretend we don't know what we really do know.
- Sales meetings are unproductive, negative, and meaningless.
- Sales training or motivation to enforce critical skills is placed on the back burner.
- The critical skill sets needed to get big deals are not enforced or taught.
- Winging it becomes the strategy of the day.
- Actual sales productivity per representative is three hours out of an eight-hour day.

What goals are you going to accomplish? What strategies are getting you there? Are you being patient and staying focused on your strategy? Are you in control of your destiny, or do the fires of the day run your life?