

Unique Strain of ADD Strikes Seasoned Sales Professionals

By Linda Stimac, Author,

RxSales: An Expert Performance System

Today Jim Kinney is the president and managing broker of Chicago's preeminent real estate brokerage, Rubloff Inc., with seven offices and 225 agents who average \$7.1 million each in sales. But Jim remembers the day he knew it was time to hang up his agent gear and accept the call of sales leadership.

"I was sitting with a prospective buyer, nodding my head as he talked, smiling at all the right moments," he told me. "But I was actually thinking about my upcoming vacation. Suddenly I was capitulated back into the present, and I realized that I had not heard what my prospective buyer had said for – how long? I had no idea."

Jim Kinney explains a classic symptom of salespeople who suffer from Attention Deficiency. It is the bane of seasoned professionals. They have a command of their subject and extensive experience with similar conversations. It is easy to perform several tasks at once – plan ahead, think about other things, and listen (well, sort of).

A more commonly known condition, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), makes it difficult for children and adults to focus, organize, and finish tasks. Treatment includes medication, counseling, and, in some cases, behavioral therapy. While the exact cause is not clear, researchers have found that ADD tends to run in families, so a genetic factor is likely.

In the RxSales Expert Performance System, we examine sales professionals for signs of a disorder that is specific to their profession. Instead of a genetic cause, research shows that Attention Deficiency in sales is often linked to length of time in the business. It is people, not tasks that do not receive the attention they deserve. And the results can be devastating. Sales professionals pay a high price to engage in a behavior that the rest of our society condones: multi-tasking. They often miss the most important thing that the potential client says – the buying signal. While Jim was mentally landing in Jamaica, did his prospective buyer say The One Thing that would cinch the sale?

Lack of attention is one symptom. Another is impulsivity, defined as "acting before thinking." This happens when the sales professional is taken off guard and loses control temporarily. A potential client says something or does something that has the effect of a curve ball in baseball or a tough shot in tennis. Every sales professional has a different list of tough shots. One says, "Oh, I hate it when prospects say 'All right, show me what you've got,' and I feel like I must perform on cue, like a wind up toy." Another says, "I get annoyed when people take phone calls or other interruptions when I have an appointment with them."

Despite the nature of the tough shot, a salesperson's response is often impulsive and ineffective. Sudden moves are common for sales professionals whose style is alert, fast-paced, eager, and change oriented. However, in sales as in sports, sudden moves can lose the game.

For attention deficiency in sales, treatment involves behavioral conditioning. Part of the prescription lies in learning time-honored ways to achieve the state of concentration – or "one pointed-ness," as the definition suggests. Many top producers' results improve dramatically when they perfect the art of staying in the moment. Some realize that both their personal and professional lives have been running on automatic pilot. They get serious – Yoga classes, books and tapes help them regain focus and control. The second part of the prescription involves developing a response sequence that allows sales professionals to move through their tough shots and regain control of the process once it enters more comfortable territory.

Since Attention Deficiency often plagues the seasoned professionals in a sales organization, Jim Kinney was wise to authorize a Group Diagnosis of his agents. In the first group, we discovered that Attention Deficiency was a major problem. Fifty-percent of the agents showed some evidence of the condition and, for thirty-six percent of the group, Attention Deficiency had become a critical problem. Their leader, Jim Kinney, could have basked in the glow of a record year in 2004. He could have, but he did not. With an eye to the future and a track record of investing in advanced learning, Jim convened a group of agents for lunch one day and recommended elective "surgery" (The Clinic for Sales Professionals™) for this and several other early warning signs.

With proper treatment, sales professionals enjoy Attention Proficiency. They successfully perform their essential role - expert facilitator of decision-making. Anything that takes professionals or their prospects and clients off the natural path of decision-making is an obstacle. That is why Attention Deficiency takes a place, along with Decision Making Dysfunction and Enlarged Approval Gland, as a Killer Condition.

To learn more about RxSales: An Expert Performance System™, visit the Guest section at www.rxsales.com or contact Charles Loew at Charles.Loew@masetllc.com