

Exceptional Selling: The Mything Link

By Linda Stimac, Author, RxSales: An Expert Performance System

To understand what causes many serious selling skill and process gaps, dust off your old edition of Greek & Roman Mythology. Scan the index for your favorite story or character, and you'll discover the universal truth about myths.

Maybe you selected Sisyphus, wicked king of Corinth, who lived in the underworld and rolled a huge stone uphill. This story taught people in ancient Greece that evil is punished. In the myth, the stone always falls back before Sisyphus can reach the top, so he is condemned forever to live a life of continuous frustration and back breaking work in the underworld.

Or is Pandora your favorite? Impelled by her natural curiosity, she opened the jar that she was ordered not to open under any circumstance. Evil escaped and spread over the earth; and, when Pandora hastened to close the lid, one thing remained trapped at the bottom: hope. This sad tale helped to explain why bad things happen. Whenever pestilence, death, war or natural destruction struck, the ancient Greeks knew why.

Like ancient people, sales professionals seek rationale for things that happen to them, and often, it's the bad things that require explanation. Why do prospects take so long to make decisions that they sometimes lose interest completely? How can people not see the benefit of this fine product or service? What makes people say "no"?

Sometimes the sales professional's own actions require justification. Why did I walk away from that prospect when I learned he was talking to another salesperson like me? Why do I have thirty electronic files containing hundreds of sales that are in the "follow-up stage"? Why can't I ask real questions that can turn a sale around?

Positive, supportive beliefs are the cornerstone of an effective sales process. But non-supportive beliefs lead to negative results and are often the root cause of a related skill or process gap. In The CheckUp™, we examine sales professionals for the presence of twenty-three non-supportive beliefs about selling. For reasons you can understand, we call them Myths.

Like their counterpart in legend, sales myths often contain a kernel of truth. Consider the common myth: "It takes a long time to close a sale in my business." No one disputes that it can take a long time to close a sale – especially in industries with complex and lengthy internal sales cycles (classic example: life insurance and its underwriting process).

The hallmark of a sales myth is that there is a negative outcome for the salesperson who believes it. In the example above, it is easy to recognize the potential negative outcome: if you believe that it takes a long time to close a sale, then it will. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Many non-supportive beliefs are the root cause of skill or process gaps. For example, if a salesperson believes that it is not right (or polite) to ask for referrals, then it is likely that the person is not proficient in asking for introductions. This is a shame, considering that it is the best way to build a client base. Even if the person attends a two day workshop on How To Ask For Referrals, new techniques will go unused as long as this powerful but non-supportive belief is allowed to swim around up there in the psyche.

If sales professionals believe that the purpose of a sales call is to make a presentation, they will conduct themselves accordingly. Watch them in action. They barely graze the chair before launching into a features and benefits recitation. The negative outcome? Today, when prospects and clients want information, they take it from salespeople suffering from this myth. But these salespeople are doomed to remain unpaid fountains of information, rather than successful sales professionals.

Myths – the source of many skill and process problems – are insidious creatures. That is why it is crucial to tackle them before anything else. The RxSales blended learning program, called The

Clinic for Sales Professionals™, does just that, beginning with a round of treatment for myths. During this treatment, sales professionals identify potential negative outcomes for each myth in their private collections. They calculate the cost (in lost production) of having these myths. This gets them motivated to begin to replace non-supportive beliefs with positive affirmations with the help of a series of self-exercises they complete and discuss with their coaches.

The process isn't easy. It takes time and patience to rewrite private myth collections. Familiar behavior is driven by those myths, making it hard to change what has virtually become a part of us. Sales professionals are hardwired to believe that their beliefs serve them well – but in the space of a single CheckUp™, they learn that some beliefs actually hurt them.

The payoff is worth the effort. When a sales professional's belief system changes from hazardous to healthy, skill and process gaps close quickly, replaced by new abilities and systems that are constructive and supportive.

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