



**THE
GATTARI
WAY**

Tony Gattari knows a little something about achievement. Now chief energy officer of the Achievers Group, when it comes to sales, it's his way or the highway.

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Tony Gattari is the retail maverick who famously led the sales team that grew Harvey Norman's computer and communication division from \$12 million to \$565 million in just nine years. He traces the company's turning point to one gutsy decision.

While planning was underway for Harvey Norman's launch of Windows 95, a proprietor came to Gattari with the idea of opening all stores at midnight on the software's release date. Australia's position in international time zones would mean that Harvey Norman would be one of the first outlets in the world to sell a copy of the revolutionary software. At first, Gattari was appalled at the suggestion of opening at midnight in the middle of winter, but over the proceeding weeks he grew to like the idea.

"Every store was so crowded on midnight that I couldn't believe my eyes," he says. "The following day news of the launch appeared in every national newspaper. We sold 85,000 copies of Windows 95 in one month. That was the tipping point that created the momentum that transformed Harvey Norman."

There's no doubt that Gattari, now chief energy officer and founder of the Achievers Group, is a colourful character and an emphatic speaker. With quotable phrases and positive maxims slipped into every sentence,

he's in demand as a speaker and trainer in sales and business strategy. It's clear he is comfortable communicating his ideas, and, not surprisingly, the sales world is lining up to hear them.

Here, he shares some key insights into achieving sales success.

STEP SOFTLY

The biggest trap for Australian salespeople, says Gattari, is relying too heavily on sales techniques developed in the US. Americans will accept a more aggressive sales technique than Australians, he explains. "We tend to be a lot more reserved. So what happens is you get all these salespeople who've been on one of these American training courses and they've gone out there and used an aggressive closing technique – and it fails. It fails so bad that the customer is offended."

Instead, suggests Gattari, the salesperson must understand the individual buyer personality before applying the sales strategy. "When I'm selling, I'm constantly playing a game of chess," he says. "I'm trying to work out what is important to the buyer and hit their hot buttons."

SOLVE A PROBLEM

According to Gattari, Australian salespeople must return to the first principle of selling – help your prospect solve a problem. And the best way to do that is to ask questions. "If you want to sell really well learn how to shut up," he says. "You will never lose a sale by asking good questions."

And it's a good idea to refrain from bombarding your prospect with product knowledge, or training staff to do so. "Salespeople have a tendency to vomit as much product knowledge as they can on their prospects," he says.

To be effective, a salesperson must appeal to the buyer's three modes of communication – visual, auditory and tactile. "Around 70 per cent of people are visual communicators so have diagrams, brochures or presentations on hand and, where possible, encourage people to touch and feel the product," he says. "And storytelling

SALES RULES TO DISOBEY

Tony Gattari, chief energy officer of the Achievers Group, exposes the out-dated sales rules that will kill your closing.

1 FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

"Sales reps may have been encouraged to bluff the customer in the past, but in the digital age where the buyer has access to vast amounts of product information online, the customer most definitely has the power."

2 FOLLOW THE FORMULA

"There is absolutely no formula for selling and you can't put people in a box. Consumers have read the books and are aware of all the tricks. Just be honest and focus on providing a customised solution."

3 MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE CUSTOMER

"Today's consumer is typically time poor and may view attempts at friend-making as an invasion of their privacy. Some customers are not looking for friendship, but they are looking for a solution to their problem."



is the most effective communication method by a long way, so have an armoury of great stories to tell.”

DON'T FEAR FAILURE

It's an Aussie cliché, but Gattari says Australian salespeople are reluctant to jump in and have a go. “We don't have a society that embraces failure,” he says. “But a willingness to try new things, even at the risk of failure, is the hallmark of successful people.”

According to Gattari, the best sales managers accept failure and use it to facilitate the learning process by encouraging staff to come up with an alternative course of action that would have prevented the failure. “Staff can have the tendency to go into denial and



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claim the customer was a dingbat,” he says. “You must push them past that in order for them to learn. You must train them or trade them.”

REWARD YOUR STAFF

Understanding the Australian sales environment is one thing, but inspiring your team to put that knowledge into practice is another. One of the key ingredients in motivating staff is effective reward mechanisms.

“You need to be generous in your reward mechanisms and pay commissions so quickly that they start taking it into account as part of their standard wage,” says Gattari.

But it pays to be strategic about those commissions, he warns. Many businesses make the mistake of paying a commission on sales, rather than on the profit margin. “So here's the insane stupidity of many businesses – the



business mantra is to make profits, but the salesperson is paid a commission on sales. The two are not always aligned.”

RECRUIT FOR ATTITUDE

Gattari believes that most selling techniques can be taught, but there's one quality that cannot be learned.

Gattari looks for people with good self-esteem, who will be able to withstand the inevitable rejections of selling. “I'm not trying to change people's attitudes because I reckon that's an impossible gig – change comes from within. You must find people who already have that healthy attitude.”

To reveal the right attitude in a job interview situation, Gattari directly challenges the candidate. “I reject the



person during the interview,” he says. “I tell them that I don't think they can do the job because I want to see how they bounce back. If they just cave in then they don't have the conviction.”

BE ENTHUSIASTIC

Gattari's own selling style reflects this outlook. As a sales rep he “was extremely persistent. Extremely. I used to ring people up and continue to ask them questions. I never accepted rejection personally. Never, ever.”

And he says that a clear, exhilarating vision is one of greatest assets a business can have. “That to me was one of the key qualities that Harvey Norman had, the ability to create so much excitement that you wanted to be part of it. That's one of my big secrets of selling – enthusiasm.”

It seems that for Tony Gattari, nothing has changed.