Return on Sunk Investment (ROSI)

All of the "training" industry wrestles with the fact that not many methodologies seem to produce the **Return on Investment** (ROI) that they promise. Most Sales Managers we talk to have the same problem; they've been there and done that and nothing has improved! It was a truism in the industry where I spent the majority of my sales career, that customers bought a solution – plugged it in – and then wondered why the enterprise had the same problems as before they spent a wad of money. We're all aware that the **Critical Success Factor** (CSF) for any solution is in the **implementation**.

How can we package implementation with our – or any - solution so that the intervention "sticks" and becomes usable to the target enterprise – delivering the value that it promises? How can understanding this "issue" help us to become better customer advocates?

One way is to deliver a "maintenance" program that **coaches** the behaviour change that is required. Another is to make sure the Sales Management hierarchy "walk the talk" and **measure** the CSF of the methodology so that it becomes a living breathing "this is the way we do things" ingrained activity.

Behaviour

So what can a Sales Manager do to help his team implement a recently learned skill?

The first thing is to facilitate the creation of the correct behaviour. We all concentrate on this aspect and spend much of our day observing the behaviour of our sales team and "jumping" on them when they behave in a way which we consider "bad".

Behaviour is difficult to change. In a recent talk by Dr. Kobus Neethling which was given at the 2006 Sales Leadership Conference, he emphasised the importance of breaching the "breakthrough line" between negativity and creative thinking (more on that later). To change behaviour he proposed a (simplified) 5 level activity as follows;

1. **Trigger** the change initiated through some action/discussion etc.,
2. **Thinking** about the solution and your part in delivery,
3. **Feeling** the results of the change,
4. **Behaviour** changes to meet the targets you have created and feel good about,
5. **Consequences** of the change are reinforced

The problem is that we are an instant generation and want the trigger to "instantly" affect and deliver a change to behaviour – and to hell with the consequences! This trigger is also an important concept and one which is in "our" control to initiate.

Much has been written about Maslow/Herzberg and others in Management Theory. Here is a very simple and graphic explanation of why "Positive feedback" can make a difference in your team.

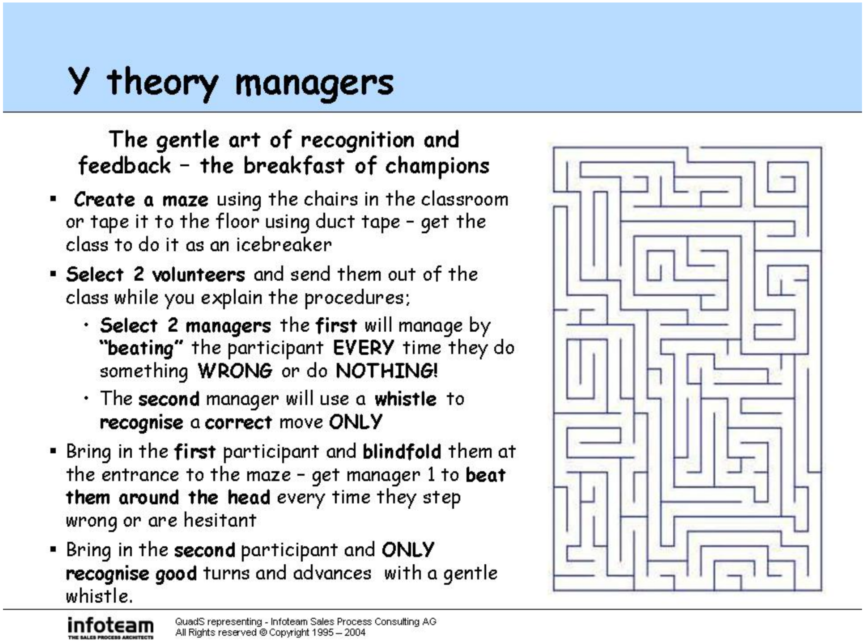


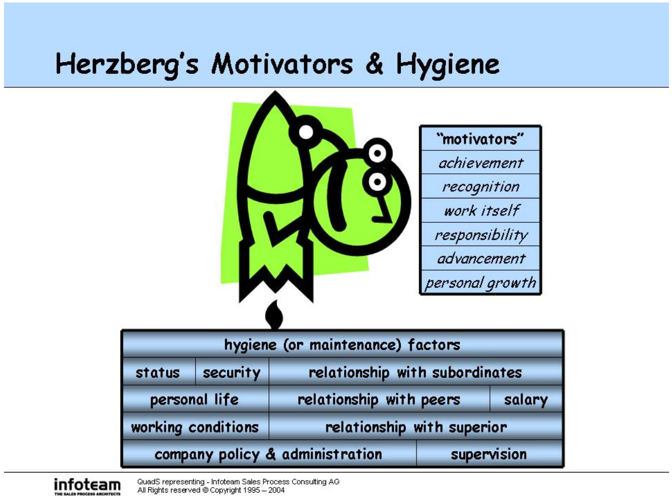
Figure 1 - The Maze

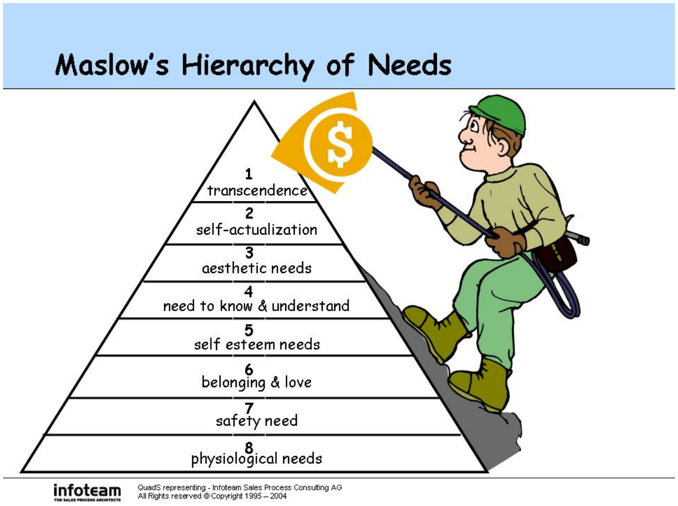
This is all about concentration by the manager on the behaviour of the subject. Not for a moment are we suggesting that x-theory "beat about the head" and y-theory "gentle carrot" are mutually exclusive or will work in every case. Sometimes one or the other approach is needed and in other circumstances certain salespeople just don't get it and you have to be in x-theory for ever. The catch is to know what works with an ***individual*** and that will make them more effective and optimise your time with them.

Belief

It comes as no surprise that if you concentrate on behaviour your trigger (see Ordered List on page 1 above) is directly influencing behaviour - which is called by most management training – unsustainable change. Somehow you have to get your people to think, feel and understand the consequences of the change you're trying to drive.

The importance of Herzberg and Maslow's work is that there are environmental things which managers can concentrate on to make a substantial and sustained difference to how to create motivation in our team. Let's assume that you have worked on these and have programs in place to identify the ***individuals'*** position in these areas. It's important to stress that there is general work to be done to create a supportive environment. Just as importantly the analysis of factors that influence and individuals' motivation, needs to be known. The important message that Dr. Neethling gave us is that there is an additional dynamic that must be addressed and that is belief by the *individual* in why the behaviour is required and their positive feelings in generating the consequences for themselves. They need to **want** these outcomes. – (get these slide)





Turn theory to practice to help your sales team

In an attempt to make your activity with your team practical – and for that matter, if you're a salesperson reading this - your personal motivation – let's take a generic activity that most sales teams "have to/want to" do and which at the same time is probably done poorly by the majority of teams.

Referrals

Most salespeople know what a referral is, yet few concentrate on this very positive moment in the sales cycle to exploit all the work done in gaining the clients trust and delivering above their expectations. I've seen salespeople ask for referrals at the moment when a customer decides to buy – or call up during the delivery phase and ask for a referral to "other" contacts who might be buying the same solution. Referrals are earned and normally should be asked for – or received unsolicited – after a sales project has concluded and the "sign-off" has been achieved.

The following model given to me by Eric Kerkhoff, CRSP-T can be applied to any generic sales activity – just use your imagination.

14 Practical steps to get more referrals

1. a week prior to your sales meeting e-mail your team asking them to make a list of all the buying centre (BC) with whom they have regular contact (**TRIGGER**)
2. prior to the sales meeting prepare a slide of 5 key ways to earn referrals
3. open the meeting by making sure everyone agrees that referrals are an important way to exploit successful projects and the purpose of the exercise is to improve individual competence in this area (**BELIEF**)
4. ask the team to categorise their contacts into 3 groups; (**THINK**)
   a. buddies they can always call and who will take the call
   b. contacts with whom they have something in common – may not take the call
   c. acquaintances – normally hidden behind a gatekeeper
5. next to each "contact" they now have to identify the number of referrals they have received – or think they can receive - from that category
6. normally there would be a pattern and some discussion should be held around why this pattern is evident. Most of the referrals should come from category a and b with the majority from a (**FEELING**)
7. show your slide which summarises how salespeople can earn referrals
8. lead a discussion on the first category (becoming buddies with your customer) driving understanding that the best way to increase referrals is to use key techniques (like delivery) to raise your contact levels from c to a. Draw out team members on how they achieve this – spend about 10 minutes here (**BEHAVIOUR**)
9. continue to lead a discussion on the 2nd, 3rd etc. key ways to achieve an improvement in each category in the market/customer which are contextual to

your team. Don't get married to your key ways – allow the team to define them use brainstorming techniques to get buy-in

10. ask each member of the team to identify a category c contact who has not yet given them a referral (have a scribe available or make sure you capture this output)
11. try to reinforce the method that may be used to gain acceptance from your contact that a referral is pertinent to your relationship – this can be done by roll-playing the request or the supportive arguments to the request (**CONSEQUENCES**)
12. break the team into groups of two and have them practice the (one most) effective approach
13. make it clear that this aspect of selling is important to you and you are going to monitor and grade their performance in this area
14. thank the team for the learning experience which they have created by **their** involvement (**RECOGNITION/CONSEQUENCES**)

This technique can be used on just about any "attribute" that you are trying to ingrain into the team. You don't have to stick closely to the sequence above but it's important that you do the "homework" by preparing for the meeting and knowing the outcomes that you're trying to achieve.

Conclusion

Using the "Opportunity Roadmap" of Infoteam's methodology it is clear that the technique described above can be used to reinforce; Identifying the actual Opportunity Description and not taking on the "evident" description; Identifying the Buying Centre; Driving out personal value statements; structuring a customer centric Joint Action Plan (JAP) and many other "techniques". When **they** believe that it will improve **their** lives you're 80% there - in engraining the skill. Good Luck!