

Sales Tip!



Cutting Through Roadblocks to Change

What happens the first time you try a new selling technique? It's usually uncomfortable and doesn't go as smoothly as it did in the seminar or how you imagined it would go. Often it results in a less than satisfying outcome. There are physiological reasons for this discomfort and awkwardness.

When you see or hear something new, your brain goes through a conscious process of evaluating whether that new behavior has any potential payoff, and you form an expectation of what might happen next. It's the "self talk" we all do to weigh the pros and cons, and then comment (to ourselves) on how the new idea is like, or not like, something we already know about (whether good or bad).

At the same time, and at a much faster rate, our brain performs a self test to see how well this new idea would fit with all the pre-existing patterns in the subconscious part of our brain. If there is a conflict, we get an uncomfortable gut feeling or hear our inner voice say something like, "No way!" usually before we've completed the conscious evaluation. If the warning is loud enough, we usually say, "That might work for them," or, "Maybe in another industry, but that's not going to work for me," and we drop the idea and move on. If it's only slightly uncomfortable, we might say, "I need to do better and this could work." Then there is an opportunity for change.

So what's really going on in our head? To ensure survival, the brain primarily operates using subconscious information. Rather than evaluate every interaction with the world as if it is a new event, the brain has a process to react efficiently and reliably to most events. This process is built on neural pathways called basal ganglia. These networks of signal transmitters are nourished and grow with use. As signals pass through them they grow, and their ability to perform the next time they are needed improves; much like the charging of a car battery - so we can depend on it without worry or thought every time we turn the key.

This physical attribute is also a natural form of self-preservation. The transmitter doesn't care if it's transmitting a good or a bad thought; it just performs better with every use. Ever wonder why we occasionally do or say something inappropriate even though we know instantly that it was wrong? Welcome to the power of basal ganglia.

Change is not going to take effect until we find a way to charge up some new pathways and begin allowing the old ones to fade. When high performing sales professionals and executives are interviewed, it's interesting to hear them describe how they have dealt with adapting or changing some of their habits. A defining moment occurs when they learn a new idea, feel very uncomfortable, but are able to finish the conscious evaluation rather than succumb to the discomfort.

Sales pros often tell us about a special moment when they did something on a sales call that felt risky, even dangerous, but only after admitting to themselves that to do what they have always done was not going to close their gap. Their stories don't tell of instant miracles or always have happy endings. They leave the sales call knowing that they are going to have to work on their skills and then they find a forum to get good at it. What they are actually doing is growing new basal ganglia and charging up the neural pathways.

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