

Not the Shortcut to Sales Success

Why 'The Secret' to sales success is so misleading.

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Books like *The Secret** argue that positive thoughts are enough to achieve success. **Ian Rheeder** believes successful salesmanship requires more.

Whether leading a sales team or a country – everything counts. To isolate just one big concept and call it 'the secret' is not just dangerous, it's an omission. It is this omission which makes me want to share what successful managers do to ensure their success and that of their sales teams.

Visualisation, or focus, is just part of 'the secret' to success. What many books on the topic do **not** emphasise is just how much energy, hard work, determination, self-discipline, persistence, and courage are required to achieve your organisation's sales goals. Thomas Edison, who often worked 40 hours without sleep, was no fool when he said "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration".

In the chapter *How to Use The Secret*, *The Secret* recommends the following: "*The Creative Process helps you create what you want in three simple steps: ask, believe, and receive.*" (p.68). This is partly correct, what it's missed out is the all important, detailed *strategic plan of action*, before you "receive". Secondly the same chapter also stipulates "*You do not have to ask over and over again. Just ask once. It is exactly like placing an order from a catalogue.*" (p.48). But in reality, success requires persistent daily attention (asking) and action.

By playing on people's greed, insecurity and lack of responsibility, it's easy to get a populace believing in 'quick fixes' to achieve their goals. By avoiding reasonable logic and only choosing to focus on the one-in-a-million random statistic, these folk can convince themselves that shortcuts do exist. This new-age 'get-success-quick' mindset clearly played a role in the current global credit crisis, with its unprecedented acts of corruption and desire to make money without labour. "The Secret", or believing is just the first project. In the real world the next project is a "Plan of Action", followed by actually acting out the plan.

Don't be erroneously led into believing there's a shortcut to a sales team's success either. Thoughts are not a plan; a plan is not action.

Defining success

Defining 'success' is a personal thing. During my sales training programmes I've asked hundreds of audiences this question: If they were forced to choose only one of the following two characteristics to achieve success - **energy** or **focus** – which would they choose? The majority always chose **focus**.

The reason for choosing 'focus' is two fold – it's what society and books like *The Secret** have taught us, and it's easier to **not** act. Remember, the audiences were forced to choose either 'energy' or 'focus'. The 'focus' majority were then left seated to do exactly this, whilst the 'energy' minority were allowed to get up and do **anything**. It then swiftly dawned upon the seated majority that they are just leaving indentations on their seats, whilst the minority - even though blindfolded - were clearly discovering new avenues through their actions.

It is through this exploration of 'energised action' that sales managers will naturally select what works and what doesn't. Peter Drucker, author of 39 management books, puts it across so persuasively: "You can either take action or you can hang back and hope for a miracle. Miracles are great, but they are so unpredictable".

Concepts of energy

The correct answer is, of course, 'focus' **and** 'energy'; but forced to choose only one, most members of the audience misguidedly chose 'focus'. We need to look at five concepts of using our energy - not just the one which involves focused thinking. To explain these five concepts of energy, imagine a hot air balloon:

1. **Self-Worth Energy:** To elevate yourself to the altitude you desire, the hot air balloon must be **large enough**. This is your genuine inner self-esteem, filled with positive and unruffled feelings. Please note that a dysfunctional, narcissistic, overestimation of oneself is not a healthy self-esteem. Self-worth must be grounded in real business competence and sales skills, not just wishful illusory thinking or screaming out "yes, yes, yes" during sales meetings.
2. **Emotional Energy (subconscious mind):** We use both the subconscious and conscious mind for making decisions. This 'whole brain' is responsible for everything, from healthy customer relationships to how we act. Feelings - like the deeply rooted 'gut' feel of self-worth, happiness and gratitude - are more important than thoughts. Why? Because healthy feelings are loaded with potent energy.

These feelings, which are observable on a brain scanner, can literally override reason. Like a light switch they'll turn you on or off, or comfort you whilst delivering a sales presentation. The exciting thing is, with every new brain scan study, it's becoming clear how our subconscious guides our intuition and actions. Of course, when you are aware of how your brain system works, miracle moments jump out at you all the time. It's miraculous to be alive when you start witnessing your new consciousness unfold.

3. **Mental Energy (conscious mind):** Using our conscious 'front-burner', we may rationally decide to steer **hot** energised air into our subconscious balloon. We need to responsibly and consciously generate positive thoughts, as negative thoughts are cold air - causing the balloon to barely fill and never takeoff.
4. **Physical Energy:** Neuroscientist, Brian Knutson, has proven that action is its own reward. **Action**, the part of success that *The Secret* book *almost* totally

ignores, really is the best way of emotionally re-programming, learning new feelings, or un-learning deeply-seated feelings of inadequacy in the sales arena. It's so healing that happiness can be described simply as **goal directed engagement**. Put another way: the thrill of the hunt is more enjoyable than the pleasure of the feast¹. It's a fact - as human beings, we're just hardwired in this manner.

If you consciously slow your breathing, it immediately makes you feel less anxious – hence, action changes our mood and thought. We also feel better after a gym workout. Writing out a gratitude list is more rewarding and mood-lifting than just thinking about a list. Therefore, 'action' is not just an act but a spiritual awakening – it is emotional therapy refuelling us so that we can act again. In sales terms: instead of thinking about it, we need to learn to just pick up the phone, make an appointment and present our offer.

5. **Success Energy:** The 'pleasure of the feast' is landing your craft at the destination of choice, creating a pleasurable mood that refuels and reignites the success-loop. For example, the best time to close another sales deal is right after closing the previous one.

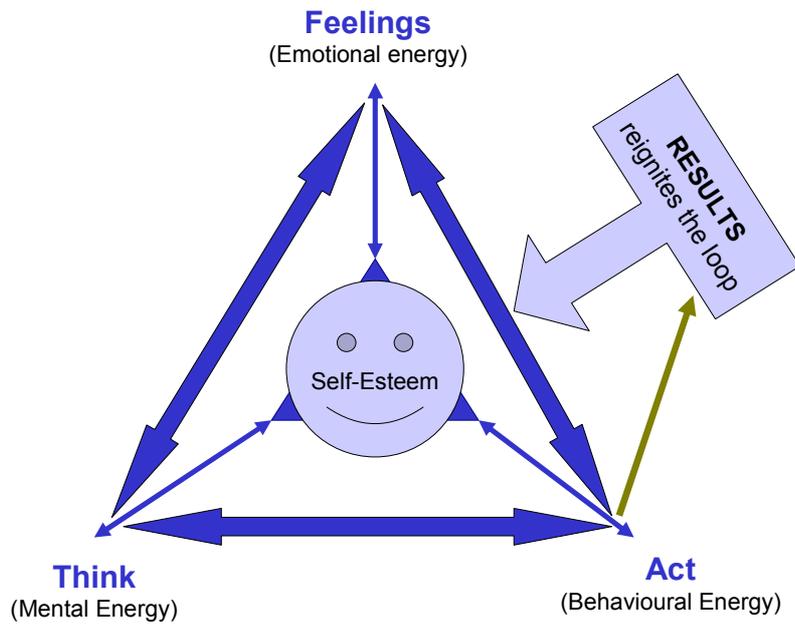
Sloth, *not* lack of vision, is one of the seven deadly sins. Thus, after all is said and done, action would have counted the most.

** Published in 2006 as both a book and DVD, The Secret is based on the Law of Attraction. In essence, it proposes that anything which happens to you, or comes to you, is the result of your thoughts. What you focus on will come about as you train your thoughts on its attraction. Written by Australian Rhonda Byrne, it sold millions of copies worldwide and attained cult status.*

The Secret also spawned other inspirational books like Shortcut to Miracle, How to Change Your Consciousness and Transform Your Life. Written by Michael C. Rann and Elizabeth Rann Arrott, both of whom have extensive backgrounds as sales and advertising executives, the book attempts to not only describe how the Law of Attraction works, but to show how to apply it to the challenges of daily life.

Reference:

1. Morse, Gardener: "Decisions and Desire", Harvard Business Review, Jan 2006, pp 46 - 47



Closed loop success system