

# Selling Memberships Is Easy!

## Prospecting, Production and Accountability. That's the Hard Part

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In the competitive world of the club industry the major difference between the haves and have not's is the profitable clubs produce and generate revenue for the club on a consistent basis. All the walk-in's and Telephone Inquires are a bonus. Remember you can't predict on whether the phone will ring or someone to walk in everyday or even on a consistent basis. Clubs who operate under that mentality and philosophy are like "Leaves being blown in the Wind", subject to all the possible things that can affect traffic or interest. Profitable operations "Plan to Make Money", everyday, yes including Sundays.

Profitable long-term successful clubs seem to have several important characteristics. I will list them below. See how many or if any you have.

1. They seem to wake up in the morning and think; We're not going to make any money today! They spring from the bed considering themselves basically unemployed for today unless they act to produce and generate revenue. Every day is a clean slate, what happened yesterday is only important in the total scope of things. The trick or theory is to learn to string together day after day after day after day (You get the idea), of production and income generating days. Kind of like "Groundhog Day" only with you determining your own positive outcome daily. Someone really smart once told me "Basically this business is being able to do the same basic things day in and day out and do them very well all the time". Ask yourself, Are the basic fundamental processes and operations of our sales process being done everyday and are they being done well? I could tell you a bunch of new fangled, top secret, consultant ideas right now but if the above is not occurring that is where you need to start first. When you ask your staff if this is being done or that being done then go further and ask them to verify it. If you give them instructions regarding something you think is important or useful and they say "Were already doing that" or "I Know that", it usually means they are doing it however they damn well please. Check! Verify! Validate! Reconcile! Don't fall into the trap of "The illusion of Perceived Reality", thinking one way then only to find out after close inspection that practically nothing is being done and if it is its not being done proficiently.

2. Successful Clubs have a production environment, production attitude, production philosophy and what I call a "Production Conscious". "Production Conscious" occurs when you and your staff feel respon-

sible, duty bound, and a moral obligation to produce revenue every day. I may have even said this in my last article but it seems appropriate here again. Peter Drucker, the father of modern management philosophy, and the foremost authority on business management says this, "A Business has a moral obligation to make a profit" "An obligation to the customers, vendors, employees, and shareholders". There is nothing evil about making money if you do it legally and ethically. Your production people are there for this and only this reason. If they are not doing it or don't want to do it or just want to be "Order Takers", start looking for people who have a conscience and work ethic. Remember this simple but difficult management theory; Your people do what you allow them to do. If they are not performing its usually not their fault. Go look in the mirror. That's whose fault it is. Your role as a manager or owner is to manage, guide, direct, monitor and ensure you people have every tool they need to do their job effectively and most important but most neglected adequate training and skills.

3. Successful Clubs Plan to make money, IN ADVANCE! Making it up as you go along is something we all have been guilty of one time or another. Successful clubs plan (in advance) daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and even forward plan for the near future usually the next 3-5 years. Everything from rate increases to growth strategies to marketing and even projections based on that forward plan to see if its achievable and to use it as a road map and score card to gauge success. If a salesperson wakes up in the morning and has no appointments or even a specific plan as to how they are going to get appointments then they are basically unemployed. Think about it, you pay them some kind of salary as part of their pay package right? Well that's not "Free Money". Remember, in most settings, salespeople are compensated a commission when they sell something, possibly a bonus if they are meeting or exceeding your standards for them. What's the salary for? I tell you what its for. Consistent, day in and day out multi faceted efforts and results in generating revenue. Yes, that dirty word many salespeople loathe, Prospecting. In my humble opinion, there is no other skill or requirement that is more important for a salespersons success then prospecting. I hate to break the news to you but if this industry is going to grow as it's predicted to or we hope it will then "You gotta go get them". My God, it's hard

enough for a poor prospect just to walk in the club for information, but they have to be self-confident and self motivated too? Good luck. It isn't reality. My perspective is and has always been that all those people who are out there and not in our clubs haven't had even a personal invitation to come try the club. Fact: Most of them don't even know you exist or that you are there. Fact: Even if they do know you are there they have already forgotten. It's not something people drive around everyday and think about. Fact: Most of them who have been asked to come to the club either haven't been asked in the right way, often enough, with any passion or compassion, or have "Dropped through the cracks" somehow. Believe me there are a lot of cracks to fall into. Fact: Hate to tell you but most people don't think or perceive exercise to be much fun. In fact many of them think it has to be painful to be good for you. You know the "No Pain no Gain" quote. I bet you 80% of those that aren't with us can recite that verse. Fact: Many people out there have had bad experiences or have suffered frustration, difficulty and most importantly failure. It's the end result, failure that hurts the most and keeps them away. Who wants to subject themselves to something that they've failed at before? You may see the as road blocks but when I sit around long enough and start think about it the opportunities that exist for us to reach, touch, help, change their opinion of us, and most importantly change their lives, it give me chills. How do you reach these people? Yes thru various advertising and marketing mediums, but where the exponential growth exists is in our disciplined, professional, consistent, persistent efforts to "Go get them". There are literally thousands of creative ways to prospect and none of them have to be "Cold Calls". I have a list of some 50-75 basic 101 prospecting vehicles that could be helpful. Anyone who wants a copy of one, just call, email, write, yell and I will send it to you for free.

4. Successful clubs have nearly "watertight" guest procedures, policy's, control, and knowledge of every guest's whereabouts, who's responsible for them, what the current status is. I've said this before but, Sales is a managed process. If managed properly and well the natural conclusion and result is a new member.

5. Successful Clubs have performance targets and hold people accountable for producing their share. Accountability in the club industry, now that's something

to ponder on. Everyone from where I'm from always asks me, "What is it you do"? "When are you going to get a real job"?, or my favorite, "When are you going to buckle down and make something of yourself"?. They have no idea what we do and that it is real work. My point is this, those same people, or the people who are out in the "Real World", have reasonable levels of performance and accountability for what occurs or doesn't occur. They didn't teach me in college about accountability. I had to find out the hard way. But why should our industry standards and expectations be any different than any other successful business? I'm not saying holding people accountable is easy or fun. It takes time to know how to deliver this message to someone and many times you have to deliver it in different ways to different people. But at least begin. Start. Make mistakes, but start making people accountable. Not holding people accountable is of epidemic proportions in the club industry. Status Quo behavior will not be acceptable, if you have a Status Quo attitude towards production and the accountability associated with it I promise you are going backwards. Lassie Faire attitude wont work either. "What happens, happens" means you are at the mercy of inconsistent, unpredictable sales and performance. You are doing them a service and your duty in holding them accountable and being up front and fair about where everyone and their contributions stand. I know it's hard. But start. You will see improvements.

In my humble opinion, actually selling the membership is the easy part. In fact it's so easy that people complicate it. Many times I have witnessed a prospect teetering on the verge of making a good decision and the salesperson talking them out of it. Sometimes you have to just "Get out of the Way" and let them join. The more a salesperson talks generally the worse the results are. I don't know about you but I like salespeople who make me feel recognized, make me feel important, actually listen to me and retain what I said, and most importantly, let me talk about my favorite subject. Me. Anybody, I repeat, anybody who can follow a few basic guidelines can actually sell the membership. I could train the water fountain to sell a membership. But the difficult part lies not in actually getting them to join but in just getting there at all!

These are just a few of the characteristics I see as a common thread in successful and profitable clubs. I hope you are doing all of them and if not try to emulate some

or all of them. Below I will give you some key concepts, thoughts and specific advice, which I believe used wisely, can improve any operation.

\* Without prospecting and outreach by your staff you are basically paying for order takers. If you're going to do that you would be better off setting up a table at the front door and take orders. When I train salespeople the first thing I teach them about is prospecting and creating business.

\* If you don't have written, formal production targets both individually and as a group it's going to be hard for you to hold anyone accountable. Set written, formal targets, which are achievable and do them in advance. Also sit down with each individual and explain to him or her what all this means and frame it to him or her as this is going to be your contribution. Then monitor it daily and coach them a little bit at a time not explode on them all at once at the end of the month when it's too late to do anything. Get or develop a daily sales flash report and demand it to be done and accurate everyday. Then analyze it daily so you can change the direction of an individual or the group today not later. If you don't have a daily sales flash report or would like one call me, email, write, shout and I will send you a template, which you can customize for free.

\* Remember that the money in this business is in the details and how well you manage them. Eliminate as many cracks as you know how to.

\* Invest time in training and retraining your staff consistently it is absolutely necessary to a profitable organization.

\* Make sure you know for sure what is going on from a sales operations standpoint. Validate, Verify, Reconcile, Inspect, but make sure.

\* Remember the harder it is to "Beat the Club" the more members you will have. Stick to your policy's and rules and make prospects compelled to join through controlling access and usage.

I want to end this article with some very important business principles I heard one day from an old lady from the south part of Missouri. She said this; I have three principles of business. I said what are they? And she answered

1. Get the Money
2. Get the Money
3. Get the money

Make the most of every opportunity and make sure you are "Getting the Money".

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