

What winning salespeople and firms have in common



ACHIEVEMENT Instead of whining for losing out on awards, let victors inspire you to dream

I was recently invited to a sales achievement awards ceremony and a few things stood out for me. The most prominent one — selling ethically — was the topic of last week's column. Today we focus on the other five.

The event was held at a prestigious hotel in town. The naysayers will look to this as a company merely preserving its image, but that's only one aspect: the other, which I chose to adopt, was a company wishing to develop, in the mind's eye of the salespeople, an image of aspiration, and therefore a desire to achieve. Some things like the desire to strive and be better at what one does cannot be instilled by telling, showing on the other hand, stands a greater chance of teaching that lesson.

The second thing that stood out for me was the schedule. It was an event held at breakfast time. We were done by 9am having started at 7.30am. The company respected the salespeople's time and also knew that because a salesperson is only as good as his last sale, releasing him early enough to face more opportunities makes good business sense. For this reason they were not only focused, they also stayed focused on the subject matter of the morning.

Next, the hall was packed. In total

we must have been more than 300. The winners, however, were about five per cent of the crowd. From an army of hundreds only a handful were generals and colonels. And so it is about sales.

Those who stand out do so like an oasis in the desert. As for the multitude, most watch and wonder; others gossip and down-play the winning; sadly, only a select few, feel sufficiently inspired to learn and emulate.

It is true what they say about personal development—many eagerly embrace its theory but then shoot themselves in the foot because deep down they really don't want to change because it means going outside a comfort zone and this is work, change.

The sea is full of fish. It's not full of sharks. As for the sharks in the hall, most bit and bit again, tearing away award after award, with merciless abandon. They had no apologies for winning. The other thing that shone like a beacon was the winners. It confirmed to me what is pretty obvious but still hits me between the eyes again when it happens.

There was nothing special about the array of winners. They came in all shapes, size, gender, height and com-

plexion—just like the “losers”. In fact, standing in a parade you wouldn't tell one from the other. There was absolutely nothing special about the winners' physical features. There were short and tall ones; plump and slim ones; dark-skinned and light skinned too; jovial and the stern; impeccably groomed and presentable.

Engaging with them, it was evident there were eloquent ones but also those not so eloquent too. And such is the thing about winning — it's got nothing to do with physical features and everything to do with the mental; nothing to do with the visible but everything to do with the invisible; nothing to do with what the crowd sees, but everything to do with what it doesn't, as is hidden in the salesperson's mind.

The fifth thing that cannot go unmentioned is the presence of the company's full top brass. Like attracts like. The event was about celebrating winners, awarding those who have grown the company's bottom line. The chief executive freely and proudly mingled with them. Achieving is not about becoming CEO — that's only one way. Winning is being the best you can in your chosen field. The top salesperson in a company most probably has the CEO's ear or chairman of the board.

Mr Kageche is a speaker and lead facilitator, *Lend Me Your Ears*; a *Speech Writing and Sales Coaching firm*. Email: lendmeyourears@consultant.com.

AIG's Catherine Igate (centre) with Ken Kairu and Selam Kairu of Dawit Insurance Agency after the two were awarded in a recent ceremony in Nairobi. FILE

As for the sharks in the hall, most bit and bit again, tearing away award after award, with merciless abandon

Bottom Line

Steps to build a creative business from scratch

Any economist will tell you that the creative sector is a leading component of worldwide economic growth, employment and trade. Over the last decade, there has been a significant shift from individuals choosing to work in traditional vocations such as health care to investing in the creative sector.

Operating a business where your intellectual capital is your golden ticket requires a calculated approach that differs from the stock standard business model. Here are five steps to establish a creative business from scratch:

Observe. A pitfall of the boom in the creative sector is that thousands of designers/writers/directors are entering the workplace at the same time you are. There is a solid chance that your skill will be instantly diluted once you join the industry. Graphic designers, for example, are a dime a dozen, and if you do your research you'll see that becoming an interactive media designer — someone who can do graphics in addition to sound, animation and digital effects, is a more valuable skill set.

Brand. Now that you've put your original spin on a creative role, it's time to set up your brand. Branding is a group of ideas and approaches behind your work that must be cemented tangibly through a website and social media presence. Setting up a website can be incredibly cheap, and the beauty of this industry is that you can barter your services in exchange for others, like trading an article for a personalised logo. Once you've got a card, logo, business email — ideally one that matches your website — and of course, a web page, start building your social media channels.

Produce. By colour, I mean content. You'd never invite friends over for dinner only to present them with an empty table. Why would you encourage someone to explore your brand when you've got no work to show them? Social media participants are fickle; if a person is directed to a 'Website Under Construction,' chances are they won't head back a second time. In a saturated market, nothing will legitimize your business better than your actual work. Make sure you've got a few posts under your belt.

Plan. You've defined your brand and hopefully snuck in a lucrative loophole in your chosen industry. Now is the time to plan. Start by writing down a list of desirable companies, agencies and clients you'd like to work with that are in line with your offering. Then map out the dollars and cents; dictate how much you need to earn in your first three months to keep afloat, and how many hours you'll have to put into your business to make this happen.

Connect. Start within your own personal connections on Facebook and your email contacts to find like-minded creatives who may be able to assist you or be interested in your business.

- ENTREPRENEUR.COM



SALES PITCH

JOHN KAGECHE