

The Holy Grail in sales management is hiring people who have the right psychology of success...

Success Begets Success

*Scientific evidence about how to
predict, create, and nurture success*

A decade ago, 1800GotJunk was a little Vancouver, Canada-based company with a handful of employees and a business model based on removing unwanted stuff from homes and offices. Today that company has 200 franchise locations in North America, and the handful of employees in the British Columbia headquarters has mushroomed to over 200, about half of whom are full-time sales professionals, says 1800GotJunk COO Cameron Herold. The fast-growing company has emerged as an employer of choice in Canada. For every hire it makes, "we will look at zoo resumes and conduct dozens of interviews," says Herold. He favors group interviews, where a number of applicants are brought in front of a panel of current employees. Herold's favorite interview question: "Tell me who you were in high school."

Sound strange? Know that what Herold is hunting for is exactly what you are: new hires who will help the company achieve still greater success.

Let Herold explain his thinking: "I want to hire people who were captain of their high school hockey team, or got elected class president, or who were voted in as editor-in-chief of the school paper." Past performance, says Herold, is the best predictor of future success - and the fast growth of 1800GotJunk underlines that he is indeed onto something.

Would that mantra work for you? Understand this: The Holy Grail in sales management is hiring people who have the right psychology of success, then finding ways to help them keep it, even grow it. A body of research is coming together that helps managers

better identify the successful, and also lets them better nurture success in current employees. An emerging bottom line is that the psychology of success is something that can be put in many heads. Run from consultants who say, as some still do, that DNA is the only predictor, because that is now known not to be true. The psychology of success, we are coming to learn, is indeed something that smart managers can harness.

ZERO IN ON RESILIENCE

One word just may encapsulate the "open sesame" to success: resilience. "One widely observed trait that high achievers possess is resilience," says Jeff Davidson, a Chapel Hill, NC, expert on

peak performance. Andrew Shatte, an adjunct professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and a vice president at Adaptiv, a success consulting firm, seconds this vote for resilience: "It's key to success."

The reason is simple: Everybody fails. Everybody stumbles. Everybody blows a sale that had seemed a sure thing. Then what happens? Some people crumble - they have lost their groove and struggle to find it anew. But the resilient shrug failure off, they shake off the negative like a shaggy dog shaking off rain. The smart ones learn from every failure.

Shatte's important point: We can

learn to be more resilient, and, in that way, we are preparing ourselves for more successes. The reality, says Shatte, is that resilience is the result of a gumbo of ingredients, and we can be trained to have more of every one. He ticks off the recipe for resilience:

- **E**motional regulation. Do we know how to keep our emotions in check? Getting too high can undo us, as can sinking too low. The resilient have learned to master their emotions.

- Impulse control. The resilient

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have learned to stifle that impulse to angrily hang up on the pestering customer. They have impulses - we all do - but they are in charge.

- *Causal analysis.* The resilient understand cause and effect, and they understand that success is a by-product of hard work.

- *Self-efficacy.* The resilient deeply believe that they can change their lives, that they truly are in control of their personal destiny.

- *Realistic optimism.* There's a fine line between ridiculous, grandiose optimism and realistic optimism - which means looking at a best-case scenario that is truly within reach - but the resilient somehow manage to nail this by believing in things they truly can attain if they get the breaks.

- *Empathy.* The resilient can get into the heads of those around them.

- *Reaching out.* The resilient welcome goals that make them stretch, they thrive on challenges - even though they recognize that sometimes they just may fail.

Shatte's upbeat prescription: When a company works at it, its people can strengthen each of those seven traits. Success should increase and it should be more enduring because these resilient workers are primed to keep having success even after adversity.

PIGGYBACK SUCCESS

Want a faster way to raise success in a team? Ridgefield, CT, consultant David

Fields reveals that recent findings in neurology lend themselves to jump-starting an individual's successes because, says Fields, the more we experience success, the more success we are likely to have. That, in a way, is a restatement of Herold's search for high achievers in high school, but Field puts an important twist on this. According to him, research says that we can piggyback on the successes of others; that is, we can grow stronger by absorbing those successes. But pay close attention: Trotting out the top sales ace to report on how he or she closes is not what Fields is prescribing. Those successes probably won't resonate with the middle-tier performers. What will? Great, unexpected successes achieved by people like them. When middling sales executive Joe Average tells how he closed that whale of a deal, all the other Averages in the room hear that success as though it is their own - and it helps prepare them to succeed on their own. "Neurologically, we don't know the difference between a remembered success of our own and one told by a person like us," says Fields. Remember that when assembling testimonials designed to inspire.

While you're at all of this, recognize one truth: There is no point putting lipstick on the proverbial pig, which in a way brings us right back again to Herold's point about hiring the successful. In that vein, core advice for

building a culture of success comes from Dr. Kenneth Siegel, CEO of Beverly Hills, California Based The Impact Group, who urges companies to look for employees who are true to themselves. "Authenticity is at the foundation of lasting success." Siegel's insight is that, for a short period, most of us can fake a belief, an attitude, a relationship - but for the long haul, to succeed and keep on succeeding, we need to be authentic, to really express what we think, feel, believe. "Too much of what is written about success is hollow," adds Siegel, who indicates that, sure, performance sometimes can be goosed higher by quick, superficial fixes but that will not play out month in, month out, because enduring success is had only by those who genuinely believe what they are saying, doing, selling.

What's the big take-away from all of this? A success-oriented mindset may seem mysterious, elusive, difficult to get a handle on - but the emerging reality is that smart organizations, increasingly, are hunting for tactics that in fact let them help their people achieve ever higher levels of success. And who wouldn't want to work for that kind of organization? Success, increasingly, is becoming something we understand and the more we understand it, say the experts, the more of it we can indeed enjoy. - ROBERT McGARVEY