

## 11 Secrets to Leadership in Sales

By Mark Dembo and Thomas J. Baskind

In his classic book, "[Think and Grow Rich](#)", Napoleon Hill discussed the eleven secrets of leadership. Recently, as I was reading the book, it occurred to me that the attributes of strong leadership and effective selling have a tremendous amount in common. After all, to be really successful in sales, you need to be a leader, both within your own organization, as well as to your clients and customers.

To paraphrase management guru Peter Drucker, a leader is someone who not only does things right, but who also does the right things, while helping others do the same. The same holds true in sales: how better to serve your clients than to really know and understand what they do, and to truly help them do it better?

With that in mind, here are Mr. Hill's eleven secrets to leadership, as they apply to leadership in selling:

1. "Unwavering Courage": Selling successfully requires courage; taking a risk where the odds may seem stacked against you; courage to make that extra call, to deal with the tough client or prospect, and to not let anything deter you. As Hill says, courage is "based upon knowledge of self and one's occupation.
2. "Self-Control": The ability to set a course for yourself and take disciplined action each day is a key attribute of all successful salespeople.
3. "A keen sense of justice": Knowing right from wrong - understanding what is fair and just - allows you to make, wise informed decisions.
4. "Definiteness of decision": Deciding on what you want to achieve, and then doing whatever it takes to get there, even in the face of obstacles and setbacks, is crucial to your success. For those who don't quite make it, failure can usually be traced back to a lack of decisiveness about what they really want.
5. "Definiteness of plans": In Hill's words, "the successful leader must plan his work, and *work his plan*. Truer words were never spoken when it comes to selling. Plan your time, and then take action on your plan each and every day.
6. "The habit of doing more than paid for": Want to sell more? Go the extra mile for your clients. Want to get the respect, admiration, and cooperation from your internal "clients" – the people you need to rely on to implement or help you close sales? Go the distance for them as well.
7. "A pleasing personality": Is selling a popularity contest? No, but would you buy something from someone who was nasty and rude?

8. “Sympathy and understanding:” Selling is about understanding what people DO, and then helping them do it better. Plain and simple.
9. “Mastery of detail”: Ah, yes... The devil, as they say, is in the details. Ever work really hard to close a sale, only to have it fall apart because of some small detail that falls through the cracks? What may seem like a small detail to you can be a crucial one, maybe even a deal-breaker, to your prospect, customer, or client.
10. “Willingness to assume full responsibility”: No matter how much customer support your company provides, you are the prime representative of your organization. If you try to pass the buck to someone else, you lose respect and credibility. “But it really wasn’t my fault that the shipment was delayed in customs and then the delivery truck was attacked a pack of wild dogs...” Doesn’t matter; accept the responsibility for any problem and all details, and then do whatever needs to be done to make things right. Your clients need to know that you are their advocate.
11. “Cooperation”: You can’t do it alone. Sales is a collaborative effort. Your prospects need to collaborate with you; you need the cooperation and assistance of others both inside and outside your organization to make things happen. The best salespeople are those who can work well with others, and with whom other people want to work.

Think about these eleven areas of leadership, and ask yourself how you do on each of these items. Find areas where you can make improvements and chart your course to work on improving what you do each day; incremental improvements each day become exponential over time.