

## **Salesman Bites Dog**

**By Mike Stewart, CSP**

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Look at your business card. What is your title? If you are a sales manager, what is the title on the cards of your salespeople?

I hope the title declares that you are a "Sales Representative" or "Salesperson". More than likely, it does not. Instead most companies tend to invalidate their salespeople with identity deflecting titles such as:

- Territory Manager
- Account Executive
- Marketing Manager
- Regional (Area) Sales Manager (Who do they manage?)
- Sales Consultant (Who do they consult with? Salespeople?)

In the company I was with for twenty years, our title was "Sales Representative" and our duties were primarily to sell new accounts and service existing accounts. We were a young, privately-held company and our emphasis was heavily on growth.

Our success led management to decide that we didn't have "Accounts" anymore, but we serviced "Clients" and, as a result, our salespeople were to be more properly known as "Business Counselors."

Their new titles suited the "counselors" just fine, because, after all, as conventional wisdom has always told us, there is something "wrong" with being a salesperson.

As a result of the sophistication of our company's image, our field sales team quit thinking of themselves as salesmen (no women in those days in our industry) and, predictably, our sales growth sputtered and floundered.

Even in today's severely politically correct environment where hyper-sensitivity is practically mandatory toward almost every identifiable group, salespeople continue to be the butt of more disparaging remarks and jokes than possibly even lawyers, as in this recent example of sales-bashing humor.

### **Sign on a Fence**

***"Salesmen Welcome. Dog Food is Expensive!"***

Today's hottest buzzword seems to be to refer to salespeople as "trusted advisors." As a proponent of consultative selling, I am all in favor of this concept, with this all important over-arching caveat: The ultimate responsibility of every salesperson is to grow revenue to meet or exceed the volume (quota) assigned to them by management.

**If you are a sales manager or executive** and feel you need to give your salespeople impressive titles so they will be "respected" enough to get appointments with self-important customers or to reinforce your company's (your?) "image", so be it. Just be sure you are sensitive to these three facts:

1. You are sending the destructive message to your salespeople that "sales" is a bad word and salespeople don't deserve respect.
2. If you don't overcome this message in the minds and hearts of not just the salespeople in your company, but every person in every department that interacts with your sales department, you can expect pushback when you charge your salespeople with actually going out and selling new business.
3. Your credibility as a leader and authenticity as a person is at great risk. This, along with the mixed message you are sending, will place significant barriers in the way of achieving the increased revenue you seek from your sales team. Don't be surprised and do not blame them.

**If you are a salesperson** always think of yourself as a rainmaker first and make the development of new business your priority regardless of the title on your business card.

Shakespeare said it very well:

***"What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."***

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