

## **Sell More By Thinking Independently**

**By Mike Stewart, CSP**

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It's easy to get caught up in "group think," where everybody thinks alike. Unfortunately, this leads to inaction, stagnation, and the blame game when enough opportunities are missed and there is insufficient growth.

High achievers think differently and step out from the crowd. I love what high-achiever General George S. Patton said:

**"If everybody is thinking alike,  
then somebody isn't thinking."**

People tend to believe there is safety in numbers, so way too many sales managers and salespeople think the way everybody else thinks, often the way they have thought for years. In my corporate days with Marcoin Management Services, we called this "The Marcoin Disease." I referred to it as:

**"Breathing our own exhaust."**

We just kept re-cycling our own ideas over and over for years and years. When I was in the field, I thought, "Holy cow! Will you guys get real?"

We had 200 offices across the country desperately needing creative originality, and management's theme song was, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Unfortunately, it was broke, but it seemed that very few of us could see it.

I've always tried to be creative and results-oriented, so, as a salesperson, I did the stuff that "wouldn't work," but, you know what? It did.

As a manager, I was encouraged to only hire people with industry experience. But I hired people from outside and, you guessed it. They were terrific. As a Salesperson, Branch Manager, District Manager, and Regional Manager, I had the autonomy to do things differently and make something good happen.

Later, as a Vice-President and a member of the Board of Directors, I was in a position to push for corporate-wide change. However, when the rest of executive management got tired of my pushing and I couldn't take their intractability any longer, I gave it up, and

left for what turned out to be greener pastures.

Note: After about three years, management was forced to sell the company, and virtually all of those responsible, along with a lot of innocent bystanders, were unemployed. That could have been avoided if the corporate executives hadn't suffered so long from The Marcoin Disease.

**"When two people think alike,  
one of them is unnecessary."  
- Abe Lincoln**

There may be little or nothing you can do about the thinking in your company's executive suite. However, that is relatively unimportant.

What is important is this: Regardless of the thinking of others, how independently you think about selling new business is almost entirely up to you!

Try this exercise to see what I mean:

1. List three activities you can do to increase sales that you are not doing now:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ask yourself what the consensus thinking is about these activities in your company, in your sales department, and among your peers. How strongly are you being influenced by this thinking?

3. Remember that thinking is only the first step: What people think influences how they feel, and how they feel influences what they do. Have you been failing to take action because of the way others think, and feel?

4. Break away from the pack! Choose one of the sales-producing activities you listed above and do it for six months. You will be pleased with the results and, hopefully, with the recognition you receive from management.

If you find that you are discouraged by peers or others because you are "wasting your time, it will never work, or we just don't do things that way," recognize that they are trying to justify their own shortcomings and lack of positive sales activities.

Then you will know you are on the right track as an independent thinker destined for greater success.

Good luck, work with relentless determination, and...

***Be encouraged, always!***

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