



The Raphael Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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The Six Characteristics of Top Performers

Here's my business theory:

If my business is good, it's me. I'm doing something right! I know what my customers want to buy and I keep those items available. I watch my business when sales are off and come up with new ideas, new ways to communicate with the customers I have and new ways to capture additional customers.

If my business is bad, it's not the economy. It's not the time of the year. It's me. I'm doing something wrong!

Somebody's buying something somewhere from somebody. My job: find ways to have those sales with me.

What you need to increase sales in your business is a specific plan. Would you travel on a plane with a pilot who did not file a flight plan for his destination? Or a ship captain who had no idea of the location of his next port?

We found our retail business succeeded through the years because we believed in direct marketing - mostly, sending attention-getting mailers with offers of real value in a personal manner from us to our customers.

But your plan has to start with a leader - a performer - and that's you!

A *Wall Street Journal* article said a prominent psychologist narrowed down the difference between performers and non-performers to six characteristics:

1. They constantly set higher goals.

They are like mountain climbers who, having climbed one peak, look beyond to the next peak. They are proud of the fact that of the 10,000 mailers sent to their customers, nearly 1,000 came to their store for the sale. Next question: How can they increase that number to 1,500 next time?

2. They avoid "comfort zones."

They know standing still means going backwards. They know most retailers work on the "lawnmower" theory. They mow the lawn the same way every time 'cause it's "comfortable and that's the way we've always done it." They follow the same pattern, work the same techniques, avoid the new, the different, the unusual in the fear they might do something wrong. Their mailing piece looks the same every year because once, a dozen mailers ago, the original was successful. The lack of continuing success they blame on the weather, the time of the year, the competition - anything except themselves. Copywriting guru and award winner Herschell Gordon Lewis, author of many books on marketing, says it well: "We're so comfortable repeating what we've done before that progress passes us by."

3. They are driven by accomplishments, not money.

They follow the theory of Apple's Steve Jobs who says, "The journey is the reward." The

thrill is not only the ringing of the register but the crowds responding to your mailing. There is no greater “high” than the making-of-the-sale, the bringing-of-the-crowd, the line outside the store before the door opens because of what you did to bring them there.

4. They solve problems rather than place blame.

They do not waste their time wondering, “What if?” or “Why didn't we...” They say, “Let's look at what went wrong and figure out how we can make it go right next time.” They understand the importance of “testing” their mailings and are quick to try the new, the different, the unusual. They are flexible enough to adjust, maneuver, and change direction to that-which-works. They know the road to success is constantly under repair. And they work at it.

5. They look at the worse possible scenario.

They ask themselves, “What's the worst possible result if we follow this plan?” Knowing that, they then decide if the risk-taking is practical.

Once they decide, they proceed with confidence with the knowledge, the talent and the expertise they commit to make it work. They know the worst that can happen. And, if they can live with that outcome, move ahead.

“Every time I fail,” said Thomas Edison, “I learn something.” He tried 1,114 times to find a filament to stay lit in a bulb. He failed 1,113 times.

6. They rehearse the future as they see it.

The successful people are teleological. They means they move toward the pictures they create in their mind. The baseball pitcher sees himself pitching a no-hitter. The Olympic athletes see themselves crossing the finish line, beating the world record. They can rehearse future actions or events as they “see” themselves participating.

They are like chess players who “feel” the next move of their opponent and have half a dozen responses ready to take when the time comes to move.

The Russians believe in the concept of studying why some individuals out-perform others. They call this “anthropomaximology.” What that means: society is no longer satisfied with simply “success.” They want to know the difference between the successful and the most successful.

Businesses in the US go bankrupt every year. Who are the successful ones remaining? The ones who will be here when others have gone? The ones who customers will seek out to shop and spend and say this is the place not only were they will spend their money but also the place they recommend to their friends to go and spend as well?

How many of these six characteristics are yours? The more you have, the higher degree of probability you will be at the same stand at the same spot doing NOT the same but MORE business next year.

So start your plan and be a top performer!