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## Mastering your territory

A sales career is not for everyone. You either love being a sales person or you hate it. Some people think they want to be a sales person because of the freedom it offers, you're not tied down to an office and you don't have a boss looking over your shoulder. What they often forget is that freedom always travels with a companion—responsibility. A sales person is free to run their territory as they see fit but this means that if things don't go well they have no one to blame. In many ways running a territory is like running your own small business. Instead of investing your savings in the enterprise, a sales person invests their time and their creativity. Businesses measure their success in terms of ROI, return on investment. How much revenue does the business produce for each dollar they've invested? Sales people need to think in terms of ROE, how much revenue does the territory produce relative to the work they put into it? Just like some business people are more successful than others, some sales people are better territory managers than other reps. Listed below are some of the qualities of master territory managers.

**Master territory managers are the “Mayors of their territory.”** They know everything that is going on in the market and they know who the key players are. They constantly ask their customers to share their thoughts and insights on what is going on in the neighborhood. They read the local papers and stay aware of local politics and issues.

**Master territory managers are active in the community.** By participating in community organizations and activities they make themselves highly visible and build strong relationships with potential and current advertisers. Being actively involved in groups like chambers of commerce or other community service organizations sets the master rep apart from the run of the mill sales person. Just paying dues and having your name in the organizational directory offers very little advantage. Active involvement, serving on committees and volunteering gives you the opportunity to work closely with community leaders and demonstrates your abilities and dedication.

**Master territory managers think long term.** They think strategically, focusing not just on next week or on their next commission but on building the territory. By focusing on building strong relationships with their customers and by maintaining a reputation for scrupulous honesty, they insure their future income.

**Master territory managers plan their weeks.** They make sure that they contact every advertiser and prospect on a regular basis. No stone is left unturned in their territory because they have divided it into zones and concentrate their efforts

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on one zone at a time. This keeps them informed about what is going on in the market so that they can capitalize on every new opportunity.

**Master territory managers are a resource.** They provide valuable information for their prospects and customers. In addition to spreading the word about their products, they help keep customers informed about changes in the market place. They also share business related stories from the web and from their readings with their clients. When a customer is looking for a supplier they try to help them connect with other businesses in the territory. This benefits both businesses and polishes the rep's image as a resource. As a valuable business resource, the master territory manager is always welcome.

**Master territory managers keep their pipelines filled.** While they deliver unmatched service to their current advertisers, they always make time to call on new accounts. Knowing that customers go out of business or decide to stop advertising for any number of reasons, they always want to have new sales to cover their potential losses. They want to grow their customer base to grow their revenue and make their product more valuable for the reader.

**Master territory managers continually up-sell their advertisers.** They know that the "best defense is a good offense." While less able reps are afraid to "rock the boat" or that trying to sell a better program to their customers would make them appear greedy, master territory managers are never satisfied with the advertiser's current program. They know that when they are presenting a bigger program they have to remind the customer of their paper's benefits. Even if the customer doesn't buy the recommended program, they have been reminded of why they advertised in the first place.

**Master territory managers never sell space.** They know that they do not sell paper and ink; they sell audiences and creative ways to attract and engage those audiences. Master territory managers understand nobody wants to buy advertising; they want to buy the customers that advertising attracts to their business. Master territory managers do not think of themselves as sales people but rather as advertising experts. Their ads are creative and accurately communicate the benefits their customers offer the public. Because they see themselves as professionals, they will challenge customers who want to run poorly designed or ineffective programs.

**Master territory managers leverage their relationships.** They regularly ask for referrals from their current advertisers. The chances of successfully selling a prospect increase significantly when they have been referred from a trusted contact. Master sales people know this and make asking for referrals an important component of their sales plan. They know that asking for a referral is not an

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imposition on their customer and that this is actually a way to compliment them. Asking for a referral tells the customer that you know that their recommendation is valued and that they are an important member of the business community.

**Master territory managers take ownership of their work.** They take great pride in the look and effectiveness of their product. Highly competitive, they work hard to make their product better and more complete than their competitors. They believe in their company and in their own abilities. Master sales people never miss an opportunity to talk about their paper and share success stories of how they have helped their customers. They are interested in the content of their paper. They know that if it doesn't provide value to the reader they will go elsewhere, making their product less attractive to advertisers.

I work with a number of sales reps, some who are experienced, some new to the business. I have heard new reps say, "If I had his/her territory I'd be successful too!" What I know is that "good territory" wasn't always so good. In some cases, our top producing territories are located in areas that are actually economically depressed. The difference between a "good territory" and a "bad territory" is determined by the presence of a "good" or a "bad" sales person. Obviously the master sales rep benefits economically by their extraordinary efforts, but their mastery also brings other rewards. Mastery in any field brings with it a warm feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Mastery attracts the respect of ones peers and even more important self-respect. Mastery is the antidote to the anxiety so common in these troubled times. The master knows that they are equal to each new situation. Mastery is not a mysterious or magical thing; it is available to anyone who decides to set themselves apart from the average salesperson. Mastery belongs to anyone who is willing to do the work and to adopt a masterful attitude. Author Gail Sheedy expressed the feeling one gets from achieving mastery when she said:

*Ah, mastery... what a profoundly satisfying feeling when one finally gets on top of a new set of skills... and then sees the light under the new door those skills can open, even as another door is closing.*

*This article was written by Jim Busch of the Pittsburgh Pennysaver.*

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