



RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR
RISK INTELLIGENCE

Five Intelligent Risks for Sales Professionals

by
Jim McCormick

Ascending to a new level of performance in any endeavor is a matter of taking intelligent risks well. Sales is no exception. Having written a book on intelligent risk-taking called *The Power of Risk* (Maxwell Press) and often speaking to sales professionals, I'm regularly asked by ambitious sales people what risks they can take to be more successful. Here are my top five suggestions for any sales professional:

1. See Yourself as the Expert You Are
2. Step Up to a More Sophisticated and Persuasive Sale
3. Ask for Referrals and Make Cold Calls
4. Always Do What is Best for Your Customer
5. Venture Out of Your Comfort Zone

Sound good? Here are the details:

1. See Yourself as the Expert You Are

Make sure you move past seeing yourself as a sales person to seeing yourself as an **expert and customer resource**. Be the person who knows your products or services better than anyone else. More important, know how they can help make your customers more successful. You know you've achieved the necessary level of expertise and customer awareness of your expertise when customers seek you out to assist them with solving their problems.

2. Step Up to a More Sophisticated and Persuasive Sale

Do the research necessary to understand your customer's business, cost structure and revenue stream well enough to sell your products or services based on the Return on Investment they will receive when they buy it. This transitions purchasing your products or services from an **expense to an investment**.

3. Ask for Referrals and Make Cold Calls

Make sure you're still employing the sales basics of asking for referrals and making cold calls. A satisfied client will gladly refer you and you always want to be expanding your customer base.

4. Always Do What is Best for Your Customer

You'll always be more successful in the long term by letting the best interests of your customers guide you. A powerful example is bringing in a colleague who can bolster your expertise when needed and help you better serve your customer.

5. Venture Out of Your Comfort Zone

To perform at a higher level you'll have to try new ways of doing things. You may also need to try things again that did not work in the past. In short, you'll need to step out of your comfort zone and do things that may make you uncomfortable, at first.

In all these risks, it is wise to follow the Six Steps of Intelligent Risk-Taking as presented in my book *The Power of Risk*:

1. Succinctly describe the risk
2. Assess the possible outcomes
3. Devise success enhancement measures
4. Revise the likelihood of success
5. Conduct a disaster check
6. Make a decision and proceed

You cannot expect to improve performance if you continue to do things the way you have in the past. *Different outcomes require different methods.* You'll need to grow, adapt and take some intelligent risks. The good news is that both the process and the results are rewarding.

Jim McCormick is the Founder and President of the Research Institute for Risk Intelligence. His books include *Business Lessons from the Edge* (McGraw-Hill), *The Power of Risk* (Maxwell Press) and *The First-Time Manager* (AMACOM). More information is available at www.JimMcCormick.com.

Permission to publish or post this article is granted provided copyright is attributed to Jim McCormick and the above information about the author and his website is included in its entirety.