



**Selling<sup>com</sup>LTC**  
**Monthly Sales Tip**  
 by Phillip W. Sullivan

[SellingLTC.com,LLC](http://SellingLTC.com,LLC)   
 [info@sellingltc.com](mailto:info@sellingltc.com)   
 1.877.603.2771

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## Are Bad Habits Blocking Your Path To Success?

Let's face it, humans are creatures of habit. And though many of us may have reached a comfortable level of success, there's probably a bad habit or two we wish we could eliminate. Of course, bad habits don't always lead to total failure, but they can often prevent us from performing at our highest potential and attaining our highest aspirations.

So what's holding you back? Are there unproductive habits you would love to eliminate? In his book *"Kiss Theory Good Bye,"* Bob Prosen discusses five crippling habits that lead to failure. This month I would like to take a look at those habits and offer some solutions on how to eliminate them from your life.

Prosen identifies the following five crippling habits:

1. Absence of clear directives
2. Lack of accountability
3. Rationalizing inferior performance
4. Use of planning in place of action
5. Aversion to risk or change

### **The Absence of Clear Directives**

A lack of a clear directive will cause you to spend the majority of your time **reacting** as opposed to acting. Stated another way, if you have no definitive plan of action you'll be forced to make one up as you go. This flying-by-the-seat-of-your-pants approach often results in poor decision-making and requires multiple attempts at solving simple issues which likely could have been avoided had a definitive plan been in place. Clear directives are needed for every aspect of your practice - from how to handle initial contacts with clients, to making detailed sales presentations, to how you intend to spend your marketing dollars.

#### ***Corrective Action***

Begin setting clear, measurable, and achievable goals. Establish predetermined goals for every facet of your business. Know exactly what you want to accomplish. Before you make contact with a prospect or client, clearly define the desired outcome and create a definitive plan to make it happen. Don't wing it or try to figure it out as you go. With no clear directives in place, it's like you're constantly trying to hit a moving target. Setting specific results-oriented

procedures will also help alleviate daily stress by removing the need to repeatedly decide what to do in every situation. Because you know what you want to accomplish, you invest your efforts to that end (focusing on the long-term goal) rather than stressing over what to do next (or concentrating only on your next, short-term obstacle).

### **Lack of Accountability**

As salespeople, when all is said and done, we really answer to no one but ourselves. If we have no goals, no one ever knows. If we have goals which we fail to reach, no one ever knows. At first answering to no one seems to have some appeal (no peer-pressure, no problem), but very few people possess the self-management skills needed that allows them to reach the highest levels of success. How about you? Are you truly working as hard and effectively as you are capable? Without some form of accountability you may never know.

#### ***Corrective Action***

Partner with a colleague or friend and hold each other accountable for meeting your goals and objectives. Set a specific time each week to meet and allow nothing to take precedence over it. Discuss your goals and the results of your actions from your previous week's activities as well as any challenges with which you are struggling. Then clearly lay out your objectives for the coming week and exactly how you intend to accomplish them. Knowing you will be held accountable to another person forces you to dig deeper and try harder to ensure you're meeting your goals. And having a colleague who will help you and also depend on you for help will result in better performance for both of you. It is important, however, to find a partner who has the drive to succeed and the desire to rise above his or her own challenges.

### **Rationalizing Inferior Performance**

Rationalizing Inferior Performance is where one gets caught in the trap of creating and accepting an excuse for every failure or bad performance. The most exciting aspect of our business is that we are independent businesspeople; entrepreneurs in the truest sense. This means that we alone are responsible for our successes, or our failures. I have observed the "rationalizing agent" on both the brokerage and captive side of the business. He or she always has an excuse or complaint close at hand. It's always easier to blame circumstances or someone else rather than accepting responsibility.

#### ***Corrective Action***

Don't rationalize, accept or make excuses for inferior performance. Having written goals and objectives will help you measure inferior performance. This is also where partnering with a colleague who will hold you accountable pays substantial dividends. When you realize you are performing below your capabilities, accept responsibility for your actions. Don't blame someone else or make excuses, even if based in fact. (Even if an excuse is based in fact, it doesn't matter... you still have to perform in order to succeed.) The bottom line is you either set out each day striving to perform at your highest potential or you don't. When you find yourself performing at unacceptable levels, accept responsibility and initiate corrective measures immediately.

### **Use of Planning in Place of Action**

Planning is important, but using planning in lieu of taking action makes it easy to continue doing nothing. Do you spend a good portion of your time creating marketing plans and sales strategies and never actually carrying them out? I have witnessed salespeople who are always planning; developing elaborate sales plans, but never implementing any part of the plan resulting in not only a waste of time, but a waste of talent. Planning how to get more

appointments, close more sales, or how to spend time more effectively are all important, but not if all you do is plan. Planning in place of action is deceptive because it takes so much of your time you delude yourself into believing that you are working. However, uninitiated plans **never** result in sales.

### ***Corrective Action***

Begin with small plans you can place into action immediately. Establish daily tasks or even hourly tasks and get into the habit of finishing a plan, i.e., "I will talk with two new prospects in the next hour." You'll find that if you begin focusing on hourly and daily tasks and successfully accomplishing them, then you'll feel confident and empowered to set and accomplish weekly goals, then monthly goals. Once you establish a plan, immediately put it into action.

### **Aversion to Risk and Change**

Having an aversion to risk and change can paralyze you with fear and nearly assure defeat. Some salespeople become so comfortable with inferior performance they have difficulty breaking free from it. It becomes easier to continue doing things the same way even if it results in failure, because a change in results requires a change in behavior. A change in behavior may mean learning a new skill or placing yourself in situations which make you uncomfortable. Change forces you to stretch and grow.

### ***Corrective Action***

Embrace change. View it as an opportunity to learn and grow. If you are apprehensive about certain aspects of your practice take some quiet time and ask what about this task makes me uncomfortable. Ask what you can do to equip yourself and enable you to perform in an efficient manner.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Here are a couple of final thoughts. First recognize and accept that you may have habits that are holding you back. You cannot correct that which you believe doesn't exist. So begin with a true and accurate assessment of yourself and your business practices. Take time to walk through every phase of your practice and evaluate your effectiveness. Make a list of the bad habits you wish to overcome. Next, measure your desire and commitment to break the cycle. It's not enough to know that bad habits are holding you back; your desire for success must drive you to make real changes in your behavior.

It is easy to fall into bad habits and if you follow them long enough you don't even realize they are the root of your failure. The only way to overcome bad habits is by making behavioral changes in your daily activities. This Sales Tip has provided you with a few simple steps which can put you on the road to overcoming habits that may be blocking your path to success. Set a Clear Directive, quit Rationalizing Inferior Performance (or underperformance), and don't be Afraid of Change. Decide today what you want out of your career – status quo or success. It's your choice...

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Good Selling!

**Phillip W. Sullivan**

President,  
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