

The Market Has Changed; Most New Homes Salespeople Have Not! by Martin Freedland

People make the difference. This is one of the shared philosophies of JWilliamsStaffing and preferred service provider, The Berke Group.

With their unique pre-employment assessment, a specific candidate's skills and talents are measured against those required for a specific job. Because it takes a combination of skill and talent to be successful, it's an effective tool for both the hiring manager and the candidate.

Martin Freedland, Founder and CEO of The Berke Group, is a guest contributor providing insight about today's salespeople and their particular talents and skills as measured by the Berke Assessment.

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 "The reason I am not selling is because of the awful market," is the chant of many new home salespeople. "I was selling like crazy in 2005, so it has to be the market and the bad traffic I am getting."

There is no question the market is much weaker and more challenging. However, some salespeople are selling, and a national study of more than 3000 salespeople conducted by The Berke Group reveals why some are successful while others are struggling and will continue to struggle.

The personality makeup and requirements for today's successful new home salesperson have changed. When prospects and buyers were plentiful and housing prices were rising, the salesperson had the best of all worlds. Prospects were practically anxious to buy a home. This is not true today as prospects are much

more selective and do not feel a sense of urgency as home supplies are plentiful.

The salespeople who are successful today share common traits and are outselling average-performing salespeople by a margin of 3 to 1. The personality traits and talents of these top performers are identifiable and are something to consider for each new home salesperson and sales manager.

In the past, high levels of Sociability (interacting with others) and low Structure (lack of detail ability) were common traits for many successful salespeople. These salespeople "never met a stranger," and many were chided for writing incomplete contracts and overlooking details. Builders were accepting of this behavior as long as sales were made.

The makeup of the successful salesperson has changed, however. With fewer prospects who are more reluctant to enter into sales contracts, today's salesperson must be much more competitive.

While high Sociability is still a key personality trait for highly productive salespeople, it is not enough. The Berke Group's study clearly identifies other key factors that are necessary for making sales today.

Idea Productivity, a measure of one's natural ability to generate ideas rapidly one after another, is a talent found in almost all top-producing salespeople. With each prospect having different motivations, personal requirements and needs, a salesperson's ability to

produce specific ideas and solutions separates high performers from the rest.

Another requirement for today's successful salesperson is a much higher level of Assertiveness than was previously necessary. Setting appointments, following up, networking with realtors, and pursuing internet leads all necessitate a relatively high level of Assertiveness. With fewer prospects, the need for being Assertive and valuing each potential buyer is essential. Hoping for more traffic is not a viable strategy for making more sales.

Where low Structure has historically been acceptable, today's high producers have moderately high levels of Structure. "Winging it" is no longer helpful. Salespeople who are organized and correct in their dealings with prospects and customers have a greater chance of making and retaining sales.

As a new home salesperson, what must you do? Chances are you got into the business because of your ability to connect with others (Sociability) so you are off to a good start! It will be important to be much more proactive than was previously necessary. There's nothing new about the need to follow up with prospects and leads. However, most salespeople do not. As I heard a top builder say, "I have visited hundreds of models across the country and acted as an interested prospect. Rarely will a salesperson contact me after I have left my telephone and address. Any salesperson who follows up is in the

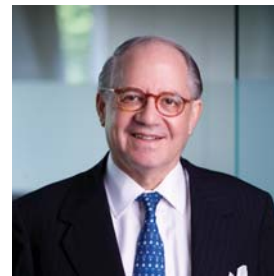
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top 10% automatically!” Building relationships with real estate agents you don’t know, meeting with HR managers who may be transferring people to your area, pursuing internet leads and sometimes visiting prospects in their homes (resale agents do this all the time) will put you in a more competitive position. In this challenging market, you can’t rely upon “the roast duck to fly into our mouths.” You need to up your Assertiveness and take the necessary actions to generate more sales.

While high Sociability is still very important, high producing salespeople in the current environment are different from many

who were previously successful. The need for higher Idea Productivity, Assertiveness and Structure have been clearly documented as highly predictive factors. Below is a graph that provides a clear picture of today’s top new home salesperson. The market has surely changed as have the requirements for the salesperson who can and will be successful.

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Committed to helping organizations continually improve the way they recruit, hire, train, manage and motivate their people for over three decades, Martin Freedland now oversees operations of The Berke Group’s Organizational practice.