

HAVE YOU BEEN MESMERIZED BY SALES TRAINING?

In the late 1700's, Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer became famous throughout France for his attempts to heal the human body through the use of magnets. Mesmer proclaimed that the human body contained magnetic force fields and if these force fields were not in harmony, illness would result. To cure these ailments, Mesmer devised a magnet therapy that he claimed would realign the magnetic forces in the body.

At first people scoffed at his ideas, but after he produced testimonials from patients who claimed that the magnets had relieved their pain, word spread across France and soon people were lining up to receive Mesmer's magnet treatments. His fame grew to such extent that the medical professors at the University of Paris began evaluating his claims. After studying his magnet treatments, they and numerous other prominent medical institutions declared Mesmer a charlatan. In spite of these allegations, more and more people flocked to Mesmer, paying absorbent amounts of money to receive his treatments.

Mesmer's notoriety reached such heights that in 1778 the King of France launched an investigation to determine the legitimacy of his claims. The King commissioned a group of distinguished academics, including Benjamin Franklin, who was in France gathering French support for America during the Revolutionary War, to conduct the investigation. The findings of the inquiry were that the magnets had no healing powers and only helped some people because of a placebo effect, or as the final report stated, "imagination."

One of the many experiments used to disprove Mesmer's claims consisted of informing some who professed to have been helped by the magnet therapy that they would be exposed to magnets through a closed door. While next to the door, the participants stated that they felt the healing power of the magnets, just as they had in earlier times when the magnets were visible. It was then revealed that no magnets were used and that there was nothing behind the door.

Publically humiliated, Mesmer fled France in disgrace and lived in seclusion the rest of his life. However, his impact is still felt as the term "mesmerized" originated from the public's enthrallment with Mesmer's magnet treatments.

Today, modern science has conclusively proven that magnet therapy is utter nonsense. It is an established scientific fact that magnets offer no therapeutic benefits.

Though there are many questions that spring forth when learning of Mesmer, one of the most frequently asked is, "Did Mesmer know that his magnet therapy did not have the power to heal or did he actually believe it was restoring the health of his patients?" My answer to this question is two-fold. First, the evidence is inconclusive whether or not Mesmer knew the magnets could not cure anyone. Second, it is irrelevant if he knew or not. Regardless of whether or not he was consciously aware that the magnets did not have the power to heal, he misled people and was guilty of fraud.

There is a common misconception that if someone makes a false claim to truth, as long as the person did not know or intend to mislead others, than it is excusable. In spite of one's intentions, any time a

person makes a truth claim that person has a moral obligation to show impartial evidence that demonstrates that the claim is in fact true. If one cannot prove the claim, then he or she has an ethical duty to express that the claim is an opinion and not an assertion of truth. To deceive others by stating that something is objectively true and then later, when proven wrong, say that you did not know it what not true, is more than ignorance. It is unethical.

This is one of the problems with most sales training. It is based upon claims of truth about selling, but offers no evidence to support the claims. Some trainers may, like Mesmer, produce a few testimonials, but they offer no scientific proof that verifies that they are correct. Furthermore, because the truth claims of one sales training system often contradict the truth claims of other sales training systems, logically, they cannot all be right. The reality is that though modern sales training is based upon conjecture, it makes claims to objective truth. This is morally reprehensible because under the guise of sharing truth claims about selling, sales trainers take money from sales people and companies.

In contrast, what makes proven science so beautiful and powerful is that it is true. Science reveals the truth of reality. This is extremely important for many professional disciplines, particularly the discipline of sales. Never before in human history has there been so much scientifically validated information regarding what creates and enables influence. For sales people, understanding these scientific principles is indispensable because when sales people align their activities and behaviors with proven science they become more effective and their ability to sell is enhanced. To disregard this proven science is treacherous because when sales people sell against science they are inadvertently behaving in ways that obstruct influence. This is not only an unprofitable business practice, but it will also diminish the results that sales people are able to produce.

Because of the proven science of influence, no longer must sales people stumble along hoping that they can guess their way to success. Now sales, like almost every other discipline, can be guided by the objective, demonstrable and predictable proof of science. No one would consider treating a deadly disease or launching a space shuttle into space without the guide of scientific research. Likewise, professional sales people cannot expect to effectively influence another human being without leveraging proven science. As researchers Brad Sagarin and Kevin Mitnick emphasize, “in the marketplace, practitioners live or die by their skill at harnessing the principles of influence. The skilled prosper. The unskilled go out of business.”¹ In short, in today’s fiercely competitive, tumultuous selling climate neglecting proven science is no longer an option.

When sales people, managers and business leaders want to base their selling behaviors on proven science they turn to the Hoffeld Group. The Hoffeld Group is a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the proven science of influence out of the laboratory and academic journals and applies it to selling. We refuse to dabble in the vast array of conflicting opinions regarding how to sell. Our foundation is proven science, not conjecture. We focus on identifying what science has verified creates, enables or enhances influence. We then communicate this complex science in practical, understandable, sales specific concepts, strategies and tactics.

Over the years, the Hoffeld Group has helped sales people and organizations from around the world base their selling efforts on proven science. The results our clients achieve are amazingly consistent. Sales production increases, market share grows and sometimes businesses and careers are even reborn. In short, when sales people align their behaviors with science, their interactions are enriched and so is their effectiveness.

Selling is a noble and necessary activity that is a mission critical endeavor for every organization. It is too vital to be based upon conjecture. Those in the profession of sales deserve to know about the proven science that has the power to enhance their ability to sell. What it comes down to is that selling is too important to be based upon anything other than proven science.

About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group's groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.

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1. Brad Sagarin and Kevin Mitnick. "The Path of Least Resistance." *Six Degrees of Social Influence*. Douglas T. Kenrick, Noah J. Goldstein and Sanford Braver (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2012). p. 26.