

Are Football Watchers Better Salespeople?

By Voss Graham

Each year brings new excitement for every football fan. Maybe this year we will win it all. Enthusiasm and spirits are running high – just like the beginning of a new year for a sales team. This year will be the year everything comes together and we beat our competition and move up the market share rankings.

While these feelings of excitement and optimism are great – the reality of the season kicks in at some point. College football fans can feel the highs of victory and the lows of defeat. Playing a good game is not enough – as every sales person knows – second place is not victory.

As a college football junkie, er, fan, watching TV during football season is a requirement for living. One day after eight hours of continuous game viewing, a question was posed – “What can a person learn or gain from all of this college football?”

At first, all the defensive answers would run through one’s mind – like blitzing linebackers, fast and furious. Then calmer thoughts and self directed questions begin to flow. After several hours of reflection and honest self evaluation, an announcement was made: *“Honey, watching college football is making me a better salesperson!”* Without supporting facts, this was a brave announcement. Therefore, here are seven points taken from years of watching football and applying the lessons of the great programs. The seven points are as follows:

1. **Preparation** – As a salesperson, preparation gets you ready to make the sale and win the account’s business. Always have a call plan, account plans and a personal business plan in place to reference. Anticipation is critical in your account relationships, knowing more about your customers gives you the advantage. Also, selling, just like college football is a year round activity. Do the little things today than win the big things later.
2. **Practice** – Practice as perfect as you can, then you can deal with actual situations with confidence. Losers believe practice is for someone else. Then while face to face with a decision maker they do not execute at a high level. Learn and practice the winning techniques – it’s your choice to be a winner.
3. **Goals** – Know what you want and figure out what it will take to get you there. Winners take their goals and break them down into measurable units. Knowing what has to be done gives you an advantage over the “wing it” crowd. Another area to examine your goals regarding measurements is similar to having an offensive and defensive game plan in football. A defensive plan is about retaining your existing customer base – how do you keep your best customers? An offensive game plan would be directed at selecting target customers and identifying how to win these accounts.
4. **Teamwork** – Even in the world of selling, teamwork counts. Each person on your team has an assignment. When assignments are executed without flaws – winning is enhanced. Poor execution by a team leads to failure – others win. Sales teams have several areas to improve teamwork. First is the alignment with the marketing team so that a consistent message or position is presented to your customers and prospects. Another area of necessary teamwork is between their

- manufacturing and distribution teams. These areas need excellent teamwork with each group executing at the highest levels to gain customer satisfaction.
5. **Adversity** – The true sign of greatness in both sales and football is how adversity is dealt with at anytime. Adversity is a tool for building character and challenges you to perform at the highest levels. Most losers believe adversity comes only to hinder their performance and results. The best teams use adversity as a motivator to improve their performance. Winners understand the importance of getting better and avoiding complacency.
 6. **Focus** – Winning football programs focus only on the next opponent. Winning salespeople focus 100% on the customer they are working with at the moment. In fact, these sales people are completely focused on learning more about the customer and their issues. Losing sales people are thinking about their commission, their tee time, who is possibly calling their call phone, what are they going to say next, everything except their customer. Be a winner and focus on your customer.
 7. **Proactive** – Be aggressive in our actions and remember sales is a contact sport. The losers react to customers rather than consistently making a proactive effort to become “top of mind” to their customers. Set the pace and make your competitors play to your strengths. The best teams set the pace and execute their plan to win.

Finally, everything in life is associated to learning. Be a lifetime learner and you will be employable for a lifetime. So enjoy watching your football games on TV or in person, then make the association to what creates a winning program, sales person or leader. Then choose the course that takes you to the top – every year.

About the Author:

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