

# Heavy Hitters

By Bruce Carter

A hand went up at a recent in-house sales training seminar I was conducting for a large fire equipment distributor on the East Coast. The raised hand actually belonged to the general manager so I assumed right away that the question which followed was primarily for the benefit of the bright-eyed and eager sales and service technicians who were also in attendance. He asked, "Bruce, you have been involved in the fire protection business for a long time. What would you say are some of the qualities and characteristics that you see in many of the very best sales/service reps in your nearly forty years in the industry? You know, the common traits of the real heavy hitters?"

Surprisingly, his question was actually a fairly easy one to answer. It's an answer I have been pondering and formulating for years.

Although excellent sales and service representatives come in a wide assortment of sizes, shapes, colors, educational backgrounds, geographic locations and economic upbringings, there are a number of notable commonalities among the best of the best. Some of the qualities that the top guns share include the following.

## Desire

*"Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, and enthusiastically act upon will inevitably come to pass."* —Paul J. Meyer

Perhaps more than any other quality or characteristic, a person's desire to be successful is of upmost critical importance. Just read the biographies of tremendously successful men and women and you will discover that the single most common quality shared by most is their unwavering desire and drive to be successful. An individual with an unquenchable thirst



for success is like a thundering freight train and is nearly unstoppable. Most managers would agree that a person with mediocre to average talent who is bound and determined to be successful will out-perform the talented individual with unenthusiastic determination 99 percent of the time.

The heavy hitters love a goal and a challenge. Give a top producing sales/service rep a monthly production goal and he is going to hit it every time. It is just the way that they are wired.

## Focus

*"I don't focus on what I'm up against. I focus on my goals and ignore the rest"* —Venus Williams

Remember the grade school short story

of Walter Mitty, the lovable character created in 1939 by author James Thurber? The mild-mannered Walter daydreamed through life imagining himself as Robin Hood, Secret Agent 007, General Custer, Tarzan, or whoever his hero of the moment happened to be. Thurber's story is a sad one, however. Walter's lifelong lack of meaningful focus netted him little more than a life of simple mediocrity.

The true success stories in life are inspirational accounts of men and women with crystal clear goals and laser-focus plans for significant achievement. Most of the top fire protection professionals have clearly defined goals for their life, for the year, for the month and the day ahead of them. They have the ability to seemingly tune out distractions in life

that often derail the plans and purpose of a less-focused individual. Top producers see themselves not merely as wandering generalities, but as meaningful specifics with their eye constantly on the target.

### Self-Discipline

*“The only discipline that truly lasts is self-discipline.” –Bum Phillips*

I recall many years ago having the pleasure of attending a presentation given by Arnold Schwarzenegger at the grand opening of a Vic Tanny Health Spa in Cincinnati. Arnold had just won the world’s most sought-after title in the world of competitive body building for a record sixth time. His one-hour presentation was motivational, inspirational, and laced with a healthy dose of his sharp Austrian wit and humor. The part of Mr. Olympia’s presentation that inspired me the most, however, was his account of the almost superhuman degree of self-discipline that he had to maintain in order to build the world’s most perfect physique! Few people in the world would be willing to sacrifice to the extent he did and endure the pain, sweat, and tears that was necessary to achieve the success that Arnold did.

Few lofty goals in life are achieved without a tremendous amount of desire, sacrifice, focus, and self-discipline. Every top achiever who I have run across in the fire protection business gets to bed early on workdays, arises early in the morning, maintains a healthy physical body, studies, learns, and works darned hard! As my mentor Zig Ziglar so aptly pointed out, “If you do the things you’re supposed to do when you’re supposed to do them, the day will come when you can do the things you want to do when you want to do them.”

Yep, ol’ Zig was talking self-discipline.

### Attitude

*“Your attitude, not your aptitude, determines your altitude.” –Zig Ziglar*

Our attitude on the job is even more important than the skills we have and use on the job. In fact, experts agree that a full 80 percent of our success (including raises, promotions, and advancement) over the course of a career is a direct result of our attitude.

So, if one’s attitude is so darned important then, what is it exactly? Well, the dictionary defines attitude as, “A manner of acting or feeling or thinking that shows one’s mood, mental state, disposition or opinion.” So attitude is an external manifestation of an internal condition! Our attitude on the outside is a pretty darned good indicator of what’s going on in our head and our heart. Our attitudes can be demonstrated in various ways, too. For example:

- One’s sense of humor (or lack thereof)
- Our facial expressions
- A person’s general level of enthusiasm for life
- Our work ethic
- The way one handles criticism
- Our ability to get along with others
- Seeing life’s glass as “half full” rather than “half empty”

Many top producers in the fire protection business have an almost magnetic attitude. Others are drawn to the person with the positive, upbeat, and encouraging attitude. The hard-working guy or gal with a smile on their face who is energetic, cheerful, and upbeat tends to attract people of similar personality type into their circle of friendships.

### Team Spirit

*“Talent wins games, but teamwork wins championships.” –Michael Jordan*

The guy or the gal in the workplace who has that ready-to-help spirit is a major plus in any organization. In the fire protection industry, the rep with team spirit is the service technician who volunteers to work on Saturday to complete the “straggler” inspections before the end-of-the-month deadline. The team player is the rep who makes a day of cold calls without complaining when all of the month’s established inspections are completed and everyone is out of work. It is the technician who volunteers to stay late and help the team knock out the forty ten-pounders for six-year maintenance that must go back to the customer in the morning.

Heavy hitters are shining stars with excellent attitudes, solid work ethic, and are the kinds of service technicians that customers and peers respect and admire. Heavy hitters put up solid sales and service numbers and are outstanding individuals to work alongside of as well. The exciting news is that virtually every service technician in the fire protection business has the ability to be a heavy hitter, too. ❖

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*Bruce Carter is a popular motivational speaker and sales trainer specializing in the fire equipment industry. Bruce is available to you and your organization for: in-house sales and customer service seminars, in-the-field sales training, and consulting. For information visit [www.nafiresales.com](http://www.nafiresales.com) or call (513) 885-3473.*

