

What Top Salespeople Do Differently

Superstars adopt a selling style that takes full advantage of their greatest talents

by Benson Smith and Tony Rutigliano Authors of [*Discover Your Sales Strengths: How the World's Greatest Salespeople Develop Winning Careers*](#) (Warner Books, February 2003)

There is no single, sure-fire, tried-and-true method that anyone can readily imitate to deliver peak performance. In fact, the world's best salespeople are not characterized at all by their techniques. But they do share one common trait: **Successful salespeople use their unique strengths to excel.**

Building on the ideas made popular in [*Now, Discover Your Strengths*](#), Gallup's national bestseller - [*Discover Your Sales Strengths*](#) presents the concept that many people already possess the tools necessary to become amazing salespeople. The book, grounded in extensive Gallup research conducted over 40 years and based on thousands of interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and customers reveals that the key to a successful sales career lies in focusing on your personal strengths and transforming those assets into solid sales skills.

Gallup researchers asked hundreds of thousands of questions over the years in an effort to understand what drives exceptional performance. They have found that **a person's response to the question "At work I get to do what I do best every day." is one of the single most important questions ever posed.** In just the past few years the question was asked from more than two million people. What did they find?

People's responses to that question **link directly to their productivity, profitability, and customer loyalty measures.** The more people agree with the statement, the better their performance. The implications of this finding are both simple and complex.

Just doing more of what you do best can dramatically improve your performance. That's the simple part. The more complex part is finding out how to do that in your present role, or finding another role that allows you to do that. **Everyone has to be in the right role in order for our talents to shine.** That's what we mean by fit, a close match between our job and our greatest talents.

Years ago we were struck by the observation that in every organization we studied, the best salespeople appeared to be in exactly the right jobs for them, and they usually knew it. Top salespeople often mentioned this to us within the first few minutes of our conversations.

John told us his story. *"After college I didn't know what I wanted to do. No job seemed really interesting to me. Then I tried door-to-door sales. To my surprise, I liked it. I got a kick out of persuading people to buy. But I didn't like the company much. After a while I got a 'real' sales job with a legitimate company. I did okay, but the job required me to call on the same customers over and over again. I missed the closing pressure of my old job. Finally, after several different sales jobs I found one that was perfect for me. It's fast-paced, you go all out to get the order, and I love it."* John has fit . . . and he knows it. . . .

For salespeople a "fit" means adopting a sales style that takes advantage of their greatest talents, or if changing jobs, finding one that is as close a match as possible to his or her talents.

Bear in mind that even modest improvements in fit yield big improvements in performance. This is especially true for individuals who are good performers already. Improving fit is the fastest, surest, and most dramatic way to improve your success and your job satisfaction.