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# History is always a good teacher

By [Colleen Stanley](#)

As sales teams prepare for the fourth quarter, they should review four history lessons from America's Fourth of July birthday that will make a difference in sales results.

## Lesson No. 1: Conviction and commitment

Our first president, George Washington, was also our commander in chief during the Revolutionary War. It was a brutal war that lasted eight years. Washington's perseverance was tested with harsh winters, being outnumbered by the British army and betrayals by close staff members. He had many reasons to quit the fight and give up.

But despite great challenges, Washington and his troops persevered because they believed in their goals: freedom and independence.

The history lesson for salespeople is to ask: How committed are you to achieving your goals?

Salespeople often complain they can't achieve their sales goals because the competition has more brand recognition, more feet on the street and lower pricing. These excuses lead to blaming the company for poor sales results instead of looking at their own sales and relationship skills. The focus is on what they don't have. Imagine the outcome of the Revolutionary War if our forefathers had concentrated only on what they didn't have.

Focus on what you can control: your conviction and commitment to achieving a goal. These two Cs beat most competitors.

## Lesson No. 2: Celebrate

The Fourth of July is the day on which people of all political parties celebrate this great country. How often does your company celebrate its greatness?

Most sales organizations are run by highly driven sales managers and comprised of equally driven salespeople. Sales meetings focus on achieving next quarter's goals and troubleshooting problems – all very important to staying in business and satisfying customers. But they rarely celebrate the victories.

Ed Oakley, author of "Leadership Made Simple," teaches his clients to revamp their meeting agendas and start them with this question: What are we doing right? It's a simple question that creates powerful results. Team members start recognizing all the good the company achieves rather than the shortcomings.

A sales manager who embraced this simple question changed the tone of his entire organization. Optimism is contagious. With each salesperson required to say something positive, the culture started moving from pointing fingers to raising arms in victory.

### **Lesson No. 3: Hit the sales quota and the fun quota**

All across America, cities and towns celebrate the Fourth of July. Parades are held, and people act rather silly. Grown men scrunch into small go-karts and weave up and down the streets. Adult women dance in celebration of their senior diva status. Crazy clowns carry the U.S. flag and kiss babies. It's fun.

Well-run sales organizations are focused on hitting the sales quota and the fun quota. They know that "work hard, play hard" is more than a cliché.

Fun quotas can be achieved by showing humorous YouTube videos during sales meetings, charging your sales team with creating a skit of good and bad sales calls, or scheduling more formal play outside of the office.

### **Lesson No. 4: History**

The Fourth of July is a wonderful time of the year to review and listen to the stories of the ordinary men and women who built this extraordinary country. Their tales of bravery and courage are a symbol of what can be done by people who believe in a cause.

Companies are well-served by keeping alive their histories. New salespeople don't know the early stories of the owner working out of a garage or car. They assume the new office building is the way things always were.

A vice president of sales with a successful business, which went from startup to public status, always made sure the president had an hour with new-hires to tell the company story. She made sure the new-hires understood how ordinary people built an extraordinary company.

What is your company's story? What were the early battles of survival? Why was the company started? Storytelling ensures that history isn't forgotten. Make sure your organization is sharing its history, its story.

Make it the Fourth of July year-round at your company by examining your convictions, celebrating your victories, hitting the fun quota and keep company history alive. Wave your company flag with pride. Remind your sales team that ordinary people build extraordinary companies.

#### *About the Author*

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