

# Sales Leader Lab Convention 2017

“Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.” (Walter Lippmann)

The 2017 Sales Leader Lab Convention was dedicated to the challenge of “Leading Leaders – How to lead high-profile executives without direct authority.”

Exceptional people are often exceptionally difficult to manage - but the extraordinary traits in their behavior often correlate with extraordinary performance and unconventional ideas. The creative potential and out-of-the-box thinking that these individuals display is a valuable resource for society and businesses. As the influential U.S. writer and journalist Walter Lippmann wrote: “Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.”



*Subtle differences in executive presence can have a significant impact on success in leadership*

None would know this better than London actor and tutor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Elliott Russo. Having been part of the UK’s theatre and TV industry for more than twenty years, Russo understands what motivates and moves outstanding individuals.

In Russo’s two-hour workshop, which formed the centerpiece of the 2017 Sales Leader Lab Convention, participants gathered first-hand evidence and surprising insights into how small things can make an enormous difference when dealing with high-performing individuals. Using his

ample experience as a professional actor and tutor, Russo worked with the audience to show the effects that even subtle differences in executive presence – i.e. posture,



voice, tone and attention – can have on the way a sales leader is perceived and followed by his team.

Participants learned that different situations may require a different style altogether.

Sales leaders may need to use a completely different approach when they communicate revenue goals to their account managers as compared to what they would use for a development conversation with a sales executive. The trick is to gain an awareness of the signals that we may send out subconsciously. Under the header “The Sales Leader as a Somatic Transmitter”, participants experienced in multiple exercises what their bodies and voices are communicating to the person opposite without their even noticing it.





It is not only other people who are influenced by our physiognomy and mimicry – even our own thinking is affected by the way we stand, breathe and mimic. In a short but highly enlightening exercise Russo asked participants to form pairs, stand opposite each other, put their feet firmly on the floor and tense their stomach and neck muscles. When Russo prompted them “and now quickly say something nice about your opposite” many participants realized that this was almost impossible in their tense and frozen state.

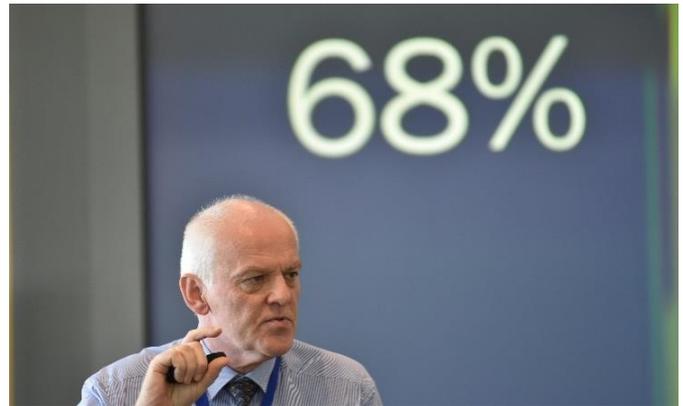
The workshop continued with various techniques to increase motivation and stimulate creativity before Russo ended his session to the audience’s wild applause.



### *Low power helps to sell products and ideas*

Andreas Goldmann spun Russo’s thread further to explain how successful sales leaders modify their attire to assume high or low power, depending on what they are trying to achieve. When they give orders that must be followed, a “high power” style of verbal and non-verbal communication is often adequate. When they try to sell ideas and gain employees’ support for a specific undertaking, though, a “low power” attitude may be the more successful option.

As Goldmann explained, recent studies have found that the most successful salespeople tend to use a “low power” approach: they assume that they have less power than the other party in a negotiation. Consequently, they gather more information from the customer; they take the other party’s perspective and try to understand what their adversary is thinking; and they strike the right balance between introverted and extroverted behavior.



Goldmann’s reflections on selling as the “art of moving others” applies to salespeople as well as to sales leaders. “Only one in nine respondents in the OECD survey has a job that is attributed by many people with words like “slimy”, “pushy”, “manipulative” or “dishonest – in other words, a job in Sales”, Goldmann explained. “However, whenever we are trying to move people and convince them to give something up for something else”, he continued, “we are selling.” Whether we want it or not, we are all in Sales – in Non-Selling Sales. And all of us being salespeople of some sort, we all can profit from the latest scientific research in the area of sales.

A common trap into which salespeople fall is that they systematically underestimate the likelihood that others will agree to their requests – and this is by more than 50 percent, as Goldmann explained. “Just ask if you need help” was his simple advice that goes for salespeople as much as for sales leaders. But who really does that in the executive ranks of a company?

Sales leaders who are trying to move people can use the same psychological effects that salespeople use when trying to sell their products and services. Concluding his session, Goldmann showed how anchoring, picturizing and picturing significantly increases success for “real” and “non-sales” sellers.

## Principles beat methods

Participants collected a variety of helpful insights and refreshing ideas from Elliott Russo's and Andreas Goldmann's presentations. However, how can sales leaders ensure that these insights and ideas are really put into practice? After all, the key challenge for organizations is usually not the lack of knowledge or insight. Rather, it is that they often fail to change employees' and management's behavior and to achieve their goals.

As NewLeaf's Dr. Michael Scherm explained in his presentation, five universal leadership principles have emerged as critical for the successful implementation of sales leaders' strategies from the numerous Sales Leader Lab programs that NewLeaf has performed for its customers. These principles have their deeper roots in the thinking of leading economists, philosophers, statesmen and other extraordinary personalities in their respective times. Using the challenge that digitalization poses for many sales leaders as an example, Scherm explained what these five principles are and how they work:



1 - *Ockham's Razor* helps organizations to circle in on the essence of their challenges and prevents organizational paralysis caused by a multitude of overlapping assumptions. William of Ockham was a Franciscan Friar, theologian and philosopher in the late 13<sup>th</sup> / early 14<sup>th</sup> century, and his principle has become a standard method to keep complicated philosophical theories simple.

2 - Going back to ancient philosopher Epictet, the *Circle of Influence* was popularized by author Stephen Covey and American philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr. In the business world, the Circle of Influence focuses teams on challenges that they can resolve or influence themselves.

What sounds trivial often becomes critical, and can cause organizations to miss their goals when they are undergoing profound changes.



3 - The *Chain of Achievement* focuses sales leaders on leading indicators. Any improvement effort in the sales organization must start with the activities that salespeople and their managers conduct (measured as leading indicators defined by activities), not on the goals that they pursue (measured as lagging indicators such as revenue). Dr. Scherm presented Ethelbert Stewart, the „father“ of the U.S. unemployment statistic, as the role model for this way of thinking.

4 - The *Power of Ten* emphasizes the importance of scale for sales leader's success - similarly to Charles Eames, who used exponential powers to visualize the importance of scale in architecture, design and nature. Sales leaders are often seen as the company's highest-ranking account managers, and often they tend to act as account managers more than anything else. However, if they really want to scale up their teams' sales efforts, they must act as multipliers and enable their teams instead of taking on sales tasks themselves.

5 - With *Gemba* the customer finally enters the stage. Japanese „Gemba“ means „the place where it happens“. In companies this is the place where value is generated for the customer. Salespeople cannot rely on one single sales methodology or role; they must be able to deploy a number of them, depending on the customer's current needs and situation. The one and only appropriate success metric in this context is the value that the customer derives from the interaction with the salesperson.

## Conclusion

While inspiration and numerous thought-provoking insights were still keeping the audience's imagination busy at the 2017 event, Andreas Goldmann was already able to give a first glimpse at the next highlight in New Leaf Partners' series of Sales Leader Lab Conventions: the 2018 Sales Leader Lab Convention will center around exciting shapes, dazzling views, lush spaces and daring perspectives - and reveal how they are related to sales leadership. Stay tuned...

## Thank you to our partners

A special thank you goes to our partners from Babbacom, Efcam, Margin Academy, Presentation Load and Wilms Coaching for the inspiring displays and materials that they presented in the foyer outside the Boardmeeting room during the event.

