

## TOM HOPKINS AUDIO MOTIVATION INTERVIEW

Andy: Welcome to another [www.AudioMotivation.com](http://www.AudioMotivation.com) interview I'm Andy O'Bryan and today it is a thrill to interview sales training legend Tom Hopkins.

Tom: Well, thank you it's nice to be here with you.

Andy: You are widely regarded as a sales legend. Master of training people at all sales levels on the most effective methods for becoming successful at pretty much selling anything anywhere. So my first question is what have you found to be the hardest aspect of sales for people to learn and become proficient at it and why would that be?

Tom: What I find is that many people have a low threshold for rejection and because they don't want to get told no, so they avoid prospecting and that's not getting the numbers up as far as the number of people they talk to. Eventually they don't have high productivity.

The key first of all is to realize that they are not rejecting you personally they are rejecting the proposal; whether the timing was not right or they were not financially ready to make the investment. So I would say you have to play it like a big game.

I look at life as a game within a game meaning you have to play to win in life and also in selling you have to play knowing that you can be rejected and you can have people hurt your feelings, but the key is to be thicker skinned and not take it personally.

Andy: What immediate and long-term steps can sales managers take to fix a chronic high turnover problem?

Tom: Well I think most turnover in selling is a natural thing that happens meaning you are going to have people leave sales after two, three or four years for various reasons or they change companies because they're stale on the product, but I really believe the key to cutting turnover is to have good management and good leadership.

Most people leave the company when they don't feel that they are being treated with enough recognition, management isn't supportive of them. The real challenge in turnover isn't with salespeople as much as it is with management and leadership. So the first key is to have managers trained to know how to cope with the different personality types that they are going to have in their office so they will then be able to cut that turnover down. But I don't want to say that a good sales company doesn't have turnover; they all do. But most good companies keep people longer than normal. And not only that I think one of the keys is to have not only recognition of their salespeople but to make sure they are making good

income. Money is the number one motivator and so the company has to be building in a way for them to make a greater income if they are successful. And that somewhat ties them in when they are making more than they can make in any other sales company.

Andy: Now many people who start out in sales probably never dreamed that they would be in that position and might only be doing it to make ends meet, find quick employment or both, only to find that after a few rejections they weren't cut out for sales. Now does somebody have to be cut out for sales to be successful?

Tom: Well there is an old myth that I tried to change and that is to be great in sales you have to be a natural or a natural born salesperson. My experience has proven that oftentimes those that aren't natural outgoing, gregarious, talkative salespeople but if they are very interested in other people and they master the art of questioning, and they can be more of the interested introvert personality they will still do extremely well in sales.

I found that over the years my top people – they, first of all, did not come across like a salesperson so they didn't threaten people – secondly, they were good listeners, which again is something that many top salespeople don't do very well is listen. And so again I feel that you just never know. I have had people that I have hired against my own best wishes thinking I shouldn't but I need someone and all of a sudden they turn out to be my top producer and I think the main reason is that they have an unquenchable desire to prove that they can do it and that they just never quit.

Andy: Now my next question is about people who weren't brought in to the company to sell necessarily. More and more employers, because of the bottom-line issues, are starting to try to make salespeople out of people/employees who are not in a sales position. So that might be met with resistance by these employees because they might say or be long-term employees who weren't highered to sell. Now how does a manager effectively train and motivate these non-selling employees to become revenue generators?

Tom: I think the first tier is you have to sell them on being a good manager that understands that the whole company is totally geared around the productivity of sales. So you have to sell people on selling to where they are excited about it. I also feel that many people who don't understand selling don't see the benefits of having a higher income which of course the more you risk take the greater your income can be. So you're going into the sales position from employee situation you have to understand that you can make a much greater income but again the training is the key I have found people afraid of selling that were trained as far as how to prospect, how to handle the telephone, how to do a good presentation, how to handle rejection and once these folks mastered the seven fundamentals of the sale, they became not only proficient but had a great income. So again money being such a great motivator, I would say you have to convince people that the

more risk you take the greater your income. And once you learn your presentation and you like the product, selling is really a fun business once you understand it and learn it.

Andy: What would you say about rejection? What would you say are the best ways for salespeople to overcome rejection and maintain a positive persistent attitude when the going gets tough? And I know it can be hard.

Tom: Well it is and no one enjoys being rejected; there is no doubt about that. But the more rejection people handle in the long-term the greater they're going to do financially. This is why I try to convince people in selling that you almost have to look at selling as a game. It's a numbers game. The people that talk to most people and, of course, put themselves in uncomfortable situations and handle more rejection eventually they will end up making more money. But again this is something you have to play.

Now one thing I do, Andy, is I ask people to make it a positive aspect by putting a dollar value on the word no. For example, if a person were to say I'm going to earn \$100 if I close the sale and to earn a hundred which means I got yes, I had to talk to five people. Well if you talk to five people and get the yes which is worth a hundred you got one yes and 4 no's. Now you divide the four no's into the hundred and in essence each no is worth \$25.

So now what you have done is taken a negative of rejection and made a positive as to the income that you earned from handling the no's. When I first got into real estate many, many years ago, I used to knock on doors and my manager said every time you knock on a door eventually you'll get a yes so all those no's are worth something, so I made them worth five dollars a door and putting that little game in my subconscious to where I knock on a door, they tell me no but I still got five dollars because eventually I am going to get a yes which will make me the listing on the property and thus the income.

Andy: So cold calling isn't necessarily an art. It is a numbers game.

Tom: Yes, it is a numbers game in the beginning. You have to find a way to build a referral business, but if you don't know anybody how do you build a referral business? You have to find some way to make contact. It could be on the telephone, it could be by direct mail with follow-up calls, it could be going out into the community and talking to people. Most people today are so afraid of rejection that they won't canvas or go out and talk to strangers. But I found a truth in my real estate career that if you talk to strangers; take out a nice business card with a thank you written on it that eventually you will start getting yes'.

Andy: So I guess this actually leads into my next question which talks about self-confidence and self-esteem. That seems to be like a snowballing effect and it can really do wonders once you get some sales under your belt. Would you say that?

Tom: Oh yes. In fact I think one of the reasons many people leave selling is that they don't increase their self image which it is hard to increase your self-esteem if you are not making money. So when I talk to managers, I say get your people up and producing. I think that if you have a brand-new person you must get them within 72 hours, within three days, in front of someone who is qualified, and do your best to at least get income generated in that first three-day period. What happens to too many salespeople is they come into a selling company, the company doesn't really train them, the company sends them on the territory, they then go out and get rejected, and don't make any money and so they say "I don't like this. I am going to quit". And I found that if I could get my brand-new people within 72 hours to have some type of good qualified lead or a closed transaction that suddenly they got excited because they were making money.

Andy: So you don't necessarily have to start out with a huge amount of self-confidence if you could just get a sale or two going you will do OK.

Tom: My shyest, most timid people in selling when I would recruit them into the company and manage them, I would get them first of all to work their warm market. The warm market is where you begin in selling which is our friends and relatives, people you know. Because if you can go out to an aunt, an uncle, or a father or mother, or some friend that works with you in your last line of work, and if you just have a great product and give a good presentation and they purchase it suddenly you're getting some great practice and confidence and that, of course, breeds confidence - confidence breeds confidence. Meaning I have found that when someone has a little success suddenly they start thinking I might be able to do this. But it won't happen if you just throw people out into the territory. I think they have to be taught, they have to role-play their presentations and again that is what most companies don't do. They let a person learn the presentation by failing for the first few weeks and now the person loses that confidence and ends up quitting.

Andy: Role-playing is such an effective tool but it seems like nobody wants to do it.

Tom: Yes and you know I don't understand is a great actor or actress that makes hundreds of thousands of dollars a year performing doesn't wing what they say in front of the camera. I have friends of mine that are actors in Hollywood and these folks say I spend three to four hours for every 15 minutes that I am going to be in front of the camera and it is done with rehearsing. I used to sit down with a mirror and actually practice my presentation. And one thing I learned over the years is that those that don't do real well don't want to practice. They'd rather just say what they feel like saying; it just comes out. Instead of saying I have to perfect my performance, I have to know exactly what I am going to say. And in saying the right words, the correct phraseology, I am going to close more sales, make more money, and here goes my confidence and my career.

Andy: It seems that that would save months of effort.

Tom: Oh it really will.

Andy: Now it is a known fact. I would like to switch gears a bit. The vast majority of small businesses and entrepreneurs eventually fail when starting a new business. Now how would effective sales training in the organization turned that stat around?

Tom: Well I think it is the whole key. There are two reasons businesses fail in my opinion. First of all they are undercapitalized where they don't have enough money when they open the company to withstand the cycles that you have to go through to build a business. Many companies begin with what I call a honeymoon period where they have a little 60 or 90 days period of excitement and then all of a sudden there can be a little slump that takes place. It's a plateau and if they don't have the money, the capital to actually withstand those little cycles that is when they have to go out of business. So the first reason is undercapitalization.

A second reason is they don't really train people and don't implement training programs. The companies don't need to re-create the wheel. That is another thing that is amazing. A good company that opens can search around, they can talk to Zig Ziglar one of my closest friends, they can talk to myself as far as our training and there are companies like ours that we have already re-created the training. Just take our material, let your people listen to the audio, watch the video training system, use the workbooks that we have, and you can get brand-new people off and trained and that I think is the key. In that first 90 days, you can have people trained in exactly what they're going to say and do.

Andy: Well, Tom Hopkins this has been a tremendous pleasure and just an interview popped with information and all of us here at AudioMotivation appreciate your time. We wish you all the best.

Tom: Well, Andy thank you for what you do for our profession. It is very appreciated and hard earned as well. So, all the best to all of you salespeople. Go help someone say yes.