



## Help Your Reps Uncover and Hone their Sales Secret Weapon



I love a good competition. For 13 years, I fed my competitive spirit playing racquetball. I got pretty good at the game, playing at the open level, and even winning a few bucks. Then after 13 years, I wanted a new challenge, so I decided I'd try tennis. I've always excelled at eye-hand coordination sports, so tennis seemed like a good choice.

**A**fter a few months taking group lessons and focusing on the basics, I discovered that, thanks to my years of racquetball, I have a natural and wicked forehand slice. It became obvious that what came naturally to me was hard for others to learn, and even harder for my opponents to deal with. I learned that my slice forehand is my tennis "secret weapon."

Training and coaching sales reps, I've realized that most great reps also have a secret weapon; the one skill they can count on to win deals and

outperform co-workers and the competition. Secret weapons are usually skills that come naturally or that reps excel at when others seem to struggle. Whatever it is, your role as their sales leader is to help them identify it, build a strategy around it, and deploy it until it becomes as natural, and as effective, as my forehand slice.

### Right Role?

The first step, of course, is to be sure they're in the

right sales role. If you have a Gatherer in a Hunter role, for instance, you'll never uncover their secret weapon because they aren't even playing the game their talents are best suited to win.

### Identify their Secret Weapon

When you're sure they're in the right role, ask yourself what skills they might have that are not only transferable, the way that my racquet skills were transferable from racquetball to tennis, but that might give them the edge in competition. Do they have a passion for technology or writing, or have they spent years in retail customer service? Where might those interests or experiences be leveraged to create an unbeatable advantage?

### Develop a Practice Plan

Even when I had identified my secret weapon, I knew that even though it came naturally to me, if I further developed my slice, it could be the difference between winning and losing. So, I spent hours practicing using the slice in every imaginable situation on the court. How can you help your reps practice adapting and using their secret weapon in multiple scenarios?

### Pressure Test and Refine

After a couple of months, I decided to put my hard work to the test. I approached my tennis instructor and told her that I wanted to test my skills out in a more competitive way. It turns out that she coached a USTA women's team and would love for me to join.

It was during competition that I sensed my secret weapon strategy was coming together. I started to "see" opportunities where putting my slice in play would dramatically increase my chances of winning! That competition allowed me to refine my technique even further.

To guarantee your reps can count on their secret

weapon under pressure they need to test it under pressure. Why? Because when everything is going well, they're relaxed, confident, and they perform at a high level. But, when they're behind quota and their pipeline is anemic they're stressed, scared, and worried. That's when you need to encourage them to put their secret weapon to the test. When it comes through like a champ then they'll know that no matter how stressful the situation, they can count on it to pull them through. And confidence is a powerful weapon.

### Coach Them

Simply put, I would never have become the tennis player I am, or the sales leader I am, if I hadn't had some powerhouse coaches. Certainly, I would never have uncovered and honed my secret weapon in tennis without the *right* coach.

Remember that no matter how good you are at coaching sales reps, or how powerful your own secret sales weapons are, you might not be the best person to help them perfect theirs. If your reps aren't developing their potential the way you believe they could, consider sending them to a seminar, online training class, or purchasing a few sessions with a sales coach.

Imagine having a team of reps who all understand their secret sales weapons, have honed them to a fine edge, and know how to leverage them to win the deals that might otherwise be impossible or at least less lucrative. If you rise to the challenge of helping them do that you may well find that the ability to help reps uncover and hone their secret weapons has become the secret weapon you can take into any situation you face as a leader! ■

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