

In A Sales Slump?



Embracing it can actually be good for your team!

The sales slump.

At some point or another, every bridal store and even the savviest of consultants experiences it. In fact, we're well aware that sales traffic patterns slowed for many of you in the second quarter of 2018. There was virtually no rhyme or reason – but lots of good guessing – as to why. We heard from a number of you that sales just stalled or yo-yoed, throwing staff members off their game with this curve ball of uncertainty.

When a slump hits your store, it's often due to some external factor – a recession, an unforeseen purchasing trend, a new competitor, or even nearby road construction that's preventing people from seeing your salon. Problem is, the slump doesn't

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Is there something you can do to turn around the situation? Absolutely! While you can't snap your fingers and reinvigorate the economy or pave the road outside overnight, here are seven proactive ways to embrace the slump and ultimately create a better, stronger and sharper sales team:

Expect it. Operating with blinders on only results in serious, often crippling shock when the inevitable slump arrives. It's important to discuss the possibil-

ity of a slump with your team as a “when” not an “if” because no matter how great your salon is, you will face a drop in business at some point.

Have an action plan. Create a detailed roadmap for how and when you will respond to slowing sales. When certain triggers get pulled, the plan will give you a blueprint for what to do. For example, if sales slow by 10 percent, you might increase your marketing efforts or give consultants an extra \$10 spiff on each gown sale. Yet when sales plummet by 50 percent, you may start reducing staff schedules or freeze incentives. Whatever plan (with triggers identified) you develop, review it periodically with your team so that when you're suddenly needing to use it, it doesn't

*What you focus on
grows, so think
positive!*

come as a surprise. Post it where only staff can see it and include it in your consultant's training manual. Make sure they're aware that it's not designed as a threat but rather a practical, essential tool for sustainable business operations.

Focus on your fundamentals.

Although it should be part of ongoing training, a more formal, dedicated review of selling fundamentals should also be included in any action plan you create. Review how you're prospecting new brides or other potential customers – what could be done better or differently? Ask sales staff to rate their tenacity and enthusiasm – could it use a boost? If so, what would be a great motivator? Also examine sales communication styles, noting what verbal and nonverbal cues could be improved. Perfect gown and product presentation, checking for where the process has perhaps become overly relaxed, sloppy or outdated. Get each consultant to provide feedback to the others on how they go about presenting various gowns. Talk about objections, too, noting how your team can learn to turn “Nos” into positive opportunities to serve brides better. Next, practice the close. Look for fears that your staff may have developed around closing the sale and see what patterns have developed as a result. For example, perhaps they are great at initiating the close but not so great at completing it. And what about following up with brides? Explore whether more could be done here, perhaps checking in with former brides to ask for

referrals or send a sweet thank you note and/or little gift for being so great.

Give yourself some love. When struggling with sales, it can be easy to get down on yourself. However, this will only undermine motivation, which is exactly what you need right now. So write down 10 things you do well when it comes to sales, remembering that what you focus on grows. From that list, pick some of those activities to do more, better, faster, etc.

When you're doing what you're good at, you'll feel more valued and validated as opposed to discouraged and denigrated. True, you're not perfect, and there will always be activities and skills you need to improve upon. But instead of punishing yourself for what you lack, ask for the help you need to learn, grow and evolve as a selling professional. This is respecting and honoring yourself at its best.

Psyche yourself out of the rut.

You can do this! You've got this! You are great at selling to brides! – or at least those are the words and that's the mindset that needs to replace any negative self-talk. Every morning, start out grateful for what you have done right/well in your job and talk yourself up until you break the losing streak!

Revisit your goals. Maybe goals need to change. Or maybe they don't. But either way, review your sales goals and determine

whether they're doable. For example, instead of “sell five brides this weekend,” maybe it's “prospect 20.” Every proactive activity counts toward success, but if you have unreasonable goals, you may be setting yourself up for failure. Note: setting high goals doesn't mean they're unreasonable. However, if you're aiming for the impossible (e.g., selling five brides when you have only one appointment scheduled), come back to earth. Start with reaching out to four more potential brides and let them know you've got an unusual opening in the schedule in the event they'd like to snag it!

Do something creative and new.

When you're down in the dumps due to a sales slump, shake things up a bit and call upon your imagination when doing so: Redesign the store. Build some beautiful displays. Reorganize the back room so it feels fresh and is easier to navigate. Suggest a contest for the sales team. Problem-solve an issue or challenge in a unique way. Whatever you do – *do different* and watch your motivation, creativity and productivity grow!



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