

# Sales and Service Excellence

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# Overcome 'Opportunity Blindness'

*3 keys to personal and professional success*

 By Marty Jacknis



**S**uccess. For some people it just seems to come naturally. Intuitively, these individuals plan better and communicate more effectively. Instinctively, they identify opportunities that others miss, striking when the iron is the hottest and reaching their goals in record time. But chances are these impressive achievements have little to do with inborn abilities. What truly sets these top performers apart is the ability to seek, see, seize and leverage vast number of opportunities surrounding them at any given time.

Unfortunately, most individuals are either unaware of this basic concept, or, they are constrained by self-limiting beliefs and planning systems that keep them from stepping out of their comfort zones into their 'opportunity zones'. In either case, like individuals wearing glasses with the wrong prescription, they have a limited view of what's really out there, leaving golden opportunities behind, only to be revealed in hindsight.

In undershooting potential business building and life-enhancing situations, too many people are leaving massive untapped and leveraged opportunity on the table. But there is a cure for this 'opportunity blindness'. By utilizing a universal planning and communication methodology called MPV, anyone can increase the probability of gaining a greater return from most any action and or initiative. Even top performers can go from unplanned and intuitive successes to more intentional and consistent triumphs.

## The Power of Three

MPV stands for the range of outcomes and correlating success identified in three levels of objectives: minimum, primary, and visionary. These three levels effectively 'bracket' the range of desired results. Together they are like progressive 'opportunity' lenses that facilitate vision at multiple perspectives and bring many successes and opportunities within sight.

**1. Minimum objectives (*M*)** are the most attainable objectives, the bare minimum of what must be achieved to make an encounter and initiative worthwhile. For example, the minimum objective in writing an article such as this would be to clearly introduce this concept to as many professionals as possible.

**2. Primary objectives (*P*)** are the reasonable objectives that should be achieved in the course of a call, meeting or initiative. Often primary objectives are the sole objectives formulated, leaving the initiator with only one way to gauge success or failure. Primary objectives answer the question, "What reasonable, desirable outcome of this interaction would I need in order to consider it a success?" The primary objective in writing this article is to motivate readers to try the concept and gain value from its use.

**3. Visionary objectives (*V*)** are the most aggressive objectives that could be achieved in the course of an encounter. This is the level where top performers shine the brightest. Taking this additional

step, they are able to identify objectives with the most significant and greatest possible outcomes. The visionary objective of writing this article is to have the reader embrace and continuously utilize the concept of removing opportunity blinders and then sharing it with their team members, associates, customers and loved ones.

### Utilizing MPV

MPV is simple yet important. MPV can be applied to any facet of one's business or personal life. It can be used to guide everything from how long to let the phone ring (minimum answer by three rings, primary two rings and visionary one ring) before answering to quantifying manufacturing outputs, identifying sales goals, setting quality parameters, establishing meeting objectives or creating budgets.

So, why doesn't everyone take advantage of this approach? The answer has its roots in lack of awareness. Most people have never considered the impact of their self-limiting beliefs. Some don't have a desire to improve; for others a fear of failure and rejection holds them back. Still others, believing that all rules are absolute and finite, refrain from asking questions that could increase their chances to optimize every situation.

Yet, when it comes to most 'rules', few are actually set in stone. In fact, there is built-in flexibility in almost every business model to accommodate requests. So, whether inquiring if a hotel can upgrade accommodations or asking clients to increase the size of their orders, all encounters and activities have the potential to become more productive. The greater the opportunity, the more thought and time that need to go into the planning.

### How to implement

Adopting MPV as a tool doesn't require a lengthy implementation or even any financial investment. As simple as getting in the habit of wearing glasses, it can be integrated into everyday life and business practices. It begins by asking three basic questions.

1. What would be reasonable minimum, primary and visionary objectives for this encounter?
2. What information must be given and obtained in order to achieve the desired minimum, primary and visionary objectives?
3. What are the logical and commonly expressed reasonable objections most likely to be encountered in trying to achieve the minimum, primary and visionary objectives?

However, effectively changing behavior goes beyond a series of questions. Human nature dictates that buying into anything new requires not only a strong stimulus, but the ability to recognize there is a void in or a problem with a current process. Overall, there needs to be an understanding of the implications, both positive and negative, of making a change.

Demonstrating the benefits of MPV can be accomplished easily through a sales call or role-playing training exercise. Experience has shown that in almost every case after the exercise is completed, most individuals were amazed and realized that they had a self-limiting plan at best. And with proactive introspection they clearly saw their current thinking and planning voids as well as a simple solution. At the end of the exercise it is important to ask all participants to think back to what their strategies were prior to the exercise. Did they develop a plan or wing it? Could they have accomplished more if they had established clear multiple objectives? Had they considered what other opportunities were possible from this one situation? How would this exercise been different using MPV?

As a follow up to this exercise and prior to future encounters, conduct

'vision checks' by meeting staff to assess whether the three-question format is being utilized.

For Scott Davis, CEO of TRA Insurance Solutions, this is an essential part of the MPV process. "When I was exposed to MPV I realized that I would gain more from my sales people if I spent more time reviewing their appointments and having a conversation -- a dry run so to speak -- before they had an appointment," says Davis, who believes that MPV added structure to what he did unconsciously and intuitively but realizes it is a learned process for many.

Brett Lindquist, CEO of The Mortgage Firm says his company is currently implementing MPV as part of the company culture. "MPV is a goal setting plan for an appointment that makes you think and plan ahead of time," says Lindquist. "With MPV, you have your objectives in mind and you ask questions differently because you are thinking of the bigger picture and a broader perspective."

### The Benefits

Whether MPV is used with strategic, tactical, operational or personal initiatives, the myriad of benefits exceed traditional limited planning methodologies and their planned outcomes. The MPV model:

- Encourages introspection and analysis of the range of possible outcomes from an encounter. The process challenges baseline assumptions, making encounter preparations more robust and more likely to garner success.
- Fosters understanding and alignment amongst meeting participants. Establishing shared MPV objectives requires communication about underlying assumptions.
- Promotes communication of information and creates a forum for knowledge transfer. Achieving any level of the objectives requires the dissemination of information to address obstacles and objections. By identifying the minimum, primary and visionary objectives, the degree of information required to attain each will be readily apparent.
- Inspires individuals and teams members to aim higher in their business objectives. In this way, the organization as a whole benefits.
- Increases the probability of reaping value from every business encounter and also reduces failure from business cycles. This, in turn, alleviates stress, which has additional benefits to the individuals and the larger organization.

### Blinders Off

Though hindsight is 20/20, everyone is subject to opportunity blindness before events unfold. While the future cannot be foretold, likely outcomes can be anticipated and planned for with the right tools. MPV is an important one when it comes to opportunity maximization. Yes, it takes time, and practice to develop, but before long by establishing multi-layered objectives, success is more readily recognized and the results can be life changing. There is simply no reason to remain blind to opportunity any longer. Try utilizing the MPV approach on your next significant initiative. That action and its associated insights and results will probably change how you plan and communicate for the rest of your life. Although, be forewarned. By utilizing progressive opportunity lenses from now on, the future will be so bright that opportunity sunglasses might prove necessary. **SSE**



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