

Making your List and Checking it Twice



One of the topics we're investing a lot of energy in these days is **proving** the value of Dealmaker to our clients. You just saw the results of some of this thinking in our new Client Success Charter.

Along those same lines, I saw the following article in USA.Today discussing the value of a checklist. In some respects, Dealmaker provides a simple checklist that leads the sales person to the next step in the sales process and ensures they're asking the right questions (often reminding them to do the most basic things like identifying the critical event or confirming availability of budget).

You might think knowing and following these steps in the sales process (or the methodology) would be ingrained by now – but they're not and it's easy to overlook them in the heat of sales enthusiasm. See the following for how a simple checklist can be highly effective.

PS – you won't find a pilot or an astronaut who gets into the cockpit without a checklist EVERY TIME they fly. If it's good enough for doctors, surgeons, pilots and astronauts – shouldn't it be a best practice for sales reps?

From USA.Today

Eight hospitals reduced the number of deaths from surgery by more than 40% by using a checklist that helps doctors and nurses avoid errors, according to a report released online today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

If all hospitals used the same checklist, they could save tens of thousands of lives and \$20 billion in medical costs each year, says author Atul Gawande, a surgeon and associate professor at the Harvard School of Public Health.

The 19-point checklist has nothing to do with high technology, Gawande says. Instead, it focuses on basic safety measures, such as ensuring that patients get antibiotics to prevent infection and requiring that all members of the team introduce themselves.



"An operation involves hundreds of steps with lots of team members," Gawande says. "We're good at making sure we do most of these things most of the time, but we're not good at doing all of them all of the time."

In his study, which was funded by the World Health Organization, hospitals reduced their rate of death after surgery from 1.5% to 0.8%. They also trimmed the number of complications from 11% to 7%.

The study shows that an operation's success depends far more on teamwork and clear communication than the brilliance of individual doctors, says co-author Alex Haynes, also of Harvard. And that's good news, he says, because it means hospitals everywhere can improve.

Researchers modeled the checklist, which takes only two minutes to go through, after ones used by the aviation industry, which has dramatically reduced the number of crashes in recent years.

Gawande says the checklist may have saved one of his own patients.

Before an operation recently, Gawande told his team that the operation might be longer, bloodier and more complicated than usual. An anesthesiologist made sure to have an extra supply of blood on hand. If the team had had to call on the hospital blood bank — and take time to get the right type — the patient could have died, he says.

Safety organizations around the world have pledged to get hospitals on board. Four countries — the United Kingdom, Ireland, Jordan and the Philippines — already have plans to use the checklist in all operations.

It usually takes 17 years for medical advances to become standard practice, says Joe McCannon, vice president of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which works with 4,000 American hospitals on improving quality. He wants the country to move much faster this time by having all U.S. hospitals try the checklist by April 1.

"Patients deserve it, and they deserve it now," McCannon says.

J. Steven Silver, Director, Dealmaker Partner Network

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