

Sales Force

Lorraine Ferguson

Founder /President – Direct Impact Associates, LLC

Authorized Sandler Training Licensee

Success Magazine: How did you first learn about Sandler Training?

Lorraine Ferguson: I had an opportunity to be a participant in a program about fifteen years ago while working for a Fortune 500 company and it had a profound impact on my selling ability and on me personally. It helped me succeed in business, and now it is my business.

SM: What was your goal in founding Direct Impact Associates, LLC?

LF: I come from a family of entrepreneurs. My father, now retired, owned a very successful construction business, which passed down to my brother Kevin who continues to grow it. My brother Myron is a nationally known speaker and publisher. That left my sister Janice and me, who for years worked together growing someone else's business.

Our personal goals were to gain more control over our own destiny and develop a business that allowed us to do what we enjoy. What I enjoy is selling and providing a service that would have a positive impact on a company or individual. Janice enjoys the operational side of the business. Acquiring the Sandler Training franchise allowed us to achieve these goals.

From a business standpoint, our goal is to ensure that our clients are so delighted with what Sandler has done for their business that they share the experience with others, and we are able to have an even bigger impact on our region.

SM: How has your prior work experience played a role in your success with Sandler Training?

LF: Early in my career, I joined a start-up company, OA Systems, as a computer trainer. I was bored because no one was selling, so I decided to dip my toe in the water and literally walked the streets of Albany "cold-calling" law firms. I thought that was all there was to selling—call enough companies and eventually somebody will buy something. Some did. However, it was a grueling way to do business and an emotional roller coaster ride for me—hoping a company would buy my product and considering it a personal failure when they did not. I realized that there had to be a better way to go about sales, but I didn't know what it was at the time.

We grew the business to one of the largest and most successful system integration and computer training companies in the region, and my career advanced from sales person to sales manager, general manager, and regional vice president.

IKON Office Solutions acquired the company in the late 1990's. I was given an opportunity to lead a \$65 million technology training division with over 250 sales people nationally. We eventually sold the business unit to a private equity firm and I went with it as CEO.

From these experiences, I learned that selling is about behaviors, not quotas. It is about believing in yourself, your company, and your market. It is about working efficiently and effectively through a proven selling process.

SM: Why did the Sandler Training system stand out to you?

LF: Simply put, because it works. How many times have you attended a training class—maybe a daylong program, maybe several days? You leave the class excited, motivated to implement what you learned. You come back to work and wham—you get busy, and before you know it, your best intent goes by the wayside. Little to nothing changes. Money and time down the drain.

We recognize that there is no such thing as a "quick fix" when it comes to improving performance. Sandler is all about learning and changing behavior over time through ongoing reinforcement and skill practice, until it becomes a part of us. Our performance can improve dramatically over time if we commit to working at it.

Sandler Training has provided skill development and ongoing reinforcement to company sales and management professionals for over 35 years, and continues to do so because it works.

SM: You have over 20 years of experience in this industry. What keeps you motivated?

LF: I have always enjoyed learning about other people's businesses—what they make, how they service their clients, and working with them to figure out how to work smarter, not harder.

Selling is like being a private investigator. You have to be curious and skeptical, and have the guts to ask the tough questions in order to get to the real problem



or issue. At Sandler, we have a rule "The problem your prospect brings you is never the real problem." To help people and businesses succeed, you need to make sure you are working on the "real problem." When you do, you can have real, positive impact. Helping clients discover, and put a plan in place to address the real problem is what motivates me.

SM: What services do you offer?

LF: I teach sales people and managers a proven, systematic process to selling and managing. Typically, my clients participate in an ongoing skill development and reinforcement program comprised of training, coaching, skill practice, and personal accountability.

SM: Why does your system work?

LF: It works because we provide ongoing skill development and reinforcement.

We work on the three elements that are crucial to success: attitudes, behaviors, and techniques. Often, people think if they throw some "technique" at the problem, it will go away. While technique is important, belief systems—toward our company, our market and ourselves, along with setting goals, having a plan and knowing how much of what to do are even more important to getting consistent results.

SM: Why are your services so valuable during this economy?

LF: This raw economy exposes the "winners" from the "at-leasters" when it comes to sales and management success. To survive and flourish, a company absolutely must identify and focus on getting an even higher return on investment from their winners, and shed their business of what we call "at-leasters" and "non-winners" as quickly as possible. What better time than now to assess your talent, invest in your top performers, and replace your less than stellar perform-

ers. There is no reason why a business can't grow in this economy if they give the committed, competent people the tools and support needed to take it up a notch.

SM: How has the recession affected your business?

LF: It has been very positive for us. If I am meeting with someone today, it is because they are serious about their business and willing to take action to improve.

SM: How can the Sandler Training system help individuals on a personal level?

LF: David Sandler, the founder of the Sandler Selling System, once said "if you want to be great at what you do, learn everything you can about people—starting with yourself." Sandler helps individuals to understand their belief systems and gain confidence, tie

their personal goals and dreams to their professional goals, and gives them the tools they need to converse with others. Sandler has been a life changing experience for many people, myself included.

SM: How many Sandler Training centers are there in the country?

LF: Sandler has an unequalled network of over 220 training centers in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia and we provide worldwide training in 12 languages.

SM: What is the most important thing you have learned about yourself as an entrepreneur?

LF: I can leverage the expertise, support, and knowledge of others to help me grow my business and improve my skills.

SM: What achievement are you most proud of and why?

LF: The work I did with the founder of a start-up company that had no sales organization or process at the onset. With Sandler's help, they were able to take their business from zero to over \$5 million in less than two years. They remain committed to Sandler and their revenue tripled, and continues to grow.

SM: What one word describes you most accurately?

LF: Driven.

Sales Training Programs. **The Sandler Selling System.®**

You shouldn't have to settle for a lemon when you can have lemonade. Sandler TrainingSM utilizes continual reinforcement through ongoing training and individual coaching sessions not only to help you learn but also to ensure your success. With over 200 training centers worldwide to provide support, you won't fail...because we won't let you.

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Finding Power In ReinforcementSM

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