



**“The three most important words  
in sales are ‘I need help.’  
Sales wingmen answer the call!”  
-Waldo Waldman**



## Wingman Concept Helps Sales Teams Soar

Selling Power publisher Gerhard Gschwandtner recently caught up with Lt. Col Rob “Waldo” Waldman, author of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* best-seller **Never Fly Solo**, whose new sales-training methodology is helping leading sales forces break performance barriers.

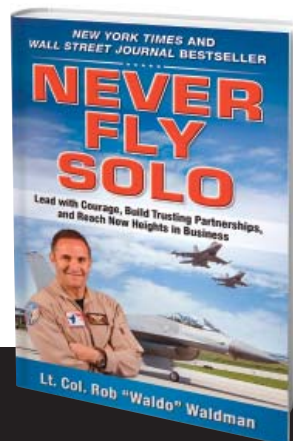
**Q: Waldo, your best-seller *Never Fly Solo* emphasizes the concept of having a wingman to succeed in competitive environments. How does the wingman concept apply to sales?**

**Waldo:** No fighter pilot flies a combat mission solo. Fighter pilots always fly as a team. Top sales wingmen do the same. In highly stressful and competitive environments, having a team that works together and provides mutual support can mean the difference between success and failure in selling. Top sales professionals take the time to build trusting relationships so that when the missiles of adversity and change come, they have someone they can go to for help. More importantly, they become powerful resources that their clients continuously come to for help. When your clients look at you as a trusted partner – a wingman – they will come to you to help solve their problems and buy from you again and again.

**Q: How do they prepare for their missions?**

There’s a very important concept called **Chair Flying**. Fighter pilots never fly by the seat of their pants. They mentally practice every maneuver and contingency in a simulator or even a chair. Sales wingmen never “wing it,” either. They too have a plan and gather up-to-date intelligence before they execute a sales call. They fully research the prospect, use technology to their advantage, and formulate a flight plan. This disciplined preparation helps them deal with objections in price, terms, deliverables, scope, etc. What if an order is late? What if you lose your best customer? What if your numbers are not on track?

Key wingtip: The best sales wingmen also leverage relationships when chair flying by



asking for advice from their peers. Chair Flying builds confidence, and confidence leads to trust. Trust sells!

**Q: What are the three most valued traits a sales wingman should have?**

**1. Commitment** – Sales wingmen commit themselves 100% to excellence, regardless of the current situation. They also push up the throttle to full power and avoid becoming complacent when sales are good! Complacency kills profits, brands and sales. Commitment says to your client and your team – “you can depend on me to get the job done.”

**2. Discipline** – Discipline is the glue that connects commitment to action. It fights complacency. Sales wingmen stick to the fundamentals and never look for shortcuts when it comes to executing sales processes. Disciplined wingmen do the hard work even when they don’t want to.

**3. Sense of urgency** – My personal acronym for win is “work it now.” Sales wingmen work on a “now” timeline. They don’t put off until tomorrow what can be done today. They are decisive and take control of their destiny, and also help buyers make decisions quickly.

**Q: So as the saying from the movie “Top Gun” goes, they feel the need for speed?**

Yes, sales wingmen have a constant sense of urgency. The phrase fighter pilots use is **“Speed is life.”** Everything in the world of the fighter has to do with speed. The faster you are, the more maneuverable you will be. When your customers have a request or problem, you don’t have the luxury of getting back to them at your convenience. You need to do it at their convenience. This often means you will be inconvenienced! If you don’t deliver solutions at a rate at which your customer wants them, or if you are not faster than your competitor, chances are you will lose the business. Speed also can be used to gain altitude. In combat, altitude is your friend.

**Q: What do you mean by “altitude is your friend?”**

The higher you are, the better the view. You can see farther and build what fighter pilots call **situational awareness**. When selling, it’s critical to get to the highest-level decision makers as possible and let them refer you internally. It’s a lot easier to have senior managers refer you to a lower-level associate than it is to go against gravity and work your way up the chain of sales command.

**Q: What about with existing customers? How do sales wingmen manage those relationships?**

They **Walk the Flight Line** and understand “Lose Sight, Lose Fight.” In other words, you need to stay connected and visual with both your prospects and clients. Too often sales professionals forget to stay visual with their biggest clients. They take them for granted and fail to stay in touch. When formulating a sales flight plan, you need to keep your biggest customers on your radar. Why? Because out of sight leads to out of mind. Your sharpest competitors are walking your customer’s flight line and staying visual with them – asking questions, nurturing relationships, and finding ways to steal some of your business. If you want to maintain the loyalty of your most valued clients, you have to stay visual and in touch.

**Q: You talk about having the courage to abort a mission. Does that apply to sales as well?**

Yes. Jet fighters have ejection seats for a reason. No mission is perfect. When selling, there are times when it’s best to abort a prospect and avoid wasting valuable time. It’s hard to give up on a prospect, but sometimes the best thing you can do is focus your efforts on a more viable target while waiting for the environment to change. You can always re-engage in the future.

**Q: Being a wingman means providing Mutual Support. How does Mutual Support work in the sales arena?**

Mutual Support is about understanding the power of feedback, open communication, and connection. The best sales wingmen accept feedback from their peers, supervisors, and even their customers. They are approachable and don’t allow their ego to get in the way of their growth. The key is to build trusting relationships with peers, co-workers, and clients so that they feel comfortable giving you the feedback you may not want to hear, but need to hear! Finally, it’s critical to appreciate the unsung heroes on your team, the folks behind the scenes who support the sales process – inside sales, tech support, customer service, IT and so on. When challenges and change come, it takes a **“one team/one mission”** mentality to win in business today.



*Waldo Waldman is a former decorated fighter pilot and top producing sales manager. A professional sales and leadership speaker, his clients include Verizon, HP, MassMutual, Johnson & Johnson, Honeywell and Home Depot.*



**To purchase *Never Fly Solo* or to hire Waldo to speak at your next sales meeting, visit [www.yourwingman.com](http://www.yourwingman.com) or call 866-925-3616.**