

open question selling

OPERATIONAL
PROBLEM
EFFECT
NAIL DOWN

**Unlock your
customer's needs
to close the sale...
by knowing what to ask
and when to ask it**

VAL GEE & JEFF GEE



PRAISE FOR *OPEN QUESTION SELLING*

“I learned the other day, because of the crazy state of the world today, of the death of common sense—well they are wrong. Jeff and Val Gee have resurrected common sense and put together a hugely readable book, filled with great stories and simple, easily understood and implementable techniques. This is a book that everyone intent on becoming a great salesperson should have, in fact as a buyer it defines the type of person that I would like selling to me: someone who really takes time to find out what I as the buyer needs, rather than jumping straight into the sales pitch.”

—Ian H.S. Shaw, Head of Leading and Development
Nestlé Purina Petcare Europe

“Jeff Gee has mastered the art of customer service, and his new book *OPEN Question Selling* is a powerful approach to selling that will guide anyone to succeed. His inspired storytelling, combined with practical life lessons, helps the reader internalize messages that can transform any sales opportunity from “Just another sales call” to “The ONLY sales call!” With today’s access to the internet and information, people and businesses have access to information about products and service as never before. Many business transactions can be done with no human interaction, digitally. However, there are still those transactions that need some level of human performance. At the end of the day, customers have perfect information and know what they want. When a salesperson is involved, it isn’t about the product or service; it is about the salesperson. Jeff Gee’s new book will help the reader to become a game changer in this new world eBusiness where human interaction has become a premium, and differentiator, in business.”

—Michael A. Plamondon, IT Leader—Managed Services
Xerox Capital Services, LLC

“One of the best sales books I ever came across, it’s a must read for every salesperson. It will definitely help put novice salesmen on the right track and experienced salesmen can brush up on their sales skills and gain a lot of hands-on knowledge and experience through the numerous real life situations in this very well written book. It will certainly be mandatory to read for each salesman in our sales team.”

—Fadi Eldin, General Manager
Scitron Training & Consulting

“Jeff Gee is a master in the art of selling techniques and it is truly an art form that many sales personnel often overlook. Would you not put a frame around a Monet? Jeff does just that. Just as a frame brings out the quality of the art, so does Jeff. He frames the art of selling in a way that enhances the salesperson when it comes to listening and penetrating customer needs and desires.”

—Mark Prioletti, Manager
Motorola Marketing Services Indirect Business Operations

“Understanding your prospect and their needs—and how you can solve one or more of their problems—is key to selling. Jeff and Val Gee’s *OPENQuestion Selling* teaches through examples and exercises the communication skills that you must develop to become a top salesperson. This book should be required reading for every salesperson, no matter their experience or skill level.”

—Paul McCord, author of
Creating a Million Dollar a Year Sales Income

“Accessible with great illustrative examples. Practical advice on selling of any kind both internally and externally with solid coaching advice.”

—Don Vanpool, VP-Operations
GE Healthcare Financial Services, Equipment Finance

OPEN QUESTION SELLING

Unlock Your Customer's Needs
to Close the Sale...by Knowing
What to Ask and When to Ask

Val Gee and Jeff Gee

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Introduction

I have never worked a day in my life without selling. If I believe in something, I sell it, and I sell it hard.
—Estée Lauder

We all need stories to see how other people have done it. When we glimpse how it's been done better or faster by others, it triggers an “aha” moment, and that's when we learn something new. This book is written by two people who recognize that we all are selling all the time: some people sell effortlessly, others sell with difficulty, and others don't even realize that they are selling.

In other words, if the first cave people had not been sold on the idea that fire is a good thing, then we would probably still be living in caves. Someone had to come along and say, “Hey, you know all these forest fires that scare the living day-lights out of us and send all the animals fleeing for their lives? Well maybe if we can keep the fire under control, it will keep us warm, help us cook, and keep animals at bay!”

And what about decorating the cave? The first person to pick a flower as an ornament had to sell the idea: “Hey you guys, let's bring some flowers inside—they make the place smell good and they're pretty to look at.”

Today, we call those benefits and needs, because if you want people to do something for you, you have to sell them on the idea. Whether they are family, friends, co-workers, customers, or your boss, if you want people to do something, you must fulfill a need in them. You have to show them a benefit and give them a “what’s in it for me” statement.

Jeff has been in sales most of his life. He has sold for small companies, for Fortune 500 companies, and, for the last 20 years, his own company. He has sold encyclopedias, roller blinds, and frozen foods door to door. He has sold food mixers to large audiences and copying machines, aluminum, advertising, hydraulic towers, and training to end users, managers, and CEOs. The list prices on the products he’s sold have varied from as little as \$5 up to \$1 million. There is nothing Jeff does not know about selling, from opening the sale to closing it. In this book, you will learn everything you need to know about how to be an amazing and successful salesperson.

Val, too, has valuable sales experience. As one of the top salespeople for Pitney Bowes, she won a place in the company’s Presidents Club. When she later left to become an instructional designer, her sales expertise enabled her to design, develop, and deliver many different types of sales training programs for corporate America. This unique combination of sales expertise and instructional design has enabled Val and Jeff to bring sales to life in a way that both motivates and instructs.

As you go through this book, read the stories, participate in the exercises, and continue your sales journey. You are already amazing—and by reading this book you will become even more amazing and successful than you ever imagined you could be.

Part I

CULTIVATING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR SALES

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NO THING TO BE EVERYTHING

Everyone lives by selling something.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

You Learn by Doing

I started selling when I was sixteen, which means I've been in sales for over forty years. My first job was with a nonferrous metal company in England, where I sold aluminum rods and sheets to wholesalers, builders, and basically anyone in the construction industry. My first sales manager, a man named Jack, had thirteen children and was very brisk and down to earth. He smoked like a chimney, called a spade a spade, and taught me that I was the one who had to do it. So instead of helping me out in the middle of a sale, he let me flounder. It was horrendous because these customers were engineers and construction

workers who didn't have time for a sales presentation, let alone one from a sixteen-year-old kid still wet behind the ears.

Looking back, it was the best training I ever had because I learned by doing. Jack never interrupted or took over. Only after the call would he ask me, "What do you think? What did you do right?" So I realized what worked and what didn't work just by doing it. Of course, I had to learn fast—I couldn't make the same mistake twice or I would have been fired!

I've noticed that many sales managers take over the sale to show how it's done. The problem is you don't learn from watching other people; you only learn by doing it yourself. In sales you have to throw yourself in and go for it. Even when you do or say the wrong thing, you are learning your trade. If you don't do anything, nothing happens—no learning, no sales, no nothing!

Feel What Is Going On for the Customer

On my first sales calls I had verbal diarrhea and didn't listen at all to the customer. Jack told me to stop talking and start listening. This is a difficult lesson to learn. To listen is the most difficult thing because you have to step outside of yourself and ignore the worries, issues, or babble that goes on in your head. You have to actually listen and get a feel for what is really going on with the customer—some people call this "empathy."

If you look up the definition of empathy it means understanding another person so well that you identify with and feel the same way as that person. Native Americans express it as "walking a mile in another person's moccasins." In sales calls when you may have only a few minutes to get to know

these strangers, it is impossible to know them so well. Plus, it's not your job to identify with them. Your job is to get a feeling about them and then be flexible enough to get into sync with the type of personality they are.

A salesperson needs to observe and listen and then become the kind of person the client can communicate with. For example, if the client's office is filled with family photographs, it's a clue—just a clue that the client's family is important to him or her. It doesn't mean that you should start talking about your family or asking questions about the client's family; it's just a hint that people are important to the client, so you might leverage the “people” aspect in your sales presentation. Look for clues so you can gear your sales presentation toward what is important to the client.

Of course, if you are meeting in a more sterile environment such as a conference room, you won't get those hints into the client's personality, and that's when your observation skills come into play. How is the client dressed? Suit, casual, expensive, neat, scruffy? It may not give you the key to the client's exact personality, but it will give you a clue.

For example, I once called on a lady who worked for a Fortune 500 company. It was our first meeting and I noticed on her desk a small statue of Buddha. She was dressed in loose robe-type clothes and had a very serene personality. So we ended up talking about meditation—which I do from time to time—and by the end of the call, she had committed to my giving a sales presentation to the rest of her team. Three months later we rolled out a \$350,000 training program with them.

At the same company a couple of years later, my champion had been replaced by a guy who wore a suit, a military-style

haircut, and a fierce demeanor. He had a way of almost shouting when he spoke and literally terrified most of his staff. Sitting in the board room with him on a first meeting, he immediately asked me how my company had come up with the name McNeil & Johnson. I told him it was a family name and that we hailed from Inverness in Scotland. He then smiled and spent the next half hour telling me all about his Scottish heritage. Do you call that empathy? Yes, because empathy is about understanding people so by listening to him and learning about our shared background, we began a relationship that lasted for years to come. We ended up doing a lot of business together.

People Like to Do Business with Like-Minded People

For a salesperson it's about finding the connection that makes the other person feel comfortable or as the Mayans used to say when they would meet someone, "I see another of myself." And it's not always easy to do that. Sometimes clients are aloof and don't say much. You've probably witnessed this. From the get-go they want you to do all the talking and don't want to reveal anything about themselves. In my own experiences, I've come to realize that most of the time it is just an act, so I go along with their act and give them the information they want. Then little by little they realize I am not a threat, that I am a professional just like them, and they start to warm up. So I then ask my OPEN Question Selling Technique-style questions that I'll be teaching you later in the book, and soon

they're telling me all about their business situation and we're off into the sales call.

By the way, never be put off when a customer says, "I only have five or ten minutes." My experience is that's just a ploy. Most people, once they start talking about themselves, go on for much longer. I've had some sales calls go on for over an hour even after the client warned at the beginning, "I only have a few minutes."

Some clients feel threatened by salespeople and some are justified in feeling that way. Not all salespeople are professional! Not all salespeople put their clients first! So it is our job to put them at ease and help them realize that you are there to sell them something that will enhance their situation. Sometimes that looks different from how it sounds. For example, I was talking with a friend of mine, Ken, who recently retired as vice president of sales for a large insurance company. He was telling me about how he started off selling insurance in England:

I was teamed up with another agent called George and we were going door to door selling new insurance policies. George had been a major in WWII. He stood ramrod straight and acted like he was still on the parade ground. He'd fix clients with his steely stare and basically tell them to sign on the dotted line, and to my surprise most of them did! We were taught to close by saying, "I would like to write this for you, if I may." Fred unwittingly changed it and said in a much stronger way, "I will write this for you."

We would go to a particular village for a week or so and call on businesses from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM. One day, we decided to continue selling into the evening at one of the local pubs. It was a big place, so George took one bar, and I took the other. I was chatting with the

landlord and had gotten him interested in buying insurance. He was just about to sign when he said, "Just a minute" and went away for a few moments.

When he came back he had all these questions about the insurance policy. Finally, when I had answered them all he said, "Okay I'll do it, just a minute, though." Off he went again coming back a few minutes later with more questions. This went on for almost half an hour until I finally twigged. Next time he left, I followed him and sure enough there was George with a pint in hand having a lot of fun prompting the landlord to ask me lots of questions. Of course in the end he did sign a policy and we had a lot of fun doing it.

Selling is all about making the calls and being authentic. George sold himself by being the military type and fixing his beady eyes on the customers, talking about WWII, firing up their loyalty, and basically telling them to sign. It worked because he was authentic.

Another story Ken told me took place when he had a very difficult territory on the outskirts of London:

It was the back end of the city, way off the main streets where people sell tires and scrap metal. My manager asked me to take this new recruit out with me for half a day before he went to sales training. He wanted me to show him the ropes and also the difficulty of actually getting in front of someone, especially when the person in the front office says, "He's out!" or "He doesn't talk to salespeople!" or "Send me a brochure."

So we go into the first place and sell about four policies, and by the end of the day, we have sold about twenty, it was a great day for me and now this recruit is saying to me, "This is amazing." And I was telling him, "No trust me, this is not the way it is. Usually it's much more difficult." Nothing I said meant anything and he went to sales training believing that sales is very, very easy. He lasted about three weeks in the field.

One interesting thing that Ken told me was about W. Clement Stone, who he knew for many years. He said, “I loved the Positive Mental Attitude concept that was developed by Stone, however I always said to him, that unless a person really wants to do it, Positive Mental Attitude will not get them to take action.”

I sell because I like people. I like to find out about them and make a connection. I also like to have fun, so I bring a lot of humor into my sales calls whenever I can. I have business relationships with all my long-term clients that go beyond just selling them a product. I want them to feel great about their decision and that’s why I sell my own training products. I believe in the seminars and products that I sell. I believe they make a difference. I believe they actually change people’s lives and help them to enjoy their work and their personal lives. Of course from a sales perspective, I talk about how it helps the company increase its bottom line through increased productivity, reduced attrition, and enhanced customer service. But my real interest is always in helping people to live better lives.

When I walk into a call, I don’t think of anything except connecting with the client: I make eye contact, smile, shake hands, and am completely at ease with myself. I could not do that if I were pretending to be someone else. I could not sell the “George” way just like he could not sell the “Jeff” way. So being yourself is very important in sales.

Learn the skill of sales. Learn the OPEN Question Selling Technique outlined in this book in chapters 6–9. Learn objection handling and how to close, and then wrap yourself around those skills. Make them uniquely yours because when you are truly yourself, clients sense it and they will give you their trust and ultimately their loyalty.

Success means doing the best we can with what we have. Success is the doing, not the getting; in the trying, not the triumph. Success is a personal standard, reaching for the highest that is in us, becoming all that we can be.

—Zig Ziglar

Wanting to Be Good at the Job

Remember Jack, my first sales manager I mentioned earlier? He also taught me that success in sales is all about self-teaching. It's about wanting to be good at the job—and the job of sales is to communicate effectively and get commitment.

To communicate effectively you have to be “no thing to be everything,” which means you have to empty your head of everything to really be with customers. It's not just looking into their eyes; it's the entire physical and mental sense that we are on the same wavelength. Even though I don't know their business—I know their business!

People are in business to make a profit. Selling is about perspiration and that means making calls, knocking on doors, and being on the phone. It's about making appointments, following up, and getting a commitment. It's about understanding what works and what doesn't work—leveraging what works and minimizing what doesn't.

That's what every company is doing. From Fortune 500 corporations to small businesses to sole proprietorships, everyone wants to sell more products and services. So how is it done?

It's done through sales and being knowledgeable, confident, able to close, and willing to perspire. It's about being in the right place at the right time, and that requires a lot of work and effort. And for you at the sharp end—the salesperson closing the deals—the work and effort has to be enjoyable because that's your job. I'm not saying that you should pull a “George” and supply a list of questions for your unsuspecting sales colleague to answer in another bar! But you should have fun, otherwise sales can get boring and that's when problems begin. I've seen salespeople go into a downward spiral; they are doing really well and then, with a few days of no sales, they are suddenly spiraling downward. Of course, the opposite is true also. When a sale is made, everything brightens up, and suddenly the world is your oyster. I don't get trapped into that anymore. I am always expecting to do well, and I do, and one of the keys is to keep interested.

When I provide training for one of my clients, which is a roofing company, I have a great time with the people. I learn about their lives in Minnesota, which largely involves the outdoors: hunting, shooting, fishing, and sailing. Originally from England I have very little knowledge about hunting—even though I was a Queens Scout and a Paratrooper—so talking with these clients is great for me because I connect with people at a new level. And I am always amazed because in the end I realize that we are all the same. We all want to be happy, do great work, feel good at the end of the day, and make money; sales is a great profession to do all those things.

For me, sales is about coming home at the end of the day knowing I've done a great job and three weeks later, or in some cases years later, getting a “yes”—that's the icing on top of the cake. It's about having confidence in yourself that you

can sell anything. And if you find something that you enjoy selling and have the confidence in yourself to sell, then oh boy, you are going to sell. After I got into selling nonferrous metals I wanted to understand all the different alloys. That desire to learn more goes for whatever I'm selling. I'm always gaining knowledge; whether it's about nonferrous metal, yellow pages, encyclopedias, training, print machines, or computer software, it doesn't matter. I think that's why I know so much—I just like to get involved in everything that's going on.

I mentioned that some of my early selling jobs involved going door to door. It was interesting, because when I knocked on a door I often was told to “shove it” or just had the door slammed in my face, yet there was always the one customer that said, “Okay!” So for me it was about never feeling rejected. It was this wonderful game: If I knock on fifty doors and I'm told to get lost at each one, maybe at the fifty-first door I will get a yes. So I just kept knocking.

Today I am still told to go away. It's more difficult because people don't actually close the door in my face. Usually they say, “Call me next month.” And when I call the next month, they say, “Call me next month.” And again the next month, they say, “Call me next month.” But sometimes they actually do mean it and are ready to talk to me the next month or six months later. And sometimes they hope I'll just go away. Unfortunately for them, the one thing I never do is “go away.” Not until I am told to do so. So I keep calling until the person tells me, “No, thank you.” Because what they don't realize is that I don't care about being told no. I just don't want them to lose the opportunity of doing business with me. So until they say no, I keep going until they say yes.

**Successful people in this world are those who
get up and look for the circumstances they
want. If they can't find them, they make them.**

—George Bernard Shaw

Going from door to door wasn't hard work because it was what I had to do. Physically it was hard because I had samples to carry; and some streets were long and I went up and down every one of them. What made me successful was the willingness to step outside myself. I never thought it was a disgusting menial job selling door to door. I actually thought and believed that I was doing great.

Selling is about having the passion to want to do something well, no matter what it is. I wanted to knock on as many doors as possible to show myself that I could actually sell stuff—so it was a game for me. Sometimes I would push it and say to myself, "I've knocked on fifty, and I'll just do another ten!" And if I didn't get a sale, then I would say, "I'll just do another ten!" It was usually in those last ten that I would get a sale. It's interesting, because although I was knocking on doors for seven or eight hours a day, I really enjoyed the game!

When I was selling roller blinds door to door, I put these small advertisements into the local paper to drum up business that read: "Get your kitchen blinds for half price!" When someone made an inquiry and was interested I went along with samples. Whatever house I went to, I would then go up and down the whole street and say to the homeowners, "I was just talking to Mr. and Mrs. Jones and they're having roller blinds installed." I would do anything to get them interested,

and then I would go round the rest of the streets in that area using the neighbors as testimonials.

After that I sold advertising in the yellow pages, which was a tough sale. To start with, I did the selling over the phone. There were lots of salespeople in a room, each at a little desk with a phone and a small divider to keep the noise down. It didn't stop us all from yelling over each other. It was trickier over the phone because I couldn't see or react to the clients in person. I had to instantly build a relationship, and these people didn't normally buy advertising. These clients were the true definition of a "cold call."

So I learned to use my tone of voice, and get out of my head, even when I knew I had to do eighty to a hundred calls a day. That's where I learned about persistence and perseverance, never doubting, and never giving up.

**Beginning is not only a kind of action. It is also
a frame of mind, a kind of work, an attitude,
a consciousness.**

—Edward Said

There Is No Such Thing as Rejection

Somebody saying no is just like somebody saying yes. "No" is just a word, just as "yes" is a word, except we put different connotations on the words: "No" is bad and "yes" is wonderful. Here's the key: If I don't give "no" power then it doesn't stick to me. I can keep hearing "no" and it doesn't matter.

Eventually, the more I keep going, the more I will hear “yes.”

I was away from home a lot selling yellow pages ads and that didn’t work so well with family life, so I got into selling food mixers instead. It was great, because I had large audiences of women from local clubs, and I would demonstrate these food mixers, a bit like the Galloping Gourmet! I would put instant coffee powder into a bowl. Then add cold water and mix it. It whipped up just like chocolate cream. Then I would hold it over my head and nothing would fall out. Even today, I am still amazed at how dramatic that was. The key was making people feel good. Every sales presentation has to be that way; it has to be entertaining. If not, it’s just very dull and boring and no one wants to buy something from a dull and boring person. I made people laugh and after each presentation I had a trunk full of food mixers to sell. I made a fortune.

That’s when I realized I wanted to get into a higher class of sale. I learned from my sales experiences that I could sell anything to anybody—and not in a slick, sleazy way. I just knew that everybody needs everything—from encyclopedias to food mixers to advertising. The salesperson’s job is to go out there and get people to buy a particular item, because they want that item anyway!

**You’ve got to be success minded. You’ve got
to feel that things are coming your way
when you’re out selling; otherwise, you won’t
be able to sell anything.**

—Curtis Carlson
Stanford Research Institute

Sometimes salespeople ask me if selling is an ability you're born with or something you learn. That's a hard question to answer because some people are unquestionably born with the skill to communicate more effectively than others. It's in their DNA. The real question is, can you teach someone how to sell? The answer is a resounding yes. You can give them all the skill sets, but the catch is that eventually they still have to go out and sell.

In all these years that I've been selling, nothing has really changed in the way that we interact with other human beings. I'm constantly looking at how I am doing it. What should I say? What should I not say? I can come out of a sale knowing I did all the right things and still not get an order, and still, I will feel great because I know the client just wasn't ready to buy at that time.

Think about adopting this attitude yourself. There's no point in beating yourself up. If you take a failed sale personally or feel rejected, everything stops: you'll never get out of bed. That's why nos don't matter and being told to "drop dead and go away" doesn't mean anything. It's just someone's opinion and their response has nothing to do with me or with you.

When I do get fed up, which is very occasionally, I just make a choice: how long do I want to remain fed up? My answer is: I only want to do it for seconds. I have got my life ahead of me and if I take rejection personally and get upset, nothing is going to happen except that I'm going to blame someone else, and then it's a spiral into the abyss. The downward elevator to despair doesn't make for sales. So keep your chin up and your spirits high. Set your sights on winning the sale and you will always succeed.

SKILLS COACHING

Next time you get fed up or feel bad about something, take a look at your watch and notice the time. Decide how long you want to feel bad: five seconds, five minutes, two hours, two minutes. When your time is up and you finish feeling bad, switch to feeling great about yourself. Remember it's your choice—good or bad—you are the one who decides.

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WAKING UP TO YOUR POWER

And old Dave, he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want.

—Arthur Miller

Death of a Salesman

Enthusiasm, Energy, and a Thirst to Be

If you don't understand your power, you will develop the “whatever life throws at you” syndrome. This means that you have no control and you are just hoping that everything is going to be great. The problem? Hope doesn't pay the mortgage.

What we have to fight is the habit of the smallness of life. We start off full of enthusiasm, energy, and a thirst to be and do amazing things; then the routine of the smallness of life sets in. Now we know things, but as soon as we start to know things, we analyze them, have doubts about them, make judgments, and consider different points of view, and soon it all becomes too much of a struggle. That's why some people start off bright eyed and bushy tailed and end up cynical, depressed, and miserable. They start off full of promise and slowly but surely it gets beaten out of them by life. That's when enthusiasm and passion go out the window. The desire to be great and experience new things is lost because everything is old and the thought of doing new things becomes scary and frightening.

I am an old man and I have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.

—Mark Twain

What do you do about it? How do you make sure you engage your power? First you let go of your troubles. You keep reaching for the higher thoughts and reminding yourself that this is an amazing life. Don't take yourself too seriously and think you know everything. I believe the more I know the more I realize I know nothing at all. We have to look at everything we experience and everything we do as brand-new. For example, even if it is the four hundredth time I've made a particular sales presentation, I think of the first time, when I wanted to connect and be with the client, understand the person, and challenge and push myself to be the most amazing salesperson I could be. That's how we get out of the rut of life.

That's how we avoid spinning on the same old wheel. So our job is to constantly remember to be amazing.

When I first started out in sales I had a wonderful enthusiasm, and I had to be careful of people giving advice and of people bearing gifts of wisdom. I had to lead my own life. For example, when I took over accounts from other salespeople, the salespeople would say, "These are the good accounts, and these are the terrible accounts." Then they would give me a list of "bad" clients: "Don't go there. Definitely don't call on that one. Oh no, it's not even worth calling on that one." But I chose to completely ignore them, and the clients they deemed hopeless and suggested I leave alone ended up being some of my biggest clients.

But this attitude wasn't something I was taught. Instead, I learned it by watching other people and being open to new information coming into my life. It was about not taking things or people for granted. It was about connecting with everybody and not buying in to other people's experience or beliefs of how things were.

I was sixteen when I started selling at the nonferrous metal company, and I just wanted to be the best; I wanted to be really good at it. I didn't want to be the one who didn't make it. I wanted to see how the successful people did it, so I talked to them and listened to them and saw what they did. I realized early on that it was all about attitude and energy and about wanting to do more. The winners believed in themselves as being able to do anything. They had no fear and they saw their interests as being in alignment with their customers.

I saw that some salespeople regarded their own interests as opposite of their customers. They believed that in order for them to make one dollar, their customers had to fork out

twenty, and they felt bad that their customer's were "losing" money in order for them to "make" money. I never looked at it that way. I have always known for certain that by communicating information about my product or service, the client is going to receive tremendous benefits. For me, selling is always a win-win situation.

**Performing your duty without attachment or
aversion is a great antidote to the poison
of fear.**

—Bhagavad Gita

A sacred Hindu text

Later in my career, when I worked for Xerox, there were more guys out there successfully selling and we each had big targets to reach. There was more recognition, more money to make. It was about getting beyond just surviving and getting to a different level of self-worth. I could recognize the people who were not going to make it. They were the ones who expected so much but gave so little. They had that kind of caged-animal look that said, "What's going to happen to me this time?" And I realized that's how they were leading their lives. However, the ones who were making it looked confident, knew where they were going, and had a purpose. They weren't just hoping; they actually believed in themselves.

I've heard it put this way: There's a flow to life, an energy that is like a river, and many people go into the river and immediately start paddling upstream, against the current—and life is a big struggle. Others, the ones who go with the flow, are carried along on the current—and life seems easy. So

when someone asks a person for help with a certain client, or a certain situation, the person who is paddling against the current and struggling so much will answer, “No, I don’t have time,” or “I don’t have the knowledge,” or “I just don’t want to.” But the person who is going with the flow of life, despite having a big life with a lot going on, is more likely to answer, “Yes, I will be more than happy to help you.” So which kind of a person do you want to be? One who goes with the flow of life or one who paddles against the flow and is always struggling against the stream of life?

The people who are on top of their game are consistently making above their quota. It doesn’t require much effort to work out who is at the top, who is average, and who is at the bottom. The question is, where do you want to be—at the top or stuck in the mud at the bottom?

Mankind is notoriously too dense to read the signs that God sends them from time to time. We require drums to be beaten into our ears, before we would wake from our trance and hear the warning.
—Mahatma Gandhi

Not Letting Go until It’s Gone

Being a great salesperson is about people seeing the determination in you that you are not going to let this go. I’m called Mr. Persistence by a lot of people because I am not going to

let it go until I know it's gone. I keep phoning, bringing up new things to talk about, and asking different things from my clients. I cultivate things to talk about with my customers by reading the papers or visiting their websites and picking up information about their CEOs or learning if their companies have done anything great with charity. For example, McDonald's does a lot of charity work for children, and many of the managers I talk with in that company are volunteers for the various charities. This makes my job wonderful because I get to talk to people who are doing amazing things!

I am constantly talking with my all my clients from different markets and different cultures around the globe, and they all understand that I'm not going away. It may take two years and still it's me they are going to choose, not the competition. By that time, I've earned the right by keeping in their face and doing what they want. I've given them the best answers to whatever questions they've asked. And I've kept asking, "When is it going to happen?" I will do whatever it takes to get them to realize I want them to choose me and not somebody else.

**Of course you sell candidates for political
office the same way you sell soap or sealing
wax or whatever; because, when you get
right down to it, that's the only way
anything is sold.
—Sid Bernstein**

It Takes as Much Effort to Sell a Little One as It Does to Sell a Big One

I wake up to my power every day. I am confident every day, no matter what. And through experience, I know it doesn't matter if I get a yes or a no. I have the passion to keep taking action and moving forward and I reach every goal I set. When I worked for Xerox I sold copying machines for up to half a million dollars. Now I sell training for up to a million dollars. And there is a truism: it takes just as much effort to sell a little one as it does to sell a big one, so sell big ones!

People ask me if it is harder to sell an intangible thing, such as training, than to sell a tangible item that people can see, touch, and feel, such as a copying machine. And I tell them, "Not really. It still requires passion and a belief that you are amazing." So the more confidence you have that you are an amazing person, the more people believe in you.

Someone once asked me in a sales class I was facilitating, "What if you are making a sale and the customer sitting across from you is looking disinterested and bored?"

I said, "I would know I was doing everything wrong. If that happened to me, I would ask the customer, 'Do you think you really have a need for these services or should I call back next year?' because I don't want to waste my time or other people's time."

You Have a Choice about Everything

Waking up to your power is being able to understand that you have a choice and that choice is activated first thing in the morning. So let me ask you, the reader: how do you wake up in the morning? Think about it. Do you realize you actually have a choice about how you wake up in the morning? You can wake up happy and ready to rock and roll and make lots of sales, or you can choose to wake up depressed, angry, tired, and with the thought that you are not going to sell much today.

The great thing is that the more you practice, the easier the choice becomes to wake up happy, which is really about waking up to your power. Let's look at that for a moment. Did you know that your brain supports the choices you make? The more you choose to wake up happy and ready to sell, the more your brain actually manufactures and releases chemicals to support that choice until finally it becomes a habit. So by taking control of your life, you are actually training your brain to work for you. Your brain is manufacturing the "feel-good" chemicals because you are always reaching for the higher, more positive thoughts.

But if you choose to wake up depressed, angry, and frustrated, not only are you not going to sell much, but also you are training your brain to manufacture and release the "feel-bad" chemicals that will support being negative. So if you tell yourself that you're not a morning person, your brain will reinforce that feeling by creating the "I-am-not-a-morning-person" chemical. By choosing to be in control of how you wake up in the morning you are accessing your power, and a positive attitude will inevitably produce more sales.

So what happens when you've had a bad day and it seems impossible to wake up lively and enthusiastic the next morning? That's where the work begins. That's when you need to realize that you may choose to be lively and enthusiastic even when you don't feel like it—even when they don't deserve it, which is the subtitle of my first book, *Super Service: Seven Keys to Delivering Great Customer Service, Even When You Don't Feel Like It! Even When They Don't Deserve It!*

**The power of belief has a far-reaching impact
from personal transformation to business
excellence and beyond.**

—Simeon Hein

Do you think CEOs, presidents, famous people, and even the most amazing person you can think of have days when they don't feel enthusiastic or happy? Of course they do. The difference between successful people and people who are just getting by is that the successful people know they are in charge of how they wake up, how they affect people, and how they present themselves. They turn their boat into the flow of the stream and go with the positive flow of life. They don't choose goals that are upstream and really difficult to reach. They choose goals that are ahead of them, new and fresh and in sight downstream where the water is flowing, and they head off in that direction.

Remember, it's your choice to say yes to life and to think good thoughts just as it's your choice not to gossip and be judgmental, envious, or upset by people and situations. Once you realize you have the power to affect everyone in your life,

positively or negatively, you can win every sales call even if you don't get the sale. Because winning is sometimes just feeling great about the sales job you did. You can win with every person you meet at work, at home, and at any place because the one person you have the greatest power over is yourself. How do you want to be? How do you want to live your life? It's your choice—your power!

There are two types of people—those who come into a room and say, “Well, here I am,” and those who come in and say, “Ah, there you are.”

—Frederick Collins

Have you ever heard clients complaining? They make a return, there is something wrong with the meal, or they are complaining about the wait. Have you noticed that even if they have every reason to be upset, they still look very ungracious and ugly? Anger is not a good look to wear. It puts people off. No one wants to be near an angry person. So avoid being angry and instead practice being amazing and being of service. That's really what sales is all about.

When you are of service, you are not at the mercy of events or people in your life. If you choose to not take things personally, you can remain objective and focused on your goals. What do you want to achieve in your life? How many sales do you want to make? How much commission do you want to earn?

When you choose to wake up lively and enthusiastic in the morning, you take the first step to being a powerful salesper-

son. You will actually make more sales because happy people connect with other people in a friendly manner, which reflects in more sales. Not only will you make more sales, but also your job satisfaction will remain high because you feel satisfied and are challenging yourself to be your best.

All effort was sacred to Him. Between the most negative, foolish, and ignorant people, and the most positive, confident, self-assured, there lies a space so small that our Maker regards it with a smile.

—Chin-Ning Chu

Awakened Human Beings Are in Charge of Their Lives

Waking up to your power is about living your life in a way that you want to, the way you choose to, instead of being at the mercy of the weather, the people in your life, your job, your clients, or anything else that is keeping you from being lively and enthusiastic. Remember, awakened human beings are not grumpy and miserable. Awakened human beings are in charge of their lives.

SKILLS COACHING

Choose the answer that best completes this sentence: The best way of waking up to my power is to . . .

1. Just be at the mercy of the weather and people in your life. **Yes or No**
2. Behave in a grumpy and miserable way in the morning so that everyone leaves me alone.
Yes or No
3. Wake up lively and enthusiastic every morning.
Yes or No

Review the answers below:

1. No. Being at the mercy of the weather or other people is being asleep to your power, which will not result in more sales.
2. No. Being grumpy in order to be left alone will keep you out of communication with other people, resulting in fewer sales.
3. Yes. Making the choice to start your day positively is taking a gigantic step toward waking up to your power.

AUDIO COACHING

We want to give you as many tools as we can to bring your sales to life. Following is the transcript of Jeff Gee talking about waking up to your power. Go to the following link to download the audio clip: <http://www.mjlearning.com/open/>.

Waking up to your power! Remember you are an amazing human being; you have the power to do anything you want. So let's have a look at how you wake up in the morning. Do you wake up full of energy ready to rock and roll and have a great day? Do you sing in the shower? Are you happy or are you waking up miserable, upset, and depressed even before you start the day?

To make sure you are in a great selling mode you have to remember how powerful you are as a human being and that you really don't have to be at the effect of people, things, and events. You don't have to be upset about the traffic; you don't have to be upset about an awkward customer; you don't have to be upset about the telephones or computer systems not working. As a salesperson you have to be amazing all the time.

So I want you to wake up to the power that you have as an individual and to the power that you have to do whatever you need to do, whenever you need to do it. I want you to wake up every morning and sing in the shower, I know it sounds ridiculous to do it, and I want you to do it because everyone who sings in the shower always feels good. Start the day right by feeling good. That's the power that you have as a human

being; you have to go out there and sell, you have to communicate with people for commitment, you have to make decisions, and you are amazing. That's what I want you to look at: how are you doing it? Are you waking up great, or are you waking up slow, upset, and miserable? How are you doing it? The choice is yours. You no longer have to be at the effect of things any more; you have the power to be amazing!

THE POWER OF YOUR SALES BRAIN

God is the toughest taskmaster I have known.
He tries you through and through. When you
find your faith or your body is failing you, and
you are sinking, He comes to your assistance.

He proves to you that you must not lose
faith. . . . I cannot recall a single instance when,
at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Creating Win-Win Scenarios

According to quantum physics, if you put a cell under a very strong microscope, you will see that the nucleus is made up of energy. And in fact, the energy from a single cell in your body could light up an entire city for a week! This is why I use the term “quantum sales”—I want to direct your mind to you and your powerful energy.

Your energy, like everything else in your life, is a state of mind. It's up to you and no one else but you to determine how much energy you are going to put into your work and how much energy you are going to put into making a sale. It doesn't matter whether you have the best product, the best service, the best sales manager, or the best company—if you don't put your energy into the sale, nothing is going to happen. That's because your energy is the key that starts the engine. It's what ignites the sale and keeps fueling it. Have you noticed that it's you and no one else that has to get pumped up in order for you to have a great day? Only you need to put your energy to work and have the state of mind that you are going to keep going until you make something happen.

Everything in your life is created by you. You are the source of your energy, the source of your thoughts, and the source of your life. Whatever you put your energy into will thrive and grow, so if you are putting energy into something negative, whether it is a person, a situation, or just a bad ongoing experience, that is what you are creating more of. For example, if you are talking about not having success with sales, you're only contributing to the growth of your lack of sales. If, however, you are not having much success with sales, but your thoughts are elevated, uplifted, and full of expectation, then ultimately you are creating successful sales.

Think of your sales as a plant. You must nurture your plant with good plant food; you must water it with refreshing water when it dries out. But, if you forget to water it, or you feed it poison, it will die. Sales works exactly like that. Read sales books that keep your spirits renewed, surround yourself with people who are passionate about sales, feed yourself with motivational and inspirational thoughts and your sales

will excel. Don't wait for tomorrow for it to happen; start where you are right now. Whatever your circumstances are, begin now to raise your energy. Take a good, deep breath and breathe in successful sales. Keep doing it until you have great energy and feelings about yourself.

**The jewel is in your bosom; why look
for it everywhere else?**

—Anonymous
Japanese Zen poem

When I worked for Xerox, we used to “buddy up” for the day with another salesperson. One time I went out with a man named Jim. We were selling the first plain-paper copiers called the 660. Each one weighed approximately 80 pounds and was 2½ feet wide by 2½ feet high and 4 feet long. In other words, this was a product that was both extremely heavy and awkward!

These buddy days consisted of us taking out a 660 copier for trials. Now back in those days in England, the tallest buildings were about three to four stories high. Most of them did not have elevators. The idea was that we would walk into a particular business, ask for the office manager, and see if the company would like a free trial, “as we just happen to have a machine in the car!”

On one particular day, the manager said yes! His office was on the third floor, so we had to carry the 660 copier up a lot of stairs to demonstrate it to him. There we were, bobbing, swaying, and banging this very heavy copier up the stairs until we finally got it up to the third floor and into his office.

Even though it took up most of the desk, we called it a desktop copier! So we sat it on the desk and plugged it in. It took four to six minutes to warm up, and I conducted some light banter and repartee while we were waiting. I was going into the final stretch talking about paper flow, efficiency, and productivity, when Jim tapped me on the shoulder to say it was now ready for the demonstration.

I asked the manager for an original so we could make a copy. I explained the xerographic process—which over thirty years ago was a revolutionary process for most businesses and a completely new concept to most offices. Before then, copies could only be made by writing them out by hand or by typing on a top copy that had two or three sheets of carbonized paper behind them. “It will take your original inside the machine and go through several processes to make a xerographic imprint onto a plain piece of paper, which will be traveling at the same time from the paper tray inside the machine.” It was while we were waiting for the original to emerge that we noticed smoke coming from the top of the machine. Immediately, Jim and I went to the side of the copier and lifted up the top to see what was wrong.

There we were, having not the slightest idea why the copier was smoking. We unplugged it and started lifting bits and poking about, when unfortunately, Jim started to giggle, which then set me off, and pretty soon we were both with our heads inside the machine giggling like a couple of school-boys. I actually had to stuff a handkerchief in my mouth to stop from laughing out loud. Needless to say, we didn’t sell the machine!

Fortunately, the original was not so important or we could have been in serious trouble. We got out of the office as

quickly as possible and took the machine down the stairs, laughing with embarrassment all the way.

So what's the moral of this story? Why would I write about a big machine belching out smoke and devouring originals? Well, it is to remember not to take ourselves too seriously. Mistakes happen. Sales do go wrong. And when we told our manager, he thought it was hilarious. Now would he have thought it was funny if we didn't make our sales quotas month after month? No, definitely not. Being at the top of your sales game gives you some leniency.

Our manager knew that stuff happens. It's the way you cope with it that matters. We had such a good laugh, we couldn't wait to get out there again and sell more copiers. Could we have gotten away with it if we were not a couple of winners? No way!

Creating win-win scenarios is sometimes about laughing at your mistakes—and learning from them. We took a risk lugging such a big, heavy machine up three floors and the next day it paid off. From that moment forward, we always made sure the machine worked perfectly. Sometimes it takes a lesson like that to wake up. The next day we sold three machines!

**The divine guidance often comes when
the horizon is the blackest.**

—Mahatma Gandhi

Being a salesperson doesn't work if you don't make sales. To be in a win-win scenario you have to bring home the sales. And to do that, your sales technique has to work for the client, for you, for your company and for your manager. Our manager laughed because he had faith in our skill to make sales. It would not have been funny if the targets had not been met!

The Sales Brain

Many sales organizations have sales teams, and they can be good for morale. At the end of the day however, the bottom line in sales, is “Did You Do It?” Yes, the team helps, the camaraderie feels good, and the competitive spirit keeps people like me motivated to sell more—but it’s still always up to me. That’s where the “sales brain” comes into play.

In my book *The Winner’s Attitude*, I discuss how we all have three brains; for details, please refer to that book. For our purposes, though, I provide a brief summary here. The three brains are:

1. reptilian;
2. animal (limbic system);
3. human (cerebral cortex).

The reptilian brain monitors our bodies: heart, liver, organs, and so forth. The animal brain monitors our survival and is born in fear, lives in fear, and dies in fear. It triggers the flight-or-fight syndrome. The human brain, however, monitors our evolution. It is born in love, lives in love, and dies in love. It triggers being of service, helping others, and evolving to a higher level of consciousness.

When I talk about the sales brain, I am talking about a part of the human brain that wants to be amazing. It wants to connect with people and share ideas, thoughts, and new concepts.

When I started in sales I always believed in what I was selling, and I still do today. If I were operating from my animal brain, I would be thinking of my clients as people to scam

and to put one over on. That is what con artists do. The sales brain is not like that. The sales brain operates from the Law of Attraction!

That is the choice we make daily, the choice of what we do with our time, our money, and what we put in our heads. That is the power of choice. All of us have choice. I just choose to be rich, and I make that choice every day.

—Robert Kiyosaki

The Law of Attraction

Your mind is like a giant magnet. But unlike a typical magnet that attracts metal objects, your mind attracts thoughts. They're like thought bombs, and once you have attracted them, they explode in your mind and you create either a wonderful life or a life full of worry, upset, and depression.

Thoughts are made up of a particular energy. For example, if you are feeling great, you attract positive thoughts: you've just hit your target for the month and everything is fabulous—you feel amazing and everyone you see looks amazing also. It's as if the entire world is filled with a blue sunny sky and the sun is shining down on everyone. Now, let's say something negative happens—which let's face it can happen; even on a sunny day when everything is going great, a big fat cloud may suddenly appear out of nowhere and rain all over your parade. For example, you get a credit card bill! You open it up and think,

“Oh no! Even with my commission I’m not going to be able to pay it!” And the feeling of worry and concern about money wipes out the blue sky and suddenly it’s cloudy, overcast, and dark. In the reality of your life, nothing has actually changed except that you got a credit card bill and now you are experiencing the fear of not being able to pay it. And the experience of fear emanates from you and taints everything you see and do. Even if someone comes along and smiles at you, it cannot wipe away your fear about not having enough money. So now, even though you are doing well at your sales job, you are feeding the negative thought: “Yeah, but I’m not doing well enough!”

That thought of not being great enough becomes a magnet that attracts more of the same negative energy. When you go home, everyone in your household looks awful, even your dog or your cat and even the fish in your fish tank are a burden on your resources. What a loser! And that energy continues and grows sometimes with disastrous results. Your spouse gets your bad vibe and suddenly he or she feels awful. An innocent question, “What do you want to do for dinner? Shall we go out and eat?” turns into a battle. “Are you crazy! We have no money!” So you sit in and watch TV and feel miserable eating your piece of toast.

Here’s the same situation, only this time with an awareness of the Law of Attraction: you’re having a great day, you get the credit card bill, and instead of letting it cloud your day, you have the uplifting thought, “I’m going to make enough sales this month to more than cover this bill.”

You feel really powerful so you continue reaching for the higher thought, the more uplifting and positive thought, and you keep getting more and more sales. Except, one time it

doesn't happen that way. You are in a sales slump, and to top it all, you get the credit card bill—and you can't pay it. This time, however, instead of allowing the fear of not having enough influence your feelings, you continue feeling the positive thoughts. In fact, this is where your real power turns on—you keep on being an amazing salesperson. You continue to come from professionalism and positive energy.

Maybe you have to call the credit card company and work out a payment plan, and you do it with a positive attitude. Even if the person on the telephone is sharp, you continue to be amazing. Maybe you have to call a couple more credit collection agencies and work out a payment plan. In other words, you do not allow the outside world to affect your inner world. You have decided that you are going to be the best salesperson you can be and you keep a positive attitude.

By the way, this does not mean that you are in denial of what is going on. You take responsibility for whatever is going on in your life at the moment. You pay your creditors, you spend less money, you keep your word, and you do not gossip or talk negatively about your situation. Eventually, the thoughts that you feed will affect your outer world. Sales will come. Money will be yours. Abundance will be your way of being because there simply is no other way it can be. Your inner world, your thoughts, and your attitude to life are your life. Right now, this very moment, you can change your entire life just with a single change of thought.

The Law of Attraction doesn't mean that bad things won't happen—stuff happens! What the Law of Attraction does is make you change the way you deal with things until fewer and fewer bad things happen. And when bad things do happen, as they will from time to time, you will be in charge of

how you deal with the situation instead of allowing the situation to be in charge of you and how you feel.

The greatest discovery of the 19th century was not in the realm of the physical sciences, but the power of the subconscious mind touched by faith. Any individual can tap into an eternal reservoir of power that will enable them to overcome any problem that may arise. All weaknesses can be overcome, bodily healing, financial independence, spiritual awakening, prosperity beyond your wildest dreams. This is the superstructure of happiness.

—William James

One time I was working for a company that made aluminum scaffolding and power equipment. I was also in the Parachute Regiment (reserve), which occupied my weekends and I had to go away on a two-week course. It was a very tough two weeks of obstacle courses, climbing, and endurance tests, and at the end I would be allowed to wear the red beret of the Parachute Regiment. All went well until the last day when I broke my leg. It's ironic that in my civilian life I was selling and demonstrating power equipment that would push me, as I stood on a tiny platform surrounded by a tiny rail, sixty feet up into the air, and yet I broke my leg jumping from one scaffolding to another a mere thirty feet in the air!

Anyhow, I arrived home with my entire left leg in a plaster cast that the doctors informed me had to stay on for about three months. I knew I'd be fired if I didn't make any sales for

three months. Then, I realized that although my left leg was injured, I could still drive the van with my right leg, because the van had an automatic transmission. So I made the choice to carry on working without anyone knowing that I had broken my leg. I was selling in a remote part of England and didn't go to meetings or have much contact with the office, so it worked very well. I made top salesman each month.

Being Curious

They say that curiosity killed the cat. That may be true for a cat, but for salespeople the opposite is true: lack of curiosity killed the sale. Being curious is about being interested, But not in an ignorant or overly questioning way. You don't want to be asking, "What's this? Who's that? Where did . . . ? How was . . . ? Will you . . . ? Have you . . . ? Did you . . . ? Can you . . . ?" That kind of curiosity will most definitely kill the cat, the dog, and the hamster, if you have one.

We're talking about the kind of curiosity where you want to find out how your product or service can benefit the client's needs. We're going to give you a great questioning technique later in the book that will help you ask the right kind of questions in the right sequence; these questions will support you in being curious in a sales way. For now, we want to tell you about why being curious is so important.

I was once a display advertising representative for the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, which happens to be in Newcastle upon Tyne in England. I called on small businesses and one in particular was a hearing aid shop. I knew if I could get in to see the manager we would end up doing business, so I kept

telephoning him week after week until finally he let me have an appointment

Colin was about my age and had an expensive storefront with a waiting room and a couple of smaller offices. As soon as I sat down, he started telling me all about hearing, deafness, and the inner workings of the ear. I had no clue about any of the things he was talking about. So I decided to clear my head and just let him talk, which was great because then I didn't have an opinion and I could really listen.

When you clear your mind of you and your own things and start to really listen, you'll find interesting things you didn't know about. You'll be surprised and enlightened, and when customers see that, then they're much more open to being sold.

So here I was listing to a hearing aid specialist whose life was talking to old ladies and men about their hearing aid problems. Is that of interest to anyone else? Not really, but I found out all this stuff about the ear; for instance, I learned about the eustachian tube and the stirrup, which looks exactly like a horse's stirrup, and what it does. Noise travels down the eustachian tube, hits the stirrup, and sends vibrations to your brain, which then interprets it as sound, voice, music, and so forth. There are twenty-four thousand vibrating fibers in each of your ear drums and, depending on the noise, certain fibers vibrate when others don't. Hearing is an amazingly sophisticated process. It's not your ears that listen; they are just collecting noise. It's your brain that actually listens and hears!

I learned all this information about hearing, and because Colin saw that I did not find it boring and I was enlightened and enthusiastic, we created a bond immediately. I went on to

sell him more advertising than any other client. I actually ended up being best man at his wedding!

Listening

And what got me to that stage with a client? Listening! I don't mean listening and just waiting for the client to finish so that I can start talking. I mean listening and actually learning something, such as all that information about the ear.

Did you ever see an unhappy horse? Did you ever see a bird that has the blues? One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses.

—Dale Carnegie

There's a technique that you might find useful to hone your listening skills. It's called "discover, explore, and heighten," and I recommend you experiment with it at home or with co-workers before using it with a client.

Why is this technique so important? Well, for one thing it will keep you youthful. Yes that's right, it will keep you young and full of life and exuberance! Here's another way of putting it. Remember your first walk in a forest, in a park, or at the beach? You had big wide eyes, you were looking at everything, you were taking notice of new things, you were curious and interested, and you loved to explore things. But the more you walk, the less you time you take to look. You stop being

curious and stop exploring. Eventually, you are walking in the forest and not even looking. You may have seen people like this in the street. There are amazing things to see—buildings, people, shop windows, birds, trees, flowers, whatever is going on—and yet, you see these walking dead people just going forward, eyeballs straight ahead, lost in their own inner world. If you try to make eye contact, they pretend not to notice you. If you say something, they pretend not to hear.

Discover, explore, and heighten is a very simple technique.

1. Discover something. It could be a thing or it could be a person, such as a friend, spouse, child, co-worker, or boss.
2. Explore! For example, you may think, “Wow, here’s my child and he’s ten years old and I don’t know what he’s really thinking about life. Maybe I should ask him.”
3. Heighten. Make it really important. Act as if it is the number one thing for you.

Here’s how the conversation might go:

“Hey Ben, what’s your favorite song?”

“Dunno!” (This could be the answer, which is why it is important to select a specific topic. It’s no good just asking how it’s going because most people will just say broadly that everything is fine.)

“Well, Ben, I’m curious to hear some new music and I thought you would be able to help me.”

“I don’t think you’ll like my music.”

“Well let me explore it and discover what it is that you like about it.”

Clearly, I'm just inventing this conversation. It could go better than that, or it could go worse. The point is that with this technique, you are being curious and you are using listening skills. You want to discover something new and you want to explore and heighten it, for yourself and for others. It's about you bringing new energy to the situation, whether at your work, or your home.

**I don't expect my flight to produce a generation
of astronauts and cosmonauts back home, but
I hope it will encourage people to pursue
their dreams.**

—Mark Shuttleworth

For more practical tips on how you can improve your listening skills, follow some of the seven key strategies below:

1. Maintain eye contact with your client. Eye contact keeps you focused on the job at hand and keeps you involved in the conversation. If you have to jot down notes, just make sure you don't keep your head down and focus solely on your notepad.
2. Focus on content, not delivery. Have you ever counted the number of times a client clears his or her throat in a fifteen-minute period? Or have you ever been unable to take your attention off the spot on a client's jacket or his or her eye tic? If so, you weren't focusing on what the client was saying.
3. Avoid emotional involvement. When you are too emotionally involved in listening, you tend to hear

what you want to hear—not what is actually being said. To counter that, remain objective and open-minded.

4. Avoid distractions. Don't let your mind wander or be distracted by the people nearby. If the office is too hot or too cold, use your mind and thoughts to mentally overcome the temperature.
5. Treat listening as a challenging mental task. Listening to a client is not a passive act; concentrate on what is said so that you can process the information into a sale.
6. Stay active by asking mental questions. Active listening keeps you on your toes. Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you listen: What key point is the client making? How does this fit with what I know from previous meetings? How is this business organized?
7. Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought. You can think faster than the client can talk. That's one reason your mind may tend to wander. All the above suggestions will help you keep your mind occupied and focused on what is being said. You can actually begin to anticipate what the client is going to say as a way to keep your mind from straying. Your mind does have the capacity to listen, think, write, and ponder at the same time—all it takes is practice.

SKILLS COACHING

Here's a skills practice to test your understanding of the information. Answer the following true or false questions:

1. Starting the day in control of my attitude helps me be in control of my sales. **True or False**
2. When I choose to create a positive sales environment, I am training my brain to release positive chemicals. **True or False**
3. People prefer to buy from confident salespeople who are in charge of their own attitude. **True or False**

If you chose True for all three questions, you understand how to wake up your power. Your choice of how you wake up in the morning affects you and everyone you come into contact with. To create a positive sales environment for yourself, you need to look upon everyone as your customer, including your co-workers, managers, service people, delivery people, and of course your external customers. When you do this, you will always create a win-win scenario, because you get what you want and your customers get what they want.

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COMMUNICATING FOR COMMITMENT

**Quality begins on the inside . . . and then
works its way out.**

—Bob Moawad

Making Your Product Known

I don't know what kind of sales company you work for—it could be a large organization with a gigantic marketing operation or it could be a small entrepreneurial business with a sales department of one—you! What I have noticed, whether I have been with a Fortune 500 corporation or working for myself, is that making the product known is always my responsibility. If I am not communicating to someone, that is, making the phone calls, knocking on the doors, and making contact with clients—even if the product is as well known as a Boeing airplane or a can of Coca-Cola—then nothing is going to happen.

So making the product known is about stirring up a lot of activity by phoning and calling on clients and setting up meetings. Someone asked me recently, "What do you do when you've traveled a long way to see clients and they're not there?" My response was that I always try to think the best. For example, I might think they were called to an emergency meeting or they completely forgot about me. Either way, its fine; I'm not going to get upset. No matter what happens—from getting the door slammed in your face to being told, "No, thank you!"—you cannot be rejected. Only your mind will reject you.

Consider this example, which happened when I approached a potential client. I flew to Memphis to talk to a major shipping company and give a presentation of what we do and how we do it. The vice president and six regional directors were very impressed and one of them decided he would like to do a pilot scheme.

So we quickly got into negotiations about dates and times to begin the pilot; we were going to deliver the training to a group of their customer service people (of which they have twenty-three thousand). For me this would be a huge account—I felt as though I'd died and gone to heaven! So over the next few days, I communicated with the service manager for that group, because he was in charge of putting the training together, when suddenly it all came to a standstill. Their internal training department, which of course has many customer service training programs, had talked with the regional director to say they should do their program before they even considered looking at mine.

As so often happens in sales, the difference between euphoria and disappointment is just one telephone call. So I had two options: forget it or keep pursuing it. I chose the latter option.

It's been seven months since I presented Super Service to them, and I telephone the service manager at least once every three weeks to see a) if the company's training program is up and running and b) what he feels and thinks about the whole process. In his words, "I have no alternative but to go ahead and deliver the in-house program but it's a standard customer service program that teaches 'smile when you dial' and is nothing like Super Service, so as soon as we have completed this program we will get you in to do your pilot."

And this relationship is being fostered over the phone; I have never met the service manager face to face. The sale is based on the relationship we have built over the phone and his belief that our program will actually make a difference. He heard from his regional director that it was amazing and that the training is all about you as an individual taking responsibility and not being at the mercy of people, things, and events.

I call the regional director every three months or so, just to tell him what I'm doing and remind him what's in it for him and his people: a more productive workforce, greater creativity, faster customer service, and a lower attrition rate, which results in an improved bottom line!

**All successful men have agreed in one thing—
they were causationists. They believed that
things went not by luck, but by law.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson**

From a sales perspective, making your product known is about keeping it in front of the client, because people forget all the time, especially executives who are making decisions

on a daily basis. Their time is precious, they're going from one meeting to another, and it's difficult for them to remember every detail of everything that's gone on. I was once in the middle of selling a large training project to a very big corporation and I was talking with one of the executives about the things we had discussed the week before. Suddenly I realized by his comments that what he wanted to do now was totally different from what we agreed to the previous week. So it taught me a very important lesson: put everything in writing. Send an email to confirm what you have discussed. It's often difficult in the middle of talking to someone to gently remind the person that this is different from what we were talking about last week. But if you put it in writing, you can refer to the document: "As you remember in the email that we sent last week . . . Is there something different that has come up now?"

Remember that your customers are busy. Just like you, they have so much stuff being thrown at them every minute of every day—of course people forget. Your job as a salesperson is to keep reminding them: "remember my product; remember what it can do for you; remember you agreed that it's the best thing since sliced bread!" (without, of course, wording it that way).

So it's great to have wonderful brochures and TV ads and to see your product advertised on banners around massive sports stadiums or your logo on a race car or an elite athlete's sweatshirt. When it comes down to it, at the end of the day, you are the one who has to keep picking up the phone and saying, "Hi there, it's Jeff Gee with McNeil & Johnson. I'm calling to let you know that I've found . . ." It's the WIFM

approach: What's In It for Me. If you can't tell the clients what's in it for them, don't make the call.

Forget Everything You Know

In order to sell there are times when you need to forget your preconceived ideas of people and what you think you know and literally clear your head of all your learning, experience, and knowledge. I learned this lesson again when I was selling sales training to a large medical systems corporation. The decision maker was a young lady about twenty-six years old who began by telling me all about the art of selling. However, this was someone who had never sold. And there she was telling me all about selling skills, what was needed, what would work, and what wouldn't work. And I was sitting there having sold for over forty years listening to a (in my opinion) misdirected opinion about sales!

I was totally caught up in my head to begin with, and my first impulse was to say, "Stop. You don't know what you're talking about." Of course I didn't say that, and I realized that if I kept talking to myself in this way, I was headed toward not making a sale. So I consciously changed my attitude and cleared my mind of everything I was thinking and opened my mind to just listening without judgment and without saying anything. And by avoiding getting caught up with my thoughts, we ended up having a great conversation. She had actually collected a lot of data from the sales team, and so not only did I get a better understanding of what they needed, but I also made the sale.

At the beginning, though, it could have ended disastrously because my initial thought was to start arguing with her because I thought that she didn't know the reality of the business world of selling. But the more I let go of my preconceived notions and my judgments, the more I understood what she wanted to get across to me. Once I got to understand her personality, I chose my words carefully. For example I would say, "I know you already know this . . ." or, "We've discovered that this is the . . ." and, "You're absolutely right in what you said, and what they're looking at now in selling is this . . ." or, "I'd like your opinion on this." It taught me a great lesson—pride cometh before a fall!

**Do you know what happened to the man who
got everything he ever wanted? He lived
happily ever after.**

—Willy Wonka

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

Stepping Stones

Sometimes you might find yourself in a situation where you are selling a product that you really don't understand or even like that much. When I first came to America from England I was transferred here by a company called Advanced System Incorporated. They sold computer training to information technology (IT) departments and I found it a really difficult sell. For the most part I was talking to decision makers who

inherently wanted to know very specific details about the product and what it would do for them. It was incredibly technical. They were talking about programs to do with COBOL and Java, which I have very little knowledge about, not to mention it's probably the least interesting subject to me on the planet.

So there I was talking to systems analysts, programmers, and high-tech decision makers about things I didn't understand and found very hard to get my head around. They would ask me questions about DOS, and even though I studied it, I just didn't grasp the basic concept; therefore every conversation had the potential to be a nightmare for me.

So I had to make it interesting and fun. I would make it my job to make the IT department not only have fun but also buy lots of product. In fact it turned out to be one of the most important sales jobs of my career because it helped so much with my sales training. Through that job I learned that even though I didn't understand the product completely, I could still connect with other human beings. I could still sell *me* as part of the solution. And the product was good, so I felt comfortable in addressing needs and selling benefits of a product that did in fact work very well.

People love to talk about themselves and their work—and once you can get them to open up in that way, the world is your oyster. Once you know what they want, what they don't want, what they have used in the past that worked, and what did not work, you have all the information to make the sale. And the best part is, they did most of the talking and most of the selling—all you did was listen and repeat what they just said they needed—which you are able to provide . . . at a price of course.

**What we call luck is the inner
man externalized.**

—Robertson Davies

Trusting Enough to Commit

We sometimes forget that the customers have to pay, and in certain cases pay huge sums of money, for your products and services. To do that requires them to trust you, to trust that you will deliver what you promise and that you won't over-promise and underperform. And sometimes as salespeople we forget that; we just want to get the sale because we believe in it. But we have to understand that from their perspective the customers have to trust us and feel comfortable because their investment is huge—not just in terms of money but also in terms of integrity and reliability. Their underlying question is often, “Will this product or service do what this salesperson says it will do? Will I come out shining or come out smelling?”

My brother who lives in Cambridge, England, reminded me the other day of a story about a neighbor of ours who had a new roof put on his house. It happened many years ago before people really knew and understood to beware of people selling bad solutions. Mr. Lloyd was also the local butcher and was a large beefy man. This particular day he was all fired up because he had gotten a great deal on a new roof. He was so happy he was telling everyone on the street about the bargain he had made: “They guarantee it won't leak or fall apart. It's almost too good to be true!”

And of course it was! “They’re coming tomorrow,” he said. So the next day, after he went to work, the roofers came to his home with a truckload of cement. All day long they went up and down the ladders with buckets and covered the beautiful red-tiled roof with cement, plastering it on like butter. When Mr. Lloyd returned home to discover his newly cemented roof, he apparently took one look, swore loudly, and then went inside his house. It’s hard to make a big man like that feel small, but he must have felt terrible because he wasn’t seen for a few weeks. Meanwhile, the neighborhood watched as it rained and the cement got wet and turned a dark gray. It never dried out again and was eventually removed when the leaks became too bad.

Stories like these are famous among friends and family. Almost everyone knows of someone who got ripped off by a salesperson, and that’s why when you establish trust with your clients, you can develop a deep and lasting relationship. People really appreciate someone they can trust. It is also why some sales can take a long time.

Every memorable act in the history of the world is a triumph of enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever achieved without it because it gives any challenge or any occupation, no matter how frightening or difficult, a new meaning. Without enthusiasm you are doomed to a life of mediocrity but with it you can accomplish miracles.

—Og Mandino

The Greatest Salesman in the World

Then there are the times when the sale goes so quickly, you're almost shocked—like the one I had with a large products-testing company. One of our telephone salespeople had called to try and get an appointment and was told to call back in six months. Three months later, the client called us because the company needed someone to come immediately to discuss customer service training. I went in, sat down with the two managers in charge of setting up a customer service training program, and discovered that they had never done any soft skills training before and that this was a new venture for them. I talked about what we could do for them and closed on a \$300,000 deal, all in one call.

An additional benefit to that call came a few years later, when one of the managers from the company who had seen me facilitate Super Service, my customer service program had moved to a university. He just happened to be on a steering committee to look at student attrition and building up the business. He told me that one of the things they needed to look at was the customer service. So we went through a competitive bid process where they looked at several people. And they picked us.

And at the other extreme, it can take just as much time and effort to get a small account as it does a big one. For example, a two-way radio dealer we've been working with for over a year is still in the decision-making process. It's taken the same amount of work and effort to try and close this deal as it would for a million-dollar one. I think the dealer will do the training in the end because I've built a relationship with their marketing company who are also pushing for our program to go through.

**Business is like riding a bicycle. Either you
keep moving or you fall down.**

—Frank Lloyd Wright

To the dealer of course, training costs a lot of money. Therefore it requires a great deal of decision making. The company executives need to talk with each other extensively about the value they're going to get. And I have noticed that the more people involved in the decision making process, the more adverse and different reactions you will get to the final decision being made. So my job is just to keep plugging away, to smooth things over, and to give the decision makers as much information, detail, and reassurance as possible.

SKILLS COACHING

Here's a skill challenge to help you practice these concepts in your life—so go for it! As we've said, in sales, everyone is your customer, so put that to the test:

1. Find a person you wouldn't normally treat as a client and treat this person as a client.
2. Is there anything this person needs, anything you can do for him or her? It may be a person at the checkout that is looking unhappy, and your job is to make this person smile. It could be a co-worker you normally don't talk with, and your job is to make a positive connection.
3. Step outside your comfort zone and see what happens.
4. How does it feel to realize it's your choice to treat everyone as your client?

After you have done this little exercise, ask yourself: What happened? How did it go? Was it a positive experience? If it wasn't, what did you do to make it that way? It is interesting that when you decide to treat others as your client, you are really selling yourself to people. You are acting in a way that will endear yourself to others; and as you may notice, the opposite is quite unattractive.

OWNING THE SALE

Art is making something out of nothing
and selling it.

—Frank Zappa

Everything Is a State of Mind

Thoughts are whirling around your mind from the moment you wake up in the morning to the moment you fall asleep at night. They are like seeds blowing through your mind. And you may have noticed that some thoughts are great, but others are really depressing. The amazing thing as far as your life and your selling power are concerned is that you are in charge of those thoughts. You decide which ones to grab hold of, nurture, and bring into reality and which ones to allow to simply dissipate.

There is actually a scientific equation that explains how thoughts turn into reality. It goes like this:

$$\text{Intensity} \times \text{Duration} = \text{Force}$$

The intensity of your thought multiplied by the amount of time you think about it equals the chance of it happening. For example, if you think you are an amazing salesperson who closes 99.9 percent of deals, and you continue thinking it day after day with passion and enthusiasm, you will create yourself as an amazing salesperson who closes 99.9 percent of your deals. If, however, you think you are a lousy salesperson and think it for a long time with certainty and passion, you will create yourself as a lousy salesperson.

You probably have met people in your life who are always down on themselves. They always have some depressing story to tell about their past, present, or future. And what kind of lives do they have? They lead depressing lives for sure. It can't be any other way. What we believe and think is true becomes true!

You create your life from what you think about most. So if you think each day, "I'm going to be really amazing today," and you put your energy into positive action, you will have an amazing life because what you believe in your mind is the reality that you create for yourself. There are many stories in various walks of life that prove this to be true; there are people who have joined companies at the ground level who have gone on to become CEOs. I know a lawyer, for example, who after seven years of working for a law firm realized he hated it and what he wanted to become was a facilitator. So he worked for us for a few years and then decided he actually wanted to train lawyers how to sell. So that's what he does now. He's happy, his company is happy, and his family is happy; it's a win-win-win situation!

Everything begins with a thought. If you are in sales and you don't like it, then decide what you want to do and find out

how you can do it. Too many people live their lives on autopilot, as if they are living life by default. They just happened to fall into a particular line of work and stayed there for twenty years being unhappy. Well I am here to tell you that it doesn't have to be that way. You can be literally whatever you set your mind to be.

**We are shaped by our thoughts; we become
what we think. When the mind is pure, joy
follows, like a shadow that never leaves.**

—Buddha

The Dharmapada

Of course in order to create results, thought needs to be followed by action. You can't learn a new skill just by thinking about it. You have to put passion and enthusiasm into the mix and when you do, reaching your goal will be much easier than you ever thought possible. It's about having a positive mental attitude.

Have you heard of W. Clement Stone? He was a prominent businessman who, in the late 1920s, built the Combined Insurance Company of America, which by 1930 employed over one thousand agents and exceeded \$1 billion in assets. Stone was born in Chicago and was only three when his father died. He started his business career when he was six, selling newspapers to help support himself and his mother. When he was sixteen, he went to Detroit to help his mother with an insurance company she had opened there. Soon he was making \$100 a week selling casualty insurance and was a

prime example of a character right out of the Horatio Alger stories, in which a poor boy makes good.

Stone emphasized using a “positive mental attitude” to make money for himself and for millions of people who read his books. He teamed up with Napoleon Hill to author *Success through a Positive Mental Attitude*. The amazing thing about Stone was his appearance; he had a pencil-thin black mustache, vibrant suspenders, polka-dot bow ties, and spats. He was also a very gifted inspirational speaker who would shout “Bingo!” at board meetings if attention lapsed. His most often used quote was, “All I want to do is change the world!” He died at the age of a hundred as one of the wealthiest men in Chicago.

One of the most interesting things about Stone was his passion to achieve greatness in his life. According to people who knew him in the early days, he could only pay his salespeople in company stocks, which at the time had little or no value—those salespeople went on to become millionaires when they cashed in their stocks years later. Stone believed in his vision, and his salespeople believed in him! It was all a state of mind.

Ken, a friend of mine who joined Stone’s insurance company when Stone was sixty-five, described Stone as “a short man with a lot of power. He came to London once a month for the sales meetings which were held at the London Hilton. He was at every meeting, and when he made a presentation he shouted—more loudly than you can imagine. Once he gained control, he would quiet down; he earned the right to be there by taking control rather than by asking for permission.”

Earning the Right to Be There

Earning the right means that you have done all the hard work to be there. You've got the skills and the knowledge, you've made the phone calls, you've checked on everything, and now you can confidently continue with the sale. When Val sold for Pitney Bowes, it was fairly easy because she was given a territory that already had many established customers. Of course there was still the cold calling to build the existing customer base, but many of the sales were to clients who already had a lease or owned the equipment and wanted to upgrade it. As she tells it,

One of my managers was a guy called Tom who had a huge amount of enthusiasm. I was driving a Z-26 silver-gray Camaro at the time and he would say to me, "It's an American car, so drive up in front of the building so they can see you in it." He was always very aware of how we approached customers, and if there was a grass area he said, "Don't walk across the grass, people are watching us, and we don't want to appear that we don't care about their landscaping."

One of the things Tom taught me was to do whatever it took to get the deal. One of his strategies was to show the customers on a piece of paper how the postage system worked for their situation. It was usually a very rough drawing with felt marker pens and on the side of the paper he would put the dollar savings in really big letters. Now Pitney Bowes has lots of very sophisticated, glossy brochures to show the systems and potential customer savings. But for Tom, he had found that to draw it in front of the customer worked really well for him and he closed many deals both large and small that way.

It taught me that earning the right to be there was about knowing the product inside out, and making the system or service easy for the customer to understand. Tom's presentation method was definitely unique, and it was the most simple and straightforward for clients to understand.

Not only that, they could see that this salesperson knew what he was talking about so it gave them a lot of confidence.

Of course, when we were selling very large postage systems that dealt with millions of envelopes, we made formal presentations; so of course it all depends on the audience.

There are many ways to earn the right to be with a customer: A very successful salesperson once told me, "I always warm up before calling my important customers. Whether I am on the phone or face to face, I do a few cold calls to get warmed up so that when I call a special customer, I am ready to get down to business."

Earning the right to be with a customer is about being professional and feeling that you have the right to be there. Are you at the top of your game? Do you look the part, dress the part, and feel the part? Would you want to purchase a product from you? Would you want a close relative to be sold something by a person like you? Are you trustworthy? Are you prepared to listen? Are you a professional salesperson? If you answered yes to these questions, then you have earned the right!

Man goes to great trouble to acquire knowledge of the material world. He learns all branches of mundane science, he explores the earth and even travels to the moon, yet he never tries to find out what exists within himself. Because he is unaware of the enormous power which lies hidden within him, he looks for support in the outer world.

—Anonymous
Ancient Hindu text

Preparedness and Product Knowledge

In chapter 4, I talked about the time I sold product that I did not understand—video training libraries to information technology (IT) departments. It was very difficult until I realized that I could use the knowledge of the IT people to help me sell my own product. It's not exactly the best situation to be in, however as a salesperson, you have to be prepared to sell in whatever situation you find yourself in. Of course, you are in a much better position when you know your product well.

Having said that, product knowledge is only as important as the client makes it. Some clients want to know every little thing about the product, whereas others only want to know how much it is and when it can be installed. One of the reasons top salespeople sell so much product is that they know everything about the product and then they forget it until the client wants to know. One of the biggest mistakes salespeople can make is regurgitating everything they know about the product until the client feels sick and just wants them out!

Product knowledge and preparedness is all about the client trusting that you know what you are talking about and that you are prepared to make the sale. They don't want to listen to what they don't want to listen to. And they don't want to be told at the end of a sale that the dimensions or the technicalities of the product will not fit into their situation. So yes, know your product and be prepared to sell it. Always remember, though, that you know the needs of the client and have the solution to meet them.

For the Betterment of All

Although a life in sales is not meant to be like the life of Mother Theresa, it can be fulfilling by providing people with solutions that help make their lives, in business, or at home, better than they were before you came on the scene. You may not be able to change the world; however, you do have a choice to sell products and systems that will enhance the world, the environment, and people's lives. The cement roof I mentioned in chapter 4 was not for the betterment of all.

When I sell my training programs or provide a keynote speech to a large audience, I know that what I am doing is going to make people's lives better than they were before they met me. If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't be interested in selling it. And it's not just the training that I am selling today—when I sold yellow pages advertising years ago, I believed that it helped businesses reach out to their customers. When I sold Xerox copiers, I believed that it provided amazing paper solutions and greater productivity for clients. When you believe in what you are selling, you are going to be a much happier and satisfied salesperson.

And yes, it's true I could sell whatever to whomever and come out on top of my game; the point is that when you believe in your product and what it will do for your client, you play the game at a much higher level. I don't care if it's silk flowers, diamonds, or nuclear fusion, if you don't see the benefits for the client, then what's the point in selling it?

Ultimately, you need to understand what your client needs and how your product fulfills that need. This is a perfect segue to part II of this book, where we teach you our OPEN Question Selling Technique for finding out what your customers want and how to deliver it to them.

SKILLS COACHING

Owning the sale is about you believing that you do. It is about gaining control and the trust of the audience, whether it is made up of one client, a committee, or hundreds of people. People will buy if they have confidence in you, and that only comes about when you have confidence in yourself. The next time you are with a group of friends, notice how you take control. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you take charge of situations?
2. Do you tell a story in a way that keeps people's attention?
3. Do you facilitate the space so people are at ease?

If you answered yes to all three points, then you most likely do own the sale. If not, practice these tips:

1. Know the dates, times, where, when, and who of the situation so that when people ask questions, you have all the answers. Practice being in the know.
2. Before you tell a story, make sure you have everyone's attention. It's no good telling a story or a joke if people are talking or interested in something else. Practice your timing.
3. Be aware of the space, whether you are at a party, in a boardroom, or at home. If someone needs a chair, help find one. If something doesn't work, be the one to assist in making it work. Be known as the kind of person that helps rather than hinders. Practice being of service.

Part II

THE OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUE

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OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUE— OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

**If you keep your ears and eyes on your
customer, you will keep your competitor's
foot out of the door.**

—James Jones

The OPEN Question Selling Technique

The OPEN Question Selling Technique is about asking questions in a particular order so that you lead both yourself and the client toward a mutually beneficial solution. Think of the technique as instructions on how to manage a business conversation. It can even be used in your personal life, especially when

you want to get a point across or sell an idea or a solution to your friends and family. I first used the OPEN Question Selling Technique over twenty years ago. I practiced on everyone I knew, including my wife. My wife and I would be in a conversation and I would start to use the OPEN Question Selling Technique. For example, I once began by asking a simple question that was supposed to give me lots of information: "How was today?"

"Good!" she answered. A one word response was not what I was looking for. I wanted her to give me more information, so I would ask it in a different way, like this:

"What was it about today that you enjoyed most and why?"

"Huh?"

That didn't work either, so I would ask another question only this time, with a bit more sincerity:

"Would you describe your day to me so I have a better understanding of what you do?"

"Hmm! Well, first I went to . . ."

Then I got the whole story. All I had to do was listen or, as a sales manager once told me, use the Question, Listen, Look, Lean, and Respond (QLLLR) technique. Leaning in toward a person actually works very well, especially if you are sitting across the table or a desk from someone. You lean in like you have a great big secret to unfold and then you respond to the person's answer.

I now teach the OPEN Question Selling Technique to new salespeople and to those who have been selling for twenty years or more. The new salespeople love it because it gives them an excellent structure to follow. Those who have been selling for many years say that it is the most amazing

program they have ever learned, because it gets them to realize how much time they had spent talking and how powerful it is for the customer to talk instead.

When I am in a sales call, the OPEN Question Selling Technique gives me a complete understanding of how to communicate from a business perspective. It allows me to get inside the minds of my customers so that I become the guide and coach. This in turn enables the customers to literally sell themselves.

There are two aspects to the OPEN Question Selling Technique, and both are equally important. The first is your heart and the second is the questioning technique itself. Let's start with your heart. Selling is all about connecting with people; whether you communicate over the phone or face to face, if you connect with a person you are very likely to make the sale. If you do not connect with the person, you most likely will not make the sale. And the only sure-fire way to connect with people is to open your heart. So what does that really mean, and how do you do it?

Opening your heart means that you are being open to the person and the situation. In my sales career I have sold to many different kinds of people from many different walks of life. Some people were so different from me in the way that they thought and lived their lives that at times it seemed we came not just from different parents but also from different planets. And the amazing thing is that when I open my heart and come from the point of view that we are all connected, we are all the same, and that we all want the same things, then I usually made the sale. People from every walk of life, from different countries and with different cultures and ideals, all want the same things: to love, to be loved, to be happy, to find

**In order to succeed, we must first believe
that we can.**

—Nikos Kazantzakis

a great deal, to make enough money, to not live in survival mode, to provide for their families, and to be respected by their friends and peers.

If I had walked into any sale with a closed heart, feeling scared, uncertain, worried, upset, and fearful, then I would never make the sale. Selling is all about making a connection with another human being and it begins with an open heart. So how do you do it?

Some people do it naturally. They are the kind of people who want to be givers instead of takers. They are not looking for what they can get out of a situation as much as what they can put in. I think of myself as someone whose purpose in life is to be of service and I accomplish this through my sales ability. I believe I give people a great product and a great solution, and this way of thinking opens my heart automatically.

Some salespeople try to “get one over” on their clients. It doesn’t work. It may work for a time, but eventually people realize they are being taken advantage of. When a salesperson wants to be the best for the clients, the clients recognize that, feel safe, and trust this person to do the best for them.

It has been proven that the heart and mind are connected. What you think about triggers a response in your heart. If you are thinking dark, bleak thoughts, your heart responds by feeling dark and bleak and as if nothing works for you. A dark-

ened heart believes that clients are nuisances, always come up with difficult objections, never make up their minds, and are difficult to deal with. All of this negative thinking leads to the idea that selling is a very hard job, and that thought leads to a reality that selling is a very hard job.

When you think positive, uplifting thoughts, it triggers an uplifting response in your heart. You feel that the world is your oyster and anything is possible. You feel that your clients are just waiting for you to come along and provide them with solutions. You look upon customers as people who need your professional expertise in helping them find solutions. You wake up in the mornings ready to go! You can't wait to get on the phone and make appointments. You want to get on the plane and see clients in their corporate headquarters. You want to drive around your territory and make cold calls because nothing is too much trouble. You know that your job is to sell and you love it! And the powerful result is that you actually create yourself as the kind of salesperson who is always on top of your game and making more sales than anyone else in your office.

**Setting an example is not the main means of
influencing others; it is the only means.**

—Albert Einstein

Now that we've discussed the first aspect, let's discuss the technique itself. The OPEN Question Selling Technique involves four types of questions asked in a specific sequence:

Operational
Probing
Effect
Nail-Down

Asked in a specific sequence, they will allow you to:

1. understand your client's business situation;
2. uncover their main problem;
3. explode the problem into other areas of their business;
4. direct them to discover for themselves the payoff for buying your solution.

I first learned about the importance of asking certain types of sales questions when I worked for Xerox in England. Before that, I was going into sales calls and doing what I thought was selling—I was just telling people about my product and services and hoping that I would make a sale.

I remember calling on a large paper-manufacturing company. I hadn't done my homework and so I went straight into my story. I told the manager about how amazing we were, how great our products and services were, and what benefits they would provide. I remember the manager saying, "You're obviously not interested in us, what we do, or what our problems are, because if you were, you would not have been trying to sell me that particular product."

It was a good lesson for me, because I experienced the importance of starting the sale with operational questions. They give you all the base information you need about the client and the business, and then you can proceed to the next OPEN question in the sequence. So let's take a look at operational

questions, what they are, how to ask them, and most important, when to ask them and when not to ask them.

Operational Questions

Operational questions begin the sale. They help uncover the client's business situation and identify his or her position within the company and level of involvement with the purchase. A good way to look at operational questions is to think of meeting someone for the first time at a social event. You wouldn't get very far if you were to begin by talking about yourself and then ask the person to tell you about his or her specific problems and issues. If you want to get along with this person, you would begin by asking simple open-ended questions to make the person feel comfortable and allow the person to share personal information when the time is right. At the beginning of a conversation, whether it's personal or business, people immediately know if they want to talk to you or not. And if you set off on the wrong foot, it's very difficult to backpedal. No one wants to be cornered by someone who is coming on too strong or, conversely, by someone who expects you to do all the talking.

**Show me someone who has done something
worthwhile, and I'll show you someone who has
overcome adversity.**

—Lou Holtz

Operational questions provide the perfect foundation for any conversation and once you begin to think of them that

way, you will start to ask them in the right way, at the right time, and with the right focus. So let's look at the very beginning of the sale. Why is the client even bothering to talk to you? What does the client expect?

Let's start with the basics. You know that clients buy because they have needs. As a salesperson, your job is to identify, develop, and satisfy those needs and the more clearly you help clients identify their needs, the more likely you are to make a sale. If the clients are satisfied with the existing situation, they have no need to buy your product. If they are not satisfied with the existing situation, you can help them identify problems and needs and make the sale.

Operational questions are fairly simple and need to be directed toward areas of the client's business that involve your product or service. Below are some examples of operational questions:

- "How does your business operate?"
- "How many employees do you have?"
- "Where are they located?"
- "What other locations do you have?"
- "Where are your customers located?"
- "What is a typical day like?"

Not all operational questions are about how the client is currently running the business. The most important operational questions probe for information about the purpose, content, and importance of the processes that have to do with your product or service. So if you were selling training, the operational questions might be:

- “How would you best describe your current training methods?”
- “What would you say are the main core values of your training?”
- “How do you see my company fitting into your business model?”

The purpose of operational questions is to establish a context or starting point for exposing or understanding customer problems. Once you know how the business operates you can then begin to see where problems may exist now or in the future. Complete the following exercise to customize operational questions to your own needs:

OPEN SKILL

Write an operational question that gives you information regarding your product:

If you wrote an open-ended question that allows your clients to talk about themselves and their business in a way that ties it into your product or service, then you are on the

right track! As I realized all too painfully, you can't go into a customer and just start talking about your product or service—it doesn't work.

I was training a sales force recently and one of the salespeople asked, "Is there ever a situation when the customer doesn't want to talk about themselves or when they don't want to give you any information?" I told them it only happens very rarely because most of the time you can get people to talk, especially if you ask them about themselves, their department, or their company—because that's what they are interested in. If you do get people who don't want to talk about themselves or their company, then you can talk in very general terms about what you know about their company and slowly begin to ask operational questions.

Operational questions reveal things that would be impossible to know by just walking into a business. For example, I once walked into a huge building with a beautiful big reception area and I thought, "Great! I'm going to sell one of the bigger copying machines." But after talking to the office manager, I soon discovered that they had a staff of only eight people and did very little copying. By asking operational questions, I found this out early in the call and didn't waste my time or their time with false expectations of selling one of the bigger machines.

The flip side of the coin happened when I walked into a scrap metal company thinking it was a complete waste of time. The place was really dirty, and the office was hardly more than a wooden shed. But I soon found out that they had over one hundred drivers at twenty-three different locations that all needed copying machines! Looking at the place covered in dirt and with things falling apart, it seemed they wouldn't have a need for copiers—yet that order and others

like it put me on top of my game. In sales you can never tell; it's only when you use a questioning technique like OPEN that you uncover the situation and discover clients' real needs.

Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, "This is the real me," and when you have found that attitude, follow it.

—William James

I use the OPEN Question Selling Technique in every sales call, even when I know a customer well, because there's always something new going on that could affect my business. So I ask my clients, "What's going on?" I ask them about their company and about them as individuals. And if I know a client really well, I ask things like, "Where do you want to be in this company?" I never stop selling. There's always someone to call and someone to question, and it's exciting and wonderful to have the opportunity to do something great for people by selling them amazing products and services.

To reiterate, operational questions begin the sales call and are the starting point for identifying the situation that your customer is in. At this point in the sales cycle you want to uncover all the information you can about the company; the individual; the company's business needs; and what's happening in the company's marketplace, in other departments, and with the competition—in other words you are building a picture of the client's overall situation. Let's look at how to use these questions effectively.

How to Use Operational Questions Effectively

One word of caution about operational questions is that they can easily sound like an interrogation, especially since it's easy to ask so many. I remember one young salesperson literally firing off all these closed-ended questions at the client until it sounded like a machine gun: "Do you . . . ?" "Did you . . . ?" "Have you . . . ?" "Would you . . . ?" "Will you . . . ?" It was an attack of words, and so the client suddenly stopped in mid-sentence and asked, "Why are you asking me all these questions? Shouldn't you know most of this already?" Now the client's senses were on full alert and looking for trouble at every turn, and that was the end of the sale. It ended all because of operational questions handled badly. So how do you avoid that trap?

The answer is that operational questions need to be open-ended. Make statements such as, "Tell me about . . ." or "Describe to me how this works." At the beginning of the sale you want them to talk and the only way you get them to talk is to ask them open-ended questions. It doesn't matter what you are selling or who you are selling to—always begin with open-ended operational questions.

I recently received an email from someone who had heard about us from another company and wanted to check out our workshops. Finally, we arranged for her to come to one of my big financial clients and sit in on an executive overview, which is basically a very condensed overview of our products and services. At the break and lunchtime I had the opportunity to sit down to talk with her, and my first

question was an open-ended operational question: “Why are you here?”

She told me her company was looking into customer service training and of course the immediate thought was to tell her that our training is amongst the best in the world. But instead of telling her all about it and what it would do for her, I started asking more operational questions. I still needed to find out the who, what, where, and why of her and her company, because at this point I still didn’t know her role in the decision-making process and there is nothing worse than talking to the wrong person about the wrong things.

I got her to talk, and the more she talked, the more she gave away the issues and concerns her company had about customer service. She told me that everything went through various committees, such as human resources, training, and finance committees. Finally we discussed the numbers of people who needed to go through the training, what they’re doing now, how many outbound and inbound calls they take, and what their average customers look like. So I got information about the business processes and also about the political human side. Without me having to sell her, we had a business conversation that actually led to a huge sale.

Operational questions gave me the great platform from which to launch the sale. She felt comfortable, she wanted to talk about her company and herself, and all the time I was simply picking up information.

You may be wondering what you should be doing as you are getting the answers to your questions. Some people take notes and that’s okay so long as they don’t get too caught up in the note taking. If you take notes, jot down bullet points about just the critical information. Write one or two words

that will jog your memory. Don't write down everything the customer says because you will end up hearing the words without hearing the message. Some salespeople can get so busy writing down notes, or filling out their planner, that they miss all the emotions and feeling behind the words. So if you do take notes, do it in a way that keeps you engaged in the conversation. Don't allow the note taking to become the sole purpose of your being there or you will run the risk of losing vital information.

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is a daring adventure or nothing at all.

—Helen Keller

When and When Not to Use Operational Questions

If you ask operational questions at the end of the sale it tells the client that you really haven't been listening and don't know what's going on. Use them at the beginning as the platform for your sale so you have the base knowledge and information you need to continue.

Once you have the base information, you can then start looking for the problems, issues, and dissatisfactions about

the client's present way of doing things. This is actually the next step in the OPEN Question Selling Technique, called probing questions, which is discussed in chapter 7. Keep in mind, though, that if you ask probing questions too soon, you run the danger of losing the sale. Review the following questions and determine which ones are operational questions:

- “Would you like to transfer that technology to a different department?”
- “Are you happy with your current situation?”
- “What can you tell me about your current business situation?”

Of the three questions, only the third one is an operational question.

OPEN SKILL

In the space below, write what you have learned about operational questions.

Because operational questions are simple to use, salespeople can get into trouble with them. Salespeople may not only ask

too many, but also they may ask them in the wrong way. And because of the way they handle it, the client may get upset and concerned that this is somebody just trying to sell something unnecessary. Of course, the client understands that you are there to sell, yet nobody likes to feel pressured, put upon, or used.

I once had a client who was a vice president for a large railroad company. I began to ask him operational questions about the company and his role. I asked him what was going on and what was happening internally, when he suddenly started crying. He told me that he had to let go of people who had worked there for over thirty years. He was in so much distress about it that he just broke down in front of me. For a moment I thought, "Bloody hell!" Then I immediately got out of my head and allowed him to get it out of his system so that I just felt empathy for him.

The only reason it happened was because I connected with him and got on the same wavelength, which allowed him to show his emotions. And of course we soon got back to a business conversation, but now there was a bond between us. I believe I got the business, which was a huge keynote speech, because of that connection. He made sure I got the job over many other competitors.

**Most people think "selling" is the same as
"talking." But the most effective salespeople
know that listening is the most important part
of their job.**

—Roy Bartell

When to Ask Operational Questions

When you ask operational questions you need to ask them at the right point in the selling cycle. For example, it's no good asking operational questions about the function of the information technology (IT) department if it has nothing to do with your product or service. Here are the effective areas to ask operational questions:

- **When you are talking to a new client.** This is an ideal time to ask operational questions. In fact new clients expect to be questioned this way. If you have never dealt with the client before, you must establish a basic context so that you can talk with some knowledge about the client's problems later in the sale.
- **Early in the selling cycle.** Well-chosen questions early in the sale help move the conversation into problem areas without causing irritation. Clients are annoyed if a salesperson says, "Good morning, my name is Carson Wright. Tell me about your biggest problems."
- **When your client's business situation changes.** It's valuable to keep a check on your long-term clients to see if any major changes have occurred (e.g., a new job or change in personal or business circumstances). A changing situation can affect the need for your product and so it is important to keep informed. You may uncover opportunities for new business or discover you may lose the business unless you act quickly. In either case, the information is valuable.
- **When you are talking to a client you haven't seen for a long time.** This is another case where changes

may affect the way you handle the call. It is a great advantage to discover your client's needs at the outset.

OPEN SKILL

Why is it so important to ask operational questions in effective areas?

Operational questions are powerful when you ask them in effective areas because they provide you with information that will eventually help you to close the sale. But there are also times when operational questions are risky. Here are some examples of risky times to ask operational questions:

- **Late in the selling cycle.** If you ask an operational question late in the sales cycle it usually means you have failed to gather sufficient background information. You have either been asking the wrong questions or not actively listening.
- **When you have nothing left to say.** Late-cycle questions arise once you've finished your sales plan and the client still hasn't placed an order. Because you can't

think of anything else to say, you start asking operational questions and the client thinks a) this person doesn't understand my problem, b) people that don't listen really bug me, and c) this is wasting my time.

- **When you've already asked a number of operational questions.** If you ask too many operational questions, your clients will become impatient and feel they are being interrogated. This can create client hostility. It is vital to move into the problem area as soon as you have enough background information.
- **When dealing with sensitive areas.** Sometimes you need information about company politics, mergers, or budget cuts that will affect the sale. Operational questions in these areas are risky at the beginning of the sale, because you don't know the client situation. Sensitive information is best gathered later in the sale after some trust has been built.
- **When discussing areas that have nothing to do with your product.** Operational questions must lead to solutions that your product or service can provide. If you are selling training, as I do, you want to ask people-oriented questions. What skills do employees need for the job? What kind of training do they get now? What other companies does the client use to help train people?

If you ask the right operational questions, they will automatically lead to the next step in the OPEN Question Selling Technique, which is probing questions. If you continue asking the right questions at the right time, by the end of the sale, you

will have earned the right to ask about the business. This will give you the confidence to close the deal and, more important, the customer will feel confident that you are the person to do it.

OPEN SKILL

Provide one example of a risky area to ask operational questions.

If you mentioned any of the following areas in the box, then you are on the right track:

- Late in the cycle
- Too many
- In sensitive areas
- In areas that have nothing to do with your product

How to Phrase Operational Questions

We've talked about when to ask operational questions, so now I want to talk about how to ask them. Really, it's about

how to be selective in asking them, and also how to phrase them so that you are seen as a problem solver rather than someone who is just asking a lot of questions.

Effective operational questions have a clear purpose and they should all lead into problem areas. Each one should relate to a problem that your client may have and that your company can solve by selling a product or service.

**Every sale has five basic obstacles: no need,
no money, no hurry, no desire, no trust.**

—Zig Ziglar

Most clients become irritated if the salesperson asks questions that have nothing to do with their situation. The list below is an example of questions that would not be effective in any business conversation:

- “Looks like you have a great cafeteria here. Is the food good?”
- “Did you get stuck in traffic this morning?”
- “I’ve been thinking about benefits recently. Are the benefits good here?”

You would be surprised at the questions people ask, and although it’s okay to build empathy, the above questions are not the right questions. The time of most businesspeople is limited, so you don’t want to waste it on the wrong questions. Therefore, connect your operational questions by relating them to the client. Here’s an example of what I mean:

- Salesperson:** Can you describe the car you are looking to purchase?
- Client:** Yes. I want a family sedan with low mileage.
- Salesperson:** That sounds great. What year are you thinking of?
- Client:** No more than two years old.
- Salesperson:** Yes that sounds like a good plan. Any particular model?
- Client:** Yes, I like the XL.
- Salesperson:** Ah yes, that sounds ideal for your family, how long do you want the bank loan for?

Connecting phrases can be made in three ways:

1. **Connect to client statements.** This helps the questions to flow. The salesperson's questions in the previous examples are to the point, and by summarizing the client's statements, they avoid being blunt. Now read this passage again without the connecting phrases, and it sounds much more aggressive and blunt: What car do you want? What year is it? What model is it? What length of loan do you want?
2. **Connect to personal observation.** Cues from the client can be used to introduce operational questions. This often impresses the client and introduces variety into your questioning. For example: "I notice your T-shirt says you support the Helen Thomas fundraiser. Do you belong to our club account?" or "Your daughter looks eligible for our Savings Safari Club. Does she have a savings account with us now?"

3. **Connect to third-party situations.** Demonstrate your understanding of the client's situation to give you additional credibility. For example: "We graduate children to our Campus Share Savings when they reach thirteen, and they receive a graduation gift too. How old are your children?"

Give your clients better service by letting them know about appropriate products and services.

OPEN SKILL

Write a third-party situation that would demonstrate your understanding of the client's situation:

**Always render more and better service
than is expected of you, no matter what
your task may be.**

—Og Mandino

Pre-call Planning

There's a lot you can do with pre-call planning, and I recommend that you do what you enjoy most. For example, I always read the *Wall Street Journal*, *Crain's Chicago Business*, and *USA Today*. I look for stories about my clients or situations that will affect them in some way. If I didn't enjoy reading, it would become a chore and sooner or later I would most likely stop doing it. So pick something that you are enthusiastic about. For example, if you love surfing the web, do your business research that way. If you love to join associations or groups and network with businesspeople, use that to find out what's going on in the marketplace. Whatever mode you choose, you should enjoy it; that way it will become a lifelong habit that will keep you informed and up to date when you are talking with clients.

I read other business magazines of course, but I know the three I mentioned will give me the business information I need in a sales call: *Crain's* gives me the local business news, which I've been able to use as a starting point in opening up conversations. The *Wall Street Journal* gives me more of the global business news: who's taking over what, what's going on from a global aspect. And *USA Today* gives me news in general so that if necessary I can talk to people about conflicts, statistics, and information of a more generalized nature. There is nothing worse for me than not knowing what's going on, especially when I am circulating in the business world. So although pre-call planning may for some salespeople mean knowing who is the chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief operating officer, and the entire organizational

chart and corporate structure, I prefer to have a big picture and then ask relevant questions when I'm in the call.

And of course, with brand-new customers I always look at their websites to see what kind of presence they have on the web. I can look at their annual reports if they post them or learn about their customers, their products, and their business.

I don't know how much information I will use until I see the client's reaction. If I am talking to a middle manager in a corporation that has just been taken over, I ask very general questions because some managers will see it as a wonderful thing and other's will be terrified and in fear of losing their jobs.

All of these are signals in the selling cycle. If I have a manager who is happy about the changes, excited about a new corporate structure, and wants to work together in the new team, then I talk about the opportunities. If not, then I simply take their point of view as the direction to go.

One time, I was working with a company that was going through major changes and the manager I was talking to went off on a tirade about how bad it was going to be. He said that nobody knew what was happening and that everyone was living in fear. I realized very quickly that this could impact my ability to make a sale. So I talked to him about when he thought things would be back to normal again and when they would be in a position to make all the decisions that needed to be made, and he said it would probably take another four to five months. So I asked him if it would be okay for me to call back then and discuss it, and he said yes, it would be great. I called back within two months and he had gone. I then got the opportunity to talk to the new manager to see how we could help her integrate and assimilate all the new people into the company. It proved a very profitable agreement.

Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again.
—Og Mandino

With pre-call planning I always keep things as simple as possible. I don't go into clients with lots of paperwork or brochures. I prefer to ask questions and then listen. I believe they enjoy someone who is actually interested in what they have to say and prefer not to listen to me spout all my product knowledge or repeat all the information I have learned about their company. In that area, a little bit goes a long, long way. I may just say, "I noticed in your annual report that the president is putting customer service high on the list of priorities." That's enough to let them know I've done my homework without having to bore them with either information they already know about their company or information they are not interested in. Again, when you are talking, you are not listening. So know what you need to know, and then forget it while the clients tell you what they know. In summary:

- List some potential problem areas that your product can solve.
- Decide on the information you need, and always keep an open mind. The client may indicate some other problem areas that you had not considered.

OPEN SKILL

List some potential problem areas that your product or service can solve.

When you go into a call, it's always good to have an idea about what you want to sell to the client. But then, as I have said before, you need to forget what you know and listen, especially when it comes to formulating operational questions. A good way to think about it is that you have two ears and only one mouth. Perhaps that is an indication of how important it is to listen.

A couple of years ago I provided a selling skills workshop to three hundred credit union employees, including bankers, tellers, and people who provided auto loans and mortgages. I divided them into groups and asked them to think about a potential client problem that their credit union products and services could solve. One group called out, "The client wants a car loan."

So I then asked them to provide all the information they would need to sell the customer the correct car loan. They came up with five criteria:

1. What is the make/model/year of your dream car?
2. What are your assets?
3. Do you have any current liabilities?
4. What interest rate do you want?
5. How many years do you want the loan to cover?

With these operational questions they could lead the customer naturally and smoothly into discussion about a potential problem that their car loan could solve. The bankers had never had any sales training before, and so going through the OPEN Question Selling Technique was completely new for them. By using role plays and various sales exercises they became comfortable asking effective operational questions and gathering enough background information so they could move on to investigating a problem area.

In banking as in all sales situations, every question must count. If you spend too much time in this initial phase, you will not move on to the next phase and the sale could be lost!

OPEN SKILL

In the space below, describe why listening is so important in a sales situation.

Remember, the more a client talks about his or her situation and you listen, the more information you can gather. Don't be too aggressive at pauses in the client's answers. In other words don't immediately jump in when the client stops talking; the client might just be organizing more material. You can't get information when you are talking.

And remember, as we talked about at the beginning of this chapter, opening your heart is very important. All the pre-call planning and information in the world will not get you the sales unless you are connecting in a great way with your client. So open your heart, open your mind, and OPEN the sale the most effective way—ask operational questions.

SKILLS COACHING

Here's a skills challenge for you to review your understanding of operational questions:

Which of the following are operational questions? (Circle your answers and check them against the correct answers that follow.)

1. What is the average weekly output of this operation?
Yes/No
2. How do you organize your scrap recovery? **Yes/No**
3. You were out ill the last time I stopped in. Are you feeling better? **Yes/No**
4. How does competition affect your business? **Yes/No**
5. Are you happy with your current technical capabilities? **Yes/No**

Answers

1. Yes. You want to know how their operation works.
2. Yes. You want to understand how the business is organized.
3. No. This is just inquiring about their health, not their business situation.
4. Yes. You are checking out their competitive situation.
5. No. This is a probing question, which is discussed in chapter 7.

OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUE— PROBING QUESTIONS

**A mediocre idea that generates enthusiasm
will go further than a great idea that
inspires no one.
—Mary Kay Ash**

Probing Questions

Now that you have information about your client and the company, it is time to uncover problem areas. And to do this you ask probing questions. These types of questions reveal areas of difficulty or dissatisfaction your clients are experiencing.

Generally, people don't suddenly realize they have a problem. Instead the problem begins as a minor dissatisfaction, a feeling that something isn't being done as well as it might be.

I call these kinds of client problems “warm needs.” You’ve heard these kinds of needs all your life—you’ve most likely even got a few yourself. They’re the kind of niggling little needs that people are not fully aware of yet. Warm needs sound like this:

- “I thought about upgrading last year, but other things came up so I didn’t.”
- “Yeah, a change would make things easier, but it’s not on my to-do list.”
- “I just never got around to it; it didn’t seem that important.”
- “Something is wrong, but I’m just living with it because it isn’t bad enough to do anything about, and besides I’m not even sure anything can be done to solve it.”

Warm needs are usually about situations that haven’t actually happened or aren’t seen as critical yet. Your job as a salesperson is to take those warm needs and develop them into hot needs where something has to happen! By helping clients verbalize their dissatisfactions, you create the raw material from which full-blown needs are developed, eliciting responses such as “Wow, I never realized it was such a big issue—yes I would like to do something about it!” or “You mean I can do something about that? Yeah that would be great!”

A warm need became a hot need for me recently. My wife and I had bought a house by a lake and were getting new carpeting. We decided not to redo the basement carpet because it seemed new. We also noticed there was a bit of a leak by the basement fireplace, but it was very small, not enough to

be bothered about until we got the other jobs done. The leak was a warm need as far as I was concerned and something that could be put on the back burner. Then a storm hit. It was a really big storm and the small leak became a huge flood. My warm need was now the hottest need I had and I immediately began to phone insurance, waterproofing, and carpeting companies to get my need handled.

At a recent sales call, I was on the other end, turning a warm need into a hot one. I was meeting with a group of human resource (HR) and training managers for a company that distributed health products nationwide. The company had a huge distribution setup with a big call center, handling both inbound and outbound calls. I'd asked my operational questions and found out that the call center employees were handling orders, complaints, billing, and other issues. They talked with a variety of customers in their chain of supply from manufacturing, nursing staff, and pharmacists to patients and even the families of patients.

As I conversed with the managers I found out they were very interested in increasing the bottom line. Their conversation was all about "faster turnaround time on telephone calls" and "putting in new policies and procedures to speed up delivery." They also wanted an effective soft skills training program to help their people handle angry and awkward customers. They didn't think their skills were up to speed in that area so they'd brought me in to discuss soft skills training.

I had also found out that they were looking at a number of other training companies, so I needed to uncover some very unique communication issues that my Super Service training alone could solve. So I asked, "What issues do you have around the internal communication between departments?"

One HR manager named Sarah answered, “Well, morale is quite low just now, but we expect it to be low because of all the changes that have been going on.” This was a warm need for her—she was saying that while morale is low, it is being accepted because of the changes.

Now, I happen to know from experience with lots of corporations that low morale affects the bottom line in a number of ways, from high attrition rates and increased days off to lack of responsibility and low productivity. So I asked another probing question to turn her warm need into a hot need:

“On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest, how would you rate morale?”

All the managers looked at each other and called out as if with one voice, “One!”

“So you all agree it’s quite a problem?”

“Yes, it sure is. Wow, we really need to look into it!”

Suddenly, I had a hot need that I could develop more fully by asking the next type of question in the OPEN Question Selling Technique, an effect question: “What would it mean to you if morale were high and your people actually took responsibility for their job?” (Effect questions are discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but I just want you to notice that once you uncover a problem like that, you want to immediately develop it by exploding its effect into other areas.)

The sales call ended with the managers talking about how great it would be if they could increase morale. They realized that a lot of the problems they were having actually stemmed from the low morale of the staff, and if the morale could be improved, issues such as productivity would improve. And so the probing questions took the issue from being a warm need

to a hot need, which resulted in an agreement for Super Service training. To recap:

- A warm need is one that the client may not be aware of yet; the client has not explicitly verbalized a need.
- A hot need is a specific need that the client speaks about: “I need . . .” or “I would like to have . . .” or “It would be great if it could . . .”

It is important to be able to distinguish these two types of needs. The exercise in the following section will make sure you know the difference between a warm need and a hot need.

Warm or Hot Needs

Which of the following statements describe a warm need and which describe a hot need? Circle your choice below.

1. We need systems we can operate easily.	Warm need	Hot need
2. When our machines fail, we can't use the system for several days.	Warm need	Hot need
3. Sometimes we get so much static on the system that my people can't hear the important messages.	Warm need	Hot need

4. We need equipment that can withstand the rough terrain of a construction zone.	Warm need	Hot need
5. We have problems with static.	Warm need	Hot need
6. We need a system that interacts with our people in the office and our field staff out on the road.	Warm need	Hot need

Here are the correct answers:

1. Hot need
2. Warm need
3. Warm need
4. Hot need
5. Warm need
6. Hot need

Essentially, when the client starts with the phrase “I need,” it’s a hot need. When the client begin with the phrase, “We have problems with,” it’s a warm need. Stating there are problems is nothing more than a statement. Some clients put up with problems for years without realizing a need to do anything about it. It’s the job of a salesperson to listen for those warm unrealized needs and turn them into hot ones where the client responds, “I need to do something about this.”

If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear.

—Mark Twain

No Problem—No Buy

By now, we have established that your clients buy because they have needs, which are born out of problems. As a salesperson your job is to identify, develop, and satisfy the needs of clients. So the clearer you make the needs, the more likely you will make a sale.

If clients are totally satisfied with their existing situation, they have no need to buy from you. A completely satisfied client has no needs.

Whenever an individual or a business decides that success has been attained, progress stops.

—Thomas J. Watson, Jr.

Clients don't wake up one morning with a sudden need for your product or service. Needs are rarely born fully developed. Needs are born from the problems or dissatisfactions your client feels. So before you ask probing questions, it is important to recognize what makes them different from other types of questions. Below are examples of questions. Some are probing questions and others are not. Which are probing questions? Circle Yes or No:

1. It sounds like a lot of your valuable time is being wasted by having to deposit funds in person, is this true?	Yes/No?
2. Does your home have a central station fire/burglar alarm?	Yes/No?
3. You mentioned that you would like to reduce your son's car insurance. What concerns do you have about his insurance?	Yes/No?

Here are the correct answers:

1. Yes, this is a probing question. The issue being uncovered is time.
2. No. This is an operational question. It is just asking for base information. No issue or problem is being uncovered.
3. Yes. This probing question is uncovering issues with the son's car insurance.

The reason this section is titled “No Problem—No Buy” is because needs arise from problems, and clients buy because they have needs. And if they don't have a problem, they're not going to buy. It's like a couple of friends of ours who recently drove from Florida to visit. Their car had 120,000 miles on it and they had been talking about getting a new one. They had done some research and knew the model and make of the car they wanted but had decided to keep the

older one for another year because it still ran well. When we were out with them one day, we noticed that the interior roof was splattered with some kind of fizzy drink. Someone had opened up a can and accidentally sprayed the roof. “Ah yes,” my friend said. “I tried to clean it off; I guess I need to give it another clean with something stronger.” Then her husband looked up, noticed it, and although he grimaced, didn’t say anything.

Nothing more was said about the car until later in the week, when they told us they were going to “just look” at other cars to “see” what was around. Next they came back with a new car. They traded in their old one for one that was in the car lot at a great price. Did the dirty interior roof tip them over the edge? I’m not sure, but I think the need suddenly went from warm (“we’ll keep it another year; it still runs well”) to hot (“I tried to clean it off; I guess I need to give it another clean”).

Was it a real problem that the interior roof was dirty? No, but it helped tip them over the edge and into replacing their car a year earlier than they had expected. The interior roof became a problem and in sales that is what you are looking for all the time—problems that you help direct from a minor dissatisfaction to a larger issue that really needs sorting out.

Sometimes of course, I’ve asked probing questions and have just gotten stonewalled. The customer seems to have no problems, dissatisfactions, or concerns. Everything in the garden seems rosy. And sometimes it’s real; everything is fine and working well, and the client just wanted to see what was out there. But more often, it’s not real. The client has a concern but not the budget to make a change. Or it may just be that the client doesn’t really like me. That can happen too—not very often, but sometimes it does.

I've also been in situations where clients have said, "Yes, we will definitely go ahead," but they haven't got the buy-in from their senior management. They sincerely want to go ahead, and they really believe that they can get the buy-in, but it doesn't happen.

Sales are about always being positive and always being prepared to do what it takes to get the sale. Consider Eric, for example. Eric had to use a cane for walking. He was one of the most determined people I met, and he knew his passion was in sales. For three or four weeks after his company's in-house sales training, however, he couldn't sell anything. Then suddenly he started to sell really well. The difference was "the magnetic compelling force of the eyes," which was a technique that W. Clement Stone (who owned the insurance company that Eric was working for at the time) had recommended. For Eric, it was the secret of his success.

Oftentimes when Eric arrived at a sales call, he immediately looked around for a place to put his cane. He would walk into the client's office with his cane and briefcase and, instead of connecting with the person, he would scan the room to find a place for his cane. So when he began his presentation, the words would come out but there was no connection with the client because he had been so busy focusing on his cane. When he learned Stone's method of locking eyes with the customer, he started to practice it and the first thing he did when he went into an office was to look at the person. He found that by using the magnetic compelling force of the eyes he started off by making a connection, and then he took care of his cane and briefcase.

The eyes really do have a very powerful directing force. Go downtown to the main busy avenue and look up to the sky, and before long you will have four or five people looking up. That's due to the powerful directing force of the eyes. If you want people to look at what you are looking at, simply look at what you want them to look at, pointing with your eyes. It's simple and it works.

When you are asking probing questions, remember the magnetic, compelling force of your eyes. Look at the client with confidence when you ask a probing question. You have made this appointment in order to sell your product. Show your confidence with a direct and open gaze; people enjoy people who have confidence in their eyes.

Listening for Results

One of the most important part of a sales call is effective listening. If you don't listen it's impossible to ask the right questions, which in turn makes it impossible to gain the right understanding of a customer's situation and needs. Listening helps you to obtain information and get feedback to your own responses. Listening also helps to establish rapport. So why is it so difficult to listen?

There are four main roadblocks to effective listening:

1. **Talking to yourself.** If you are stuck in your head thinking about other things and your mind is racing ahead to what you are going to say next, what will happen if you don't close the sale, or any number of

other things that the human mind gets preoccupied with, then you will not be able to listen.

2. **Words.** These can have different meanings for people. Your client could say something that triggers a negative thought for you and you will be stuck thinking about that, although the client didn't mean it that way, and minutes later when you "come to," you realize that the client has continued speaking and you haven't heard a word.
3. **Closed mind.** Preconceived ideas about what your client is going to say, wants, or needs act like a blanket over your mind and don't allow you to hear what is actually being said.
4. **Past experiences.** Reminders of negative past experiences (perhaps the client simply looks like someone you don't get along with or sounds like a previous client that didn't buy from you) can create negative influences on your present situation and you may stop listening.

Now that you know what not to do in the listening game, how do you listen effectively and have the kind of communication and rapport that gets the sales results you want? There are four keys that, if you follow the instructions, will give you all the tools you need to listen for results:

1. **Demonstrate empathy.**
 - Show an understanding of the customer's point of view.
 - Be able to detect the customer's needs and desires.
 - Understand the customer's feelings and emotions.

2. Practice silence.

- Keep quiet while the client is talking.
- Do not jump in before the client has finished speaking.
- Use this time to hear what is being said; pay attention to content, feelings, and tone of voice.
- Use your eyes to observe facial expressions and body language.

3. Show sensitivity.

- Be aware of how your own desires and needs impact the current situation.
- Be aware of your own feelings toward your client and do not let them interfere with your ability to listen.

4. Pay attention.

- Take notes to organize main ideas and key words.
- Set aside distractions.
- Paraphrase and summarize what the client has said.

When you listen for results, you will find yourself automatically asking the right questions at the right time. As a result, you will be able to help your clients define the main problems for themselves, develop the consequences of those problems into other areas of your clients' business, and show the value of your solutions to those problems.

Inexperienced salespeople are hesitant to ask probing questions. They fear that probing for dissatisfaction may annoy the client. By knowing when to ask probing questions, you can reveal warm needs and turn them into hot needs without upsetting your client. And, of course, in some cases, probing questions must be asked with great care.

Being a salesperson is all about getting along with people. It's about recognizing body language and when you can push something and when you must hold back. As you know, people communicate through words, tone, and body language—but do you know how much we use each to communicate? Research on communication at the University of Pennsylvania has studied this and here are the findings. Assuming the communication is at 100 percent, the following statistics show the importance that words, tone, and body language have in overall communication:

- Words—7 percent
- Tone—38 percent
- Body language—55 percent

As a salesperson you most likely know this already, your client can be saying one thing, but his or her tone and body language can be telling you something completely different. If a client says, “Yes I’d like to go ahead” with arms folded and the head shaking in a “no” pattern, very likely the sale will not be made. However, if the client says, “I don’t think I’m ready yet” with a smile and an open gesture, it could very well mean that the client is nearly sold and just needs a bit more persuading.

Asking probing questions is about asking the right question and then listening for the problem, so it’s important that you know the areas where asking probing questions may be risky. The risky areas to ask probing questions are as follows:

- **Recent decisions.** Probing for client dissatisfaction over recent major decisions can lead to very dangerous

waters because it could be seen as a criticism. The client may have been involved in making the decision, and, especially if the decision was a bad one, your client may not want to discuss it.

- **At the very beginning of the sale.** Until you have asked operational questions, you should not begin asking probing questions because you will seem too eager to talk about your clients' issues and concerns. You need to build trust or empathy in a professional manner before they will feel comfortable revealing their dissatisfaction with current systems.
- **With your own products.** The purpose of probing questions is to expose dissatisfaction. If the client already uses your product, you don't want to create dissatisfaction unless you have a better product to offer. Even then you must be careful asking probing questions.

OPEN SKILL

What do you think would be the most risky area for you to ask a probing question, and why?

The purpose of probing questions is to reveal difficulties and dissatisfactions you can resolve. Every probing question should lead toward a solution your product can provide. Now let's look at the effective areas to ask probing questions. The areas where probing questions are effective and should be used freely are:

- **The client has major problems with the existing service in an area where your product is strong.** This is the very best area for probing questions. The more you can build up the seriousness and size of the problems, the more anxious the client will be to buy your solution.
- **The client has been using a competitor's product for a long time.** By asking probing questions, you will uncover areas of dissatisfaction you can develop into needs. If the client is happy with the competitor and has no dissatisfactions for you to develop, then the sooner you find that out, the less time you will waste.
- **Significant areas to the client.** Asking probing questions about areas you feel are important to the client is very effective. The more important a problem is to a client, the more the client will want and need your solution.
- **You have established details about the client's background situation and you're wondering what to do next.** The ideal time to ask probing questions is immediately after you have established details of the client situation. It is best when probing questions flow naturally from your operational questions; with

successful salespeople the flow is smooth and automatic. Probing questions are excellent for uncovering warm needs.

- **Areas where you have a solution.** Obviously sales are about providing solutions. Always ask probing questions in areas where your product or service will provide a solution. You do not want to ask questions that will uncover problems that you cannot resolve.
- **Early in the sales cycle.** Although you should always ask operational questions before you ask probing questions, you do need to ask them early in the sales cycle. Sales are about uncovering needs and needs usually originate from concerns, issues, and dissatisfactions. That is why probing questions are so important in the OPEN Question Selling Technique.

OPEN SKILL

When is the most effective time for you to ask a probing question and why?

Practice asking probing questions at home with your friends and family because the more you understand and practice the OPEN Question Selling Technique outside the sales call, the more effective you will be when you are in front of the client.

Here are a couple of examples of probing questions:

- “If you had to change any part of the situation, what would it be?”
- “What kind of problems did you have today at work/school?”

Listen to the answer. If the above probing questions are too direct for you, how would you ask them differently? What could you do to soften them?

Probing without Interrogation

If you walk away with just one piece of information from this book, the most important would be to get out of your head and connect with your client. If you sit in sales meetings talking to yourself, then you are not connecting with the clients. Asking probing questions allows you to uncover problems and issues that your product or service can solve.

Remember, have an open heart. When your heart is open and you are in sales because you want to do a great job and help people make the right business decisions, you will automatically ask the right questions in the right way and at the right time. When your heart is closed and you are in sales because you want to make lots of money, then you may find yourself asking the wrong questions in the wrong way.

Why is this so? It's because human beings are very intuitive. We know when someone is genuinely interested in providing us with something worthwhile. We also know when someone is not. People who get scammed (like the neighbor with the cement roof) sometimes are also ripe to be scammed and taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. When a deal is too good to be true—it usually is! You know by now that there is very little that is free except your attitude.

Having a great sales attitude is free. There is no price attached and no one but you makes the choice to have it. When you have a great sales attitude it is impossible to ask questions in an unpleasant way. It really is. You see, there is something magical about salespeople. I'm talking now about professional salespeople who make a good living at sales. These kinds of people, and you are most likely one of them or you would not have read this far into the book, have some knowledge that the rest of humanity does not have. Salespeople know how to connect with other people in a way that makes people trust them.

Call it charisma or just an innate sense of how to communicate—successful salespeople have something special. It may be their persistence. It may be that they just enjoy interacting and being with people. But success stems from really wanting to make the sale and doing whatever it takes to make it. And if you don't get that client to say yes, you will get the next one, or the next one, until eventually, someone says yes! And though persistence has a staying power to it, the desire to get in touch with the client on a level that involves trust and faith is equally important. Your clients have to trust that what you and your company say will

happen will, in fact, happen. And in today's marketplace, with huge companies going under, that is not always such an easy thing to do.

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.
—Calvin Coolidge

The great thing is that most clients are open to being sold. You may be thinking, “Not my clients,” but really they are. They want the latest and best that you have to offer. They want it to be at a price they can afford with guarantees that it will do what you say it will do for them. And to provide that, you have to connect with the customer. And connecting goes beyond looking as if you are listening. You actually need to have a listening ear, and to have that means that you have to be “no thing to be everything.” Though I have said this before, it is worth repeating, because if you can get this, you will be more than halfway to making more sales and being more profitable than you have ever been before.

And this also works with friends, family, neighbors, whoever you are talking to. If you can clear your mind for a moment and actually be with the person you are communicating with, you will hear what that person is truly saying and you will be amazed! For example, one thing that I always

do when I am on the telephone is to walk about. It helps me concentrate and focus on what the other person is saying. If I am sitting at my desk there is a tendency to look at email, doodle on a notepad, or just play with a paper clip. All these activities take me away from what my client is saying. So if possible, I get up and walk, and the act of walking clears my head.

Now when I am in front of the client, obviously I can't get up and walk about. So what I do is just consciously listen and pay close attention to what the client is saying. And I am always listening for issues, problems, and concerns that my product can help solve.

I do not go to sales calls to chat about my clients' personal lives, although if that comes up, I listen and then steer the conversation back to the sale. I am always in charge of the conversation, and the way I do that is by using the OPEN Question Selling Technique. That's the beauty of having a simple process like this; it will keep you on top of your game, which in turn helps clients keep on top of theirs. You will surely enjoy being of service and helping clients make the right decision.

Being in sales means being bold. If you don't think your product or service is the very best there is in the marketplace, then how are you going to sell it to your client? Are you going to lie? Don't do it. Don't sell a lousy product; instead, find a great product as fast as you can. And it doesn't have to be top of the line or the most expensive; it just needs to do what you say it can do, so the clients trust that they know what they are getting. You don't have to sell a Ferrari at \$300,000 in order to sell a great car. You don't have to sell a million-dollar aircraft for it to be a great airplane. But if you are selling items that are shoddy or badly made, then you are forfeiting

your integrity, and that is something you do not want to do as a sales professional.

Another amazing thing about being a professional salesperson is that once you know what you are doing, you can literally sell anything. So don't get trapped selling something you don't like selling. Take the high road, and keep your integrity intact.

OPEN SKILL

Write a probing question you could ask during a first meeting with a client who is interested in increasing the bottom line.

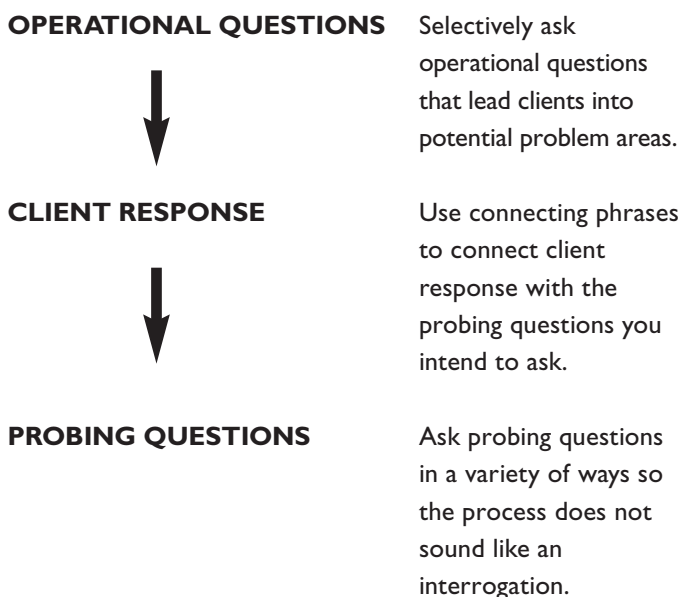
The Way to Ask

Probing questions begin the process of developing needs in the client's mind. No matter how clearly you see the need, unless the client sees it, it does not exist! All your questions must be geared to the speed of the client's thought process. The smoother the connection between your initial operational

questions and your probing questions, the easier it will be to have good client rapport.

Using connecting phrases are a great way to ask probing questions. To do this, listen to what the clients are saying and then speak their own words back to them, tagging a probing question on the end.

Here is a simple diagram to show you how it works:



The operational questions establish a starting point for exposing and understanding client problems. As there is no advantage in uncovering information you cannot use, it is important to select operational questions that lead the client toward potential problem areas so that you can connect the response to a probing question.

The best technique for connecting operational questions and probing questions is:

1. List some potential problem areas in advance of the call.
2. Decide on background information you will need before asking probing questions about this area.

Example

Product: You are selling a new promo on home equity.

Potential Client Problem (which your product can solve):

Clients' existing rates are high.

Operational Questions to Ask before Asking Probing Questions

1. What is your existing rate?
2. How long do you plan to stay in the home?
3. Have you looked at refinancing before?
4. Have you had any rates quoted from other sources?

By now you know that you need to ask several operational questions before you have enough background to ask a probing question, because the right operational questions lay the groundwork for asking the right probing questions. So let's look at some examples of how to connect probing questions to client responses.

Use connecting phrases such as:

- "From what you've told me, although you've received some quotes on new rates, you feel

you can still get a lower rate for you home. Is that correct?”

- “Does the situation you have described lead to problems with the budget you mentioned earlier?”

Using Variety

Sometimes, in order to reveal a problem that you can develop into a need, you must ask several probing questions. Here are a few examples:

- Direct: “Are you happy with your checking benefits?”
- Making a choice: “Which aspect of your direct modem connection gives you the most trouble?”
- Asking the client’s advice: “How can a better online banking service improve quality?”

Using Indirect Ways

In addition to the straightforward ways of asking clients about problems, difficulties, and dissatisfactions, there are indirect ways of exploring problems, such as:

- Improvements: “How could your existing service be improved?”
- Change: “You mentioned earlier that you want to change vendors, what is your main concern with the present vendor?”
- Magic wand: “If you had a magic wand, what is the number one problem you would solve?”

- Cost: “You talked earlier about cost being a big factor, can you describe what concerns you have had in the past with pricing?”
- Personnel: “Employee satisfaction is high on your list of problems to be solved; can you tell me what kind of issues you have in that area?”
- Machinery: “I know you said that machine reliability is a big factor in your decision-making process; can you tell me what issues you have been having with breakdowns?”
- Technical: “The members of the IT department are a big part of this decision; can you tell me what the main issues are that they want to resolve?”

When you have asked the right operational questions and have been listening to the client's answers, you should be able to connect a probing question to at least one area of potential dissatisfaction. And as we said before, connecting them to the client takes the edge off and turns what could sound like an interrogation into a friendly chat with a professional salesperson who is actually listening to client needs and providing solutions.

Keep Going

Sometimes it seems that the client just doesn't have a problem in any area. Of course this is not true because as soon as one product comes out, there is a newer one being developed that solves even more problems. This is very obvious with software. What is today's newest and hottest product

is soon found on tomorrow's scrap heap. In fact, sometimes it's hard to keep up with technology. The amazing thing, however, is that with today's technology, if people do not keep up with the hardware, their systems will no longer operate. Or you suddenly realize that what seemed state of the art is now practically obsolete, or even "non-environmentally viable."

So the idea is to keep going until you have exhausted every possibility. And even then, you always want to leave on a positive note. I heard this story recently from a very seasoned salesperson: "I was once taught in sales training that although the introduction is very important, it is equally important to leave a client properly, not just for them, but for you also. I didn't really get it until I saw someone demonstrate it one day. It was like calculus: I didn't understand for six months and then suddenly I got it."

When you sell your product it's easy to leave on a high note with a "yes." And if you don't sell, it is especially important to leave with a "yes" answer. In other words, you never leave a prospect with anything other than a "yes" answer. For example, one day, I went out selling with a guy named John. We were in this office talking to the manager who was really tough. John had battled his way into this presentation and the manager was giving him nos with both barrels. Finally he got to the end of his presentation and she had not said "yes" to anything he said for the last twenty minutes. So when the final close came she said, "No!" John looked out the window at the beautiful day, looked at her, smiled, and said, "Isn't it a beautiful day?" She said, "Yes." And he said, "Thank you very much." Then he turned and left her office so fast I had to run to catch up with him!

I thought that was a great story; a wonderful demonstration about playing the game of sales to win. Why not? It's fun and it beats leaving with your tail between your legs with a no! ringing in your ears. Always think about getting a yes, because as the saying goes: "Sow a thought, and you reap an act; sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, you reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." Everything begins in your mind and if you want people to say "yes," you have to practice.

SKILLS COACHING

Selling is about getting commitments to say “yes.” Practice this in your everyday life. See how many times you can get people to agree with you. Soon you will be living your life expecting to get yeses. And that’s how you create commitment. Here are some simple exercises that will help you get a yes!

1. Next time you are at the market, try to get the checkout person to say “yes” at least once. If you really want to go for it, see how many times you can get him or her to say “yes,” without causing people to think you are weird of course—it needs to be natural, otherwise it won’t work with your clients.
2. When you are on the telephone with friends or family, always try to leave the conversation with them saying “yes.”
3. For a really challenging process, the next time you are in an elevator, without seeming unnatural or weird, try to get one of the people to say “yes.” It is very important to appear natural and at the same time, it should not hinder you from getting your yes.

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OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUE—EFFECT QUESTIONS

Count your blessings. Once you realize how valuable you are and how much you have going for you, the smiles will return, the sun will break out, the music will play, and you will finally be able to move forward the life that God intended for you with grace, strength, courage, and confidence.

—Og Mandino

Effect Questions

Let's say you are in a sales call. You asked operational questions, such as "How many people do you employ?" and "What's your present equipment?" and you found out about

the client's business situation, how it operates, and what he or she does within the process. Then you asked probing questions, such as "Are you happy with this machine?" and "Do you have any reliability issues?" and you uncovered a couple of problems and dissatisfactions with the existing situation. You are feeling great and the call couldn't be going better.

And that's why it's right about now that many salespeople make the mistake of jumping in with a solution. Or worse, they bring out a brochure and show all the different products they have to offer. And who could blame them? After all, the client has a need and the salesperson has the solution, so it seems the right thing to do.

Well, I wouldn't be worth my weight in salt if I suggested you go ahead and do that. Because now is exactly the wrong time to jump in with a solution. Right now is exactly the right time to ask effect questions, such as "Does this problem lead to increased costs?" and "As a result of this problem, do you have more customer complaints?"

Why? Because effect questions are like the rotor routers of the sales call—they dig their way into a problem and uncover all kinds of issues and consequences that the client had never thought of. In other words, without effect questions, the client just has a single problem, but with them, the client realizes there are multiple issues to be resolved.

What Are Effect Questions?

Effect questions inquire about the consequences, implications, or effects of a buyer's problems. For example:

- “How much does this problem cost you?”
- “What effect does the loss in insurance you described have on your financial situation?”
- “What are the consequences of this situation?”

Effect questions expand and explore the effect of client problems. An effective salesperson asks effect questions to develop the client's problems to a point where the problems become so big that the client wants to find a solution. Only after client needs have been developed should the salesperson introduce solutions and products.

What happens in real life? The average salesperson does not ask even one effect question and tends to jump straight from the first statement of a problem into describing a solution and the product's advantages. This reduces the chances of a sale because the client's need is still undeveloped. So, ask effect questions after a client describes a problem but before you introduce your product/solution. Read the following sales dialogue, which uses the OPEN Question Selling Technique. Afterward you will be asked some questions, so read it carefully. The salesperson is called Parker, and the client is called Jim.

Parker: This is a beautiful old-style building, Jim. Have you been here long?

Jim: About three years. We moved from an ugly concrete and glass office block.

Parker: Tell me, Jim, do you have a burglar alarm system at present?

Jim: No, but we've never had a break-in here.

Parker: Okay, let me ask you Jim, what is the most valuable item in your office?

Jim: I guess that would be the computers.

Parker: And they're fairly small?

Jim: Yes, it's amazing; technology keeps making products smaller and smaller.

Parker: How difficult would it be to run your business if they were stolen?

Jim: It would be a disaster.

Parker: Could you describe why that would be so much of a problem?

Jim: Invoicing, billing, records, everything would suffer, but we could manage until our insurance paid up and we got replacements.

Parker: Do you happen to know, Jim, if the software, programs, and customer files are insured also?

Jim: No it's just the equipment that's insured.

Parker: Do you keep back-up records somewhere else, for example, at the bank?

Jim: No, just here in the computer itself.

Parker: Jim, in my experience, thieves don't leave software behind after a theft. How serious would it be to you if the software were taken?

Jim: Very serious. Redevelopment would be expensive, and the original programs were very expensive.

Parker: And because software development can take a long time, wouldn't that hold up your billing even more?

Jim: We could always do it manually.

Parker: What effect would that have on your processing costs?

- Jim:** I see your point. It would be inconvenient and expensive to run a manual system.
- Parker:** And if you lost your software, how difficult would it be to process customer orders?
- Jim:** Without order processing and stock control, we would probably grind to a halt in a couple of days.
- Parker:** What other valuable items would be hard to replace if they were stolen?
- Jim:** The furnishings, some of the antiques would be impossible to replace.
- Parker:** And if you lost them, how would that affect the character of your office?
- Jim:** It would be damaging. We've built a strong character here of solid dependability, and without it, we would be just like all our competitors.
- Parker:** I don't mean this to sound odd, but how many doors do you have at ground level?
- Jim:** About seven.
- Parker:** And ground-level windows?
- Jim:** About twelve.
- Parker:** So that's at least nineteen points where a thief could break in, compared with one or two in the average concrete block-type office. Does that concern you?
- Jim:** Yes, when you put it that way. I guess we're not very secure.

Now that you have read the transcript, here is an exercise for you. In the following two boxes labeled "Problems" and

“Effects,” write down the problems Jim had and the effects that Parker developed to make each problem more serious.

Problems	Effects

Did you notice that Parker highlighted the problem of the valuable computers that were small enough to be stolen and the effect it would have on other areas of the business, such as invoicing, billing, and records? Then Parker brought up the problem of uninsured software and the effect that not having a safe backup system would have on redevelopment costs, late billing, and processing expenses. Finally, Parker brought up the problem of other valuables being stolen and the effect that would have on the character of the office and ultimately on competition.

Did you also notice that when Parker asked a probing question and got Jim to realize there was a problem, Parker immediately followed with an effect question to root out all the issues surrounding that problem? And once that problem had been fully exploded out into other areas, Parker asked another probing question to uncover a different issue. And as soon as Jim realized the issue, Parker again followed up with another

effect question. In other words, Parker did not bombard Jim with a series of probing questions to get a long list of problems, the effects of which would be determined later. No, as soon as a probing question uncovered an issue, that issue was immediately rooted out and exploded into other areas of the business.

Problems	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Computers not secure ◆ Software, programs, and customer files not insured ◆ Backup records not secure ◆ Other valuable items not secure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoicing, billing, records would be expensive to process manually • Redevelopment of original programs expensive to duplicate • Late billing and processing expense • Loss of company character

OPEN SKILL

Why is it important to ask effect questions?

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, selling is about opening your heart and fulfilling the client's needs, so it's very important when you are uncovering problems and their effects that you do not come across as the gloomy bringer of doubts and concerns that cannot be solved. Effect questions must be asked only in areas for which you can provide a solution.

You find yourself refreshed by the presence of cheerful people. Why not make an honest effort to confer that pleasure on others? Half the battle is gained if you never allow yourself to say anything gloomy.

—Julia Child

As we've said before, it can be a fatal error to assume that clients are aware of their problems. But you can avoid that error by asking probing questions to bring areas of dissatisfaction to the clients' attention. A second fatal error is making the assumption that the client has given thought to the effect that a problem has on the business. Effect questions take each problem and place it under a microscope for further examination of its consequences. These questions ask what will happen if this problem were to remain unresolved. Could this problem create X situation? Does it cause . . . ? How does it affect . . . ?

Effect questions are the most powerful questions of the OPEN Question Selling Technique because they give the client the "headache" that makes them feel the need to find a solution. Remember, most people make changes only when

the pain of not changing is equal to or greater than the pain of changing.

Life's ups and downs provide windows of opportunity to determine your values and goals. Think of using all obstacles as stepping stones to build the life you want.

—Martha Sinetar

Smart Salespeople Ask These Questions

To ask good effect questions, you really do need to know how the client's business functions. And as you begin to explore how one problem may be affecting other areas of the operation, you begin to see the consequences that multiple problems may be causing. Both you and your client will begin to see which problems are having the greatest effect.

So asking effect questions does two things: (1) it helps the client see how a problem is affecting the overall operation, and (2) it helps identify which problems are having the greatest impact. Not all problems are equal in magnitude—some have wide-ranging effects, whereas others are quite minor. So let's take a look at the three key areas that problems occur in a business:

1. **Profits.** These are problems that relate to the bottom line and have a negative effect on operating costs or the revenue-generating ability of the company.

2. **Customers.** These issues include anything to do with overall quality and satisfaction.
3. **Employees.** These are concerns regarding job satisfaction, turnover, and productivity.

What types of problems occur in these areas?

1. **Profits.** Decreased revenue, increased operational cost
2. **Customers.** Decreased customer satisfaction, loss of customers
3. **Employees.** Decreased employee satisfaction, loss of employees, decreased productivity

By asking the client effect questions, the salesperson creates a situation where the client is the one talking about the consequences. And it is far more powerful for the client, rather than the salesperson, to define the consequences.

People generally believe what they say themselves, not what they are told, as illustrated in the conversation presented below. The seller, while talking to her client, has discovered

Seller—Effect Question	“What about the customer service staff in your office who take the sales reps calls? Do they find they waste time talking about trivial issues, even when there are no urgent messages for the sales rep?”
Client—Cold Need	“I suppose that happens. I don’t listen in on all their calls, so I can’t say for sure.”

Seller—Effect Question	“And what about delays? Do urgent messages come in that sit and wait until sales reps to call in to get them?”
Client—Warm Need	“Yes, that happens. In fact Sarah, a sales rep, complained last week that a customer called early in the day and she didn’t get the message until lunchtime; her customer got really upset and she nearly lost the account.”
Seller—Effect Question	“It sounds like your reps are wasting time locating phones to call in for messages that may not exist, and yet they sometimes don’t get urgent messages in time to respond without negatively affecting customers and potential sales.”
Client—Hot Need	“It’s beginning to look like we could do a better job. I guess we really need an updated system all around.”

that the customer service reps talk with the sales reps twelve to fifteen times a day. However, oftentimes there are no messages for the sales reps so the calls are wasted time on the phone.

Building the Effect Is Key

The the word “problem” is derived from the Greek word *proballein*, which means “to throw forward.” In other words, problems move us forward, and when we are prepared to solve problems everything in our life changes. When you take the time and effort to solve the big problems, other smaller problems resolve as well. However, the key words here are “time” and “effort.” Some problems are chronic—they just keep limping along regardless of the difficulties they create. You may know this for yourself. Maybe you have one or two problems that you just keep rolling along with because solving them seems to require too much effort.

Consider a lawn, for example. I know it sounds odd to talk about a lawn in the middle of a sales book. But lawns are very tricky things; you could have a lawn covered in clover or some other obnoxious weed that stops the grass from growing. To solve the problem would mean either replacing the lawn altogether or paying a company to spray each month and then re-seed. So you have two choices: 1) you do nothing and the lawn, albeit not the best in town, remains the same, because it needs too much maintenance, which costs too much, and you don’t mind having an average lawn; or 2) you do whatever it takes to solve the problem regardless of the time and cost, because you are an avid golfer and want to practice your putting strokes on it or you love gardening and you want a beautiful lawn.

And this is basically the same way your clients think. How big of a problem do they have? How important is it for them to resolve? Your job as a salesperson is to persuade them that

the problem is big enough to be resolved. And to do this you have to explode the consequences of the problem into other areas.

Many of your clients may be happy with the way they are doing business when you first meet them. Selling is about moving the client from a state of relative contentment to a state of discontent, and by that I mean helping them become aware that they have problems that are affecting their business negatively. So what we are really doing is asking our clients to make a change.

We simply assume that the way we see things is the way they really are or the way they should be. And our attitudes and behaviors grow out of these assumptions.

—Stephen Covey

When your clients buy your product or service, they are purchasing change. Think about yourself for a moment. Let's say you have an older home, and you knew when you purchased it that some time in the future you would need to put on a new roof. What is likely to motivate you to make that change?

- **Suffering.** Your roof is leaking and you worry every time it rains.
- **Damage.** The leak is causing damage to other parts of the house.
- **Competition.** Your neighbors have newer roofs.

As a general rule, nothing changes until the problem of staying the same is greater than the problem of changing. And that is basically how clients decide whether to make the change to your product. Your job is to sell creatively by helping the clients recognize that their business is already suffering or that to remain competitive they must make the change.

If you are using a “telling” style of selling, you would be considered to be pushy, aggressive, non-listening, greedy, and so forth. By using the OPEN Question Selling Technique however, you become a “seeking” type of salesperson and you come across as a more knowledgeable, capable, listening, and caring human being. There is a big difference between salespeople who tell the clients what is best for them and those who seek the information they need from the clients so they can prescribe or lead the customers to the product that will best serve their needs.

Clients do not like to be told what to buy. They prefer to seek their own solutions from a knowledgeable salesperson. It's worth repeating that all of us tend to believe what we discover for ourselves more than we believe what we are told. When you help your clients discover their needs, it creates long-term partnerships with them. The following section provides a short exercise to find out if you are more of a teller or a seeker.

Persuasion Exercise

Circle whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. You are selling an interesting gadget. You normally get so excited and enthusiastic about a product that you immediately point out all its unique features.	Agree/Disagree
2. You think of sales as a fact-giving profession—the more information you give, the better you are able to sell.	Agree/Disagree
3. You are selling a digital watch. Your first thought is to find out everything your customer thinks about time, watches, jewelry, mechanisms, and general lifestyle as it may relate to a watch.	Agree/Disagree
4. You are selling coffee cups. There is nothing to ask the customers except how much coffee they drink.	Agree/Disagree
5. In your normal sales day you agree with the 80/20 rule. You listen 80 percent of the time, and the client listens 20 percent of the time.	Agree/Disagree
6. You are under severe pressure to sell lots of product. In this situation, your job is to give lots of information and hope some of it sticks.	Agree/Disagree
7. Successful salespeople give more information than they seek.	Agree/Disagree

8. You are selling a very technical product that the client cannot possibly know everything about—your job is to tell them as much as possible about it.	Agree/Disagree
9. You have uncovered several big issues and you do not have time to ask effect questions. It is better to tell the client the solution than to ask the effect questions.	Agree/Disagree
10. You are selling a calculator to a large wholesale dealer who could buy millions of dollars' worth of product. You do not need to ask probing or effect questions; all you need to do is give the client lots of information.	Agree/Disagree

Persuasion Exercise Answers

Your Answers	. . . and What They Mean
You agreed with six or more statements.	You have developed a very strong telling style of persuasion. This works best when 1) you are under severe time pressure; 2) you're seen as the expert or boss; and 3) used with people you know.

	Research shows that, in selling situations, seeking is more persuasive. So when you are selling, you will need to use much more seeking. By using the OPEN Question Selling Technique you will be less likely to fall into the trap of telling too much information.
You agreed with four to five statements.	You have a fairly strong telling style. Although this works well in some situations, it's not so effective in selling—where research shows that seeking behavior brings the best results.
You agreed with one to three statements.	Either you have had a lot of selling experience already or you've got a natural seeking style. Your high level of seeking will be a big advantage in your selling career.

Just because we increase the speed of information doesn't mean we can increase the speed of decisions. Pondering, reflecting and ruminating are undervalued skills in our culture.

—Dale Dauten

Too Big to Ignore

As you have probably gathered by now, the whole reason for asking effect questions is to make the problem too big to ignore. And this is really where the magic of sales comes in. You basically go into a client's space, whether it's in the client's actual office, over the telephone, or in some remote location off site, and you not only uncover problems, but also you ask questions that make the client realize that the problem the company has been chugging along with comfortably is now too big to ignore.

There have been a number of times where at the end of the call a client has said, "Thank you so much for allowing me to really look at my business from a different angle so I can see that I can actually do something about these problems right now." I remember one client remarking, "That's the first time someone has allowed me to think through some of the business issues that we are up against!"

Asking effect questions is opening up the issues from a place where the client can actually do something about it. You should come from your heart when you ask the effect questions. You want to make the client's business better than before you arrived with your solutions. Therefore, the way you ask the effect questions has to be from a place in your own heart where you really want to be a solution rather than a problem.

You are doing it from a place where your client feels comfortable that you have the best solutions to offer, and that means feeling successful in your own life. I remember one amazing vice president of sales that I worked with who drove around in a very expensive car, always wore designer suits, and had an immaculate appearance. She said to me once,

“People want to buy from people who are doing well.” And it’s true. Likewise, Dan Kennedy, a great marketing guru and motivational speaker, once said, “I noticed that when I wore a suit I always sold more product at the end of my talk than when I wore a jacket and pants.”

So when I go into a sales call, I always wear an immaculate suit. What client would want to purchase a solution from someone with dirty shoes, a threadbare cuff, or a rumpled suit? Your personal appearance tells all. Does this person care or not? And if there is any question mark in that first glance, then you can be sure your clients will be talking to themselves about it. I know salespeople who carry a toothbrush and dental floss around with them and make sure their teeth are clean before talking to a client.

Your job as a salesperson is to be immaculate in thought and deed. You must be able to sit in front of the client feeling great about yourself. Be sure your integrity is beyond reproach and . . . okay let’s back off here a bit. It’s too easy in the sales profession to beat yourself up, and I don’t want to do that here.

OPEN SKILL

Why is it important to ask effect questions?

A Good Time to Ask

By now, I hope you understand the amazing benefit of asking effect questions. And just like there are good times to ask operational and probing questions, there are effective times to ask effect questions. Here they are:

- **When problems are significant.** The more important the problem is to the client, the more potential there is for asking effect questions. Avoid the temptation to jump straight to possible solutions. Develop the problem first. Ask about things like cost, wasted time, inconvenience, or opportunities lost. If the problem is significant, the client will readily tell you these things, which will make the need for a solution more urgent. Another high payoff area for effect questions is when the problem is complex or has a chain of consequences.
- **When problems need diverting.** Sometimes the client describes problems to which you only have a partial solution. For example, suppose you are selling a very reliable and versatile product, but it is priced higher than the competitors. The client, in response to a probing question, reveals a concern about the cost. To jump into a description of your product at this point would be fatal. Instead, divert the client's problem into areas favorable to your product.

In some areas however, effect questions can be risky and must be asked with care. In these cases, be cautious about using effect questions. The following are examples:

- **Too early in the call.** Until you have established details of the client situation and problem areas, it is too soon for effect questions. For example, you would never say to a client, “Good morning. What are your problems and their implications?” This would create mistrust and cause the client to deny real areas of dissatisfaction. Once denied, the client would find it hard to retract. So, warm the call up with operational questions before exploring problems and implications.
- **With implications you can’t solve.** Effect questions must be selectively developed to satisfy specialized needs. It is very risky to encourage the client to talk about the implications of problems you can’t solve.

OPEN SKILL

Describe a situation when it would be risky to ask an effect question.

- **With sensitive implications.** Unless you have developed a very good relationship with the client, it can be risky to probe into sensitive areas, such as personal issues involving the client or recent decisions that the client has made.

What Can I Do about It?

I like thinking of possibilities. At any time, an entirely new possibility is liable to come along and spin you off in an entirely new direction.

The trick, I've learned is to be awake to the moment.

—Doug Hall

Effect questions develop and extend client needs from vague, implied needs to clear and explicit needs for your product. Unless the client sees the need, the need does not exist. Therefore, all your questions to clarify and develop needs must be geared to the speed of the client's thought processes. You must carry the client's thoughts along with you. The smoother the connection between the questions you ask, the easier this will be to achieve.

The purpose of effect questions is to explore problems and dissatisfactions that you can develop into needs for your products. There is no point in discussing problems unless they have effects that you can use to sell your solution. How and when you ask effect questions is key to making the sale. Ask effect

PROBING QUESTION

Selective probing questions are likely to have implications you can develop into a need for your product.

CLIENT RESPONSE

Use connecting phrases to connect client responses with the effect questions you intend to use.

EFFECT QUESTIONS

Ask effect questions in a variety of ways.

questions only in areas that have implications you can satisfy. Here's some ways to ensure that you are on top of your game in this area:

1. List some potential problem areas in advance of selling a specific product or service. Concentrate on problems you know your product can solve.
2. For each problem, list the possible implications that could increase the significance of the problem (and therefore the client's desire for a solution).
3. Connect your effect question to what the client is saying. Here are some examples of connecting phrases:
 - "You talked earlier about the problem you had trying to refinance your home; what effect did that have on your credit rating?"
 - "You mentioned that finding supplies was a problem; does that also create difficulties with productivity?"
 - "Does this problem you talked about with the loss of service affect employee morale?"

OPEN SKILL

Why is it important to use connecting phrases?

A given problem has several implications, which can make it seem more serious. Not all of these implications would apply to every sale. Effect questions are necessary to discover which implications are most significant to any individual client.

Practice is the key to using connecting phrases in a smooth and natural way. The best way to practice and make it a habit is to use connecting phrases in conversations with your friends and family—not all the time, of course, or you will sound a little bit odd. Here's an example of how you can practice:

Pat: Can you please put the cap back on the toothpaste after you've used it!

Francis: You're right, putting the cap back on prevents the toothpaste from getting hard. I'll be sure to do that next time.

Pat: While we're on the subject, could you also squeeze the toothpaste from the bottom?

Francis: Yes, I'll be sure to squeeze it from the bottom that way the toothpaste will come out easier, right?

Pat: Yeah, right! Hey and thanks for listening and being so amenable!

Francis: No problem!

Isn't that a much better way to have a conversation? Here's how it could sound without using connecting phrases:

Pat: Can you please put the cap back on the toothpaste after you've used it!

Francis: Why?

Pat: Because the toothpaste gets hard.

Francis: So.

Pat: So will you do it?

Francis: Do what?

Pat: Put the cap back on the toothpaste.

Francis: I guess.

It's a different kind of conversation without the connecting phrases. You see, when you repeat what someone has just said, it makes you think of the consequences of the problem. Try it next time you are asked to do something. You will find that being amenable, taking on board the problem, and then agreeing to do something about it will enhance your life in many ways—and not just in sales. It will also give you a smoother ride through life.

After all, nobody said that we had to paddle upstream all our life. We can choose any time we want to go with the flow. And

that is really what sales is all about. It is choosing to go with the flow of life. When a client admits to having a problem, your job is to explore the consequences so that they realize its true scope. And with family and friends, when you connect the phrases to what they just said, you actually get the bigger picture and go with the flow. It's an "aha" moment: "Aha, I see why you would want the cap put back on the toothpaste. It prevents the paste from getting hard and difficult to squeeze out of the tube."

So go with the flow when you use each part of the OPEN Question Selling Technique. Visualize yourself flowing with the client before you go into the call. See yourself sitting or standing across from the client and literally see the words flow between you in a smooth and easy fashion. See yourself and your client smiling and nodding in agreement, and most important of all, see yourself close the sale and the client signing the agreement or doing whatever it is needed to buy your product. Visualization is just part of creating your life the way you want it to be. After all, you are asking your client to buy in to you and your company. Why not buy in to yourself first by visualizing yourself as the greatest salesperson on the planet—closing deals, seeing money coming in, and getting everything you want from life!

When people honor each other, there is a trust established that leads to synergy, interdependence, and deep respect. Both parties make decisions and choices based on what is right, what is best, what is valued most highly.

—Blaine Lee

SKILLS COACHING

This is about visualizing yourself as the greatest salesperson on earth. It's about visualizing you having a great life as a salesperson—doing a great job, enjoying your work, enjoying the paychecks you get, and being the best you can be for your clients, your company, your family, your friends, and your community.

Imagine if you lived your life the way that you really wanted to—making choices every day to be amazing and to do and say the right things. Making this a reality begins with visualizing those things that you want for yourself. Here is the exercise:

1. Sit down and close your eyes.
2. Visualize yourself being exactly the way you want to be, from the inside out with a wonderfully open heart that receives love and joy in every moment. See yourself in perfect health, and welcome health and wealth into every cell of your being. Imagine yourself dressed exactly the way you want to be, living the style of life you want.
3. See your next paycheck with the amount of money you want to earn.
4. Imagine yourself driving the car you want, living in the house you want, and associating with the kind of people you want to be with.
5. Now feel all the things you want coming into being.

You know about the Law of Attraction. As soon as you have a conscious desire, that's what you bring into your

being. It is already happening on the level of your thought. Now you just have to keep it alive by being grateful for what you do have. Keep it alive by being the best that you can be and by keeping your thoughts in the positive stratosphere.

OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUE— NAIL-DOWN QUESTIONS

**Nobody counts the number of ads you run;
they just remember the impression you make.**

—William Bernbach

Nail-Down Questions

You buy because you have needs, and your clients buy for the same reason. If there's no need, there's no sale. A big part of being a salesperson is to identify, develop, and satisfy the needs of your clients. The clearer you make their needs, the more likely you will hit the nail on the head and make a sale.

How do needs start? They begin as problems or dissatisfactions your client feels. And in order to develop those problems

into needs, you follow the OPEN Question Selling Technique, which in summary is to ask:

- Operational questions to establish a jumping off base,
- Probing questions to expose a problem,
- Effect questions to explode the problem into other areas, and
- Nail-down questions to develop the importance of finding a solution.

So what is a nail-down question? A nail-down question asks the clients to think about and clarify the importance of finding a solution to their problem, and it has to be asked with an open heart to work effectively. In other words, you are asking the clients to tell you why the solution is important to them. Traditionally, this is not how a sale goes. Usually salespeople uncover the problem and then move in for the close, as in this example: “We talked about the problem of hard water and how it effects washing capabilities and creates stains. Well, I have the solution! Our water processing system guarantee’s soft, clean water and many other benefits.”

The problem with immediately telling the clients about the solution is that it does not give the clients the opportunity to think for themselves about the benefits. Nail-down questions, however, build the solution up so that the clients really want to know what it is. In other words, you are asking the clients to uncover for themselves the benefits of finding a solution. Here’s how nail-down questions sound:

- “How much would it be worth to you if you could get rid of this problem?”

- “How would it help if we could offer you the flexibility you are seeking?”
- “How will solving this service issue help your department?”

Like all questions in a sales situation, nail-down questions are more effective when they are asked with an open heart. What does this mean? It means that you sincerely want to help the client find a solution that works. You have the attitude of being of service rather than just making a sale or closing a deal. We have mentioned “making a sale” and we talk about “closing” later in the book in chapter 11, because of course you are in the business of selling. However, when you operate from a place of needing to make a sale because you have to reach quota, clients will sense the desperation and begin to resist.

**Those who are fired with an enthusiastic idea
and who allow it to take hold and dominate
their thoughts find that new worlds open for
them. As long as enthusiasm holds out, so
will new opportunities.**

—Norman Vincent Peale
The Power of Positive Thinking

Every sale you make needs to provide a real and effective solution for your client; that’s the way a person moves from being a salesperson to an amazing salesperson. Here are a few more examples of nail-down questions:

- “How much money could be saved each year if we could reduce the costs we talked about?”
- “Because our system helps you conduct business electronically, how much time will that save you?”
- “If we could help you save ten withdrawal fees, what would that mean in terms of savings?”

OPEN SKILL

Write an example of a nail-down question that you could use with your product.

The Customer Realizes the Solution

Your job is to help the clients become aware of the extent of their problem and acknowledge the benefits of using your products and services. Nail-down questions help you explore the value of the solution.

Never underestimate the power of clients discovering for themselves the benefit of your solution. We were customizing our program recently for a client in England who suggested,

“We think the word ‘nail-down’ is a bit too strong for over here. We would like to use the word ‘nudge’ instead, so that our salespeople ask nudging questions.” That was fine, because it works either way, although for me, “nail-down” has more of a feeling of commitment.

Think of a time when you wanted to make a purchase, whether it was a large one, such as a home or car, or a smaller one, such as a piece of clothing. Have you ever experienced that point of decision making where you are wavering—should I or shouldn’t I?—and because you didn’t realize all the benefits, you decided not to buy? Well, in a sale that’s when you ask nail-down questions. You are at the point in the sale where the clients can be tipped one way or another. They have acknowledged they have a problem and realized the effect it has on other areas of the situation. They have the money to buy, but they’re just not sure if it’s worth it! Well, a great nail-down question right about now will tip them into a yes decision rather than a “I’ll just wait a bit longer” decision.

**If you want to know the way ahead, ask
someone who is coming back.**

—Chinese Proverb

Haven’t you ever had that experience? You want the car, or the home, or the piece of furniture; that’s why you are shopping for it. But it’s a really big decision and you need to feel that it’s the right one. And suppose someone were to ask you:

- What would be the value of . . . ?
- How would it help if you could . . . ?
- What would be the importance of . . . ?

You would have to think for a moment, and ask yourself the same questions. As human beings we want to make the right decision; often we are just scared of making the wrong one, especially in a corporate environment where other people will be using the product or service and making their own evaluations.

What may be just a small decision to you might be a really big one for your client. To you, the money the client is about to spend may seem really insignificant for such a large corporation that makes billions each year, but for the decision makers in the company, it could be 90 percent of their budget and so they need to feel good about the decision.

That's why nail-down questions are so important. They don't just lead you to closing the sale, but also they actually help your clients realize the value of their decision and feel good about it. Not only that, when other people ask them why they made that decision to buy, they will remember the value and the importance of the product because they were the ones who, in fact, had to think about it and verbalize it to you!

So when you ask a nail-down question think of it this way: you are helping the customers to make the best decision possible because when they realize the value and the importance of this decision, they will feel really good about it.

It's All about Payoff

I recommend that you take a moment right now to list all the payoffs of your product or service. I'll start you off on the right track by listing some of the payoffs of my products, which involve motivation, training, fortification, and inspiration:

Payoffs

1. Boost employee morale
2. Enable employees to handle all customer service situations effectively
3. Teach practical customer service skills
4. Employees learn how to take responsibility
5. Teach employees how to have a great attitude even on a Monday
6. Fire up employees to be their personal best every day

As with every step of the OPEN Question Selling Technique, practice makes perfect. So practice with your family and friends. Next time someone asks you if he or she should make a decision to purchase something, ask a nail-down question: "What would be the value of making this particular decision?" Or, "How much would it be worth to you if you created a family budget?"

Imagine asking yourself a nail-down question every now and then, particularly before you are about to do or say something: "What is the importance of me doing or saying this right now?" It is an especially good thing to ask just before you begin to defend yourself, justify something, or make an

OPEN SKILL

List six payoffs of your product or service.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

accusation. Ask “What am I going to get out of this?” Because very often, we get into the same situations over and over again, doing and saying the same things, which trigger the same results time and time again. In a sales situation, once you begin to use nail-down questions at the right point during the sale, you will begin to ask them automatically and they will become part of your sales conversation.

Obstacles can't stop you. Problems can't stop you. Most of all, other people can't stop you.

Only you can stop you.

—Jeffrey Gitomer

The Little Red Book of Selling

Benefits, Solutions, and Getting It Home

Many sales programs talk about benefits and solutions without really focusing on getting the point home. And the way to get it home is to believe it with your heart and soul. It doesn't matter whether you are selling roller blinds, as I did many years ago, door to door, as long as you believe in your product. I always believed that my roller blinds were the best solution for the homeowner at that time.

All too often we hear about benefits from the client's perspective, but what about the benefit to you? When you walk into a sales call armed with benefits and solutions for yourself, you feel great. So ask yourself, what is the benefit to me of being a salesperson right now? What solutions am I providing for myself by being a salesperson? I can tell you mine. Here's the list:

1. I get to be my own boss when I am in front of a customer.
2. I make a difference in people's lives.
3. My products and services are the best.
4. I deliver the best results.
5. I learn amazing communication skills, such as empathy and listening, that I can use in my everyday life.
6. I earn as much money as I am prepared to make.
7. I provide solutions.
8. I feel great at the end of every day.
9. My energy is always upbeat.
10. I have an amazing attitude.

If you don't feel any of those benefits as a salesperson, you should ask yourself a couple of nail-down questions, such as: "What is the value of me being a salesperson?" and "What is the importance of having my job?"

By looking at the payoffs and benefits of your actions in your own life, you can begin to look at benefits differently. It's not just about selling the benefit of an automatic system versus a mechanical one, for example; it's about selling the amazing qualities of your product, the qualities that are going to make a difference in your clients' lives, and the benefits that are going to make them feel great about their decision, knowing that they made the very best decision they could and that they did it all because of you.

The Appropriate Use of Nail-Down Questions

There are hierarchical sales, where you have sold your product or service to one person, but to go further, it has to be approved by another level of management. For example, I was recently talking with a consultant who was working with a large corporation. She had been at one of my Super Service workshops with a different company she had worked with previously and as soon as she heard this company was looking for customer service training, she said, "Super Service is the one you have to look at."

So a manager from her team called me and said, "One of our consultants said that I need to talk to you because we are looking for customer service training." We made an appointment for the next week, and I went to meet her.

I used the OPEN Question Selling Technique and over the first ten minutes asked a series of operational questions: “Why did you want to see me?” “What’s going on?” “How is the department set up?” “What is your position?”

Then I used probing questions and found out that she wanted to take the company to a new level of customer service—a level that would change behavior. Then I asked effect questions and we talked in general terms about helping employees accept responsibility for their actions and be accountable for being amazing every day. She wanted a program that would help employees realize that such changes weren’t all up to the company and that it is the individuals who make the difference.

Then I asked the nail-down question: “What would it mean to you if we could get your people up to speed and change behavior in how they communicate with their customers?”

And she said, “It would be tremendous; it’s just what we need to turn the department around so it becomes one of the most professional departments in the company.”

And that was the close: “When do you want to start?”

And she literally said, “Let’s do a pilot!” (A pilot is like a small-scale training program designed to measure the success of the learning.) Then she asked me, “How much will it cost to do a pilot with my department?” And that was it, we were off and running. We did the pilot and the response was phenomenal: it was a great success!

The next step was to put it through the whole of her department, with all three hundred people. And that’s when the decision making went to a higher level. Whereas she could pay for the pilot without having to go through the whole financial process, now that we were doing it for the entire

department, it had to go through people like the consulting vendor manager. Basically he is the buyer, and his job is to negotiate the best deal for the company.

So I talked with him over the telephone and the good thing is they were in a time crunch. They wanted to provide the learning as quickly as possible and he wanted a licensing agreement so they could use the program as ongoing training.

The sale begins when the customer says yes.

—Harvey McKay

When to Ask and When Not to Ask Nail-Down Questions

Few salespeople ask nail-down questions at the optimum point in the sale, that is to say, at the point when they are most effective. If asked too soon, the client's lack of clarity about problems prevents you from effectively developing a real desire for solutions. At the other end of the scale, many salespeople begin asking nail-down questions too late. They wait until after they have described their solutions and then try to generate an appetite for what they have offered. The ideal time to start asking nail-down questions is after you have developed the importance of the client's problems by using effect questions and just before you describe your product or solution.

Normally, I don't have to ask more than one or two nail-down questions. People get it! For example, in the sale described above, after I asked the first nail-down question ("What

would it mean to you if we could get your people up to speed and change behavior in how they communicate with their customers?”) and she gave me the answer (“It would be tremendous it’s just what we need to turn the department around so it becomes one of the most professional departments in the company”), I didn’t need to ask another because I had everything I needed to go ahead and close the sale. If I had then gone on to ask another one, such as “How helpful would it be if your people would accept responsibility?” it would start to sound unnatural; besides, once you have an answer that begins, with “It would be tremendous,” what more do you need? That’s a closing situation right there.

As I mentioned earlier, the OPEN Question Selling Technique is a sequence of questions and timing is very important. Here are the effective times to use nail-down questions:

- **When the solution has a payoff in other areas.** A nail-down question such as “What can you do with the extra money our product will save you?” can often prompt the client to think of additional payoffs. Many client situations are complex, and freeing the client from one problem often has unexpected payoffs in other areas. Use nail-down questions to develop additional possibilities.
- **When the client must justify the solution.** Sometimes the person you are talking to has to justify the product to his or her team or a higher level of management; in these cases, nail-down questions help clarify and develop the payoffs in the person’s mind so he or she can justify it much more easily.

Although it's good to ask a nail-down question after you have discussed the effects of the problem, there are some areas where asking a nail-down question is risky and must be asked with care, such as the following:

- **Too early in the call.** I have heard new salespeople open a call with a dramatic statement, such as “If I could show you a way to reduce your rate, would you be interested?” Although this is a nail-down question, it is not very effective and may antagonize clients into denying the existence of genuine problems and needs.
- **When the client's need is subjective.** Sometimes a client just likes your product and is prepared to make a quick decision. If you ask nail-down questions when clients are making very positive statements about your product, you may cause them to have second thoughts.

OPEN SKILL

Why is it important to use nail-down questions before closing the sale?

Pretend that every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that says, “Make me feel important.” Not only will you succeed in sales, you will succeed in life.

—Mary Kay Ash

Holding the Reins

As the salesperson you need to be holding the reins at all times so you can guide your client around obstacles, resolve issues, and get to the finish line for a win-win situation. It's just like life: When you get in your car in the morning, do you have a smooth ride all the way to your destination? Not usually. There is traffic; someone jumps lanes just in front of you and you have to brake or swerve to avoid them. There are traffic lights, stop signs, and distractions. There are hiccups along the way. There's a smooth stretch followed by a bumpy stretch followed by an amazing stretch followed by a nasty stretch. That's just life, and it's particularly true of a life in sales.

If I expect to have a smooth ride, I am in for a big surprise. I have to get up in the morning, floss, shower, dress, and have breakfast, and in that timespan all kinds of things can happen; I could stub my toe on the dressing table, there could be no milk for my coffee, or I could pour in the cream and it's off—that's life. If I get upset it's going to affect my day and that will affect my sales. Everything I do affects my selling.

In order to keep a tight hold of the reins, use the OPEN process and be in control of the situation. Know what you will do and what you will not do. Know when to compromise and when to stick to your guns, because the objective in a win-win situation is for the customers to feel they have a great deal, for you to feel you got a great deal, and for the company to have a great deal.

**It is better to arm and strengthen your hero,
than to disarm and enfeeble your foe.**

—Anne Bronte

SKILLS COACHING

This coaching session is about arming and strengthening your hero, which, in my eyes, is the client. So for this next practice session I want you to employ the following skills in your daily life:

1. Every time you are in conversation with someone, think about how you can make the other person stronger with the words you use.
2. Refuse to use negative language that creates resistance in the other person.
3. Be a warrior for uplifting other people.
4. Give compliments when appropriate.
5. See other people as part of your team and on your side to win for you.
6. When you choose between gossip and holding your tongue, hold your tongue.
7. Keep your word as a way of strengthening your communication skills.
8. Be a person of integrity and always work to uplift the situation.
9. Reward yourself by giving yourself lots of compliments throughout the day.
10. Affirm that you are an amazing salesperson every morning and throughout the rest of your day.

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HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Personal development is your springboard to personal excellence. Ongoing, continuous, non-stop personal development literally assures you that there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

—Brian Tracy

Welcome Every Objection

A friend of mine, Ken, recently told me about one of his selling experiences that I think you may enjoy. He was out with a colleague calling on small businesses, going from office building to office building, and they would meet up every couple of hours to see how each of them was doing. Ken was doing extremely well, selling a lot of business. His colleague, however, was not doing very well at all. This went on for the whole morning, and finally after lunch, the colleague said, “I think it’s because you are selling to all the businesses on the sunny side of the street. I think people on that side of the

street feel better and so they are more willing to buy! No one I talk to is interested because it's so dark."

Flabbergasted and yet willing to go along with his colleague, Ken said, "Okay you take over my side of the street, and I will take yours." So off they went.

The problem was that Ken didn't really know which businesses his colleague had actually called on, so he went into the first office, and said, "Have you had someone in today talking about this product?" And the business manager said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, there was someone here earlier."

Then Ken thinking fast on his feet said, "Ah good, I am actually his supervisor and I am going round after him to see how he is doing. May I ask you a few questions?"

"Okay," said the business manager.

"What did you think of the way he presented the product to you?"

"Very good. He did a good job."

"And did you like the product?"

"Yes, it seems very good."

"And can I ask you why it is you decided not to purchase one at this time?" By the end of the conversation, Ken had sold the product and realized that this in fact was a great way to get business, considering the circumstances. Finally when they met up again, his colleague asked Ken, "How did you do?"

"Quite well."

"Can I see your orders?" Ken showed him all the orders he had gotten and his colleague said, "But those are the people I already called on. They weren't interested."

"Well yes," began Ken, and then he explained that in sales no one is interested right away. The job of a salesperson is to

make the client interested, whether in setting up the call in the first place or in actually purchasing the product.

The colleague responded, “But when I talk to people, they often already have the product, or they’ve heard about it, or they’ve bought one from another vendor. And Ken told him about how to handle objections. “When someone says, ‘I have that already,’ you simply reply, “Oh yes I understand, many people have got one like this,” and continue with the sale.

“But what if they say they’re just not interested?”

“Same thing,” said Ken. “You say, ‘Yes I’ve known people who weren’t interested at first and after using our product, they realized it had lots of benefits.’ And then carry on with the sale until you finally spark an interest and they say, ‘Oh, I didn’t realize it did that; how does that work?’ That’s when you’ve caught their interest. I never expected to find people who were interested. I just always expected to make them interested.”

So objection handling is more a state of mind than anything else. Ken had the state of mind that whenever someone said. To each “I’m not interested,” “I already have one,” and “I can’t afford it,” he would respond by acknowledging the objection and then continuing with the sale. But his colleague was expecting to find someone who was interested and simply folded at the first objection.

**Life takes on meaning when you become
motivated, set goals, and charge after them in
an unstoppable manner.**

—Les Brown

When you use the OPEN Question Selling Technique, you get fewer objections because essentially the client does all the talking. You just listen, remind, and emphasize that what you are going to do is eliminate certain problems and satisfy the client's needs.

When an objection comes early in the sale, it's usually a problem; the client has either worked with your company before and had a negative experience or has used your product and the product didn't meet expectations. If the objection comes later in the sale, it's usually a buying signal, because now they are interested and they are going to have to make a decision. And usually when people have to make a decision, they want all the facts, and all the information; obviously, they want to get the best deal that they can.

If I try to sell you something, the first thing you are going to ask is, "How much is it?" Then I tell you and you're going to say, "Ohhh, it's too much," unless of course, you really need it and have the right budget. If that is the case, then money isn't an issue. With most business customers, money, though perhaps not an issue, is a decision. When you are buying something for your company, you want to get the best deal possible. It's a negotiation process. Recently I was working with a client to sell a training process that cost \$500,000 and money was a negotiation. The client said, "Wow, that's quite a lot." Because I didn't know what "quite a lot" meant and I had to narrow it down, my next question was, "What were you looking to spend?"

The client answered, "We only wanted to pay \$300,000." So I empathized with her and said, "I understand what you are saying. I hear you." The next step of the sale was to look at what we had to take away and so I asked, "What are you

prepared to cut out of this program to get to you \$300,000?” She wasn’t really sure, so I got out my calculator and said, “If you divide \$500,000 by the 6,000 employees that you want to train, it’s only \$83 per head for a program that’s going to last you twenty to thirty years.” I brought it down to the smallest detail and worked it out from there.

In the end we negotiated the price based on the client paying the whole sum of \$400,000 up front. It was a win-win scenario for both of us. It was a compromise between the \$500,000 that I wanted and the \$300,000 she wanted. If you look at objections as reasonable requests, then you will see them in a different light.

There is only one way to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it.

—Dale Carnegie

Although there are many ways to handle an objection, which are outlined for you in this chapter, the biggest asset is for you to have the right attitude. You have to understand that objections are not things to be scared of. They are things to be dealt with just like everything else, and you are going to get them, unless you have undersold your product. In the end the customer has the right to say, “Get out of my office because it’s never going to happen!” Of course people don’t say it as harshly as that, but there are times when clients say, “This is never going to happen.” And you’ll probably wonder why they wanted you there in the first place. Maybe they’ve already

decided what they want and just needed a couple more quotes, and unfortunately you are the one to provide them.

Here is a list of techniques for handling objections:

1. **Acknowledge but do not agree with the objection before you answer it.** Begin with statements such as “I hear what you’re saying” and “I understand how you would feel that way.” That way you acknowledge the objection without agreeing with it. You can’t say, for example, “I absolutely agree with you,” because then you have nowhere to go.
2. **Clarify your understanding of the question a customer is raising before you answer it.** You want to pinpoint the real objection. If the client says, “It’s too expensive!” the meaning of “too expensive” is unclear, so you’ll have to dig to find out what it means. First acknowledge it by saying, “I hear what you are saying.” Then dig for the real objection: “Am I right in saying that you don’t think you are going to get value for your investment?” If the client agrees, then ask, “What part of our product or service are you concerned about?” If the client says, “All of it,” then restate the benefits and value of your product from the client’s perspective.
3. **Listen and think momentarily before answering.** Collect your thoughts and look at it from the client’s perspective. There’s nothing for you to defend; you simply want to help the clients understand how your products and services can really help their company.
4. **Aim your answer directly to what is on the customer’s mind.** That means, keep it simple. Don’t start talking about things the customer has not

brought up—it will be confusing and possibly bring up objections the customer has not even thought of. Answer the specific question and then keep quiet.

5. **Handle objections as you would handle any other ordinary question, without paying excessive attention to it.** In other words, don't overtalk yourself. This is really important, because when salespeople get verbal diarrhea it just causes more questions and concerns in the buyer's mind. So stop talking.
6. **Handle emotional situations by treating objections as if they resulted just from a lack of information.** Don't get caught up in the personality and the feelings of things. Focus on the actual problem and not the personality.

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.
—Milton Berle

What Objections Sound Like

There's usually a shift in the client's body language that comes with objections, because the client has to make uncomfortable statements such as, "That's too expensive" or "I don't think it's going to work." Let's face it, up to now you've had a great relationship and the client feels good. You've been using the OPEN Question Selling Technique and everything has flowed smoothly; now comes the tough bit.

When I am selling, I understand this and there is no need to panic. This is perfectly normal and natural, and it's a great opportunity to negotiate with the client to get a win-win situation.

People are people; some people's first instinct is to raise objections because they're nervous. But there are times when money is a real concern. I had one experience at a printing company where I was meeting with three managers, and when I told them the price one manager yelled out. "That's far too much!" She was really freaked out and it was apparent that her colleagues didn't approve of her reaction. It was just the way she was. For her, everything was a problem; everything was unhappy. So there was a stunned silence and then one of the other managers said, "Wow I know we are tight on money, but I didn't realize we were that tight," And everyone just burst into laughter. Then the lady apologized, but for her the statement was accurate. She had to cut budgets and slash wages, so money was a real concern. We ended up negotiating an agreement that was cost-effective for everyone.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we walked into every call and the client began with, "This is how much money we have, this is what we have to spend, and this is what we are actually going to do"? No one does that of course, and that's why salespeople are born!

**My greatest strength as a consultant is to be
ignorant and ask a few questions.**

—Peter Drucker

OPEN SKILL

What is a common objection that you have to handle?

Write your response to the common objection you handle.

First Response

It cannot be overstated, that the best way to handle any objection is to begin by acknowledging it. Showing that you understand how they feel gives the clients a sense of security and allows them to feel okay about it.

When you use the OPEN Question Selling Technique you get information that will help you handle the objections you may hear. For example, one large corporate client was under a huge time crunch to get the program up and running immediately. I knew this, so later when I got the objection about the cost I was able to say, "I understand how you feel and I know we've got a real time crunch here. By implementing this plan immediately we can get the problem resolved and you will get everyone trained as needed." I was able to bypass the cost issue because the real need was getting it done on time.

When the clients raise an objection, they also claim some responsibility and will actively participate in finding a resolution. Or they'll stall the process and avoid the issue, revealing that there's no opportunity after all.

The closer the client is to the business issue, the fewer objections you will hear, and the more likely the client will help resolve the issue. For example, if the customers see the benefits of your product, they're more likely to resolve their own objection and accept the solution you're offering.

Some objections may simply be intended to disarm you. But if you panic in response to an objection that's a sincere obstacle, your client may lose confidence in you. So a good way to avoid this is to think of an objection as feedback or a request for more information. Consider these tactics:

- Look at the objection as information that's neither good nor bad.
- Repeat the objection back to the client sincerely—without changing the meaning of the message.
- Isolate the objection.

Once you have acknowledged the objection by saying, "I hear what you are saying," make sure you're addressing the true issue before starting to handle it by asking, "If that wasn't an issue, would you go ahead with this?" If the answer is yes, you've discovered the real objection. If the answer is no, or another objection is given, then you know that you have more objections to handle. Here are some questions that will help you to isolate the issue:

- "If that weren't an issue, what would your thoughts be on going ahead with this?"

- “Other than that, how closely does our recommendation fulfill your needs?”
- “That issue is important to the decision. Let’s set that aside and come back to it. What aspect of the solution do you feel good about?”

Now that you’ve isolated the true objection, you can clarify the objection to ensure that you and the client are on the same page. Sometimes this step alone can resolve the objection because the client thinks more about it and finds a solution or decides it’s not really an issue after all.

- “Let me just clarify what you are saying to make sure I am addressing the right issue. . . .”
- “I want to make sure I am hearing everything correctly. Am I right in thinking . . . ?”

Here is a role-play example using effect questions to resolve an objection:

- Client:** Although I like this product, it’s a very high-profile situation and I don’t want to risk making a mistake.
- Salesperson:** I hear what you are saying; you’re concerned about the risks associated with making a mistake.
- Client:** Yes, we need to increase the bottom line and I don’t know if this will come close enough.
- Salesperson:** I understand what you are saying; if this were not a high-profile project, what would

be the effect of delivering the program as we outlined?

Client: If we can increase our bottom line it would make a huge impact on all aspects of our business, from R&D to customer satisfaction and faster delivery times.

Salesperson: Based on the plan, how likely do you feel the results can be met?

Client: Very confident. I have read about these types of programs and they are proving to be extremely successful. I'm just not sure my nerves can handle it.

Salesperson: What has been the effect in the past, when intellectually you know you are making a good business decision, but you are nervous because it's a change?

This example shows how to use effect questions to handle objections and move the conversation toward a resolution. Now that you know how to turn objections into a meaningful dialogue, try the suggestions above when you encounter reluctant customers.

Every single one of us can do things that no one else can do—can love things that no one else can love. We are like violins. We can be used for doorstops, or we can make music.

You know what to do.

—Barbara Sher

Final Response

After you have answered an objection, ask your customer, “I take it we’ve solved that particular issue?” If the customer agrees, then you’ve virtually closed the sale. If the customer continues to voice concerns, then you just keep answering the objections until finally the customer says, “Yes, that’s it.”

If you look up the word “objection” in a dictionary, you will see other related words, such as “resistance” and “opposition.” Notice they are all about pushing against something. So objections are really a resistance to something that has been said or put forward. But in order to resist something, there has to be something to push against. And if you take away that resistance you will just push straight through.

Imagine for a moment that you are pushing against a wall. If suddenly the wall disappears, you fall forward. In other words, without resistance there is nothing to push against. And this is the mentality that I have when I am handling an objection. I don’t give the client any resistance. Here’s what happens when you do resist the objection:

1. Clients voice an objection—they have resistance
2. You push back—you create more resistance
3. Resistance squared—pushing harder and harder until someone loses

Here’s what happens when you do not resist the objection:

1. Clients voice an objection—they have resistance
2. You acknowledge the objection—you have no resistance
3. Resistance is voided—win-win

If you do not put up any resistance to an objection, it becomes null and void and there will no longer be any resistance or objection from the client. It is only when salespeople feel the objection as a personal attack or a violation against their product or service that they resist the objection and push back. If there is nothing to push against, it weakens the objection.

If you go on the web and type in “objection handling,” you will see thousands of different ways to handle objections. One person wrote, “Learn the Secrets of How To Consistently Smash Through the Toughest Sales Objections” as if smashing through objections is what handling them is all about. Another author wrote, “Interestingly, the same objections come up again and again irrespective of the business you are in, or the product or solution you are selling.” And these were:

- “That’s not in our budget.”
- “I haven’t got the time.”
- “Come back in eight weeks.”

Although they seem to be fairly consistent with the type of objections I have received in the past, they are by no means as neatly packaged as that. Objections are seen to be difficult to handle because they come in such different packages. As in the example above when the manager yelled out her concern about the cost, objections can come as a shock. If you fear running

into unexpected objections with your clients, you are not alone; every sales professional feels the same way. But when you try to smash through them or overcome them, you and your clients will always be operating from a place of resistance, which is not an effective way to handle them.

By operating from your heart instead of from a fearful perspective, you can answer these same objections in this way:

- “That’s not in our budget.” Respond with: “I hear what you are saying; may I ask what is in your budget?” This is a great objection because it opens up the question of budget and you can legitimately ask what is in the client’s budget.
- “I haven’t got the time.” Respond with: “I understand, time is a precious commodity; I just have a couple of key questions that I think may end up saving you and your people lots of time.” Many times, clients will say their time is limited to only a few minutes and yet thirty minutes later they are still talking!
- “Come back in eight weeks.” Respond with: “I hear what you are saying; may I ask what will have changed in that eight-week time span?” By asking an operational question you are back into the sales call. Now you will find out if there is a legitimate reason to come back or if it is just a pitch to get rid of you.

When you handle objections as if you are a partner with your clients and act as a consultant who is on their same side, you are much more effective and less fearful of objections as a result. People feel comfortable and at ease when they see you as a resource who cares about their business—this is the

kind of relationship that will lead to customer loyalty and a lasting business relationship.

**Of what does not concern you say nothing
good or bad.**

—Italian Proverb

SKILLS COACHING

Handle objections in every part of your life and you will automatically be able to handle your client's objections. All it takes is practice and an open heart. In other words, don't take objections as a personal attack. Don't defend or justify them, don't defend yourself, and don't defend your product. An employee recently said about a colleague, "It's like I'm on a battlefield. Everything I do is wrong. Everything I say is wrong. What can I do?"

Answer: Stop taking things personally. If someone is on a battlefield, who says that you have to be on it with them? Be an onlooker and stand aside and apart. Ask yourself, "Do I want to do battle with this person? Do I want to be on the same level as this person?"

No one can do battle with someone if the person refuses to play. So when you are handling an objection, remember rule one: don't take it personally. Answer the objection and not the emotion. Here's how you can practice:

1. The next time someone says, "I don't understand this," or "Why is this?" or "What happens when . . .," simply answer the question and then continue with the conversation.
2. If you can't answer the objection, or what you have said does not seem to provide the person with a desired answer, say, "I'm curious; how would you handle this?" or "You seem to know a good deal about how this process works; what would your solution be?"

3. Objections are really selling signals. They signal that the person is interested in some way. Something you have said or demonstrated has ignited the person's curiosity. So approach every objection as a buying signal. The person wants more information and you are there to provide it.

CLOSING WITH OPEN QUESTION SELLING TECHNIQUES

**You don't close a sale; you open a relationship
if you want to build a long-term, successful
enterprise.**

—Patricia Fripp

A Good Close Closes Itself

When you use the OPEN Question Selling Technique, your close will automatically follow. Once you have asked an effective nail-down question, such as “How would this system help you reduce costs?” and the client answers, “It would help in many ways, from increased productivity to reduced attrition,” the close automatically follows: “So I take it we can go ahead?” And the client answers, “Yes!”

People buy only if you ask them to buy. It's as simple as that, and no one has been killed for asking for an order. Sometimes

however, it is uncomfortable for new salespeople, and even for some veterans, to ask people for money. That's why many salespeople put their product out there and just wait.

If you don't ask a nail-down question to help the client see the value of your product, you will find it difficult to start building value at the close. When we are talking about closing, we are really talking about commitment. It may be commitment to buy, or just to present your product to a committee, or to do some research and bring your findings to another appointment. It is a commitment to do something—to take the sale to the next stage.

My company researched why people did not commit to buying something, and the overwhelming response was, "I was never asked." Even after the salesperson demonstrated the product and all their questions were answered, the clients were simply never asked to spend any money . . . and so they didn't! Please don't fall into that trap—always ask for the order. And if you want to play a game, think of John, the salesperson who never left a prospect with anything other than a yes answer. Remember how he had battled his way through a presentation and all the client would say was "no!" Finally after he had asked for the order and the office manager said, "No," he looked outside at the beautiful day, looked back at her, smiled, and said, "Isn't it a beautiful day?"

She answered, "Yes."

He said, "Thank you very much," and out he walked with a resounding "Yes!" ringing in his ears.

Knowing when to ask for the order is simple when you follow the OPEN Question Selling Technique because it falls naturally into place. Even then, sometimes a salesperson can wait too long to ask for the sale and the right time to ask

passes them by. So here is the one golden rule for closing using the OPEN Question Selling Technique:

Believe the sale is made. Indicate by your confident words and positive body language that you expect the client to say “yes.”

And if this sounds too forceful, you can always soften your close by saying, “Not to be presumptuous, but if everything we’ve talked about makes sense, how soon would you want to begin benefiting from your new system?” If your client answers, “As soon as possible!” then you just need to get your order details handled. If, however, this question brings up another concern or the client hesitates, then he or she is not yet ready to make a commitment. You have now just made what is known in the sales business as the “trial close.” At least now you know where you stand.

It’s always good to have a few different ways of handling the trial close. One way is called the “alternative close.” This involves giving your prospect a couple of choices, either of which will advance the sale. In other words, whichever option your client chooses, the sale moves forward. Here are some examples:

Salesperson: Ms. Brennan, when would you like delivery, the twelfth or the sixteenth?

Ms. Brennan: I need it by the twelfth.

In this conversation, the salesperson has closed the sale by asking which delivery date the client needs. In the next exchange the salesperson is assuming the sale by asking about training.

Salesperson: Bill, are you going to be trained on the new process, or do you want someone else to be involved?

Bill: Someone else is going to be trained on it.

When Bill says who is being trained on the new process, you know he's going ahead with the sale. The trial close was positive, and now the salesperson can ask for the order details without any discomfort. It's a natural close.

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.

—Vince Lombardi

We are going to cover several strategies that you can use to close a sale, but they all come down to one common fact: you have to ask! Don't let your fear of being presumptuous or rude keep you from selling a product or service your customer is already willing to buy. It's your confidence in the product that will guarantee the sale.

Always Be Closing

ABC! It's just a state of mind that says when you are in with a client you should always be closing for something: the next appointment, a presentation, a call back. You should never leave the client without some form of commitment. ABC is to

remind yourself that when you walk in to the potential client you have to come out with something. You can't walk out of the sale without closing on something.

There are some wiseguys, clients who are themselves salespeople, who say, "Are you trying to close me on everything here?" I love it! The biggest compliment you can get as a salesperson is when someone says, "Boy you're persistent, and you don't give up!"

To aim is not enough; you must hit!

—German Proverb

Most people have no idea that you are using the OPEN Question Selling Technique or closing them. It's only people who do it for a living that say, "Wait a minute, this guy is really selling to me here." Most people go along with the conversation.

And we're all doing it to each other. We don't know we're doing it, but we're all trying to get confirmation of something. When I want to go to the movies and I want my wife to go with me, I have to close her on going to the movies. I can do it by saying, "Do you want to come to the movies with me?" and she can say either yes or no. Or I can say, "Hey, wouldn't it be great if we could sneak out early from work and see a fabulous movie? Would you like to do that?" In this case, there's more chance that she would agree to it because it sounds good, as opposed to just blandly asking if she would like to join me. Or I could go one step further, and say, "Hey wouldn't it be great if we could stop work early?" and she says yes. And then

I could build it up: “And we could go see a movie!” We’re all trying to get people to say yes to us, but some don’t do it very well and they get a lot of nos. Other people do it very well and get a lot of yeses. It’s all about how we set it up!

So experiment with closing. Try it with your own family and friends. The next time you want someone to do something, don’t just ask the person to do it without consciously closing—think about how to close the person! Build up to it—ask in a way that will make the person say, “Yes!”

Closing for Commitment

Basically, we need commitment from people at every level. We need to get commitment that they will do something to take the sale to the next level, whether it is signing the purchase order, agreeing to a delivery date, or purchasing a service agreement. You want the clients to be nodding their heads and agreeing to take action.

And surprisingly this comes from within you. It is impossible to read this book and be an outstanding salesperson if you don’t have commitment in your own life. In other words, you have to keep your own word in order for your customers to keep theirs. Remember the Law of Attraction that we discussed earlier? Your thoughts create actions and more importantly they attract people with similar thoughts and actions—so if you are chronically late to meetings, you will attract other people who are also late to meetings—just begin to notice it and you will see it is true.

Here’s a list of questions for you to answer:

1. When you say you are going to do something, you:
 - a) always do it.
 - b) sometimes do it.
 - c) never do it.
2. How do you feel about yourself?
 - a) I am amazing.
 - b) I am okay.
 - c) I am not okay.
3. Other people say that I am:
 - a) a great person.
 - b) an average person.
 - c) not such a great person.

Hopefully you have answered most of those questions as A's or a mix of A's and B's, because the most important commitment you can make is to yourself. And if you have answered C for most of the questions, then now is the time to let it go. Yes, that's right, just let go of your negative judgment about yourself and commit to being positive right now. And that does not mean being positive that you have a negative judgment about yourself. It means being positive that you have a positive judgment about yourself.

What you think about yourself is what others will see. So let's make a list of things that you can commit to for yourself:

- **Sales Commitment #1: Create a great professional appearance.** Commit yourself to always looking and behaving as a professional expert. That means dressing

the part, walking the part, and talking the part. Think of yourself as a professional and you will look like one. Walk with confidence and dress like a CEO, because if you want your clients to take your advice regarding your product or service, you have to be appropriately groomed. When you walk with confidence, people will buy from you based more on your conviction and enthusiasm for your product than on your product knowledge.

- **Sales Commitment #2: Talk less—ask more.** Every time you talk, you tell. When you ask questions, you get your clients to talk and that's what you want. You want them to talk about their needs so you can find out about their problems and the effect of those problems. Only then can you guide them to the right product or service.
- **Sales Commitment #3: Use positive vocabulary.** Words create pictures and while certain words are positive, other words can turn people off. For example, the word “contract” creates a vision of a legally binding document that requires legal efforts. If possible, call your contract an agreement, a form, or paperwork. The mental image is less threatening. So think about words that create positive word-picture images.
- **Sales Commitment #4: Build rapport.** People buy from people they trust, so always build rapport before getting into your presentation. Do this by asking operational questions that get the clients to talk about themselves and their business so that you have a better understanding of who they are.
- **Sales Commitment #5: Qualify the sale.** Not everyone you talk to is a good candidate for your

product or service. If they don't have the need or the money for your product or service, there is no sale. The sooner you figure this out the less time you will waste. By asking operational questions, you will quickly find out if they are qualified to purchase your product or service.

- **Sales Commitment #6: Know when to stop presenting and close the sale.** Many salespeople think they have to tell a client everything they know about the product even after a client has indicated the product is what they need. Using the OPEN questioning technique will help you recognize the ideal time to stop talking and start closing.
- **Sales Commitment #7: Be of service.** Take the dollar signs out of your eyes and start thinking about being of service. When the clients feel you are being of service to them and their needs, they are more likely to do business with you.
- **Sales Commitment #8: Know how to close.** Ask for the sale. "If I have the one you said you liked, do you want to take it with you today or have it shipped?" or "How do you want to make this purchase today—by cash, check, or credit card?"
- **Sales Commitment #9: Pay attention to details.** Every presentation is new to your client so don't skip over details just because you've done it so many times that you are bored by it. Present with enthusiasm and cover all the details, unless your client indicates otherwise. This is especially important when handling your paperwork, because missing information can cause clients to quickly lose faith in their decision and

walk away from the sale—not to mention the hours of work it will take your co-workers to try to decipher the paperwork.

- **Sales Commitment #10: Ensure proper fulfillment.**

This is about paying attention to details. If you or your company doesn't have the practices and policies in place to properly fulfill the expectations you gave your clients, you will find yourself working harder and harder to get new business. Invest time and effort in standardizing procedures that can be followed by everyone who works with you. Make promises you and your company can meet and then work to meet or exceed them.

Oldies and Goodies

There are some great tried-and-true closing techniques that have been around for years. And if you've done a really good job of needs development by using the OPEN Question Technique, then closing comes very easily without using tricks.

Closing is really very simple and natural. The secret to success is in making sure that the sale is always advancing toward a commitment to proceed further. First use operational and probing questions to uncover difficulties and dissatisfactions and start to build your product as a solution. Then use effect questions to make the problems more important to the client, and finally, use nail-down questions so that client interest is focused on the value of the solution.

One of the most important stages of selling is closing because it is about the actions you take to gain agreement of the

sale. There are many closing techniques in sales, which are prescribed actions that salespeople take to persuade the customer to make the necessary commitment. Here are some oldies and goodies:

- **Affordable Close.** Ensure people can afford what you are selling: “We’ve talked about the cost-benefit ratio, so let’s go ahead with the paperwork.”
- **1-2-3 Close.** Close with the principle of three: “It comes in green, red, or black; which one would you like?”
- **Alternative Close.** Offer a limited set of choices: “Would you like the stand-alone model or the built-in system?”
- **Assumptive Close.** Act as if the client is ready to decide: “I take it we can go ahead now?”
- **Balance-Sheet Close.** Add up the pros and the cons: “We’ve weighed the pros and cons, and this will definitely improve your bottom line—when do you want it installed?”
- **Best-Time Close.** Emphasize that now is the best time to buy: “This is an excellent time to use this system, so let’s get started with the paperwork.”
- **Bonus Close.** Offer an incentive to clinch the deal: “And if you purchase today, you also get the additional guarantee; here are the forms.”
- **Middle Close.** Make three offers—with the target in the middle: “We’ve got three choices—the larger one is most likely too much for your needs, and the smaller one doesn’t give you everything you asked for; the

middle one, however, is exactly the right solution, so let's go ahead with the paperwork."

- **Calendar Close.** Put it in the diary: "Okay we can get this installed early next week."
- **Companion Close.** Sell to the person with the client: "I know you've been paying close attention to the conversation; if you agree this is the right solution we can get the paperwork started today."
- **Compliment Close.** Flatter the client into submission: "I like the way you think and this seems the best solution for your needs; let's get the paperwork handled."
- **Concession Close.** Give the client a concession in exchange for the close: "I really think this will work best for you, and we can reduce the delivery cost by 20 percent by putting the order in today."
- **Conditional Close.** Link closure to resolving objections: "It looks like we resolved all the issues you talked about; let's get the paperwork handled now."
- **Demonstration Close.** Show the client the goods: "I'd like to show you how this works and then if you like it, we can go ahead with the agreement."
- **Economic Close.** Help the client pay less for your product or service: "I think if we put this order through today, we can still get the discounted rate."
- **Emotion Close.** Trigger identified emotions: "Sounds like this is something that will really help everyone feel more secure. Let's go ahead with the paperwork."
- **Golden Bridge Close.** Make the only option attractive: "Everyone who has this system agrees with your analysis; it's the best on the market. All we have to do is complete this form."

- **Humor Close.** Relax the client with humor: “I think you’ve come up with more benefits for the product than I have. Shall we go ahead and complete the paperwork?”
- **Hurry Close.** Go fast to stop the client from thinking too much: “Looks like we’ve covered everything you need; all we have to do now is decide on delivery dates.”
- **No-Hassle Close.** Make it as easy as possible: “We’ve done the hard part—making the decision; now all we have to do is complete the paperwork.”
- **Now-or-Never Close.** Hurry things up: “We only have a few more in stock, so let’s get the paperwork started.”
- **Ownership Close.** Act as if the client owns what you are selling: “When you take delivery, you’ll wonder how you survived without it.”
- **Quality Close.** Sell on quality, not on price: “Everyone who has purchased this system says it’s the very best on the market.”
- **Repetition Close.** Repeat a closing action several times: “To summarize, you’ve agreed on the style, the size, and the color, so let’s handle the paperwork.”
- **Retrial Close.** Go back to square one: “I know you said you’re first objective was productivity and we agreed it will increase by up to 250 percent with this product, so let’s set some key installation dates.”
- **Selective-Deafness Close.** Respond only to what you want to hear: “From what I hear you saying, you want this delivered as soon as possible; how does next week sound?”

- **Standing-Room-Only Close.** Show how others are queuing up to buy: “It’s been a real winner so let’s get you on the delivery schedule as soon as possible.”
- **Summary Close.** Describe all the extras the client is going to receive: “With this you will also receive guarantees, warranties, and free installation; here’s the agreement we need to complete.”
- **Testimonial Close.** Use a happy customer to convince the new customer: “You can talk to anyone in the industry and they’ll tell you it’s amazing. The only question left is deciding on a delivery date.”
- **Trial Close.** See if the client is ready for a close: “If we can guarantee all the figures we discussed, are you ready to go ahead today?”
- **Ultimatum Close.** Show negative consequences of not buying: “I’d hate to see you miss this opportunity; shall we just get the agreement covered?”
- **Yes-Set Close.** Get the client saying “yes” and the client will keep saying “yes”: “I know you said yes to the benefits and yes to the solution; all we need now is a yes on the terms.”

As you can see, the list of closing techniques is almost endless, and all it really takes is for you to ask for the order. Go into the call expecting to close on something. Commit the client to do something, to take some action. There’s a saying that you sell on the tangibles and you close on the intangibles. In other words, when it comes to the close, if you have helped the customers feel they can trust you, if you have asked the right OPEN questions, then the only way to go is to buy your product.

So use the oldies and goodies in terms of closing techniques and then remember that when you sell from your heart, you are not really closing the sale, you also are opening an amazing solution for your client.

OPEN SKILL

Write down the closing technique that feels most comfortable to you.

**There's no such thing as coulda, shoulda,
or woulda. If you shoulda and coulda, you
woulda done it.**

—Pat Riley

What Has Always Absolutely Worked

Simply ask for the order. Stop worrying, stop talking to yourself, stop selling more benefits, stop asking questions;

this is the time to be strong and say, “So I take it we can go ahead.”

When I was new at this game, I was told to ask for the order and shut up. I remember trying to sell a copier. I went through everything—the needs, the benefits, the demonstration—and I got to the end and said, “So I take it we can go ahead!” And this guy didn’t say anything; he just looked at me, and because there was a silence I freaked out and I started going over everything I had already talked about. Then, because he still didn’t say anything, I started rambling incoherently until he looked at me like I was an idiot and started asking me all these questions. In the end I walked away with nothing. It was really embarrassing, and it was only after I got out of his office that I realized I had fallen into the trap of the silence.

All that he was doing was thinking about it. He had to make a decision and he was thinking it over, weighing the pros and cons. But I couldn’t bear the silence, so I stepped into the trap. The biggest killer for salespeople is to ask for the order and then continue to talk. The biggest strength for the salesperson is to ask for the order and then make sure that the next person to speak is not you.

Of the mental hazards, being scared is the worst. When you get scared, you get tense.

—Sam Snead

Silence is a great tool. All you have to do is make sure you are in charge of it and not your client.

A manager once went out on a sales call with a young man and forced him to ask for the order and then shut up. He'd seen him do his sales pitch and then it was time to ask for the order. The client took a couple of seconds and then said, "Yes, I think we'll go ahead." In response, the young salesperson just screamed out, "Yes!" He was so happy he'd forgotten where he was for a moment, which of course made the client burst out laughing, and pretty soon everyone was laughing. The sale went ahead and so did my career. I was that young man!

Selling is a profession based upon a particular set of skills. The strategy described in this book utilizes a questioning technique called OPEN to lead to successful completion of a sale. It requires practice, but when you feel comfortable using it in a one-to-one relationship with a client, your performance as a professional will rocket. By using OPEN, you will gain your client's commitment and

OPEN SKILL

Write down one thing that you have learned from this book that will absolutely create the best success in sales for you.

achieve the goal of being one of the most amazing salespeople on the planet. It's a great profession, a skillful profession, and one that will last forever, because when it all comes down to it, no company can survive without salespeople. So determine to be the best!

SKILLS COACHING

We have repeated throughout this book that you have to practice sales. Why? Because selling is part of your everyday life. We are all selling all the time. Some people know it and others have no clue. Be that person who has a clue. Open your heart and be the best salesperson you can be. Practice getting commitment and closing the important deals in your life. Here's a way to practice:

1. Choose one thing that you really want to happen.
2. Choose the one person who can most help you achieve it.
3. Determine the best way to close this person on agreeing with your needs.
4. Remember your sales tools.
5. Finally, remember gratitude. Every morning when you awaken, give thanks for being alive and being able to have another amazing sales day!

Being a salesperson is like being a business warrior. You are out there communicating with people from all walks of life, some who enjoy meeting with salespeople and others who do not. Your job is to put people at ease so they trust you are going to provide them with an amazing solution that is guaranteed to work at an amazing price. Without you, there would be very little business. You are the heart of the company, so put your heart into it. And remember, if you paddle with the flow of the river, you will reach your goal much faster and more easily than if you paddle against it. Good luck and good selling!

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