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Selling to the Modern Buyer with the Sandler Rules

By **David Mattson**

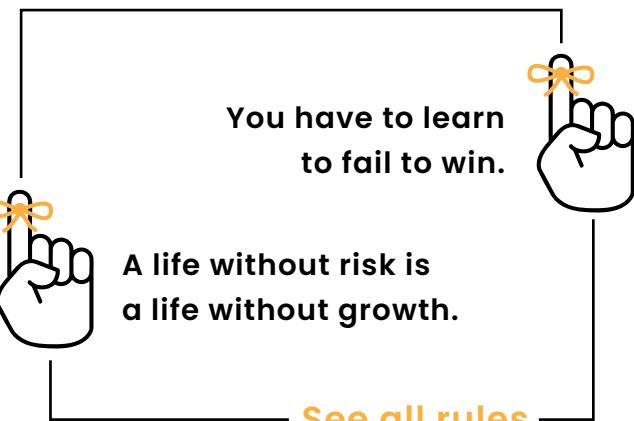
President and CEO, Sandler

David Sandler, the founder of our company and the man I was fortunate enough to call my mentor, gave all salespeople a truly great gift. He challenged us all to think about our everyday interactions with buyers as being governed by a clear set of rules.

Success
is a matter
of learning
and following
these rules.

— David Sandler

Where other selling “experts” focused on scripts, contrived scenarios, and tricky turnarounds, David took a different approach. He knew from personal experience that memorizing scripts, scenarios, and turnarounds doesn’t work – and that even when those things seem to work, that only



happens in situations where we were going to get the sale anyway.

He knew that the effort so many salespeople expend on trying to master the ping-pong game of “when they say this, you say that” is a waste of precious time.

The reality is that the ping-pong game doesn't really work in sales -- or in sales leadership, for that matter -- because whether we're a salesperson talking to a buyer or a sales leader talking to a salesperson, we're always dealing with our fellow human beings.

There are two or more independent humans taking part in a conversation. They each have a lot of choices open to them. They are each making their own decisions based on their own unique perception of what's going on in the relationship.

We can't expect to regurgitate a series of lines that will create a successful relationship -- one that reliably delivers sales revenue. What we can do, though, is build up our own self-sufficiency. We can create an environment of agility, an environment that gives us the flexibility we need to insert our own personality authentically into the decision-making journey. We can initiate and guide a conversation that makes choices feel safe and transparency between the parties much more likely. And we can close a lot more sales as a result.

There really are clear rules for making that kind of conversation, and that kind of relationship, a reality. These rules are based on David Sandler's revolutionary selling system.

They are career-changing and life-changing. Learning them and implementing them is far more effective, far more fulfilling, and far less stressful, than trying to manipulate buyers with scripts and scenarios. Such techniques are simply too ineffective to use with the modern buyer.

David believed in conversational selling. His rules are the principles that make successful conversational sales possible. They are proven and timeless. The Sandler Rules you will find on pages 8 through 11 bring his guiding principles confidently into the current moment.

The basic tenets that guided David Sandler's work and made his selling system legendary across all major industries have not changed, but other things certainly have.

The buyer journey has changed, the technology has changed, the way we interact with our customers has changed, and the social and cultural norms have certainly changed. So has the need for a truly global expression of these rules, since so many salespeople now sell across national borders in a way that was not quite as common when Sandler launched his system and his company.

Our new book, *How to Sell to the Modern Buyer: 52 Sandler Rules for Sales Success*, captures the essence of David's life work helping salespeople to be the best they can possibly be. It empowers you to put his transformational ideas into practice in today's ever-changing selling environment.

What does conversational selling look, feel, and sound like in an information-rich, multi-platform, globally connected, hyper-competitive world? What philosophy makes enduring success in such an environment possible?

When you were a kid, it's likely you were given all kinds of rules designed to help you out in specific situations where you might get stuck. For instance: "I before E, except after C, or when sounded as A, as in neighbor, or weigh." A rule like that doesn't try to tell you how to spell every word; it's just there for you when you need it. David Sandler took the same approach in designing his rules. Sandler always wanted to give salespeople the opportunity to express their own personality, and he also trusted them to be flexible and adapt themselves to the buyer and the specific sales situation. His rules are always there if you need them, though, and always available to help you navigate the situations where you are most likely to get stuck. ■





See all 52 Sandler Rules

THE SANDLER RULES FOR SALES SUCCESS

David Sandler challenged us all to think about our everyday interactions with buyers as being governed by a clear set of rules.

Attitude —



Your perception, beliefs, and outlook about yourself, your organization, and the marketplace, have a huge impact on how you sell and what you are willing to do to succeed.

Sales Philosophy

1. Sales is a conversation between adults to uncover the truth.
2. If your competition does it, stop doing it right away.
3. Slow down the process to speed up the sale.
4. People don't argue with their own data.

Equal Business Stature

5. Establish and maintain equal business stature.
6. Your time is worth no more or less than your buyer's.
7. No free consulting.
8. Sell like you don't need the business.
9. Save something for the presentation.

Comfort Zone

10. You can only perform consistently with how you see yourself conceptually.
11. A life without risk is a life without growth.
12. You have to learn to fail to win.
13. No one gets into your head without your permission.

Behavior



Your goals, plans, and actions determine how often you do the right things at the right time and place. It is a result of your discipline, vitality, and guts that determine how quickly and consistently you will succeed.

Overcoming Call Reluctance

- 14.** You don't have to like prospecting. You just have to do it.
- 15.** Every unsuccessful contact earns compound interest.
- 16.** It's unethical to sell someone something they don't need, and it's unethical not to sell someone something they need.
- 17.** Salespeople get paid to work in adverse conditions.

Behavior Plan

- 18.** Do the behaviors and the results will follow.
- 19.** The strength of your conviction is proportional to the size of your pipeline.
- 20.** Time kills deals.
- 21.** SW4 (Some will. Some won't. So what? Someone's waiting.)
- 22.** When your foot hurts, you're probably standing on your own toe.

Technique



Your strategies, tactics, and personal presence while executing your behaviors impact the effectiveness of those actions. It can have a dramatic effect on your overall success and affect your attitude over time.

Communication

- 23.** You can't not communicate.
- 24.** Leverage technology to engage, not to hide.
- 25.** The most important subject people like to talk about is themselves.

Technique *(continued)*



Up-Front Contract

- 26.** No mutual mystification.
- 27.** When you want to know the future, bring it back to the present.
- 28.** Never make a move without commitment.

Prospecting

- 29.** When prospecting, go for the appointment.
- 30.** You can't lose anything you don't have.

Pain

- 31.** You can't sell anybody anything. They must discover they want it.
- 32.** The problem the buyer brings you is never the real problem.
- 33.** No pain, no sale.
- 34.** Stop selling features and benefits.

Questioning

- 35.** If the salesperson is talking, the buyer isn't buying.
- 36.** The professional does what they did as a novice – on purpose.
- 37.** Answer every question with a question.
- 38.** Don't get stuck in reverse.
- 39.** Never answer an unasked question.
- 40.** Express your feelings through third-party stories.

Investment

- 41.** Money isn't the only investment.
- 42.** Exhaust your list of concessions before you discount the price.

Decision

- 43.** Only decision-makers can get others to make decisions.
- 44.** People pay attention when they have to make a decision.
- 45.** Qualify hard, close easy.

Technique (continued)



Presentation

- 46.** The best sales presentation you will ever give the prospect will never see.
- 47.** Don't paint seagulls in your buyer's picture.
- 48.** Sell today, educate tomorrow.
- 49.** A decision not to make a decision is a decision.

Post-Sale

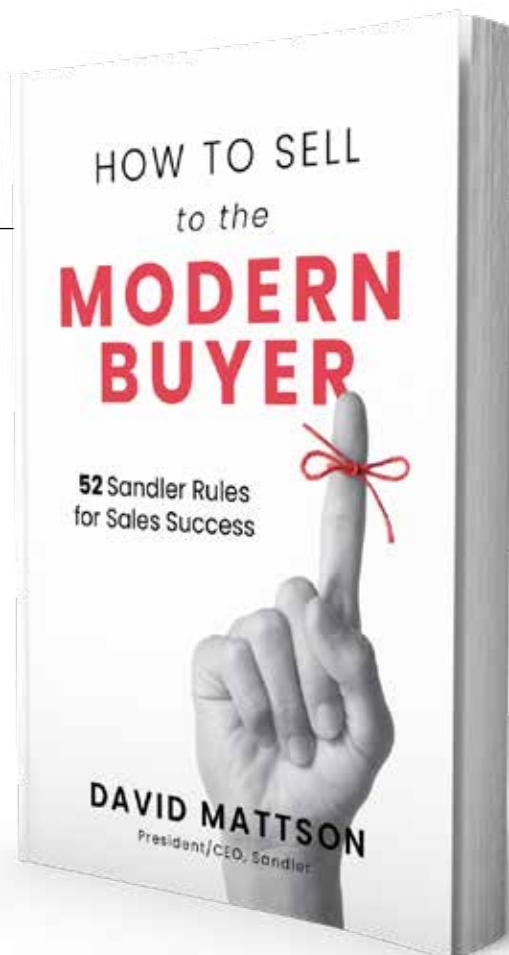
- 50.** Don't buy back tomorrow what you sold today.
- 51.** The best time to deal with a customer's complaint is before they make one.
- 52.** Money does grow on trees: referral trees.

Get the Book

Learn the Sandler Rules. Follow them. Live them. Make them how you do business. If you're a sales leader, make them how your team does business. You'll be glad you did.

PURCHASE >

Get your copy of the book.



Is Setting a Vision Just for Big Companies?

By **David Hiatt and Susan Sykes**

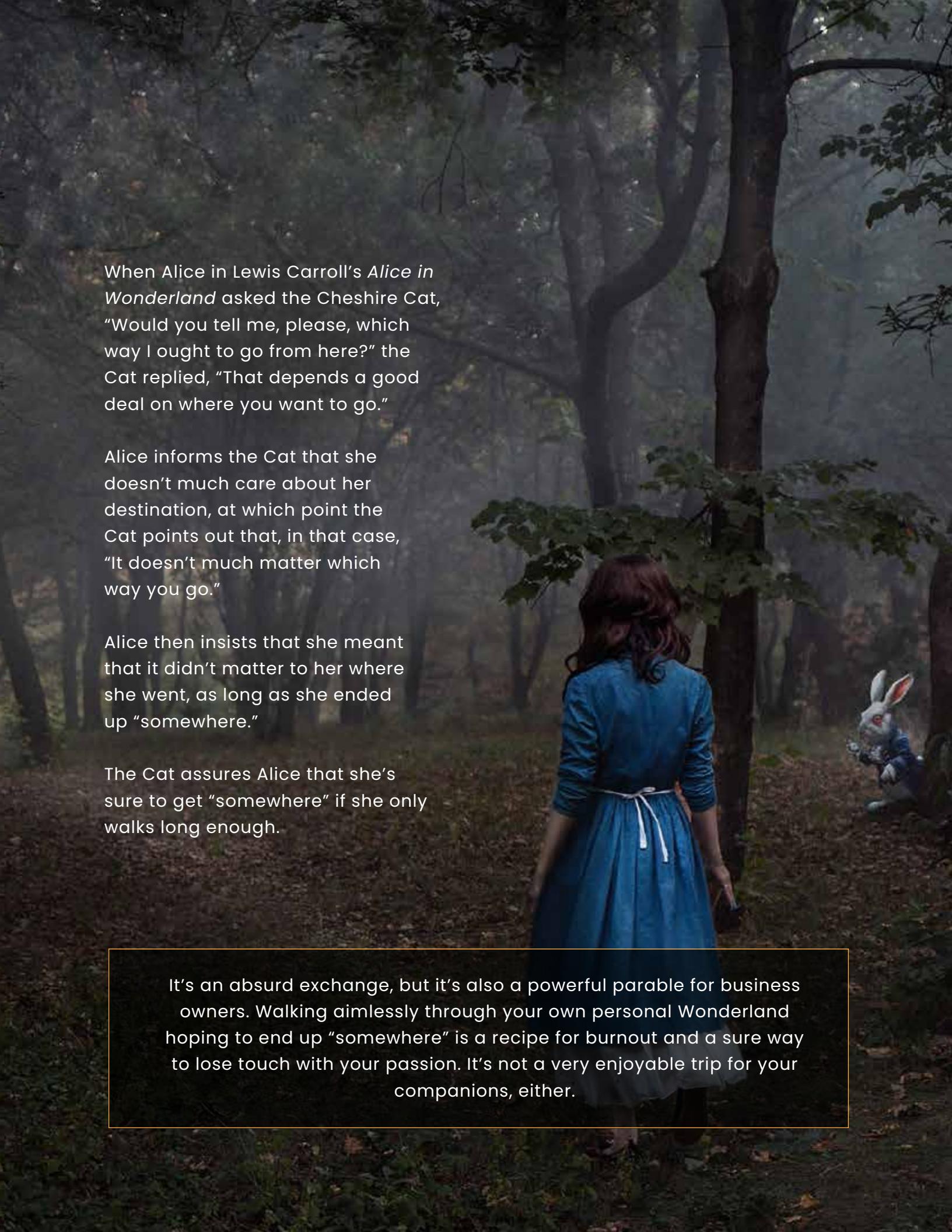
If you are the owner/operator of a small business, we have some important questions for you to consider.

- 1. What is your personal vision for your life?**
- 2. What kind of leader do you want to be?**
- 3. What is your vision for your company?**
- 4. What is its mission?**
- 5. How does the company mission tie into your personal mission?**
- 6. Why do you get up in the morning?**
- 7. If you have employees, why do they come to work each day?**
- 8. What is the purpose of your organization?**

These are big questions that need asking and answering—and they are not just for big companies.

The common belief that setting a vision is something only big companies do is a passion killer, rooted in the assumption that personal goals and dreams are not connected to company goals and

that they are not as important for smaller businesses as they are for larger ones. This is simply untrue. A business of any size without a mission or a vision is at a competitive disadvantage.

A dark, atmospheric illustration of Alice in Wonderland. In the foreground, Alice, with long brown hair tied back, wears a blue dress and stands with her back to the viewer, looking towards a large tree. To her right, a white rabbit with red eyes sits on the ground, looking up at her. The background is filled with dense, dark trees and foliage.

When Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* asked the Cheshire Cat, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" the Cat replied, "That depends a good deal on where you want to go."

Alice informs the Cat that she doesn't much care about her destination, at which point the Cat points out that, in that case, "It doesn't much matter which way you go."

Alice then insists that she meant that it didn't matter to her where she went, as long as she ended up "somewhere."

The Cat assures Alice that she's sure to get "somewhere" if she only walks long enough.

It's an absurd exchange, but it's also a powerful parable for business owners. Walking aimlessly through your own personal Wonderland hoping to end up "somewhere" is a recipe for burnout and a sure way to lose touch with your passion. It's not a very enjoyable trip for your companions, either.

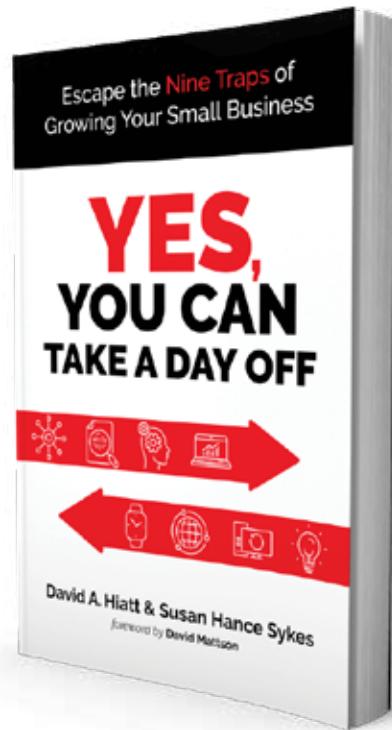
As a business owner, you have the privilege of choosing your direction. You also get to choose who, if anyone, you want to accompany you on the trip.

If you dream of being a sole practitioner with a handful of clients and a lifestyle business, that's fine.

If your dream is to build a multimillion-dollar corporation, or for that matter a multibillion-dollar corporation, that's fine, too.

Just be clear on what you want. Own it! These are, potentially, great choices, as long as they are emotionally powerful for you and as long as they connect to what author and inspirational speaker Simon Sinek calls your "big WHY"—a purpose or calling that inspires you enough to change your world, and the world around you, for the better.

Whether your business is just you, you and a few, or you and a huge team, your goals and dreams matter. You get to choose your goals and dreams, and you get to say why you are choosing to move in that direction. Setting a clear vision ensures that you are moving forward with purpose. ■



SAMPLE >

Read a free sample chapter.

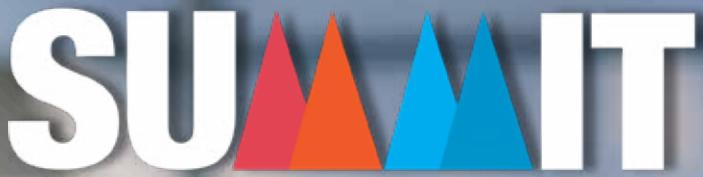
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5 SIMPLE STEPS TO A WORLD-CLASS Discovery Process

By **Mike Montague**

Every effective sales process incorporates a discovery phase. This is the part of our engagement with the buyer where we figure out who we're dealing with, what their problem is, whether we can solve it, whether a budget exists to address that problem, and what the decision making process looks like.

The more robust the discovery phase, the smoother the rest of the process goes, and the better your decisions about whether and how to pursue the deal are going to be.

Here are five strategies we share with our clients that set up a **world-class discovery process**.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white shirt and a black headband, is smiling broadly. She is leaning over a white desk, writing in a spiral-bound notebook with a yellow pen. There are several yellow sticky notes scattered on the desk next to the notebook.

**How many of these
can you build into your
sales process?**

#1 Get permission to ask questions.

For each discussion, set a clear agenda that establishes the ground rules. By “ground rules” I mean: what the purpose of the meeting is, what your expectations are, what the buyer’s expectations are likely to be, how long the meeting will last, and what the possible outcomes of the discussion are.

As part of that “ground rules” discussion, it makes sense to say something like the following: “I’m sure you’re going to have a lot of questions for me as we move forward, and of course I want you to feel free to ask me those questions.

On my side, I know I have a number of questions as well, and I’m hoping you’re okay with me posing those questions today, so we can figure out exactly what we’re looking at and whether it makes sense to continue the conversation. Is all that okay?”

It’s surprising how few salespeople make this up-front agreement part of their routine. If you don’t get permission to ask questions, you run the risk of having the buyer take control of the meeting! A patient doesn’t get to take control of a meeting with a doctor; the buyer doesn’t get to take control of the meeting with you.



If you don’t get permission to ask questions, you run the risk of having the buyer take control of the meeting.

#2 Qualify for Pain.

When we say “pain,” we’re talking about a problem that carries an emotional impact of some kind for the buyer. The rule here is a simple one: No pain, no sale. Here’s a famous sequence of questions David Sandler created that has been helping

salespeople qualify pain for decades. It’s just as powerful today as it was when he first shared it. We call it the Pain Funnel. You can use it whenever you think you’ve identified an inkling of a pain point.

Qualifying Questions:

- “Tell me more about that ...”
- “Can you be more specific?”
- “Give me an example ...”
- “How long has that been a problem?”
- “What have you tried to do about that?”
- “Has anything you’ve tried worked?”
- “How much do you think this has cost you?”
- “How do you feel about how much this has cost you?”
- “What kind of trouble does that cause you?”
- “Have you given up trying to deal with this problem?”

If you *cannot* identify a business problem that you know you and your organization can fix, a problem that the buyer is committed to addressing, then this is not a qualified opportunity.

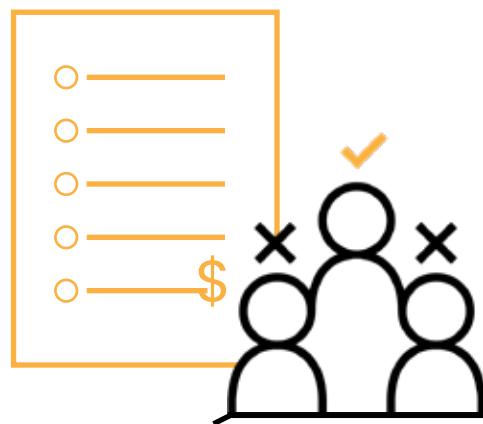
Your discovery process needs to stop, at least for the time being. On the other hand, if you can identify that kind of problem, your next goal is to ...

#3 Qualify for Budget.

Is there money available to solve this problem? A lot of salespeople postpone this essential question until late in the process, but that's in no one's best interests, certainly not yours as the sales professional. Ask directly about the money during your discovery process. If there's no budget to solve the problem, you are not looking at a qualified opportunity.

#4 Qualify for Decision-Making Process.

You know there's pain—and the desire to make it go away. You know there's money available to fix the problem that's causing the pain. Next question: Do you know what steps have to happen internally, and with whom, for those funds to be allocated? This issue is just as essential to qualify as pain and budget. If you cannot get clarity about how the buyer will make this decision, this is not a qualified opportunity. So get clarity!



LAST BUT NOT LEAST

#5 Get their fingerprints on your solution.

The fifth step of a world-class discovery process is one that too many sales professionals skip: co-creating solutions with the buyer or the buying team. Once you get to the presentation, there should be no surprises. If you are creating your presentation in secret, and you're expecting to launch it on your buyer like the Normandy invasion, you're going to have a problem. A better approach is to make sure that your buyer is by your side, creating the

solution along with you, every step of the way, giving you feedback, ideas, and internal terminology. When they see your solution in the document or on a PowerPoint slide, that should not be the first time they've ever seen it! Remember, you're not going for the "Wow" effect. That's what amateurs look for when they give a presentation. We're professionals. What we're looking for is, "Yes, that's exactly what we talked about." ■

Follow these simple steps, and you will be implementing a robust, world-class discovery phase...and you will close more and bigger sales as a result.

WHY SALESPEOPLE FAIL >

Get the guide that shows you why salespeople fail, and what you can do about it.



Effective Sales Coaching with the Sandler Success Triangle

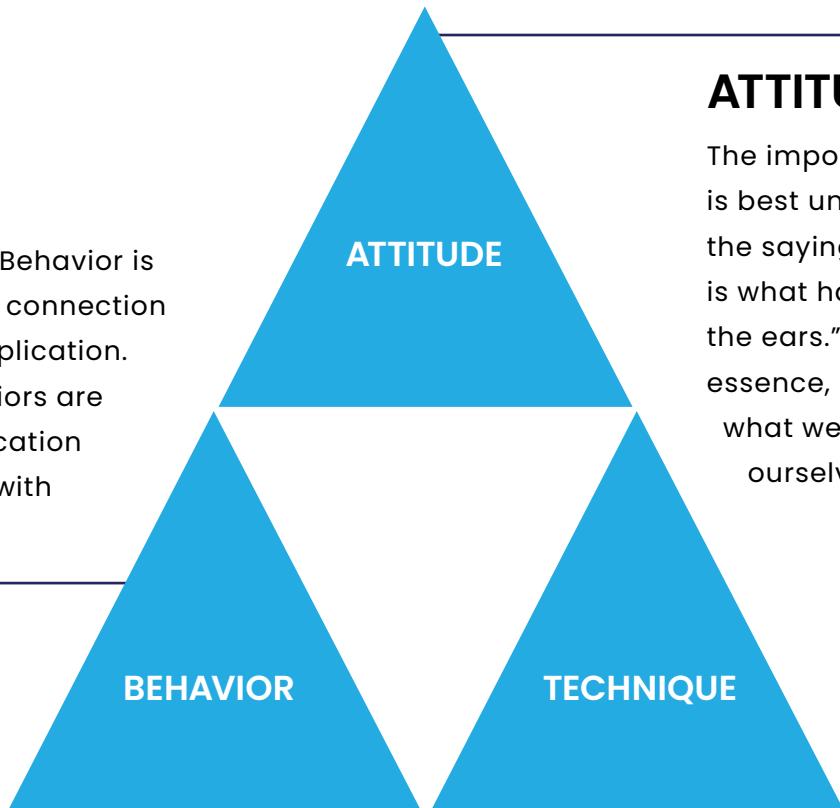
By **Bill Bartlett**

The three points on the Sandler Success Triangle are Behavior, Attitude, and Technique. These three points create a roadmap for high performance.

BEHAVIOR

The importance of Behavior is best understood in connection with the idea of application.

The optimal behaviors are the real time application of mastered skills, with the right Attitude.



The corners of the success triangle connect to each other, as you may have noticed.

ATTITUDE

The importance of Attitude is best understood through the saying, "90% of success is what happens between the ears." Attitude is, in essence, our self-concept: what we believe about ourselves and our world.

TECHNIQUE

The importance of Technique is best understood through the concept of mastery. Skills that have been mastered can, given the right attitude, be implemented and put to good use.

Very often, we see that the most effective coaching sessions tend to focus on the Behavior corner of the Success Triangle, perhaps because changes in a measurable behavior are usually easy to quantify.

To the right, you'll find a list of the typical top ten sales behaviors for salespeople. Notice that the list can be considered either a list of skills—that which is learned—or a list of behaviors—that which is executed during the course of the selling day—depending on which aspect the coach chooses to emphasize.

Each of these behaviors should have a clear expectation of performance associated with it. Identifying strategies for measurable improvement in one of these ten areas is a good goal for just about any coaching session.

The Behavior corner of the Success Triangle is the starting point for success, so the salesperson must have a clear understanding of the top 10 behaviors that must consistently be performed on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. These behaviors must be executed with unconditional commitment and high performers understand the importance of turning these behaviors into specific measurable goals. Goals without plans are daydreams! Each behavior must have a clear strategic plan serving as a roadmap and finally must be placed on a calendar to monitor its execution. This is how we put the Success Triangle into action as a coaching tool! ■

- 1** **Business development/lead generation:**
Prospecting, the number one behavior that drives all the others.
- 2** **Building relationships:**
Establishing a strong, open relationship based on trust.
- 3** **Qualifying the opportunity:**
Determining a reason to do business.
- 4** **Making presentations/closing sales:**
Presenting solutions to the prospect's problems.
- 5** **Servicing customers:**
Delivering superior customer satisfaction.
- 6** **Account management:**
Maximizing business in each account.
- 7** **Territory development:**
Building a strategy to grow the territory.
- 8** **Demonstrating a behavior plan:**
Establishing measurably productive sales activity.
- 9** **Continuous education:**
Developing ongoing product, market, and sales knowledge.
- 10** **Executing a sales methodology:**
Mastering the sales process.

Unrecognized Pain in the Qualification Process

Recently, we sat down with Sandler trainer, author, and thought leader Jody Williamson to discuss best practices in discovery for professional salespeople.

Here's what he had to say.



Q: You've been writing and speaking a lot lately about this term "unrecognized pain." What, exactly does that mean?

A: Well, if you look at the Sandler process, pain is a core concept. It's familiar to anyone who has spent any time at all studying Sandler principles. Pain is the emotional response to some problem buyers have in their world. It's been described as the distance between where the buyer is and where the buyer wants to be.

Q: Right. None of that has changed in your view, I'm guessing?

A: None of that has changed at all. It's just that there are different kinds of pain. There are the pains we uncover pretty easily when we show up in the selling role, the consulting role, if you will. That's the first kind of pain. We ask a question: "Hey, what are your issues?" And they say. "Oh, our main issue is A, and we're also concerned about B." They know it already. And we agree with them. We think they've diagnosed it correctly. We both agree the pain exists. So then the question is, do they want to fix it? If they do, maybe they want to fix it with us. Pretty straightforward. That's the first kind of pain. Nothing wrong with any of that. It's important to be able to lead that conversation, and as professional salespeople, we need to know how to do that. We need to be able to get people to open up and share what their pain is.

Q: What's the second kind?

A: What I've found is that the really great salespeople can talk to people who don't fully recognize the second kind of pain, which I call unrecognized pain. If you think about it, you realize that a lot of people out there don't even know that they have pain. Either they're in denial for some reason, or they haven't yet connected the dots.

A: It's kind of like if I go to the dentist for my exam and the dentist says, "Have you had any problems?" I might say, "I've been having some pain on a tooth on the right side, all the way at the back of my lower jaw." And the dentist might say, "Let's take a look." Then he does the exam, and a few minutes later, he says, "Yep, you've got a cavity back there." That's the first kind of pain. But there's another kind of exchange that can happen at the dentist's office.

Q: What's that?

A: The dentist can say "Have you had any problems?" And I might say, "Nope. All good. No problems at all." But instead of just taking my word for it, the dentist does what a good dentist is supposed to do: conduct an exam and see what's really going on in my mouth. He does the exam. He takes X-rays. And then he says, "Well, you know, you may think there are no problems, but I have to tell you, I just found something. There's a problem here we're going to need to fix. You just aren't feeling it yet." And I think the truly great salespeople are a little bit like that dentist in the second situation. They can identify things the buyer isn't feeling yet, but is going to feel before too long, and they can start a conversation about that.

Q: That's a great analogy.

A: It makes sense to think of sales that way, because as I said, a lot of people don't even know they have pain. It takes an expert to shine a spotlight on it. And the challenge is, you have to create a true consultant role to make that kind of conversation.

You have to establish yourself as the trusted advisor. If you're perceived as the stereotypical supplier or vendor, you can't have that conversation. So you need to learn how to position yourself that way, which is a matter of not just asking the right questions, but also doing the right pre-call planning and tracking down the relevant success stories. You want to be able to present the right third-party stories to confirm your expertise in your field of specialty. That's the equivalent of the certificate up on the dentist's wall. That's the proof that you know what you're doing. ■

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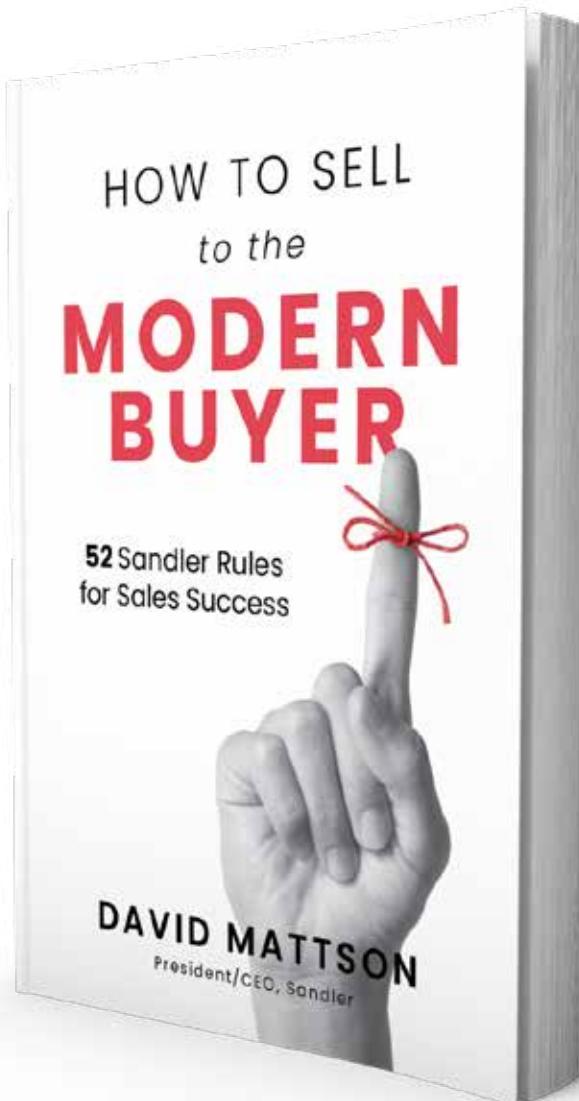
We stay at the forefront of our industry, constantly pushing the boundaries with innovative training solutions and thought leadership.

Success
is a matter
of learning
and following
these rules.

— David Sandler

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STARTING ON PAGE 08

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