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Sales Presentations:

Solving Problems and Filling Needs by
Increasing People's Desire to Buy



The Relationship Selling™ Series

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Mindset: Friend or Foe?

“Stage Fright” is what they call it in show business—that feeling of butterflies in your stomach that precedes a performance. The same nervousness often crops up when you raise your hand in a meeting to speak. The minute you are called on, the jitters set in.

In a sales presentation, the same phenomenon occurs. When it is really strong we call it “Call Reluctance,” and it can happen not only prior to a contact, but also in the opening moments of a sales presentation. Why? When you consider that we’re speaking on a topic that we know pretty well, what is it that makes us so nervous?

Our own mindset is to blame. We spend our time thinking about what we are going to say and how we will be perceived, instead of focusing on how we can help our clients see the value of our ideas. When you are focused on helping someone, your own nervousness goes away, and only when you start becoming more self-conscious does it return.

Let me make an important distinction here—there is a marked difference between what I mean by being “self-conscious” versus being “self-aware.”

Being self-aware means realizing how you are behaving, why you are behaving that way, and how it is coming across to others. Self-awareness is good. Self-consciousness, on the other hand, is when you have your consciousness—all your attention—focused on how you feel. *Awareness* in this sense is intellectual, logical, and rational. *Consciousness*, as used here, is emotional, illogical, and often irrational. Set aside your concerns about your own emotions and focus on your goal of helping your clients see the benefits you offer. Almost magically, your nervousness will go away, and you will become much better at presenting your ideas.

Show How You Bring Value

The Importance of Solving Problems

Former editor of the *Harvard Business Review* Ted Levitt said, “At their core, products are problem-solving tools. People buy products if they fulfill a problem-solving need.”

The thing that makes someone want to buy from you is the realization that you can solve his or her problem. Once

people see how they will gain value from doing business with you, their desire to buy increases. See the meaning in what you do, and so will they.

When you are presenting your solution to others, it will only matter to them to what extent it will solve their problem. Their “problem” is whatever they are faced with when they don’t have your product or service. It could be that they don’t have enough insurance coverage or their existing automobile isn’t as reliable or enjoyable as it could be. They might be wasting time due to out-of-date technology, not enjoying music as much as they could with your new instruments, not experiencing the health benefits of using your fitness facility, missing sales by not using your web-based marketing services, or any number of other “problems.” The key is to help them see the difference between what they have now and what they could have by doing business with you.

My friend Bill Staton is a financial advisor and wealth manager. I first met Bill and his wife Mary at a convention in Minneapolis when he was conducting a workshop for my colleagues in Speakers Roundtable. He was teaching us how to simplify our money management and investments while increasing the safety. He trademarked this model as America’s Finest Companies.

At the time, I was content with my own money management and certainly not seeking an advisor who lived on the opposite side of the country from me. (I’m in California and he’s in North Carolina.) But, as Bill described the value of freeing up my time and reducing my investment worries, I started to become interested. As he went on, offering specific examples of how his system had paid off for others, I began to listen more closely.

What got to me most was the logic of his system and his honesty in explaining it. He didn’t use any dramatic presentation techniques, fancy computer graphics, or coercive questioning. He simply told the story of how he developed his system, and then he showed the history of how well it worked—and I bought.

I have been a client of Bill and Mary Staton’s for over a decade now, and happily so. The reason I’m their client is that I trust them. I understand their thinking, see the strategy behind their process, and admire their openness in communicating with me. When a problem arises or the market takes an unexpected dive, they call their clients, arrange

a teleconference to discuss the situation, and answer our questions directly and honestly. When they have a new service, they explain the benefits I'll get by acquiring it. I trust them because they always seem to put me first. They don't try to persuade me to buy—rather they present the suggestion, show the benefits and limitations, and then recommend the action I should take. Instead of calling me to sell the virtues of some impressive investment product, they simply show me how I will get value from it in light of my own investment goals and current holdings. If I want to know more I can ask, but I usually don't find it necessary.

Note that I became Bill's client not because I was persuaded, but because I felt befriended. That is a major point. People buy from those they trust, not just from people who impress them with knowledge. When you think about your next sales presentation, think about how it will show the prospective buyer the value you are offering to them. Be their business friend—help them easily get what they want.

Here are the Vital Aspects of Sales Presentations:

- Your Mindset
- Your Knowledge of Your Subject (Your Product)
- Your Ability to Present Your Ideas Well
- Your Ability to Control the Circumstances
- Your Attentiveness to Your Customer
- Your Ability to Adapt to Differences in People
- Your Ability to Adapt to Changes in Situations
- Your Ability to Recover from Interruptions
- Your Confidence and Sincerity in Presenting

Your Mindset

The next time you see a speaker at a meeting or a pitchman on a TV commercial, take note as to whether they seem more interested in you or in their message. See if you can detect their mindset toward what they are doing—it is usually easy to tell when someone is truly trying to help you versus when they are simply trying to persuade you. The old school of selling was all about persuasion, but that was at a time in which customers knew little and sellers knew a lot. Today customers are often well informed and educated about your product. Many have already done their online shopping before connecting with you, and try-

ing to persuade them to buy would only increase their tension and resistance. Instead, you should be helping them make a good buying decision. Collaborate with them and help them fill their needs; be their business friend, not their master. When you approach this situation with the mindset of being their business friend, you will find their tension reducing and their desire to buy increasing.

Your Knowledge of Your Subject (Your Product)

Nothing can take the place of product knowledge. Those who aren't well acquainted with their products or services will be spotted in a second; their words may be smooth, but their sincerity is lacking. Take the time to learn all that you can about your offer. Study the history behind it, familiarize yourself with the technology, know your competitors, and gather stories from customers about their experiences with your product. The more you know, the more options you will have for ways to present that information effectively, and you will have a higher confidence level when it comes to addressing questions and concerns.

Caution: Don't get the impression that product knowledge is the only thing you will need in order to generate sales. Knowing your product will only take you part of the way. If that were the most powerful aspect of selling, we could just send product manuals to people and they'd buy—but no, people buy based on emotion. They buy because they want to—understanding the product is simply how they reassure themselves that buying is a good idea. We analyze with our logical minds and we purchase with our emotions, or our desire to buy.

Do you recall ever making a decision to buy when your logic told you that the purchase should be delayed, but your excitement about owning the product caused you to buy anyway? Emotion trumped logic in that instance. How about an occasion where you wanted something, but your analysis of the cost/value comparison caused you to say no? Naturally, we need to honor both our logic (which keeps us safe) and our emotions (which keep us happy), but they both need to be kept in perspective so that we always make the best overall decision.

Your Ability to Present Your Ideas Well

There's an old story about a new inmate in a prison learning jokes from an older inmate. The older inmate told him, "They won't let us tell jokes by yelling down the cellblock at night, so we all memorize the jokes and number them. Then when we want to tell a joke we simply yell out the number and everyone remembers the joke." He demon-

strated by calling out, “Number 3” followed a pause, and then the cellblock erupted in laughter. The new inmate said, “Let me try one.” And he yelled out, “Number 5!” No response. Puzzled, he asked the old man why nobody laughed.

He said, “Number 5 is a funny joke, why didn’t they laugh?” The old inmate replied, “Face it fella, some people just can’t tell a joke.”

The same is true for sales presentations. Some people just don’t do them very well—and no matter how good their information is, if they don’t present it well then others will not want to buy. However, you can learn to be a good presenter. Become a student of your craft. Learn how to deliver powerful and interesting presentations. Build a library of books and recordings on presentation skills. Subscribe to websites and blogs on the subject. Practice often and get coaching when you can. Study how others present ideas and tell stories.

Your Ability to Control the Circumstances

Sometimes the setting can destroy your chances of making a sale.

If you are trying to present a compelling case for buying while your client is distracted by frequent interruptions or other priorities, then a sale is not likely to follow. Get his full attention for the entirety of your presentation, or find a better time to speak with him. If there are distractions, the prospect is not focused on your message. Learn to both anticipate and manage distractions. Check out the meeting place and look for the best location to have a focused conversation. Consider visual distractions, noise distractions, potential interruptions, and physical elements that might make people uncomfortable. Then, eliminate the bad and increase the good; do some creative thinking about how to diminish the effect of distractions. Become a student of sales settings, and be sure to avoid adding to the distractions yourself by doing such things as presenting too many ideas at once or providing non-relevant information. Keep the conversation focused on the benefits of buying.

Your Attentiveness to Your Customer

I remember a salesperson with whom I was meeting in a busy restaurant. Every time someone walked by our table, he looked up at them. Every time. It was starting to drive me nuts! I finally suggested that we change seats so that he was facing the wall and I was facing the traffic—most customers won’t do that for you. Most will simply lose faith

in you, and not buy.

You must keep your attention where it will pay off the most, and that is on the needs and interests of your customer. You’ve probably heard people praise others by saying, “When they speak with you it’s like you are the only person in the world to them.” Get people to say that about you. Listen to their comments, read the message behind their words, seek to truly understand them. Look for why they are saying what they say. *If someone tells you that your product costs too much, it is not so much a statement of the pricing as it is his opinion of its relative value.*

Your Ability to Adapt to Differences in People

Treating everyone the same is the most unfair thing that you can do. Read that again, please. You must tailor your information to each person—not all people want their information the same way. Some folks want their information fast and focused: just the facts and outcomes, no stories or explanations. Others want examples of people applying the information and getting results. Some need personal reassurance, while others want to know who else is using it. Occasionally individuals are mostly concerned with how they will look to others if they buy. There are all kinds of differences in how and why people buy. You and I must become students of personality differences and excellent at adapting to each one.

The more flexible and versatile you are in adjusting your delivery of information to suit your client, the more likely you are to make a sale.

Once, a colleague and I were delivering a presentation to a client who was what we call a “Thinker”—the analytical, logical-thinking type. We were being dramatic and playful in hopes of winning his approval, but he wanted an organized and logical presentation. It was almost too late when we finally recognized our error. As the redness crept up his neck we noticed that he was becoming less and less responsive. Then he said, “Gentlemen, if you don’t take this more seriously then I don’t want to continue!” We were shocked. In our naïve approach to the presentation, we had neglected to determine how he wanted his information. So we quickly toned down our delivery, gave an overview of the ideas and evidence we would be presenting, and asked him if that would meet his needs. Luckily this worked. He calmed down and asked us to document our claims, and provide more detail. When we did, he finally bought. Had we continued with our lighthearted presentation, we’d have never made that sale.

Your Ability to Adapt to Changes in Situations

I was booked to deliver a one-hour speech in Miami to about 600 people. I had done my research and was prepared to do my best work. I couldn't wait to get started. Then the speaker before me ran over time...by 45 minutes! The meeting planner, a client of mine, said, "Can you cut your speech to 20 minutes?"

What would you have done?

Luckily I had prepared so well that I was able to eliminate many of the stories and details from my speech while still covering the core message. I kept the planned opening as well as the closing story, but I did major surgery to the middle of the presentation. In the end I was able to deliver a highly effective speech despite the time crunch. If I hadn't been prepared, there is no way that could have worked.

Think of your presentation as a series of modules instead of one big package. Design each point to stand alone, so that you can shuffle the order or length of the presentation easily. Don't become a slave to a script, but do have an outline that is well scripted enough to keep you at your best. If you choose to script your presentation anyway, then do so in small vignettes; make each mini-presentation complete enough to stand on its own. Then when you have to adjust your presentation, you can simply change the number and/or sequence of vignettes. As you master each piece you will improve your presentation overall.

Your Ability to Recover from Interruptions

The question is not whether you'll have to deal with interruptions but when will the next one be? Life is chaotic; change is normal.

Change is normal.

Surprises are changes we didn't anticipate.

Problems are changes we weren't prepared for.

Emergencies are changes that require immediate solutions.

Crises are changes we don't know how to adapt to.

Disasters are changes we didn't adapt to.

Plans are changes we decide to bring about.

Successes are changes we brought about on purpose.

Change is normal. (The foregoing statement is subject to...change.)

Nothing ever goes exactly as planned. So what are you to do in a sales presentation? As I mentioned earlier, have your presentation organized by key thoughts, points, and modules. Make each key point a vignette or story about how the buyer will benefit from that feature or product. State the point (this enrollment gives you permission to involve up to three colleagues at no extra charge), then give an example (so, if you want Sonya to use the same software as you then you simply list her as one of the three and she can access the site just as you can), and call for action (to have Sonya involved in this project right away, shall we add her to your subscription right now?).

If you have modules prepared throughout your presentation, when an interruption occurs you simply go back to the module you were in rather than having to start all over again. Say someone drops in and distracts your customer for a moment and then leaves. At that point you can say, "As I mentioned, the three extra enrollments are included in the price of yours. Now, another feature that will be valuable to you is..." Your client will often follow up a distraction with the question, "Now, where were we?" You can make the transition smoother if you have your answer already in mind.

Your Confidence and Sincerity in Presenting

People don't care what you have to say until they are sure that you care about them. Show them you care—tell them the truth, and admit when you don't know something. Tell them, "I'm not sure of the answer but I'll find out and get back to you." Remember that the purpose of the sale is to make their lives better in some way, and to do so profitably. Your goal is *building profitable business friendships*. Each of those words is vital. The relationship must be profitable, or it doesn't justify taking your time during business hours. And it must be business-based rather than social. Also, it must be a friendship in which you are doing something good for the customer. If you don't care about them, they won't care about you. Be the kind of person they are hoping you are.

People will often judge your ability by your confidence in both yourself and your subject. If you are too self-conscious, they'll assume you don't care about them enough.

If you are uncertain and hesitant in making recommendations, they'll feel you are unsure of your suggestions. If you don't have faith in what you are saying, they surely won't either.

As I write this we are in the midst of a political campaign season, so I am witnessing "sales presentations" on TV by all of the major candidates on a daily basis. It is easy to spot the ones who are confident and the ones who are not. The confident ones often get votes even when people disagree with their positions on issues. Why is that? It is because we are more strongly persuaded by someone's conviction and confidence than we are by the logic of their argument. Confidence comes from mindset and preparation plus lots of practice in front of others. There is no substitute for experience, but while you are gaining that experience you can develop more confidence by remembering the importance of your message.

See the Meaning in What You Do

One day I was in the Atlanta Airport walking through the food court, which consists of several serving stations and one seating area. It was a very busy day, and the food court was jam-packed with people. All the seats were filled, so I didn't try to compete for a seat—instead I got a cup of coffee and stood observing the hustle and bustle. I was watching a bus boy as he roamed between the tables cleaning up the trash left by each of the guests. This guy was depressed—he was slumped over, he had a long face, and he looked very unhappy. He would drag himself from table to table as he cleaned up the messes, never making eye contact with anybody.

After a moment or two, I discarded my coffee cup in the trash receptacle and I walked over to him and I said, "Excuse me." He backed up like he thought I was going to chew him out or that somehow he was about to get in trouble. I said to him, "I'd just like to make an observation. What you're doing sure makes a difference here." He said, "What?" And I followed up with, "Look at this place. If you weren't cleaning these tables, within five minutes there'd be trash everywhere." He said, "I know." I said, "So what you're doing really makes a difference here, and I just thought I'd say thanks for doing it." Then I walked away.

When I was about ten feet away, I glanced back. I swear

this guy looked like he had grown six inches; he was standing taller and making eye contact with people. Now he didn't burst into the mode of "Service Man" and suddenly go hopping gleefully from table to table. What he did do was to go from depressed body language to neutral body language, showing neither happiness nor sadness.

But what do you bet that for the balance of his shift, he did his work a little better? What do you bet that for the balance of his shift that day, he felt a little better about himself, and he probably even handled problems more smoothly?

Now the question becomes, if that was indeed the case, then what in the world did I do to cause that effect on him? All I did really was point out how the work he was doing made life better for other people. I showed him how it made the food court a better place to be—a healthier, more sanitary, more pleasant-looking place to be. This added dignity to his work. I showed him there was a purpose in what he was doing, that his work was not merely a process of drudgery that he had to perform.

When we see purpose and value in what we do, we do it more effectively. When we see no purpose in it, it feels like slavery—but when we see the purpose in it, it feels meaningful and important.

The purpose of business is to make life better for people.

How do you make life better for people? Anyone who doesn't will soon find himself out of business—all it takes is one good competitor, and suddenly all your accounts are in jeopardy.

Consider the impact of what you do on those that you do it for. In what ways does buying from you or doing business with you make someone else's life better? Take some time to write out your answer. Seriously. Write this out, because the clearer it is in your mind, the clearer it will be in your client's mind as he listens to you. Write your ideas on a separate sheet of paper right now:

Here is how I make life better for others when I make a sale:

Meaning is vital to healthy living. If we are to survive, there must be a reason.

Victor Frankl, who survived the Holocaust as a prisoner of war during WWII, wrote a powerful book called *Man's Search for Meaning*. In it, he told about how people had endured the most horrible of experiences in the death camps. Most of those who endured it were those who had a sense of purpose, of meaning. They had a compelling reason to stay alive.

That's a very dramatic and powerful illustration of the need for meaning. But even on a simple day-to-day basis, like the case with the busboy at the airport, all of us need to see a sense of meaning in what we do. We need to understand the why, not merely the how.

Presenting to Groups

It's been said that the number one human fear is speaking in front of a group. Is it your number one fear? Personally, I am quite comfortable doing so, but I have many friends who are terrified by the prospect.

Think about your skill in presenting to a group. If your skill is good but your confidence is low, you won't be very effective. If your confidence is good but your skill is low, you'll be boring and ineffective. So it is important to work on both your skill and your confidence level.

Presenters who know how to capture an audience's attention, tell compelling stories, and present information in interesting ways, are both popular and persuasive. Conversely, presenters who are uncertain or not confident tend to lose their audiences.

Here are a few ways to capture attention at the beginning of a presentation:

In group settings:

- Walk to the stage confidently and have a clear, compelling opening line.
- Start talking to the audience as you approach the speaking platform. Confidently engage them in conversation as if this were not a speech, but rather just a chat.
- Open with a compelling statement. "Three of your com-

petitors are in a position to put you out of business within a year!" Then tell them how to avoid this.

- Greet the audience cheerfully.
- Open with a story. "When John was in college he purchased his first car...." Then relate your story to the topic and the audience. "What we can learn from this is...."
- Show a video clip or do a product demonstration.

In small group or one-on-one presentations:

- Ask a compelling question. "How long do you feel you can go without addressing this problem before you incur major losses?"
- State a dramatic fact. "Our company is the first to ever offer a service that eliminates this problem!"
- Pose a dilemma. "There are 36 companies offering solutions to your problem. So how do you decide which one to deal with?" Then help them answer that question.

These are just a few teasers to get you started thinking about your opening comments. Now let's look at some issues related to giving presentations to groups.

The larger the audience, the more structured and dramatic the presentation needs to be. If you are presenting to a small group, then your style can be very conversational because the smaller the group, the more personal the relationship seems to be. Therefore, behaving in a very formal manner while presenting to a small group tends to increase tension—it makes you appear to be a lawyer arguing a case instead of a salesperson trying to help them buy. With small groups, it is expected that questions will be welcomed and dialogue pursued.

When you are speaking to dozens or hundreds of people at once, you need to make it more of a performance. In a classroom, we expect discussion and informality, but in a theater we expect a show. One way to add structure and drama to your presentation is with visuals. PowerPoint can be your best friend, but it can also be a distraction if you rely on your slides to make your speech for you. Let the visuals simply enhance the presentation rather than *being* the presentation.

Assume for a moment that you are in a theater with dramatic lighting and a large audience. The program starts with music and lights, and then an announcer introduces

the presenter. As the presenter walks casually onto the stage he sits down in a chair and says, “Hi. I just wanted to tell you about this product because I think you’ll really like it. So, if you don’t mind, I’ll just show you some slides and answer questions.”

Now tell the truth—wouldn’t you be a bit disappointed? Of course you would. The setting called for a dramatic presentation, but the presenter’s style was very casual. A better opening would have been to walk confidently to the center of the stage (into the strongest lighting) and say, “There are four threats to the future of your company...and our services remove all four of them! Here is number one....” Can you see how the style of presentation changes the impact on the listeners? Choose the style that best suits the setting; use a more relaxed and conversational style for smaller groups and a more dramatic one for larger groups. But above all, be yourself—don’t try to come across as Shakespeare if you are Jay Leno.

Another way to add drama and structure is through the use of stories. Get examples and quotes from customers and others. Video or audio tape them when you can, and add them to your speech. Prove your points with stories, examples, case studies, and testimonials. If practical, invite your customer to be present in person or by phone during the presentation. A live testimonial can be very compelling, but be sure you review their input in advance. People learn best through stories. A story allows the person to visualize the experience without having it personally, and being able to hear a testimonial directly from the person who gave it is highly believable.

Always end your presentation on a strong point of value to the listeners and invite them to speak with you further after the speech.

When presenting, it is best to know the listener’s priority interests before you begin, so do your homework and ask plenty of questions as early in your dialogue as possible. If, for example, your customer says “My concerns are A, B and C, with A being the most important to me.” Then your presentation you should address the concerns in that order. However, when it is time to close the presentation and ask for the sale, do so only after reviewing item A once again.

Here’s why. If I address your concerns A, then B, and then C, at that point we have just discussed C, the item least compelling to you. But if I review the value I can deliver for your first priority, A, then I’ve refreshed your desire to buy. Only then am I ready to ask you to buy. I want you to make

the buying decision while you have your greatest need in mind. So present in this order: A-B-C and summarize in this order: C-B-A. Then ask them to buy.

The Structure Of Effective Presentations

Let’s talk about the structure of making a sales presentation. Without structure, it is difficult for the prospect to follow your thoughts. They need a clear, logical path to follow. Although many sales people like to wing it rather than prepare a structured presentation (they say they feel more “natural and honest” in doing so), the majority of professionals rely on an outline. The truth is that you can be much more natural and honest when you are well prepared than you might be by impulsively following your stream of consciousness. Professionals practice some of the well-worded lines that they speak over and over throughout the years, and they become very adept at delivering those specific words in their own personal way, knowing that their presentation will have impact when delivered in the manner they’ve perfected.

Whether you speak well or not, you still must give a logical flow to your ideas. In your presentation, be sure to cover five general areas:

1. The claim. You’re making a presentation, so what do you claim to offer? What benefit are you going to bring to people? Is it increased sales, fewer sick days, less paperwork, fewer mechanical breakdowns, greater life opportunities, or more free time? Whatever it is, it must be related to your prospect’s need, the gap they feel between what they have now and what they’d like to have. For example: “By sending your executives through our Health & Longevity program you will increase their loyalty to your company and extend their productive lifetime as well. This will cause them to bring more commitment and creativity to what they do.”

2. The need gap. Over half of your work as a sales person is going to be focused on uncovering and diagnosing each person’s need gap. During a presentation, you have to keep your prospect aware of that gap between what they have and what they want, and continually show how your product or service fills that gap. The company may have high healthcare costs due to their executives being overweight, out of shape, or sustaining unhealthy eating and smoking habits. The gap is between their current costs and lost productivity versus having a healthy, fully-engaged executive team. They will need to see and feel the costs of continuing

down their current path. If you show them their current situation and then calculate for them the savings of eliminating each illness or sick day, then they'll be able to see the value of listening to your solutions.

3. The solution. Your product or service has to genuinely solve the prospect's problem. You have to present a clear, concise statement of how your product will do it, and you may include specific measurable criteria by which the success of the solution can be judged. This could be a point of negotiation, or it may ultimately reflect a guarantee that comes with your product or service. The solution has to be clear, and they have to be confident that you can provide it. In our executive health example, this would involve some math on your part. Determine the amount of each executive's pay and benefits, and show that in terms of days on the job. For example: "The average executive in your company costs \$400 each day in pay and benefits. In order to be successful, your company must gain more than \$400 from the contributions they make each day, overall. When a day is lost due to illness or injury, the cost is much greater. You not only lose their productivity and the \$400 you spend on them, but you also incur the added costs for their recovery. On top of that, you have to fill the gap with someone else's contribution, thereby diminishing their personal productivity. Can you see how this begins to add up to big dollars?"

4. Documentation. How can you prove your claim? How can you show that you really will provide that benefit? Offer testimonial letters. Be specific; give an impressive demonstration, present slides, show pictures, graphs, data, other proof, or use brochures. Call someone else on your cell phone and have him give an on-the-spot testimonial in the midst of the sales presentation. Do a conference call or an online video presentation where you're able to use visuals and have several people on the call at the same time, each interacting from their own computer. If you are selling someone a new home, this can be done by using the home itself to help them visualize the value or convenience of living there, or you can have them talk with neighbors or show them Chamber of Commerce reports to document your claims. This can be weather statistics, like annual rainfall or average temperatures, or safety data, such as police reports on how low crime is for the area, etc. The main thing is to give them assurance that your claims are true. Prove your case.

5. A call to action. You've got to ask for the sale. Too many salespeople don't do this, and it's a natural thing to ask for feedback on your presentation and your product or service, but it's also a natural thing to ask them to make a decision. "If you don't ask, you don't get."

When I was a kid, I had a job selling doughnuts door to door. I'd ring the doorbell and when they answered I'd ask, "Would you like to buy a dozen fresh doughnuts?" My "presentation" consisted of asking for the order and showing the doughnuts in my basket. Then I'd tell them the price and, amazingly, that would often do the trick! People bought.

But then I discovered an even better way to ask for the order. Once I realized that people weren't buying the product for immediate consumption, I changed my offer. Instead of going door-to-door midmorning with my products, I'd call people the evening before. (It was my home neighborhood, so their phone numbers were easy to get.) My "pitch" was this, "Mrs. Moreheart, how would you like to have hot, fresh doughnuts for breakfast tomorrow morning?" Then I'd take their orders and deliver the still-steaming pastries to their door the next day. I guess you could say that I had discovered "telemarketing."

Make the call to action: You will always need to ask for the order, but the more you can make your "ask" appeal to their interests, the more likely you are to make the sale.

Quick Tips for Making Presentations:

To be more effective in making presentations, here are a few key tips:

- **Be entertaining or interesting.** Do what you do in such a way that it draws other people in and gathers their attention. Do your preparation, cover the little details, and make sure that everything that can be prepared for has been prepared for. Relax and have fun. Add appropriate humor, tell stories, state fascinating facts, and give demonstrations where you can.
- **Play off of needs.** When you're speaking with a customer, talk in terms of what they need, what they care about, what they're concerned about. Keep it relevant.
- **Customize your presentation, follow a structure, and only discuss the features of your product or service that are related to the interest of that prospect.** Don't try to educate

them about all the features. Convert the features into benefits for them. Be ethical, don't exaggerate, and tell them the truth.

- **Build perceived value.** Show them by the way you propose a solution that you know their buying criteria and what will make this a successful decision for them. Address both the buying criteria and the success criteria.
- **Differentiate yourself from your competition.** Show how you stand out. What's better about doing business with you? Be confident, state your case with conviction, believe in it, share your enthusiasm, and don't hold back. Stay sensitive to your prospect's needs, though; listen to what they're saying to you, watch their body language and their reactions, and adapt to them.
- **Create carefully worded phrases over time that you can use again and again to say the most vital parts of your sales presentation in the perfect way for you.** Present simple, broad concepts first, and complex, detailed concepts later in the presentation. Lay the groundwork, and then get specific.
- **Customize your presentation to the behavioral style and personality of the person you're dealing with.** Ask for feedback constantly throughout your presentation. Notice whether they respond better to stories, facts, calculations, documentation, or testimonials, etc. Let them talk a bit too so that they feel more invested in the presentation. Don't make it a lecture—make it a dialogue, and involve your prospect.

Believe in what you do, show your belief, and be prepared. It will be contagious and they will buy from you.

Let The Customer Sell Himself

Many years ago, professional sales trainer Fred Herman had the opportunity to appear on a television interview show hosted by Mike Douglas. Before the show, he was screened by one of the producers and the following ex-

change took place.

The producer said, "Mr. Herman, so you're a sales expert? Well if you're so good at selling, sell me something."

Fred said, "What would you like me to sell you?"

The producer said, "Sell me that ashtray."

Fred said, "Why would you want that ashtray?"

The producer said, "It's a needed item in this office, we've got a lot of smokers and it helps keep the office clean."

Fred asked, "What other reasons would you have for wanting that ashtray?"

The producer said, "The colors fit our color scheme, it's about the right size."

Fred then asked, "What do you think that ashtray is worth?"

The producer said, "About twenty dollars."

Fred said, "Well, I guess I'll let you buy it."

By asking the appropriate questions, Fred was able to lead the producer through an evaluation of the product, in the light of his own needs. And when the producer saw how the product met his needs and agreed on a reasonable price for it, there was no selling to be done. The customer literally had sold himself.

Imagine that you are selling a home theater system and the customer says, "What should I buy and how much does it cost?" You could respond by saying, "That depends on you. What do you want and what is that worth to you? May I ask you a few questions to help you determine the best system for you?"

Then lead them through the decision process logically. Ask what room they want the system in, what they have at home now, what kind of viewing they do (alone or with others), what do they enjoy most about having a system like this, who else will care about and use this system, what price range did they have in mind, etc. As they answer each question, they will be customizing a system to their needs and increasing their own desire to buy. After letting them experience the product, when you reach the point where they are ready to buy, you simply help them choose the payment plan that is right for them. They already know the price because it was revealed as they selected each

part of the system. They know how great it will be to have it because you just gave them a demonstration. And, they have thought about how much fun it will be to have the system in their home and showing it off to others. Now you just complete the paperwork.

Rescuing Customers from Competitors

Have you ever owned a product only to discover something better at about the same price? Didn't you feel a bit cheated? Have you ever had a service provider who didn't do for you the great things you saw another provider do for one of your friends? Ever catch yourself saying, "Man, I wish my X would do that for me!"? Well, you probably needed "rescuing."

If your product or service is worthy of purchase despite the presence of competitors, then why don't you rescue some people from your competitors? That's right. I'm talking about going and getting customers to leave your competitors and come to you.

In some industries that's not appropriate, but in most industries it's as common as going to work in the morning. So how do you win your competitors' customers? Converting customers from competitors is a fact of life for many salespeople. Sometimes customers become dissatisfied and they switch, sometimes because of geographic moves or other needs have emerged, and sometimes it's simply contract renewal time and they aren't satisfied with what they've gotten. These are selling opportunities for you. Your market share will increase if they come to you and decrease if they go to your competitor.

Here are some ways to entice your prospects to switch to you:

- 1. Think long-term.** Don't give up when you hear them say, "I'm satisfied." Satisfaction may be temporary, their needs might change, or you might come up with a good reason for them to switch.
- 2. Develop a relationship.** Cultivate a business friendship with each of these prospects. Become a solution source or "answer man" for them. Let them

call you for free advice occasionally. By developing this friendship, you'll be able to do item three.

- 3. Study their needs.** Take your time, do research, and ask non-threatening questions to find out what your prospect needs and how well they're currently being served. The key is to find a need gap and then offer a solution.
- 4. Sell yourself.** Personal chemistry is important, but so is showing that you're an enthusiastic, earnest, professional, ethical, and caring expert who will be an asset to do business with. Come up with new ideas for your prospects—even if they're not doing business with you. Give them good ideas, show them you care, and show them you're on their team. Sale or no sale, earn the right to get some of their business.
- 5. Add value.** Many products or services are so common that they're commodities. Differentiation may be difficult; it might be that someone else offers virtually the same, possibly even exactly the same, products that you offer. But they don't offer you. That's why you have to sell yourself into this equation, emphasizing such things as extra touches, performance guarantees, superior service, better delivery schedules, or whatever it takes within reason.
- 6. Ask for a no-risk trial order.** Say, "Just give me a chance to show you what I can do." Many customers are loyal to their suppliers, but they'll grant you a trial order if you ask for it. Make it a no-risk deal. Ensure them that they will be satisfied through some kind of guarantee, and then bend over backwards to make sure the trial order makes a very positive impression—give them a sample of what they can get from you.
- 7. Ask them for a portion of their business.** Converting a competitor's customer may not be an all-or-nothing deal; you may be able to do it bit by bit. Prove yourself slowly as you go along—just get a small percentage of their business and then let that grow into something larger.
- 8. Be persistent.** Nothing succeeds like persistence. All things being equal, the sales person who's persistent will win the account just about every time. Keep in touch with prospects, think long-term, and be a consultant and an ally and you will plant drought-resistant seeds. In other words, these people will stick with you through the hard times. But what you've got to do is

persist in a way that's appealing and professional, not in a way that's annoying.

They say sometimes it takes five or ten calls to make a sale. Well, if all five or ten of those calls are just you coming by one more time to beg, plead, or harangue the person for business, you're going to become an annoyance and you're not likely to get the sale ever. However, if every time you make a contact you learn a little bit more about them—bring them one simple idea, one little insight, or one bit of information that makes them more effective—over time you become not only their business friend, but a subject expert whom they respect. Once you are their subject expert, you can become their preferred provider.

How To Sell Through Others

What do you do when others are presenting your ideas for you? Many times the person you have called upon is not the final decision maker, and so they take your ideas and present them to someone else. Ideally you would want to make the presentation to the decision maker yourself, but the reality is that you often do not have that opportunity. Elena said, "I'll take it from here. Thanks. We will get back to you if we decide to buy from you."

What would you have said or done at that point?

Do you ever have to sell through others? Now, when I say sell through others, I mean someone says, "OK, give me your information and I'll take it to the decision maker." When you meet a potential buyer, it's important to determine whether you're speaking with the person who actually makes the buying decision or not. You might just ask, "Who usually makes buying decisions for your company?" If the reply is, "I screen the products and recommend the top two or three to a final decision maker," then you know that you will have to make two sales—one to your contact and one to the decision maker.

Your contact will become your sales representative. Think about that—if *they're carrying your message to someone else, they are your salesperson in that organization. So it's imperative to prepare your contact well so that he accurately represents you and your product or service.* If

you don't take the time to prepare them, you reduce your chances of a sale.

First, outline the key points that you want them to make, and then summarize the main reasons why that organization should buy from you.

Second, include enough copies of your sales materials so that each person who's in on the discussion has his own copy. A little bit of added expense in putting together special packages for each individual may greatly assist your likelihood of getting a sale.

Third, highlight key points of your product or service that make it different from competitors, and put those points in writing. Let them know that you can be on hand for answers and details—even offer to be available by cell phone if necessary.

Here are some important questions to answer before you attempt to sell through someone else:

- Where does the decision maker get his information?
- If there's more than one decision maker, in what sequence are decisions like this made?
- Who reports to whom?
- In the case of a committee, who will present your ideas to the group, and who has the most authority on that committee?
- If you were contacted by the prospect, did the prospect initiate the contact, or, was he asked to contact you by somebody else? A lot of times we find that they're not the buyer at all, someone else just asked them to gather some information.
- Who, besides the decision maker, influences the choices that are made?
- What does the buyer really want and need?

When someone else is carrying your message, they are your sales rep. Take the time to give them a brief moment of training and the tools with which to do the selling effectively. You'll increase your likelihood of gaining a "yes."

So, here are some thoughts on what you could have said to Elena from my earlier question. When she said, "I'll take it from here..." You could have offered, "I'm happy to be on hand to tell others about this if that works for you." If she replied, "No thanks, we've got it." Then you could say, "That will be fine. How many people will be looking at this in order to reach a decision?" Answer: five. Then you say, "Great, then I'll put together five individual packages

of information for you so that each person can have their own copy. As I prepare these I'll summarize the vital information in a short cover sheet. What are the main questions you think they will want to have answered in that summary?" Then pause and let her think. Once you have that list of questions, you can prepare a cover sheet that virtually makes your presentation for you.

Another option would be to create a short video clip on DVD or to attach to an e-mail to each of them, with links to your website for more information. There are many options, but the main need is for you to get your best images and answers into the minds of those who are making the decisions. If someone else is making your presentation for you then make sure they have great sales materials to use.

In Conclusion

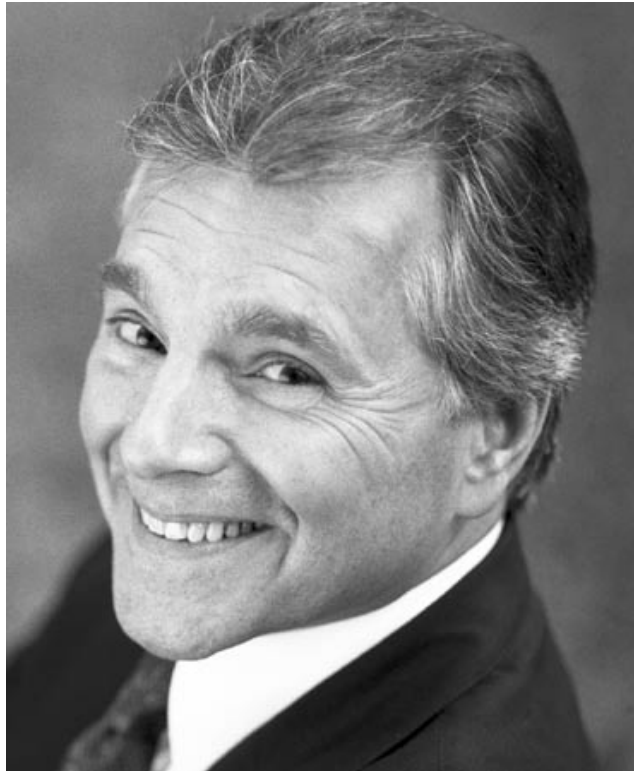
There are multiple reasons for you to become a master at sales presentations. For your company, it means that you will be more productive and a better ambassador for their products and services. For your clients, it means that you will help more of them solve their problems and make their lives better. It also means that they will have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that they are in good hands, that their sales representative will watch out for their best interests. And for you, it means that you will face each day with more confidence and eagerness. You'll start looking forward to each presentation. You will begin to enjoy it so much that you'll transcend the "Call Reluctance" that so many others face and you will contact more people. Your self-esteem will increase because you will respect and admire yourself.

To most of the world, presentations are selling. Everything else is seen as baggage to the presentation. But as a Relationship Selling Professional you now know that this is merely the dialogue portion of the sale. It is where the logic and emotions come together in the mind of the buyer and they resolve to make the purchase, or not.

The tips and techniques described in this book will help you become more confident and comfortable in all types of presentations. And the payoff for you will be not only more sales but also a greater sense of satisfaction from doing it. Additionally, the better you become at sales presentations, the more relaxed and in control you will be. The payoffs of becoming truly good at sales presentations

are many. This book has given you the elements, now it is up to you to apply and master them.

Give me a call if you need further help and visit my website www.Cathcart.com often for the many free resources and links you will find there. I'm eager to help you become the best sales presenter you can be.



About the Author

Jim Cathcart

High achievers from around the world credit the advice and inspiration of Jim Cathcart as keys to their personal advancement. As the author of thirteen books on business and psychology including two best sellers, *The Acorn Principle* and *Relationship Selling*, Jim Cathcart's works are in use by businesses and universities worldwide.

CEO and founder of Cathcart Institute, Inc., Jim sits on several corporate boards plus the Board of Visitors of Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management.

He is one of the world's top professional speakers and business authors and has been inducted into the Speaker Hall Of Fame, received the Golden Gavel Award from Toastmasters International, and the Cavett Award from the National Speakers Association. Jim became a member of Speakers Roundtable, 20 of the top professional speakers in the world, in 1986.

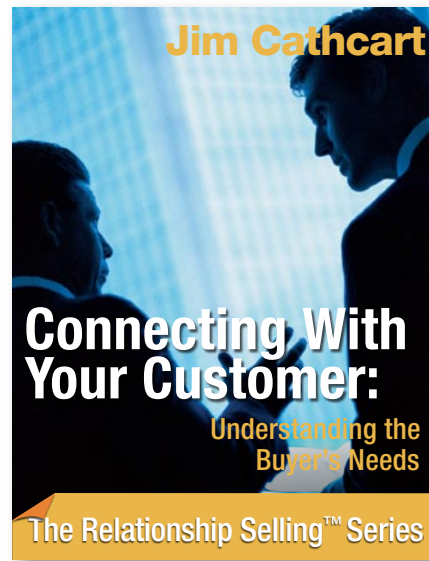
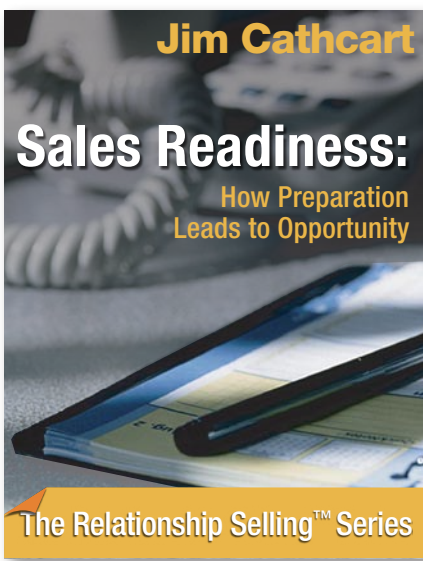
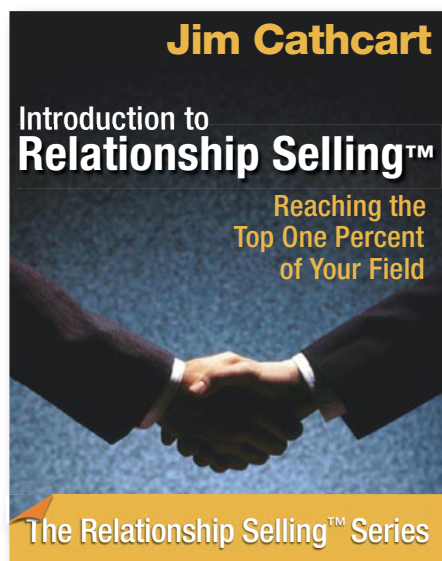
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