



Book The Greatest Salesman in the World

Og Mandino
Bantam, 1983

Recommendation

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, described this work by Og Mandino as “one of the most inspiring, uplifting and motivating books I have ever read.” Mandino’s works have sold more than 50 million copies worldwide. This book tells the story of an ancient merchant and his 10 mystical scrolls, each bearing a spiritual precept that is applicable to sales success. *BooksInShort* recommends Mandino’s advice to those in sales or sales management who gain support from self-help literature with a Christian point of view.

Take-Aways

- In this fable, 10 ancient scrolls offer sage philosophical advice that can also help you sell better. The first says you can grow if you harness your ambition.
- Shower love on the people in your life, including your business prospects.
- Never give up, and you will ultimately make the sale.
- You are unique and can accomplish unique things.
- This could be your last day on Earth, so don’t waste a minute.
- All things are possible when you control your moods and emotions.
- Learn to laugh at life and at yourself.
- Offer your gifts to others to “increase yourself a hundredfold.”
- Act now. Don’t dither over sales or life decisions.
- Never pray for wealth, luck or sales success. Instead, pray for wise guidance.

Summary

The Old Merchant’s Treasure

In ancient times, a wealthy merchant named Hafid was renowned as the world’s greatest salesman. He lived in a Damascus palace filled with opulent furnishings, and he owned warehouses packed with beautiful textiles, precious gems and rare merchandise. Knowing his end was near, Hafid prepared to change his life. He ordered his servant Erasmus to convert his vast fortune to gold and to donate it to the poor, leaving only enough for Hafid to live in reasonable comfort. Shocked, Erasmus reminded Hafid that the past year had been his most profitable ever. Hafid asked Erasmus to have faith in him and to stay with him until Hafid fulfilled a promise he had made to his own master when he was young.

“I am here for a purpose, and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand.”

After Erasmus did as commanded, Hafid brought him to a room that had always been locked. It contained only a plain cedar chest. Hafid opened it and removed 10 ancient leather scrolls. He told Erasmus they held the fundamental principles of incredible sales success – the principles Hafid himself had followed. He was young when his master gave him the scrolls, but he remembered that his master said to reveal their knowledge only to Hafid’s own successor, a special person who would appear and would give him a sign that would make his identity clear.

Young Hafid’s Adventures

As a boy, Hafid tended the animals of an aged merchant and master salesman named Pathros. When Hafid asked the merchant to teach him the principles of selling,

Pathros asked Hafid what he could do with great wealth. Hafid promised that, like Pathros, he would help the poor, so the merchant agreed to teach him. He sent Hafid on a mission to Bethlehem to sell a beautiful red robe marked with a star – the signature of the robe maker – and with Pathros’s symbol, a circle inside a square. Pathros charged Hafid one silver denarius for the robe; any sales proceeds greater than that amount would be his profit. Pathros told him perseverance would make him a success.

“One grain of wheat when multiplied a hundredfold will produce a hundred stalks. Multiply these a hundredfold, ten times, and they will feed all the cities of the earth. Am I not more than a grain of wheat?”

Hafid rode one of Pathros’s donkeys to Bethlehem and tried for many days to sell the robe. He slept in a hillside cave behind an inn. One night, Hafid found a man and woman huddled inside the bitterly cold cave with a newborn baby. The shivering parents had covered the sleeping infant with their own cloaks. Hafid wrapped the infant in the luxurious red robe and gave the parents back their cloaks. After the mother thanked Hafid, he left the cave to ride back home so he could report to Pathros. Outside, an unusually bright new star lit his way.

“To become a master in the art of sales one must learn and practice the secret of each scroll.”

When Hafid reported to Pathros, the merchant asked the boy if he’d seen the brilliant star. Hafid said he saw it, but he hadn’t noticed that it followed him. Pathros wondered if this was a sign. “Did you participate in some extraordinary event while in Bethlehem?” Pathros asked. Hafid told Pathros he hadn’t been able to sell the red robe and, instead, he’d given it away to protect a baby. The old man was unusually silent as he thought long and hard. When Hafid apologized for his lack of success, Pathros told him, “Sleep in peace, for you have not failed.” The old man understood that he had finally found the person to whom he must give his precious scrolls.

The Cedar Chest

Days later, Pathros summoned Hafid to his tent. Pathros was dying, and he said he wanted to give Hafid a gift. Pathros said that when he was an impoverished young man he had rescued a wise man from bandits. As a reward, the wise man had given him a small cedar chest holding 10 scrolls that revealed the secrets of selling. Pathros told Hafid that he became immensely wealthy because he faithfully applied the scrolls’ selling principles throughout his life. He bequeathed the scrolls to Hafid, along with 100 gold talents. He told Hafid to buy rugs and to go to Damascus to sell them. Pathros instructed Hafid to read and reread the scrolls and to follow their principles religiously. If Hafid obeyed, Pathros said, he would become the world’s next master salesman.

The Principles of Life and Sales

Pathros told Hafid to keep the scrolls secret until some special sign revealed the identity of his future successor, who would be allowed to reveal the scrolls’ principles to all. The 10 scrolls said:

1. **“Today I begin a new life”** – Read and consider the following principles. Apply them to achieve the goals you set for yourself, including sales goals. Leave the past behind and aim high in the future. Start today. Focus on not failing, or on not missing your goals, rather than on succeeding, which everyone defines differently. The habits that you develop and rely upon throughout your life will prevent you from experiencing failure, so establish strong habits and practice them every day. To achieve your goals, good habits must rule your life. At the same time, eliminate the bad practices that stand in your way and thwart your progress. Intently study these scrolls. Use their knowledge to help you form good habits.
2. **“I will greet this day with love in my heart”** – This is the key to success in sales and in everything else. Banish hate from your heart. Love each day, each friend and each enemy. Love each sales prospect. Tell everyone, “I love you.” Demonstrate love in everything that you do. Give love, and you will receive it. If you make love your guiding principle in life, everything that you encounter will be a boon to you and not a burden. To illustrate: The light of the day will illuminate your path, and the dark of the night will reveal the brilliant luminosity of the stars. The happiness you experience will bring you joy and enrich your heart, while any sadness you encounter will broaden your soul.
3. **“I will persist until I succeed”** – The prizes you seek, including the sales you want to make, will come at the end of your efforts, not the beginning. If you are forthright and never quit, you will attain all your goals. Never despair that you may fail. See challenges as a series of steps you must take, one by one. You will always possess the strength to take one more step. Think in these terms, and you will never quit. Be as the rain – one drop, and then another and another – that eventually levels the highest mountain.
4. **“I am nature’s greatest miracle”** – You are unique. Never hide what distinguishes you from everyone else. Instead, revel in your differences. Showcase the attributes that make you special and the spirit that gives your life an inimitable purpose. Understand that you represent the pinnacle of evolution, a miracle that has been thousands of years in the making. As such, you can accomplish truly great deeds. Apply yourself to become the best person you can be, and, in the process, the world’s greatest master of sales.
5. **“I will live this day as if it is my last”** – Never waste a minute of your limited time. Focus on today, not on what happened in the past or what may occur in the days yet to come. Use each minute wisely to sell the maximum number of your goods. No day you experience will ever come again. Thus, each day – indeed, each second of each minute of each hour – is totally precious. Once each second is gone, it will never return: It is lost. So do not squander any of your time; it is an invaluable and priceless gift. If you waste it, you waste your life. Do not put off until tomorrow what you need to accomplish today. Tomorrow may never come. Today is what you have. Use it. Treasure it.
6. **“Today I will be master of my emotions”** – Your moods determine your days. Manage your moods, and you manage your days and thus your sales. Use these methods: “If I feel depressed, I will sing.” “If I feel sad, I will laugh.” “If I feel complacency, I will remember my competition.” Never let your thoughts, which move from happiness to sadness and back to happiness, rule your deeds. Make your actions rule your thoughts. Master and guide your destiny. Take charge of your life to attain your desires, including the sales that are yours to achieve. They are your fate because you make it so.
7. **“I will laugh at the world”** – Never regard yourself with too much seriousness. Know that your present problems will one day cease, no matter what form they take or how heavily they may burden you now. Therefore, maintain a balanced perspective at all times. If you can laugh, your heart will be light, you will not be troubled, and everything will become possible in your life, including meeting your goal to achieve more sales. Make “this too shall pass” your all-purpose watchword. When you can laugh at life, and thus be happy, you will be a rich person. Success will be yours.
8. **“Today I will multiply my value a hundredfold”** – Your potential is limitless, and so are the opportunities that stretch before you in sales and in life. Be the

single grain of wheat that can become an entire field and then multiply itself to become all the fields that provide food for all the hungry. Be the clay that becomes the castle. Nurture yourself physically, mentally and emotionally to remain strong and resilient. Set noble, elevated goals for today, for your week and for all the other intervals of your life. Go on record. Hold yourself to account by explaining your objectives to everyone, but never speak of your accomplishments to anyone.

9. **“I will act now”** – Planning without action has no value. No map will transport you where you want to go. You must find some way to get there yourself. Start with a first step, then another and another. Be like the firefly that glows only when it flies. Make your life glow through bold, valiant actions. Procrastination is your mortal enemy. Tomorrow is a dream. Follow this essential mantra: “I will act now. I will act now. I will act now.” Repeat it over and over to yourself. Your success as a master of sales is right before you. Seize it. Act on it. Act now. This single moment, this vital second, is all that you have in life. Don’t waste it. Act.
10. **“I will pray for guidance”** – Praying is a natural act, independent of any religion. Make every prayer a fervent plea for guidance, not for health or wealth or sales success. Seek guidance and, in doing so, you will find it. Include these words in all your prayers: “Let me become all you planned for me when my seed was planted and selected by you to sprout in the vineyard of the world. Help this humble salesman. Guide me, God.”

The Next Greatest Salesman

Now elderly, Hafid patiently awaited the arrival of the person to whom he would give the priceless scrolls. One day, a small, disheveled man with torn sandals, snarled hair and sores all over his body limped wearily into Damascus from out of the burning desert. The poor wanderer went directly to Hafid’s palace and announced his arrival. The stranger wanted to speak to Hafid. Suspicious, Erasmus escorted the man to the interior garden where Hafid rested. The stranger asked if Hafid was the person known as the world’s most successful salesman. Hafid replied that some used to refer to him in that way.

“No longer will I fail to call again tomorrow on he who meets me with hate today. This day he will not buy gold chariots for a penny, yet tomorrow he would exchange his home for a tree.”

The stranger said he was Saul of Tarsus, a Roman citizen also called Paul. He had traveled from Jerusalem where – after the crucifixion of Jesus – he had witnessed the stoning of Stephen, a holy man condemned for the blasphemy of saying that Jesus was the Messiah. Paul was now under orders from the high priest to journey to Damascus to arrest all Jesus’s followers and escort them to Jerusalem for punishment.

“Where is he who built the pyramid? Is he not buried within its stone? And will the pyramid, one day, not also be buried under sand?”

Paul told Hafid that as he traveled to Damascus, a bolt of lightning knocked him down and blinded him. Paul shivered with fear when a voice from nowhere – a voice that identified itself as Jesus – called out, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

Saul’s companions escorted him to Damascus, where Saul met Ananias, a Christian, who touched his eyes and restored his sight. Saul accepted this miracle as a sign of Jesus’s divinity. He began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God. The people who heard Saul distrusted him and conspired to kill him. Saul returned to Jerusalem and continued to preach about Jesus, but no one listened to him or believed him.

“Yesterday is buried forever, and I will think of it no more.”

The mysterious voice told Saul, now Paul, that even though he was fervent, he failed to convert people because “even the word of God must be sold to the people or they will not hear it.” The voice told Paul to return to Damascus to meet the world’s most successful salesman, who would show him how to convert nonbelievers to Christ. Paul told Hafid about Jesus’s life and the miracles he wrought. Then Paul took a bloodied red robe from his bag and put it in Hafid’s lap. Paul said that he got the robe, Jesus’s only possession, from Roman soldiers who gambled for it.

“This day I will make the best day of my life.”

Hafid was dumbstruck. His hands shaking, he explored the robe until he found a small star, the sewer’s mark, next to a circle inside a square, the mark of Pathros. The old man stared in shock at the symbols.

His voice quivering, Hafid asked Paul to describe Jesus’s birth. Paul told him Jesus was born in a cave in Bethlehem. Crying, Hafid asked Paul if a brilliant star marked the night of Jesus’s birth. Now Paul could barely speak. Understanding everything, Hafid tearfully embraced the wandering pilgrim, who also began to cry. Hafid turned to Erasmus and told him to bring the chest and ancient scrolls to Paul, saying, “We have found our salesman at last.”

About the Author

The inspirational author **Og Mandino**, a former World War II US Army fighter pilot and insurance salesman, overcame alcoholism, wrote 19 books and headed *Success Magazine*.
