



Book Soft Sell

The New Art of Selling, Self-Empowerment and Persuasion, Third Edition

Tim Connor
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Recommendation

This business classic is now in its twentieth printing and third revised edition for good reason: It helps salespeople sell. This precise guide covers every aspect of sales, from the nuts-and-bolts of prospecting and closing to the inspiration and motivation that keeps you fired up and excited about your work and goals. *BooksInShort* recommends this book to all sales professionals, including managers. But we also encourage all non-sales professionals to spend some time with this book, since whether you like it or not, selling is an important skill in your career and your daily life.

Take-Aways

- Control and direct your thinking and you can control and direct your prospect’s thinking.
- Your prospect’s enthusiasm for your product or service is based on your enthusiasm.
- Your success in sales depends upon high new-prospect awareness.
- You must become a master prospector.
- You’ll sell more by listening than talking.
- Determine what your prospects want, not what they need.
- To close a sale you must have a will to win and the ability to visualize a successful close.
- Welcome, encourage and answer sales objections.
- Keep, analyze and learn from your sales records.
- A service attitude gets and keeps customers.

Summary

Selling As an Opportunity

Selling means something different to each person. What does it mean to you? Why are you in the selling profession? Success stories in selling are as plentiful and varied as sales people, but selling is an obligation you can't take lightly if you want to succeed. You owe it to yourself and your company to be the best you can be. If you're not yet where you want to be, you can take steps to get there.

“Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is.” [Vince Lombardi]

Begin with self-analysis. Are you satisfied with your professional progress? Are you satisfied with your financial progress? Why or why not? List your personal, non-material assets and liabilities. What are your strongest assets and greatest weaknesses? Do you have the full support of your family as you move toward your goals? Why or why not? Do you have the full support of your company manager, associates and colleagues as you move toward your goals? Why or why not? State your belief in yourself, your profession and your product or service. Then ask yourself if you have complete and up-to-date knowledge of your business. Are you delivering better results every day?

“I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was.” [Muhammad Ali]

Are other people putting more energy into their work than you are? Do you think and plan as much as you should? Are you as enthusiastic as you should be? Are you developing rapidly enough to keep up with the company's progress? Ask yourself if you are using the successful salesperson's key attributes:

- 10% professional knowledge.
- 15% selling skills.
- 25% people skills.
- 50% proper attitude.

“Would you be interested to know the major cause of failure in sales? It's the fear of rejection.”

Are you maintaining those percentages, especially that all-important kicker: attitude?

Rules of the Road

The fundamentals of selling can be summarized in 10 basic rules:

1. Your ability to control and direct your prospect's thinking is directly related to your ability to control and direct your own thinking.
2. Your prospect's enthusiasm for your product or service is a product of your enthusiasm for your product or service.
3. Your ultimate success in sales depends on your ability to maintain a high new-prospect awareness consistently.
4. If you can only master one skill in selling, become a master prospector. Being great at prospecting will guarantee your future success.
5. Judge your ability to give a good presentation by your ability to listen. You'll sell more by listening than by talking.
6. Determine what your prospects want, not what they need. Needs are logical; wants and desires are emotional.
7. Closing a sale requires only one attitude, the will to win, and only one skill, the ability to visualize your prospect as buying before you close.
8. Sales objections are as important to a successful sale as having a product or service to sell. Welcome them, encourage them and answer them.
9. Sales records are a must - keep, analyze and learn from your records.
10. Only one attitude separates winners from losers in sales - a service attitude. Your customer expects and deserves it. If he doesn't get it, he'll buy from your competitor.

Motivation

Motivation is a simple concept: goal-directed action. This is similar to the definition of success as moving toward a predetermined, personal goal. You can't have success without motivation. Your ultimate success depends upon your ability to maintain a high degree

of internal motivation, that is, to have both motives and actions every day. One common misconception states that you can motivate others. You cannot motivate anyone but yourself. You can show other people how to motivate themselves, but you can't do it for them. When you go to a seminar, read a motivational book or listen to a motivational cassette, it can give you a boost that lets you increase your sales activity temporarily, but can you make the motivation last? Can you continue to motivate yourself from inside?

“Motivation is not an external factor, but an internal one. Parents don't motivate their children, sales managers don't motivate their salespeople; people motivate themselves.”

The most common methods of external motivation are fear and incentive. Since both are external, they have a tendency to be temporary. Only internal motivation is lasting and consistent. Fear motivation is effective for many people, but it doesn't work all the time on everyone. That's because it's based on do-it-or-else punishment. Fear motivation is not particularly effective with people who are willing to tolerate the punishment.

“What can you offer your client other than your products or services? You can provide a continuous flow of ideas. You can be an idea gold mine.”

Incentive motivation is the opposite, offering reward instead of punishment. While more effective than fear motivation, incentive motivation also tends to be temporary. Since incentive motivation is based on a want, once the want is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator. To continue to motivate the individual, you have to raise the "want level." For instance, if a sales contest's first prize is a color TV, and everyone participating in the contest already has two color TV's, the contest won't work. If the reward is a four-week vacation around the world, you'll see increased enthusiasm for the contest and temporarily increased productivity, but just for the period of the contest. Productivity is directly related to the reward or the desire for the reward.

“Peak performance salespeople study their clients' business, their industry, their competition and are walking encyclopedias of information on their own products and services.”

One of the inherent problems in sales is that so many companies motivate their sales professionals with a combination of fear and incentives. This approach has only been moderately effective and results in only average productivity. The best motivational method isn't external - it's purely internal. Let's get the donkey to pull the cart because he wants to pull the cart, not because we threaten him or because we reward him with carrots.

Why Salespeople Fail

Poor selling performance can stem from many different roots. To succeed, you must understand your strengths and weaknesses. Ben Franklin once said, "Being ignorant is not so much a shame as being unwilling to learn." Consider this diagnostic list of weaknesses behind poor performance and see if you need to work on any of them: lack of continuous training, poor planning, poor attitude, poor use of time, lack of specific goals, lack of self-discipline, procrastination, lack of concentration, neglecting self-evaluation, inability to cope with rejection, inability to keep trying after a failure and lack of creative imagination. No one sells everything every time. The most successful sales professionals still have to endure rejection and failed attempts. The key is to keep going to the next prospect and the next.

Why Salespeople Succeed

Successful sales professionals generally have the following qualities. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on each one to see where you stand and where you need improvement.

- Definiteness of purpose
- Desire
- Enthusiasm
- Use of knowledge
- Self-confidence
- Pleasing personality
- Faith and belief
- Going the extra mile

- Persistence
- Goal-oriented
- Self-discipline
- Personal initiative
- Imagination
- Concentration
- Positive self-image
- Learning from defeat
- Sound health
- Budget your time and money
- Accurate thinking: seeing things as they really are
- Empathy

Prospecting and Closing

Prospecting, as defined by Webster's dictionary, is exploring for gold. Prospectors research and then go digging. In sales, effective prospecting relies on your ability and willingness to do your homework and to ask enough of the right questions until you believe you have a bona fide prospect. Most sales professionals are either reluctant to ask probing questions or simply don't know how or what to ask. Before you even begin asking questions, decide what kind of information you need to determine whether you have a prospect. Each prospect has different needs, wants and problems.

- Listen when the prospective client answers your questions.
- Your questions and their answers help you identify their styles, opinions, their current understanding and awareness of their own needs and your product or service.
- Questions help you avoid rejection. If the prospect isn't ready to buy, your questions will help reveal that and you can move on.
- Questions build trust and rapport. You demonstrate your interest in what the prospect has to say.
- Questions get the prospect involved and thinking.
- Intelligent questions make you look competent and knowledgeable.

"Many people over-learn from experience. Mark Twain tells a story about a cat that sat on a hot stove. That cat never sat on another hot stove again. He never sat on a cold one either. He just got out of the business of sitting on stoves. He over-learned from experience."

The mind of the prospect must go through four stages: you must get attention, create interest, cause a desire and get action. To guide the prospect through these stages you must develop people-reading skills and understand different behavioral styles. Everyone falls into one or more of these behavioral style categories: amiable, analytic, expressive and driver.

"Success is first a personal thing. It is different things to different people. What are you after? What's important to you?"

Everyone also has one or more of the following action personalities: fatalist, exasperator, appraiser and relator.

Selling isn't a numbers game, it's a quality numbers game. Just seeing enough people won't make you a successful sales professional. The people you contact must be good prospects. To sell, you must control the selling situation with tact and skill. Remember, the most successful closers are also the most successful prospectors. Closing isn't getting your prospect to make a buying decision, but getting him to agree with the buying decision you've made for him. Closing isn't something you suddenly begin doing at the end of your presentation. You actually begin your close at the beginning of your presentation. Realize that you are there to sell, not to visit. The close is your responsibility, not the prospect's. You are, or should be, in the best position to make the best decision for your client. The moment of closing should be the time that the client is the most enthusiastic about you and your product or service. But that doesn't mean that the close won't be followed later by a nervous change of heart and a cancellation. So, after the close, provide plenty of reassurance regarding the client's wise buying decision and the product or service. Leave behind a positive, confident, self-assured customer who believes that he or she has just made a brilliant decision.

About the Author

Tim Connor, CSP, is the president of the Connor Resource Group, Inc. He has been a full-time speaker, trainer and consultant since 1974, and has given thousands of presentations worldwide. He is the author of *The Voyage* and other books, audio and video learning systems, and the popular newsletter, *Life Balance*. He has been a member of the National Speakers Association since 1978 and received his CSP (certified speaking professional) designation in 1990. *Soft Sell*, now in its twentieth printing and third edition, has become an inspirational classic. He lives in Davidson, North Carolina.
