

World's Shortest Sales Course



OR...

*Stuff Your Sales
Manager Never Told
You But Should Have*



Brian Jeffrey

Are you a seasoned business-to-business sales professional who is looking for a refresher? Are you new to the selling field and want to find out what you should be doing to become more successful? Maybe you're one of those people who hates to sell but has to do the dastardly deed as part of your job. Whatever... here's what you absolutely need to know.

Enjoy the read.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "J".

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by Brian Jeffrey

INTRODUCTION

This ebook is intended to be many things to many people. If you are a seasoned business-to-business sales professional who is looking for a quick refresher, this ebook will do that for you. If you're new to the selling field and want to find out what you should be doing to become successful, this ebook's for you as well. If you're someone who's just curious about sales and selling, then you'll gain insights into what professional salespeople do to stay ahead of the pack.

On the other hand, you might be one of those people who hates selling but has to do the dastardly deed as part of your job description. If this is the case, this ebook offers simple but powerful tools to ease the pain and put the world of selling into perspective.

If you're one of those people who hate to sell, believe me you're not alone. This phenomenon – a dislike for selling – is common among all walks of people, particularly professionals such as engineers, accountants, and others, who feel that they shouldn't have to sell their services. These people tend to take the position that customers or clients should seek them out rather than the other way around. This approach to selling has caused many businesses to wither and die.

So, whether potential clients come to you or you go to them, it pays to know how to sell.

Getting Into Sales

I don't know about you, but it was never my intention to go into sales. I got into sales by accident. I had the choice of either going into sales or becoming unemployed (fired actually!) and considering the options, sales looked pretty good. That first year in sales was awful. I got tired of wandering the streets, having people slam doors in my face and spitting on me. (Like most salespeople, I tend to exaggerate a bit.) It wasn't quite that bad, but close. I was on the verge of quitting when I stumbled over my first sales book, "How to Outsell the Born Salesman." I devoured the book in a last ditch attempt to salvage my sales career.

From that book, I learned that there was a system or process to selling and I thought that if I could master the process, I'd get all the sales. That was pretty naive thinking but what happened was that I did master the system and, while I didn't get all the sales, I got more sales. I also became a student of selling and have remained so for over 40 years.

My sales manager at the time allowed me to share my newly found knowledge and enthusiasm with the rest of the sales team, and I ultimately evolved into a full-fledged sales trainer with my own sales training and sales management consulting company.

Course Background

This ebook is a tightly written distillation of *ProSell*, the flagship sales training program of SalesForce Training & Consulting (a company which I co-founded 20 years ago and sold in 2006), and is a highly condensed, very complete, although somewhat short sales course. I believe that, page for page, this tiny ebook is the world's smallest, most complete sales course. Hence the title, the *World's Shortest Sales Course*.

When you consider that most salespeople have never taken any formal sales training, I believe that after reading and absorbing the information in this ebook, you will have more sales knowledge than the majority of salespeople wandering the streets today.

Notice I used the term *sales knowledge*, not *selling skills*. You don't

develop skills from reading a book, listening to a tape or CD, or watching a video. You develop skills by doing. Let me explain.

If you're like most people, you probably know how to ride a bicycle. I'm prepared to bet that you didn't develop that skill by reading a book. Right? Let me guess. You fell off the bicycle several times before you overcame the forces of gravity, stayed upright, and stopped running over people who were unfortunate enough to get in your way. In other words, you developed the *skill* of riding a bicycle.

So, I'm going to give you a bunch of information (knowledge) on how to ride the sales bicycle and it's up to you to convert the knowledge into a skill by using the information to make sales.

Marketing Versus Selling

A lot of people tend to confuse the terms marketing and selling. They mistakenly think that marketing is selling and are disappointed when their marketing efforts don't result in sales.

My somewhat simplistic definition of "marketing" is the *indirect* process of generating awareness and/or interest in whatever it is you are selling. The operational word here is, *indirect*.

All of your marketing collateral (literature, catalogues, etc.), your web site, most of your advertising and other marketing efforts are all intended to create awareness and interest, not make sales. That is unless you're in the catalogue sales business such as Sears where the catalogue does the selling and no real salespeople are required, just order takers.

On the other hand, I feel that "selling" is the *direct* process of turning the awareness or interest into revenue. The operational word here is *direct*.

After all the awareness and interest has been generated, somebody has to make something happen. Before a sale is made, you either have to get face to face with the prospect or you have to pick up the telephone and talk to him. That's when selling occurs.

The problem is that nobody likes to be sold to but we all like to buy.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

One of the reasons people don't like to be sold to (or to sell for that matter) is the perception they have in their minds about salespeople in general. When I ask non-salespeople for their impressions of salespeople I often get descriptions like loud, dishonest, liars, don't listen, talk too much, tell you what you want to hear, pushy, annoying, say or sell anything for a dollar, wouldn't want my kid to marry one, etc.

A lot of people see salespeople as being like circus barkers or snake-oil peddlers who ride into town, kick down the side of their chuck wagon, and start gathering crowds to give them their pitch. That's the bad and the ugly.

There is another lingering perception of salespeople as being back-slapping, joke-telling, carpetbagger-type people. The reality died many years ago. Oh, there are still a few industries that try to use this old-fashion, shallow selling technique, but for the most part, they're not well received in today's marketplace. Today's prospects are looking for more substance and more professionalism.

It can be discouraging for people like me, with years of sales experience, to hear these things but that's the reality of many people's perception of sales and selling.

There is a good side to selling, however. When you think about it, you probably have encountered a number of salespeople who were helpful, honest, appeared to have your best interest in mind, and who you'd deal with again and again. They're out there and you really don't have to look all that hard to find them. That's the kind of salesperson I want you to be.

Popular Misconceptions

There are a few misconceptions that need to be put to rest. The first is that there is such a thing as a *born salesperson*. You can't visit the maternity ward of your local hospital and ask to see the latest "salesbabies." There's no such thing. I personally don't believe that there is any such thing as a born salesperson. There is no doubt that some people are better suited for sales and who seem to have a natural ability for

the job, but that doesn't mean the successful salesperson was born into the occupation.

There are four basic types of salespeople — the Farmer, the Hunter, the Repairman, and the Shopkeeper — and the type depends upon the person's basic personality. Each style has its strengths and weaknesses depending upon what they are selling and the type of selling they are asked to do.

If you want to find out your selling style, get my ebook on *How Your Personality Impacts the Sale* and complete the *What's Your Selling Style* instrument in the back.

The second misconception I'd like to shoot down is that selling is something that is totally natural and everybody can do it and do it well. Not true. Some people believe that the only three things in the world that you don't need any training in are sex, parenting, and selling! Don't I wish! I'll venture the observation that most people would be a whole lot better at all three of those activities if they had received some training. I know that I certainly would have (at least the two I didn't get any training in!).

The final misconception to be put to rest is that selling is easy. A lot of people think that all a salesperson has to do is go around and talk to people all day long. How hard can that be? Well, it's a lot harder than meets the eye. In actual fact, selling is a difficult job.

Selling is not really an art, and it certainly isn't a science. It's a skill, a learnable skill. It requires good human relations skills, good communications skills, and good organizational skills to name just a few. Notice the word "skill" here. There is nothing natural about acquiring skills. Skills are something you learn and to learn something you have to be taught, which implies training. Yet most so-called salespeople haven't received any real sales training and too many haven't even read a book on the subject.



Selling isn't a 9-5 job. You have to start early, stop late, and sell like hell in between.

Now that we've put these misconceptions and myths to bed, let's take a look at the real world of professional selling.

PROFESSIONAL SELLING

My view of professional selling is quite simple. I don't *sell* anything. I help people make an informed buying decision. A good salesperson doesn't create pressure; a good salesperson creates the desire to buy. I call this the consultative and relationship method of selling. I want to have a mutually beneficial partnership with my prospect.



Selling is helping the prospect make an informed buying decision.

I do this by taking the time to fully understand what my prospect is looking for and why he is looking for it.

If I don't have anything that meets my prospect's wants and needs, I'm going to tell him to have a nice day and I'm going to be on my way.

On the other hand, if I have something that I think would be of value to the prospect, I'm going to use my selling skills – skills that are covered in this booklet – to present my offering in such a way that the prospect may want to buy. I will help him make an informed buying decision.

THE COMPETITION

One of the things that can get in the way of the prospect making a buying decision in my favour is the competition. As you can see from the graphic of all the little guys with their spears standing on top of their

respective castles, there is always more of them than there are of us.

It's important that you differentiate yourself from your competitors because, if prospects can't tell the difference, they'll go with whoever has the lowest price. You need to answer the prospect's silent question, "Why should I buy from you?"

One of the best ways to answer that question is to develop a set of Differential Competitive Advantages (DCAs) for each of your competitors and be ready to use it at the appropriate time.

Basically, you need to know how you are better than or different from each of your major competitors. You then use this information to give the prospect a reason to buy from you instead of buying from your competitor.

Notice that you don't necessarily have to be better than your competition, just different. Of course, being different *and* better is best.

Whatever you say, you must be careful to avoid knocking the competition. Tempting though it may be to slam a competitor, particularly a bad one, it is perceived as being highly unprofessional. You can avoid this danger by always starting your DCA with a positive or neutral comment. The key is to point out and emphasize the difference. That's why it's called a "differential" competitive advantage.

The format for a DCA is to start with a positive or neutral comment and then mention one of the things you do better or different than your competitor.

Here are a couple of examples. Suppose your prospect mentions that he's also considering one of your competitors, the Duffis Corporation, and Duffis is a reputable company. You might say something like this:

"Duffis is a good organization. One thing we do differently is... (now mention one of your DCAs)."

Let's assume that Duffis is not all that good and has a reputation for bad service. You'd probably be very tempted to mention that point but that might be perceived as knocking the competition. In this case, you'd start with a neutral comment such as:

“Duffis is certainly one of our competitors. One thing that makes us different is... (then mention an appropriate DCA).”

The keys to a successful DCA are to start with either a positive or neutral comment, emphasize the difference, and keep it short. The DCA is intended to be a point of differentiation, not a sales pitch.

THE SELLING/BUYING PROCESS

Once you identify a potential prospect, there are essentially four steps to the selling/buying process and each has a specific purpose.

Step 1: The Approach.

This is where you break through the prospect's pre-occupation barrier and get the sales process started. Whether you approach prospects face-to-face or over the telephone, chances are that their minds are somewhere else and not on you. You need to get their minds off whatever they were thinking and on to you.

A lot of salespeople abuse the Approach step and spend far too much time chitchatting. If you're in the Approach step for more than two minutes, you're socializing, not selling.

Step 2: The Probe.

The purpose of the Probe step is to qualify the prospect, establish your credibility and trustworthiness, and start the rapport-building process. Overall, this should be the longest step of the selling/buying process, yet most salespeople will gloss over this step in their eagerness to get to the next step so they can start talking about whatever it is they want to sell.

The key to this step is asking good questions and listening for the answers. Listening is something many salespeople are loath to do. In fact, I feel that most salespeople wouldn't listen at all if they didn't think it was their turn to talk next!



Professional salespeople aren't fast talkers, they're smooth listeners.

Step 3: The Prove.

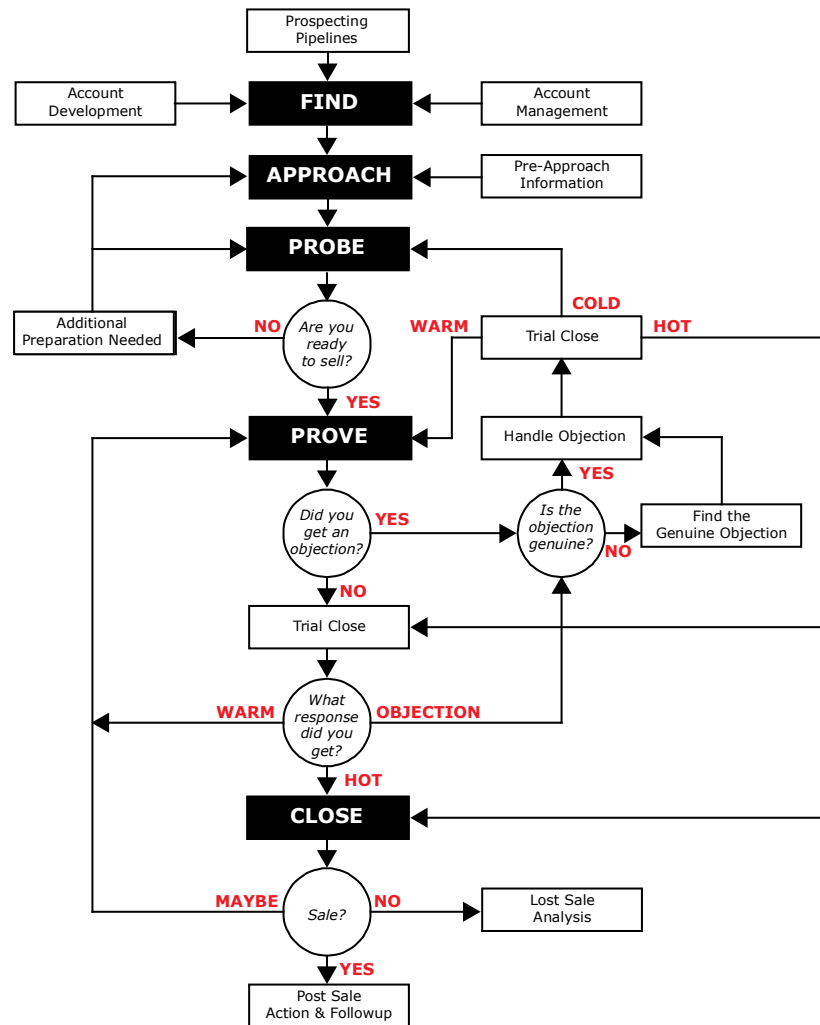
This is where you present whatever it is you're selling. Basically, you tell your prospect how your product, service, or idea is going to benefit them so they are justified in buying. A lot of salespeople still do this very badly. Most talk in terms of facts and feature while their prospects are listening for benefits.

It's at this stage of the selling process that any concerns on the part of the prospect are likely to come up. In the sales world, we call these concerns "objections" and too many salespeople turn concerns or requests for more information into disasters by mishandling them. This is also where the prospect is likely to raise the (dreaded) price objection. This is such a hot topic that we have an ebook on this very subject titled, *Conquering the (Dreaded) Price Objection*.

Step 4: The Close.

This should be the easiest part of the selling process if you've done the other steps of the sale properly. Unfortunately too many salespeople turn this step into a verbal and emotional arm-wrestling match with the prospect. I'm going to show you painless ways to close the sale, painless for both you and your prospect.

The Selling/Buying Process Flow Chart



Now let's look into each of these four steps in more detail. *Caution:* The information that is being presented here is the bare minimum that a business-to-business salesperson needs to know. There is more to learn, much more. In fact, I could write a whole book on each one of these steps, but if I put much more into this ebook, it wouldn't be the *World's Shortest Sales Course* any longer!

THE APPROACH STEP (GETTING THE SALE STARTED)

There are two types of sales calls – the warm call and the cold call. Warm calls are easy, but most salespeople I know would rather stand under a cold shower, fully dressed, tearing up \$100 bills than make cold calls!

Warm Calls

Here's the secret to getting a warm call started: Any promise made during a previous call can be used to start a warm call.

Example. After your initial greeting and brief chitchat, you might say something like this:

“Fred, the last time we spoke, I promised to get you some additional information on price and delivery. Well I've got some good news and bad news.”

This short sentence quickly moves the call from being a social one to a business call.

As I mentioned, warm calls are relatively easy. It's the cold calls that cause most salespeople grief. That's why I wrote an ebook on the topic of *Warming Up Cold Calls*.

Cold Calls

While face-to-face cold calling is still an option, it's a poor one in terms of effective use of your time. This means that much of your cold calling will be done over the telephone.

All the techniques described below work equally well for making face to face or over the telephone cold calls and they all share one thing in common – an interest-creating benefit statement.

Interest-creating Openings

When approaching prospects, it's important to give them a reason to listen to you. If you don't, they won't! Just because you announce who you are and where you're from doesn't mean your prospect will give you the time of day. It's important to have a *reason* for calling on a prospect — a reason that is important and of interest *to the prospect*.

Your opening statement shouldn't tell a prospect what you sell; it should tell a prospect what you can do for him. You need a benefit statement.



On an initial call, the prospect is more likely to remember your name if you state your company's name first, then your name.

A benefit statement basically answers the question, "Why should I listen to you?" and it's too often missing from a salesperson's approach to the prospect. Here is an all-to-typical approach:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. I'm Sarah Seller from Acme Promotions and I'd like to set up an appointment to tell you about some of our exciting new products?"

Can you find any reason to give this person an appointment if you were on the receiving end of a call like this? I certainly can't.

A better approach (not perfect mind you, but better) would be:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. I'm calling from Acme Promotions. My name is Sarah Seller. The reason for my call is that we've been very successful in assisting companies such as yours increase their profile in their marketplace and I'd like the opportunity to see if we can help you as well. May I have a few moments of your time?"

Notice that now Sarah isn't telling the prospect what she sells, but what she might be able to do for him.

So make sure you're armed with a benefit statement – a reason why the person should listen to you – otherwise, you'll be hearing "Sorry, I don't have the time just now" or "Sorry, I'm too busy" a lot.

Three Dynamite Methods

Here are three ways to break through a prospect's preoccupation barrier and get the sale started. You'll notice that all these openings have a benefit statement in them. So, before you open your mouth, decide what benefit you're going to use in your opening statement.

The first two approaches are very similar and are probably two of the most effective ways of getting your foot in the door without getting it crushed. Both methods are based on using someone's name, someone that the prospect knows and hopefully respects.

1. Referral Opening

The secret to this method is to open with the name of the person who gave you the referral, then give your name. Here's an example:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. An acquaintance of yours, George Leeder, suggested I call you. I'm with Traynor & Associates. My name is Joe Traynor. The reason I'm calling... (now give a benefit of interest to the prospect). Have I caught you at a good time?"

2. Asked/Promised Opening

Another way of using the referral opening is to use the "asked/promised" format. Example:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. George Leeder asked me to call you and I promised I would. I'm with Traynor & Associates. My name is Joe Traynor. The reason I'm calling... (now give a benefit of interest to the prospect). Have I caught you at a good time?"

The asked/promised approach is intended to establish you as a person who keeps their promises and is reliable. This method works best for those people who *do* keep their promises and *are* reliable! It also works well as an opening paragraph in a sincere sales letter.

Suppose George Leeder didn't really "ask" you to call but has agreed that you can use his name. In that case I'd modify my opening statement to, "George Leeder suggested I call and I promised I would."

Notice that I end the opening with the phrase, "Have I caught you at a good time?" not, "Have I caught you at a bad time?" It improves your chances of having the prospect talk with you.

3. *Specialty Opening*

You know, or should know, more about whatever it is you sell than your prospects do, which means you're a "specialist" in that area. You became a "specialist" by studying all the information and data you could find.

Perhaps you read some books on the area. You read all your competitors' information in order to understand how your product/service ranks in the marketplace and you understand both the strengths and weaknesses of what you're selling. In other words, you've made yourself an expert, a specialist in your field.

By the way, if you haven't done any of this preparation, watch out, the knowledgeable prospect may eat you alive and destroy your credibility. Who wants to buy from someone who doesn't know what he's talking about?

To effectively use the specialty opening, you need to be able to complete the following phrase in 10 to 15 words, no more: "We/I specialize in..." You then use this information to capture the prospect's attention and open the door to a possible sale. Example:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. I'm with Traynor & Associates. My name is Joe Traynor. Our company specializes in helping salespeople find new business and close more sales. Depending on how well your salespeople are doing, we may have some ideas to improve sales performance. Do you have a moment to talk?"

The Specialty Opening is also ideal for helping receptionists or gatekeepers direct you to the right person. Example:

“Hi, I wonder if you could help me? I’m with Traynor & Associates. My name is Joe Traynor. We specialize in helping salespeople find new business and close more sales. Could you please tell me who I should be talking with?”

Softening Up a Cold Call

While you might not be able to warm up a cold call, you can soften it. By soften, I mean take some of the pressure out of the approach.

Two of the things prospects are concerned about when they’re approached by a salesperson is that they’re going to be “sold” something and that the salesperson will take up too much of their time. One way to avoid creating this impression is to take a more conversational approach in the opening and remove their time concerns. Here are two sentences to include in your opening to help soften up a cold call:

“I know you weren’t expecting my call today, so I won’t take up much of your time.”

- and -

“The purpose of my call is to...”

Let’s use the Specialty Opening to illustrate this approach. Here’s the format:

1. Introduce your company and yourself.
2. “We/I specialize in...”
3. “I know you weren’t expecting my call today, so I won’t take up much of your time.”

4. "The purpose of my call is to..."
5. Ask permission to ask questions.

Example:

"Hello Mr. Prospect. I'm with Traynor & Associates. My name is Joe Traynor. We specialize in helping salespeople find new business and close more sales. I know you weren't expecting my call today, so I won't take up much of your time. The purpose of my call is to see if some of our ideas on finding and closing even more business might be of value to you. Do you have a few moments to talk?"

Once you've got their attention, it's time to see how you can be of value to them (and perhaps sell them something!).



If you're in the Approach step for more than two minutes, you're socializing, not selling.

You can find lots more tips and techniques in my book on *Warming Up Cold Calls*.

THE PROBE STEP (UNCOVERING THE PROSPECT'S NEEDS)

The purpose of the Probe step is to:

1. Qualify your prospect (turn suspects into prospects)
2. Start the rapport-building process
3. Establish credibility and trust

Why Qualify

If a prospect doesn't have a need for your product or service, or can't afford it, or doesn't have the authority to buy it, then you don't have a prospect.

How to Qualify?

Ask questions! Find out what your prospect wants and why he wants it.

The fact that you are taking the time to ask your prospect questions and not launching yourself into a canned or irrelevant sales pitch builds trust in the prospect's mind. You're there to help him make an informed buying decision, not just transfer money from his wallet to yours. By pausing to ask questions, you position yourself as a valued resource and not just another salesperson. That builds trust and people buy from people they trust.



When establishing credibility,
it's not what you say that counts;
it's what you ask.

The quality of your questions will establish your level of expertise and credibility in the prospect's mind. Ask good questions and your credibility goes up. Ask poor questions and your credibility slips rapidly away.

In order to have something to listen to, you have to get the prospect talking and you do that by asking questions. The right questions will help you assess your prospect's Need, Authority, and Ability to Pay.

The Question Is:

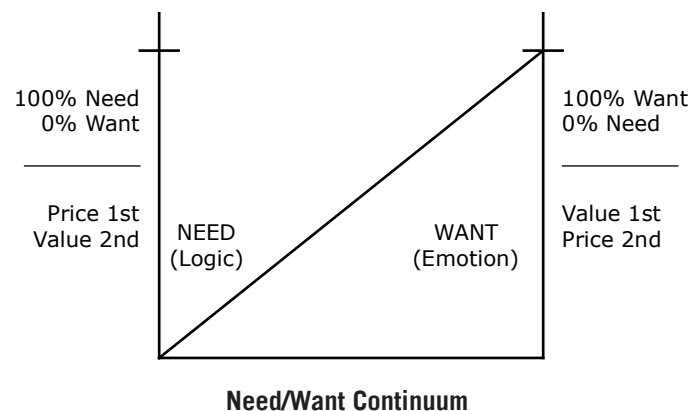
What questions should you ask? In order to answer that question, you must first know the answer to these two questions:

1. What need or want does my product/service fulfil?
2. Why should a prospect buy my product/service?

Once you have the answers to these two questions, you'll know what questions to ask to get the answers you want to hear. You see, it's not good enough to just ask questions. You have to know what **answers** you're looking for in order to have the right questions.

People Buy for Needs & Wants

Sometimes people will buy only to fulfil a need and other times they will buy only to fulfil a want. Usually they buy for both a want and a need. You need to determine where on the need/want scale the prospect is so you can adjust your sales presentation appropriately.



It's important to understand the implications of the need/want continuum. On the left side where the prospect has a 100% need and 0% want, the prospect will tend to put price first and value second. When a prospect is at the right side and has a 100% want and 0% need he or she will put value first and price second.

In general, people buy emotionally and justify their purchases logically so the closer the prospect is to the right side of the chart, the easier the sale will be. You just have to help them justify what they want to buy; i.e. help them find reasons to make the purchase.

Here is an example of how the need/want continuum works. A prospect looks at the tires on his vehicle and notices that they're almost bald. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't know many people who get a thrill out of buying tires. They tend to be an unwanted expense. It's basically a 100% need, 0% want situation so the prospect goes to a tire store and purchases the least expensive tires that will do the job. He then puts those 100% need, 0% want tires onto a vehicle that was, most likely, 0% need, 100% want, like a huge, four-wheel drive pick-up with roll bars and high intensity lights. Just the vehicle one needs for city driving! You get the idea.

Your job is to move the prospect along the need/want continuum and you do this by properly qualifying the prospect. You qualify a prospect by asking the right questions to uncover and understand his needs and wants.

NEEDS

- Usually obvious
- Above the surface
- Product specific
- Logical, rational
- Fact based
- Price sensitive, value aware
- Product focus
- Easy to define
- Price before value

WANTS

- Sometimes hidden
- Below the surface
- Product neutral
- Emotional, may be irrational
- Perception or feelings based
- Value sensitive, price aware
- Salesperson focus
- Hard to uncover
- Value before price

The above table helps in showing the basic difference between needs and wants. The more someone *wants* something, the more likely he or she is to buy it regardless of price and other factors.



People buy emotionally and justify their purchases logically.

What You Need to Know

In order to make a sale, you need to know what the prospect wants to buy. You find that out by asking open-ended questions, ones that start with who, what, when, where, why, how, and tell me. We call that qualifying the prospect. To qualify a prospect, you must find out if she has a need, the ability to pay, and if she is the final decision maker. In addition to these three key factors, it's helpful to learn about the organization, when the decision will be made (timing), who the competition is, and something about the prospect as a person in order to build rapport.

There used to be an old saying about qualifying a prospect that went something like this: To qualify a prospect, you have to talk to the MAN. MAN stood for the person with the:

- Money** (has financial ability to pay)
- Authority** (has authority to say yes)
- Need** (has a need for the product/service)

These three elements remain the critical ones, but if you really want to qualify a prospect, you have to talk to the COWMAN. (A cowman is what a cowboy wants to be when he grows up!)

- Competition** (who else is being considered)
- Organization** and **other** person
- When** (timing; is there a sense of urgency)
- Money** (has financial ability to pay)
- Authority** (has authority to say yes)
- Need** (has a need for the product/service)

Order of Asking

While the order in which you ask the questions isn't critical, I usually recommend the following sequence:

1. Need (or want) questions.

These questions are tailored to the product or services being sold and fall into four categories.

Problem questions. These are specifically crafted questions. Here are some phrases that can be used as question starters. You have to fill in the blanks.

- Tell me a little about...
- What are you looking for in terms of...?
- Have you had...(describe a specific problem)?
- Do your people complain about...?
- How often does the problem effect...?
- How do you see the problem?

Situational questions regarding their current suppliers.

- Who are you using now?
- What do you like about your current supplier?
- Who are you currently dealing with?
- What were some of the major factors in choosing your current supplier?
- What do you like best about...?
- What are they doing now that you really appreciate?
- What is one area they could improve?
- What has to happen before you'd consider changing suppliers?

Situational questions regarding current products/services that they use now.

- What are you currently using?
- How is it working out?
- What types of products/services have you used in the past?
- How do you use them?

Pay-off questions. Once again, you have to fill in the blanks to develop your own questions.

- What would it mean to you if...?
- If we could... would that be of value?
- What would it mean, in terms of dollars and cents, if we could...?
- What do you think of...?
- What's your reaction to...?

2. Timing question (when/urgency).

If there is no or little sense of urgency, then there is little likelihood of a sale happening any time soon. This doesn't mean that you are wasting your time but be careful about spending too much time on a sale that isn't going to happen until some distant time. Some typical timing questions are:

- When do you expect to go ahead with this?
- When do you need delivery?
- What time frames are we looking at?
- When will the final decision be made?
- When do you expect to issue a purchase order?

Remember, it's not what you say that counts, it's what you ask.

3. Competition question.

Some salespeople are afraid to ask about their competition, but if you don't know who or what you are up against, how will you know how to counter it? Typical competition questions might be:

- Who else are you considering?
- Who else are you looking at?
- Will you be considering anyone else?

4. Ability to pay (money).

For some reason, many salespeople are uncomfortable asking questions in this area. They think they are going to offend their prospect. I agree that some prospects are hesitant to give you a truthful answer because they're concerned about having you jack up your price once they give you your budget. If you've built a good rapport and trust between you and the prospect, you're likely to get a reasonably truthful answer.

Here are some typical questions. The first and third seem to work the best.

- How much have you mentally budgeted for the purchase of...?
- How much were you thinking of investing in...?
- Prices range from \$A to \$Z with \$M being about the average. Will that be a problem?
- Approximately how much have you set aside for this?
- What budget range were you thinking about?
- Approximately how much were you looking to spend?
- What price range had you planned for?

The key phrase in the first question is "mentally budgeted." If you ask your prospect how much she "wants to spend," she'll tell you "Zero. I was hoping to get it for free." By the way, if the prospect doesn't at least have an amount in mind (mental budget), then she is very early in her buying process and probably shopping around.

5. Authority question.

You need to know who holds the purse strings, who will make the final decision. Here are a few examples:

- Who, other than yourself, will be involved in making the final decision?
- Will... (name) also be involved in making the final decision?
- Who can veto this project?

The underlined words in the first question are very important. If you asked the person “Who will make the final decision?” she will probably tell you that she will. Then when you get down to the Close she’ll tell you that she has to talk to the boss or whatever. The phrase “other than yourself” usually gets you a lot closer to the truth.

6. Organization and other person questions.

Like the need questions, these questions need to be tailored to meet specific situations. Here are a few examples:

Organization questions:

- How did this company get started?
- What are your major products/services now?
- Where do you see the company going in the future?
- What are some of the major challenges that lie ahead?
- How do you see your department/division evolving in the future?

Other person questions:

- How long have you worked here?
- Where were you before coming here?
- When you have a chance to relax, what do you like to do in your spare time?

This last question is particularly powerful because it can give you incredible insights into the individual. Many times you can find out things that allow you to cement a professional relationship with the person and build rapport.

For example, let’s assume your prospect enjoys working on model trains as a hobby and you happen to come across an article in a magazine on model trains. What do think your prospect’s reaction would be if he received a copy of the article with a note on it from you that said, “I thought you might like to see this?” That action positions you as someone who is interested and who cares and not just someone looking for a sale. Powerful.



People buy from people they know,
people they like, and people they trust.

It is in the Probe portion of the sales process where the prospect begins to see you as a valued resource and not just a salesperson. You want your prospect to feel that you are not just there to take his money, but you're there to help him make an informed buying decision.

That's why most professional salespeople recognize the Probe step as the critical step in the selling process. It is pivotal to your success in sales.

THE PROVE STEP (SELLING BENEFITS)

The Prove part of the sales process is where you get your chance to talk. Unfortunately, if you're like most salespeople, you'll say the wrong things!

Surprised? You shouldn't be. Most company's sales literature usually consists of long lists of facts and information about what they do and how they do it. Fact after fact after fact. Unfortunately, the prospect doesn't buy facts. Which leads us to...



Our customers buy the
product of the product.

And what is the product of the product? *Benefits*, of course!
Remember, everyone listens to radio station... WIFM-FM

What's In it For Me – FOR ME!

We all know how radio works. Out in the middle of a field or on the top of a hill somewhere is a fixed frequency transmitter beaming out a signal and we, as listeners, have a variable frequency receiver that we use to tune around until we find something we want to listen to.

In selling, the situation is reversed. When you're selling, the prospect (the listener) is on a fixed frequency and the salesperson is in effect, a variable frequency transmitter. If you want to make a sale, it's important that you "broadcast" on the same frequency that the prospect is listening to. You find out the proper frequency by qualifying the prospect (the Probe step) and finding out what factors are important to him in his buying decision.

The secret of successful selling is to make sure you're transmitting on the same frequency that your prospect is listening to. It's important that you're saying things to the prospect that he wants to hear and that are meaningful to him.

Some of the things that go through a prospect's mind when you're making your presentation are: What will it do for me (WIFM-FM)? Why should I buy your product/service/idea? Why should I buy it from you? It's important that you answer these questions.

Finding the Benefit

As mentioned earlier, too many salespeople have a tendency to talk in terms of watery facts and features while ignoring that your prospects are buying meaty benefits. So how can you quickly translate facts and features into benefits? Easy. Whenever you give a fact or feature to your prospect, make sure you answer the silent burning question: SO WHAT?

Look at any fact or feature about whatever it is you're selling and ask yourself the question, "So what?" If you can't figure out the "so what," or what it means to your prospect, don't expect your prospect to be able to figure it out either.

Here's an example using a mythical product called a lifat. Now most lifat salespeople are familiar with the key features of the lifat and have no problem making a sales pitch that goes something like this:

“Our lifats have a stainless steel lining, three legs, and fold down to 22 inches.” Fact, fact, fact! Bad, bad, bad.

Let’s see what happens when we apply the “So what?” test to these three facts.

Fact: stainless steel lining. *So what?*

Benefit: easier to clean and maintain.

Fact: has three legs. *So what?*

Benefit: remains stable on uneven surfaces and reduces workplace accidents.

Fact: folds down to 22 inches. *So what?*

Benefit: it fits under an airline seat for easy travelling.

Our sales presentation becomes much more meaningful to the prospect when we say:

“Our lifats have a stainless steel lining so they are easy to clean and maintain. Also, the lifat has three legs which makes it stable on uneven surfaces lowering workplace accidents. In addition, the lifat folds down to 22 inches so it fits under an airline seat for easier travelling.”

See the difference? Instead of fact, fact, fact, we have fact/benefit, fact/benefit, and fact/benefit. Our presentation becomes much more powerful and meaningful to the prospect.

While this may seem like a lot of trouble, it makes you sound much more professional and credible, particularly when the benefits match the prospect’s needs that you uncovered during the Probe step.

Bridges to Benefit

You will have less trouble if you get into the habit of building a verbal bridge between the fact/feature and the benefit.

A verbal bridge is a phrase such as:

- which means
- therefore
- which allows you to
- so that you can
- as a result
- giving you
- so what you'll see is
- and what you'll immediately experience

Simply put, a bridge is any logical phrase that allows you to link a fact/feature with a product-related benefit. Example:

"Our lifats fold down to 22 inches (fact/feature) which makes them (bridge) easy to ship (benefit)."

-or-

"The lifats are made of stainless steel (fact/feature) so (bridge) they are easy to clean and maintain (benefit)."

The basic format for presenting facts/features and benefits is:

FACT/FEATURE → BRIDGE → BENEFIT

Fact/feature = what it is or what it does,
Bridge = connecting word or phrase,
Benefit = what it means to your prospect.

Finding Your Benefits

Here's a quick way to develop your own personal fact/benefit sheets. Simply get a sheet of paper and make two columns. Title the left column "Facts/Features" and the right column "Benefits." Make one of these for each of your main products or services that you sell.

Take one of your sheets and put down as many facts or features as you can think of. Don't worry about the benefits; just get down the facts or features.

Then go back over each fact/feature on your list and ask yourself, "So what?" or "What does that mean to my prospect?" and jot down your answer in the benefit column.

Don't be surprised if you can find several benefits associated with a particular fact/feature. Jot them all down.

Here's an example of our mythical lifat:

<u>Fact/Feature</u>	<u>Benefit</u>
Stainless steel lining	1 - Easier to clean 2 - Easy to maintain 3 - Lasts a long time 4 - No rust to cause problems 5 - Hygienic
Has three legs	1 - Remains stable on uneven surfaces 2 - Less likely to fall over 3 - Can move it around easily
Welded seams	1 - No leakage
Folds down to 18 inches	1 - Fits under an airline seta 2 - Easy to store away 3 - Easy to ship
Lightweight	1 - Lower shipping costs
Integrated electronics	1 - More reliable 2 - Easy to repair

And so on. You get the general idea!

Just because you may have two or more benefits associated with a particular fact or feature doesn't mean you must give them all to your prospect. The basic rule is: only present one fact and one benefit at a time and only present the benefits that are meaningful or important to your prospect.



Remember... Facts and features just tell. It's the benefits that sell!

Facts and *benefits* are your basic selling tools and it's important that you equip yourself with as many tools as possible. It's vitally important for you to know a minimum of two or three facts and *benefits* about each of the products or services you sell. Without this information, your toolbox is empty and you're basically selling empty handed. Don't let that happen. Make your fact/*benefits* lists today.

Objection-handling Time

If you're going to get any objections, they are likely to come up during the Prove step of the selling process. The best way, by far, to deal with objections is to not get any in the first place. If you've done the Probe step well and used that information to make a proper sales presentation, you may not get any objections whatsoever. What you may get, however, are requests for additional information.

Let's face it, if someone truly "objects" to you or what you're offering, it's highly unlikely that he or she is going to buy from you. On the other hand, many salespeople will confuse a request for clarification or a concern on the part of the prospect as an objection and then will proceed to turn it into a disaster.



Treat objections as requests for more information or concerns on the part of the prospect.

Apart from simple requests for more information or clarification, prospects concerns (or objections) will fall into two categories and the ways for dealing with these two types of classifications vary.

When faced with what you feel is an objection, you need to decide if the "objection" is based on logic or feelings. In other words, is it

logical or is it emotional. If it is logical, you can handle it and there are several standard objection-handling techniques that work. If you feel the objection is based on emotion or feelings, avoid it! The general rule is to acknowledge but avoid emotional objections.

Sometimes there is no easy way to determine if an objection is logical or emotional because they can seem the same. For example, your prospect says, "We tried that before and it didn't work" could be a statement of fact (logical) or it could be something the prospect is bringing up because he doesn't want to do business with you. You need to learn to listen with your stomach and see how you *feel* about what you heard. Did the objection feel real or do you suspect something else is going on here. Learn to trust your instincts.

Keep in mind that logical or real objections are not always correct or real and may be based on error, rumour or innuendo. Whatever, they are real to your prospect.

Some reasons for emotional objections are your appearance, gender, age, or a failure on your part to build a rapport with the prospect. He or she simply doesn't want to do business with you but won't tell you that fact. Instead, the prospect keeps bringing up "objections" that you can't overcome in the hopes that you'll go away.

General Objection-handling Rules

When you take the time to boil down your prospect's concerns and objections, you end up with three root causes for most of them: a misunderstanding, skepticism on the prospect's part, and a drawback or shortcoming in your offer. In general, these three root causes can be handled by explaining it, proving it, or offsetting it.

<u>Root Cause</u>	<u>Handling Technique</u>
Misunderstanding	Explain it
Skepticism	Prove it
Drawback	Offset it

While the "Explain It" technique probably needs no explanation, the other two techniques deserve to be elaborated on a bit.

You can overcome prospects skepticism by removing the FUD factor (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt) from the sale. You do this by providing proof or evidence of what you are telling the prospect. The most common form of evidence is the written testimonial. You can also have verbal testimonials or references that are prepared to accept a call from your prospect. Other forms of evidence are examples or stories of other satisfied customers, demonstrations, exhibits, statistics, expert sources, etc. In other words, you prove it by providing tangible proof.

The "Offset It" technique is used to counter a perceived drawback on the part of the prospect. Perhaps you can offset a late or delayed delivery by eliminating the usual delivery charges or maybe you can offset the fact that you can't do everything the prospect wants done by offering a discount on the price.

The (Dreaded) Price Objection

If there is one universal objection that most salespeople get hit with it's probably the dreaded price objection. That's probably because the whole world seems to be price and value conscious and everyone wants a "deal."

In actual fact, most prospects don't want a "deal" as much as they want good value for the money they're going to spend. It's safe to say that in any sale, price will be a factor but it is rarely the deciding factor.

There are only three reasons why the price objection ever comes up:

1. Your product/service is overpriced. The prospect can get exactly the same thing down the road for less.
2. The prospect can't afford your price. If this is the case, you should have found it out during the Probe step and stopped wasting your time with a PWOT (Potential Waste of Time).
3. The prospect doesn't want to afford your price. He or she simply doesn't see enough value in what you're offering to justify paying your price. You didn't do a good enough selling job in the Prove step.

It's been estimated that between 9-14% of people will put price first when making a purchase. I know, I know, you're probably wondering where the other 86-91% of the population is because you're only finding the price-sensitive ones. They are out there, trust me.

So if the general population doesn't put price first, what's in front? There are four main things in addition to price, that are key to a person's buying decision:

1. **Confidence.** How confident is the prospect in you, your company, and in what you're offering? No confidence, no sale.
2. **Quality.** Does the quality match the perceived value? No one wants to buy junk but they also don't want to pay too much for something either.
3. **Selection.** People like choice and don't like take-it or leave-it propositions. Any time you can offer your prospect a choice, you will be getting a leg up over your competition that may only offer one choice.
4. **Service.** Will you be there after the sale to support the prospect? Prospects don't want to feel abandoned after the sale is over.



Sell value: If the prospect doesn't perceive you as being better or unique, then the only thing you have to work with is price.

Price Handling Strategies

Here are just three price-handling strategies taken from my ebook *Conquering the (Dreaded) Price Objection* where I go into this topic in much more detail.

Strategy 1: Focus on the price difference, not the price.

This method works well when the price difference is less than 10 percent. Focus your prospect's attention on the price difference. Your

price may be higher than a competing product but usually the difference is not substantial. Instead of avoiding the issue, call attention to the amount of the difference, not the total amount. Now your challenge is to justify the price difference, not the total price. This is where having some benefits in reserve is very helpful. Make these benefits very clear and compelling and the price objection is effectively countered. Example:

(Assumes a \$500 sale and you're \$35 higher.)

Prospect: I can get the same thing for \$35 less at Fenmore's.

Salesperson: I can understand your concern about price. You probably want to know what you're going to get for the extra \$35. Well, let's take a look at what the \$35 buys you. For an extra \$35 you get... (Now mention one or two benefits that will differentiate you from the other product.)

I've seen this technique work equally well on a \$50,000 sale where the salesperson was \$3,500 higher and there is no reason it wouldn't work on a \$500,000 sale where you were \$35,000 more than your competitor. Remember, all you need to do is justify the difference.

Strategy 2: Make it smaller.

This is where you break the price down into smaller units if possible. Show how small the actual price of the product is in terms of cost per day, week, or year, amortized over the life of the product. Example:

I appreciate your concern about price. When you look at this investment over the time that you'll be using it, it works out to only \$15 a month. Does that make it more affordable?

Strategy 3: You get what you pay for.

Very few people buy on price alone and those who do have all been stung by buying something cheap. Ask your prospect if he, or anyone he knows, ever paid too little for something and later regretted it. Example:

I appreciate your concern about price. Have you ever known someone who got a good deal on price only to be disappointed later at what they really got? I don't want that to happen to you.



Every price is too high for the person who doesn't want to buy.

Once you've properly qualified the prospect and shown him how he is justified in buying what you're selling through the presentation of sufficient benefits, then it's time to move along to the easiest part of the sales process—the Close. Mind you, it's the easiest part only if you've done the other parts properly.

THE CLOSE STEP (ASKING FOR THE BUSINESS)

If you never want to hear the word “no” again when you ask for the business, learn to use trial closes. Trial closes tell you when to stop selling and start closing.

What is a Trial Close

A trial close is an opinion-asking question, the answer to which indicates the prospect's readiness to buy. It's also known as “taking the prospect's temperature.” If the prospect isn't hot enough to buy, don't ask him to buy. It's as simple as that.



Trial closes allow you to test the water before leaping in.

Using Trial Closes

There are two primary reasons why salespeople don't use trial closes:

- They confuse a Trial Close with the Alternate Choice Close.
- They aren't prepared to use one.

To add to the problem, some salespeople don't know *when* to use them. Because trial closes are non-threatening, they can be used early in the sale and as often as you feel the need to take the prospect's temperature.

Standard Trial Closes

The Trial Close, or opinion-asking question, can take many forms. Here are some fairly easy ones:

Any question that starts with: "In your opinion...?" could be considered a trial close. Here are some others:

- How does it sound so far?
- Does that make sense?
- Do you think this will do the job for you?
- Is this what you're looking for?
- Are we together on this?
- What do you think?
- How close do you feel this comes to meeting your needs?"

The trial close paves the way to a smooth close. By smooth, I don't mean slick, I mean professional. There comes a time in the sales process

where you know it's time for the prospect to make a decision and the prospect knows it's time for him to make a decision. It's time to make something happen.

Dangers of Closing

Why are most salespeople afraid to attempt to close the sale? Some fear rejection. Some are so concerned about blowing the close that they won't even try. Some are fearful about offending the prospect by appearing too pushy. And we're all afraid of the big **NO!**

Most salespeople feel that a "No" is 8-10 feet tall and made of solid concrete. If a "No" falls on you, it will apparently crush you to death. Fear not, no one has ever died from getting a "No". On the other hand, there may be a few who have had heart attacks when they got a "Yes" they weren't expecting!

One way to avoid getting a "No" is to use trial closes, as discussed earlier, to pave the way.

Most salespeople don't really know how to ask for the business and because they don't know, they don't ask. Here are some sure-fire techniques that really work.

Sure-fire Closing Techniques

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a "sure-fire" closing technique, but there are some easy ways do the job. And make no mistake about it, part of your job is to close the sale.

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's explore the myth of the Close and learn some techniques that will work if you make them work. But first...

For some reason, too many salespeople think the Close step is the biggest and the most difficult part of the sale. Not so! The Close is the easiest part of the process provided you have done the other three steps properly.

The Close becomes difficult for those salespeople who feel they don't deserve to get the business. If you've done the Probe and Prove steps as well as you can, minimized the prospect's skepticism by provid-

ing suitable evidence, answered the prospect's concerns, then all that remains is to ask for the business. Closing a sale simply means *asking for the business!*

And why don't many closes work, because salespeople don't prepare themselves to use a closing technique. Strange as that may seem, I've found that when push comes to shove, many salespeople cannot give me an example of what they say or do at the critical part of the sales process. It's as though they just stand around and wait for the prospect to buy.

The 3 "Fs" of Closing:

- 1 - Don't FEAR it.
- 2 - Don't FUMBLE it.
- 3 - Don't FAIL TO DO it.



Closing the sale is... 70 percent attitude, 20 percent technique, and 10 percent skill.

It doesn't take a lot of skill to close a sale. If you can ask a question, you can close a sale. Closing is more a matter of attitude than anything else – your attitude.

Have a positive mindset, learn a couple of techniques, practise them, and then use them. It's that simple.

Proven Closing Techniques

Here are three very easy ways to ask for the business (close the sale):

1. Alternate Choice Close.

This classic close is often considered the most popular of closing techniques, the granddaddy of closes. It's an easy way of asking for the order without asking the prospect to buy. The idea is to give your

prospect two logical choices. Whichever one they choose, they've said "yes." *Caution:* don't use this close unless you receive strong buying signals. If you misjudge, the prospect may feel you're trying to manipulate or rush him. Here are some examples:

- Do you prefer the half-day program or the one-day?
- Would you want us to distribute the preprogram surveys to the participants or would you prefer handling it?
- Where should I send the invoice — to you or to your accounts receivable department?
- Will you want me to provide the handouts or will you look after getting them printed?

2. Recommendation Close.

Sometimes prospects are unsure of themselves. They know what they want but are not sure how to do it. Some people simply find it hard to make a decision. The Recommendation Close puts a degree of assurance into the situation and helps the prospect make a decision. It also positions you as a valued resource, not just another peddler. Examples:

- What I recommend is that we start off by distributing a participant survey. What do you think?
- I recommend a one-day program with a two-hour follow-on session. How does that sound?
- What I recommend is that I distribute the participant survey to your people and then tabulate the results for you. Would that help get the project started?

3. Direct Question Close.

This is a great close and easy to use. No beating around the bush, simply ask the question. Examples:

- Shall I go ahead and block off the date on my calendar?
- Shall we get the paperwork started?

- Are you going to go ahead with this?
- When can I expect the purchase order?
- (Do you want to buy or what? is probably a bit too direct!)

My personal favourite is a variation of this closing technique. It's called the Negative Direct Question Close. The salesperson asks a question where the prospect's "No" means "Yes." Examples:

- Is there any reason why we shouldn't go ahead with this?
- Is there anything that's keeping us from moving forward on this?



You lose 100 percent of the business you don't ask for.

THE FINAL WORD

There you have it, a complete mini sales course in only 40 pages. Don't fall into the trap of underestimating the value and the power of this information. If you'll take the time to truly master the ideas, tips, and techniques covered in this booklet, you'll be an even better salesperson. You'll certainly be much better than the average salesperson I see out there every day.

Why is that? Because many salespeople don't stretch or challenge themselves and as a result they're going to be no better tomorrow than they were yesterday.



If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.

Don't let that happen to you.

Don't just make a living make a difference. Make a difference to your company, to your industry, to the sales profession, but most importantly, to yourself.

Good luck and good selling!

POSTSCRIPT

Is this all there is to selling? Not by a long shot! This isn't Sales 101; it's Sales 100. There is more to professional selling than presented here, much more. What we covered here are the bare essentials a new salesperson needs to know and what experienced salespeople need to be reminded of. This is the core information that you need to succeed in sales. Learn it and learn it well.

Here are some of the other qualities that are important if you're going to succeed in sales:

Positive Attitude.

Sales professionals are up, positive people. They're the kind of people others like to be around. When they enter a room, the mood is lifted. They recognize the old adage that life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you react to it, and they react to life in a positive manner.

Enthusiasm.

Like attitude, enthusiasm is something you have complete control over, unless you choose otherwise. Enthusiasm isn't the rah-rah, in-your-face hype that can turn off some people. It's a positive expression of your belief in your product and yourself and being prepared to let that belief show to others.

Persistence.

Many salespeople are quick to drop a potential opportunity. They expect instant results and if a sale doesn't close quickly, they move

on to the next one. They forget that most sales are made after the fifth contact and that most prospects will voice five or more objections before making a buying decision. Salespeople have to learn to hang in there until the prospect either buys or dies.

Drive.

To be successful in sales you must have an inner drive that pushes you towards your personal goals. Selling isn't a nine-to-five job. You start before nine, quit after five, and sell like hell in between. Remember, no goals combined with no drive makes for no success.

Desire & Discipline.

Many "wannabe" salespeople simply don't have these two qualities and don't understand why they aren't successful. You must have the desire (and drive) to succeed as well as the discipline to do what is required to be a success.

If you want to learn more about the problems and challenges that can get in the way of your sales success, get a copy of my ebook *Why Salespeople Fail*. Read it and learn how to avoid the pitfalls and land mines that can cripple otherwise good salespeople.

I hope this material has peaked your interest and whetted your appetite for more. Learn as much as you can about your chosen career. Read books, listen to CDs, and get trained until you're not just good, but you're as good as you can be.



Sales success is the natural
consequence of consistently
applying basic fundamentals.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Jeffrey is a sales management consultant and former sales trainer with over 40 year's experience. He's the author of *The Sales Wizard's Secrets of Sales Management*, *The 5-Minute Sales trainer*, 18 ebooks, and over 100 articles on selling and sales management.

Brian provides sales management consulting, coaching, and mentoring to business owners and sales managers. He has had many sales successes (as well as a few spectacular failures) and has learned what works, what doesn't, and why — information he readily shares with others.

Find out how Brian helps companies maximize their sales at **www.Quintarra.com**.

