

## Chapter 1 Going Pro in Sales

What is the oldest profession in human history? Many will be surprised to learn that it is selling. The art, the passion, and the history of sales began during biblical times. It was during the growth of our world that individuals began to exchange goods and services for money. Although sales professionals were called something different during these times, they were very respected people in their communities.

Sales professionals bartered for services. They traveled hundreds of miles and months on end to have someone purchase their goods and services, and they took pride in what they did. Selling today is not much different from what it was 2000 years ago. However, selling today is a very competitive and fast-paced business that takes time, courage, an ability to relate well to people and, moreover, an ability to ride a roller coaster.

### ■ Why Sell?

Why not? One of the most versatile professions and the most interesting profession in the world is that of sales. Nothing—and I mean nothing— happens to any firm, any organization, or any business without sales. Selling for any firm is where it all begins. Selling turns on the lights, selling pays the salaries, selling helps with research and development —selling helps everything! There is not one portion of a firm that is not affected in some way by sales.

Many do not understand this: Selling is the beginning for any company. Sales must take place for a company to maintain its ability to supply customers with products and maintain visibility in the marketplace. Unfortunately, sales professionals tend to get stereotyped into “sleazy” unconcerned individuals who want nothing more than to line their pockets with cash. This stereotyping has been particularly hard to shake for certain industries and companies. Whether you are an established sales professional or a new member of the field, you should be very proud of your profession.

There is nothing that provides me with more pleasure, more purpose, and more passion than helping a prospective client satisfy their wants and needs. If you think about the world of professional selling, you not only resolve pressing issues but you also get to help people meet challenges and ease pain. You are a physician, a consultant, a trusted friend trying to help another undergo a transformation so as to assist with present business and personal issues and make their lives easier.

1For more than 25 years I have sold products and services from Main Street to Wall Street. I can tell you nothing has satisfied me more than knowing that I have assisted thousands of people during my tenure as a sales professional.

### ■ The New Sales Professional

The core of professional selling in business and practice has not changed too much in the last 2000 years. Selling is still about matching a buyer with a professional who is interested in a particular product or service. What have changed are the methods and practices in which to communicate to potential and prospective buyers. As of the writing of this book, we live in an age where business seems to be accomplished at the speed of sound. The internet, cell phones, fax machines, email, voicemail, and a myriad of other devices are not only accessible to much of the world but also essential. As a result, sales professionals seem to conduct business 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Given the world of the internet and delivery of information at the speed of light, clients feel the need to communicate wherever, however, and whenever they need it. Today's sales professionals find an increasing challenge to meet that need. A sales professional today is armed much like a security person or handyman, with a box of tools and trinkets that denote his or her

trade. Cell phone, pager, laptop, WiFi and other modern channels of communication assist the selling professional in remaining connected all day.

However, much to the chagrin of many sales professionals, what separates the good sales professional from the great is an uncanny ability to create, maintain, and build relationships. Even with all of the electronic means of communication at their disposal, clients still want and need a relationship with sales professionals. Most importantly, many clients need someone they can trust and count on for many years to come. After 25 years in a completely different market, I still maintain many of my original client relations.

Salespeople are like trusted friends and confidants. Don't get me wrong—I'm not telling you to become a therapist or a counselor, but I do suggest that the further you can befriend a client and assist them with meeting the challenges they face, the more trust you will build. Also, the more you resolve issues and offer suggestions for future work, the better your relationship and the more you will sell.

If you take only one suggestion from this book, make it this: do not sell for money, do not sell for prestige, and do not sell to satisfy your desire for material things. Sell because you love it. Sell because you enjoy resolving client issues and because you enjoy a challenge.

#### ■ **Five P's of Successful Sales**

When I conduct my sales seminars, I offer the keys to sales success. You are receiving them here for the first time in print. After a review of my own self-development over 25 years of successfully selling products, I have concluded that the art of selling comes down to five very special and very important terms.

They are:

- Preparation
- Planning
- Purpose
- Passion
- Persistence

In consulting and leading a myriad of sales forces over the years, I have found the preceding five traits to be essential characteristics of all successful sales professionals. Even the failed fictional salesman, Willie Loman, of Arthur Miller's play "Death of a Salesman," had passion and persistence. In order to achieve, you too must have those characteristics—and more!

#### ■ **Preparation**

The most important part of any sales professional's job is to prepare for each and every sales call. The successful sales professional will always know who he or she is calling, as well as why they are calling and how they will sell the product or service.

A sales professional is much like a general on the battlefield, an athletic coach at a game, or a chess player at a tournament: always thinking ahead, strategizing to determine their next move. You might say a sales professional is like a nurse in an elementary school before the fall and winter seasons hit. The nurse knows that students will get ill from the spread of germs, so she conveys information about how to avoid getting sick to the students prior to the start of flu and cold season. Salespeople do the same. Successful salespeople are always prepared. They understand the client, the industry, the company, and the specific pain the client is dealing with.

Prepared sales professionals also know how to get information should there be a question that stumps them. Put simply, sales professionals are problem solvers much like a physician trying to understand the reason for an illness. Sales professionals know how to ask the correct questions

to understand the issue and move immediately to problem identification and resolution. It should be a very rare occasion when a prepared sales professional does not know where to turn to get an answer.

### ■ Planning

Planning is one of the most important parts of sales preparation. From answering a telephone to making a call to understanding the client and the industry, planning is the single most important part of selling. If you do not know who you are speaking to and what you will say, then how can you have a conversation?

Selling without planning is much like going on a blind date. You do know that the person is male or female and that they want to meet you and communicate with you, but that is all. You cannot be a problem solver if you do not understand to whom you are speaking and how you can meet their needs.

There are several low-cost or no-cost planning resources that are musts for sales professionals because they can take you from good to great in a short time. They are the annual report, news, and company and industry information.

### ■ Annual Report

This important multisection document is a must-read. The first few pages contain a letter from the company's president or CEO that outlines new products, reports on growth and operational woes, and describes plans for maintaining their competitive edge. This initial section indicates how you and your producers can help the company. Also of importance is the listing of company officers and board members. Review the list to see if your contact is in the upper tier and to identify board members who could be future customers. Finally, read the financial report and review the numbers so that you understand the company's financial position. From this section you determine if the company can afford your product; or perhaps you can identify areas in which you can help them save money.

So where can you get an annual report? Call the company's department of investor relations or corporate communications, or get in touch with your contact. The latter will appreciate that you are going the extra mile to learn about the company. You may also be able to obtain an annual report from the company's web site or through a subscription-based internet service, such as Hoovers.com or Dow Jones News Retrieval.

### ■ Business News

Not enough sales professionals read The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, or other national periodicals. To properly service your customers, you must understand their successes, recognize their trials and tribulations, and help them cope with competition and the pressures of the marketplace.

Reading a major periodical will inform you about customer news and keep you abreast of business changes. Not enough time to read through the newspapers? Then subscribe to the periodicals' e-mail bulletin services for real-time updates. And although your time is limited, you should commit 30 minutes each day to reading your local newspaper's business section from front to back. Some of the online new sources I highly recommend are [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com). These are only my personal suggestions—you may have your favorites depending on your regional, national, and international location. However, I do suggest you subscribe to an online or off-line periodical to better understand company and industry issues.

### ■ Industry News

As important as breaking business news is, you must clearly understand the industry you service. Therefore, it is your job to follow industry news. Perhaps you are servicing a niche industry, such as Wall Street technology firms. Ask your clients and contacts about the periodicals

they read to follow industry trends. You can then determine which publications are most reliable and subscribe. The payment you make for the delivery of this information is an investment in your career.

If it is difficult to locate business or industry periodicals, check the voluminous resources available online, such as [www.factiva.com](http://www.factiva.com), [interactive.wsj.com](http://interactive.wsj.com) and [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). Also, numerous Internet portals including Alta Vista, Yahoo, and Google provide real-time business content. Review these sites to gain quick and timely information.

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If it is difficult to locate business or industry periodicals, check the voluminous resources available online, such as [www.factiva.com](http://www.factiva.com), [interactive.wsj.com](http://interactive.wsj.com) and [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). Also, numerous Internet portals including Alta Vista, Yahoo, and Google provide real-time business content. Review these sites to gain quick and timely information. Certainly in today's fast-paced, information-crazed environment, there is little time to access increasing amounts of information. However, clients want sales professionals who understand their business and competitive concerns and can use that knowledge to help them. in your blood! The secret to successful sales professionals is that they absolutely, unequivocally love what they do. Successful sales professionals love challenges, are exceptional in overcoming adversity, and love the product or service that they represent.

They are never shy or reserved, and you can sense their spirit and their passion when they speak. In fact, I heard a South African phrase recently: Enbutu, meaning from the spirit. Successful sales professionals have an aura of spirit, of love, of passion, of commitment in everything and anything that they do. The more you can create enbutu in your sales presentations and your sales day, the more helpful you can be to your client.

### ■ Persistence

Lastly, successful sales professionals are persistent. They love, need, and yearn for a challenge. Successful sales professionals never say quit or uncle, and they never stop answering questions, resolving issues, and finding customers. Successful sales professionals are constantly seeking new business and looking for ways to find new clients. It is the successful sales professional who is always looking for answers and finding ways to resolve client issues.

Additionally, sales professionals that succeed never take “no” for an answer. Those with the power of determination are not stubborn but are capable of seeking the needle in a haystack with such dogged persistence that they stand head and shoulders above anyone else. The successful sales person is someone who is still willing to go the distance even when fatigued or stumped; creating value, vision, and viability for the prospective client who is yearning for a resolution.

Every sale has five basic obstacles:  
no need, no money, no hurry, no desire, no trust.  
—Zig Ziglar, American Sales Trainer,  
Author, Motivational Speaker

**Excerpt from *Split Second Selling – PRACTICE makes perfect...Sales*, Golda Publishing 2007, \$28.95**