

CONVICTION

How thought leaders influence
commercial conversations

Peter Cook
Michael Henderson
Matt Church

CONVICTION

How thought leaders influence
commercial conversations

Peter Cook
Michael Henderson
Matt Church

thought leaders

Thought Leaders Publishing

First published as Black Belt Sales in 2012

Thought Leaders Publishing

Suite 8, Rear 510 Sydney Road Balgowlah NSW 2093

Copyright © Thought Leaders Global

Peter Cook, Michael Henderson and Matt Church assert the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.

ISBN: 978-0-9775724-7-2

1. Success in business. 2. Expertise—Economic aspects.
3. Entrepreneurship. Cook, Peter; Henderson, Michael; Church, Matt.

Cover design by Michael Fink

Edited by Neville Cook

Typesetting by Michael Fink

Printed by ePlot, Australia

Contents

A Brave New World	1
Positioning	15
Respect	31
Clicking	51
Value Models	63
The End	73
Letters	75

A Brave New World

The evolution from selling to buying

The internet has redistributed knowledge power. An expert used to be the person who held the answers, but with Google, Wikipedia and other platforms it's becoming easier to be informed about almost anything. This has caused major disruptions in many industries. From education to medicine, from retail to automobiles, a buyer is now able to get informed fast and to stay informed on demand. This is driving an evolution in the selling process, and it's one that business needs to be tracking.

Take a travel agent who competes on price. With smart phones and other portable devices their client is price shopping while sitting across from them. How does she set herself apart now?

There is a power shift at play here, a shift from the seller to the buyer. And we think this shift is great — it's one that's based on *knowledge, respect* and *choice*, not on *manipulation*.

Bottom line — your prospects and clients are more sophisticated than they have ever been and are now in the driver's

seat. Old-school salespeople relying on closing techniques and slick moves are going to find it harder and harder to survive.

We would suggest that they are extinct, but just don't know it yet.

It's not easy to completely revolutionise how you approach selling. It is, however, essential that you do — it's a completely new world.

You can see some key distinctions between the new and the old world of selling in the table below.

Old World	New World
Sales process	Experience process
Techniques	Advice
Questioning	Anticipating
Product knowledge	Professional knowledge
Posturing	Positioning
Adversarial	Educational
Sales expert	Thought leader

This shift requires a change in how you approach the offering of goods and services. This is especially so with advisory services and absolutely so with *brand you*-based selling.

The *Evolution of selling* model on page 8 shows the shift and charts the various stages of evolution you need to go through if you want to adapt your sales approach in this new world order.

Five things to think about;

1. It's about becoming more customer-centric than ever before. This time though it's not about asking them what they want, it's about knowing what they want as the price of entry to the sales conversation.
2. It's about setting up an experience such that the customer will think of you when they decide it's time to buy.
3. It's about creating products and services that are insanely great and deliver exceptional value. Anything else is simply taking up space and creating waste.
4. It's about moving from a sales team to an advice team.
5. It's about getting beyond features and benefits, and presenting dynamic solutions that are truly world class.

If you get these things right then you are starting to step up into 21st century selling. You are moving from simply

selling stuff to making a difference. You are moving from trying to convince others to buy from you, to standing in the true belief, the conviction, that what you offer is exceptional. That is of course unless it's not, and then all you can do is bait and switch, trick and grab, and interrupt people at dinner time with your 'no better than anyone else's' offer. We probably should mention up front that this stuff won't work for mediocre products and services.

You can see the evolution from Features and Benefits through Subject Matter Expertise to Thought Leadership in the following table. It's this shift that conviction as an idea is addressing;

1.0	2.0	3.0
Static	Dynamic	Agile
Makes Claims	Shows Evidence	Emulates & Educates
Features & Benefits	Subject Matter Expertise	Thought Leadership

The first sale really is to yourself. You have to believe in what you're selling.

The idea of Black Belt

Two of the three authors of this book are Black Belts in one form of martial art or another and the third author is married to one. So we kind of like the metaphor of martial arts. We think that salespeople go on a journey to mastery in sales much like students of a martial art. For us it's the perfect metaphor for going beyond average as a salesperson and stepping into the extraordinary. Being in the 2% club.

In martial arts there are three groups of people who train — those who are enjoying it, those who are using it and those who are living it.

In every martial arts school there are people who come and go using the martial art as a sport. At some point they get as good as they can and find that the extra efforts to become great at the art is something they don't really want. So they come, they train and eventually they leave.

In sales these are the people who come in and try sales for a while, maybe even make up the numbers, but don't contribute much to the whole sales target — to the peak performance game. They do enough to get by and hopefully land the kinds of accounts where all they have to do is the bare minimum to keep it all alive. At least they keep the sales manager busy, right?

There are also the thugs who are using the *martial* in martial arts as a way of letting off steam and experiencing a joy of sorts, inflicting pain on other people. These are the street fighters, the bullies, and in most sports they would get

yellow cards for their behaviour. In some dojos they don't. They are simply managed by the more senior people in the hope that they chill out and 'get it'. The hope is that they start to operate from a more elevated place. In some cases the whole dojo operates from this kill or be killed, survival of the fittest culture, and the thugs fit right in.

In sales these are the aggressive win at all costs individuals. They rape and pillage your database churning great customers by qualifying them aggressively and treating the relationship with disdain. They work the phones, bug the people, and celebrate outsmarting dumb patsy prospects who fell for the double conditional close with the invalid buy back clause attached. They may even become effective salespeople.

Then there are those who are committed to what the Japanese call *Bushido* — the *way* of the warrior. For this group, martial arts is more about the art. It's about discipline and technique and, more than anything, it's about how you conduct yourself in life. Martial arts truly is *the way* for this last group. They may lose a bout or a sparring session, but they always win when they stay aligned with what they believe. This group is not out to hurt, but rather to learn, to serve and to be in mastery. They are humble, confident and aware or their surroundings.

The sales equivalent is a Sales Black Belt. And these traits of humility, confidence and awareness can be found in Sales Black Belts too. This is how thought leaders influence commercial conversations.

Many art-centered martial artists will tell you that they have often met people with the spirit of a Black Belt. These people carry the way into everything they do. It may be cooking or gardening, and we see them often in business. The most successful business people you meet are divided into the last two types — the thugs and the masters. This is not a book for thugs. We have written this for people who want to master the art of selling like a Black Belt, as a thought leader. If that is you, read on.

The stages of evolution

C-based	Conviction <i>We will do business if what I know is what you need</i>	Truth	BUY
D-based	Diagnostic <i>We will do business if ask you enough questions</i>	Time	
R-based	Relationship <i>We will do business if you like me enough</i>	Trust	SELL
T-based	Technique <i>We will do business if I am clever enough</i>	Tools	

It all began decades ago when sales trainers taught sale professionals how to close the sale. It was about techniques and about developing smarter salespeople who, let's face it, kind of tricked the unsuspecting prospect into buying something. The sale person knew that if they were better at what they did when selling, then more people bought from them.

The unspoken mantra of the technique *T-based* sales force is: *'If you are smart enough the client will buy!'*

Things then moved onto a relationship-based sales approach. How many ways can you build rapport and deepen the client

relationship? You would invite the potential client to dinner at your house or sponsor a box at a sporting event. And while it's true that people do business with people they like, it's no longer a guarantee for business success.

The unspoken mantra of the relationship *R-based* sales force is: *'If they like you enough they will do business with you!'*

Eventually, the selling process needs to move from off the shelf solutions to bespoke solutions. This is where the diagnostic selling approach is centered. Essentially it's about becoming less presumptive and taking the time to truly understand the needs, wants and concerns of the people you hope to do business with. The questioning involved no doubt lengthens the decision making lead time, but it also strengthens the provider-client bond.

The unspoken mantra of the diagnostic *D-based* sales force is: *'If we ask enough questions the client will buy!'*

These three sale force platforms are essentially exploring what you can do to affect sales. They are seller-centric. There is an emerging fourth strategy that is to move from convincing the client you have what they need to standing in conviction around what you do and why it matters.

Conviction based selling is built around the unspoken mantra: *'If we have what you require you will buy it!'*

Why it's an evolution not a revolution

Now we are not suggesting that you simply jump from one stage to another, throwing the baby out with the bath water. We recognise that even T selling often embodied, as part of it's core methodology, the establishment of customer needs. We are suggesting that the process of evolution is both selective and inclusive — you take the best bits forward.

Some of the best bits from each of the earlier stages include:

T-based: This is the stage of selling where skillful salespeople used very sophisticated techniques to influence their clients to buy. This included establishing the customers needs and demonstrating how your product or service met those needs. Overcoming customer objections and demonstrating how the features, advantages and benefits of your product or service offered greater value than those of your competitors.

This may involve setting up an appointment with the declared intention of doing business — not just touching base, but actually asking for the business when it's time to.

R-based: This is the stage where selling is all about building rapport and trust. This stage of sales evolution also recognised that repeat business and customers for life created significantly easier to obtain and often more profitable sales over a longer time frame. Part of the motivation for adopting this approach was that if a customer liked you enough to keep giving you repeat business it made it tougher for competitors to simply come in and undercut you on

price — because the customer wasn't just looking for the best price. They were looking for an acceptable price with a strong relationship.

This required acting in a more genuine manner as a salesperson and demonstrating a real interest, even a fondness, for others who found themselves struggling with the challenges for which you have solutions.

D-based: This is the stage where the process involves gaining a deep understanding of the challenges and problems faced by your clients. As organisations became larger and multi-national they began to experience more complex challenges caused by multi-faceted contributing factors. Simple questioning techniques were no longer capable of handling the sheer scope and scale of the problems facing these organisations. In response, sales methods developed extremely sophisticated diagnostics to ensure that enough of the right questions were asked of enough people to gather sufficient data to enable pathways and solutions to be identified.

The aim was to isolate the greatest value point for a potential client and ensure that what you offered to the client as a solution would address that specifically.

As we mentioned earlier each of the stages of the sales evolution have their merits. All three — transaction-, relationship- and diagnostic-based sales — are still in wide use today throughout markets across the globe, and they do generate results. Often good results. Even very good results. But they all have one significant and universal limitation,

one that experienced sales managers will instantly acknowledge. The overwhelming majority of salespeople do not like using these sales methods. Our research identified that 76% of all salespeople actually do not like selling. 76% ! Think for a moment about the Pareto Theory that suggests that on average, just 20% of your sales team members will deliver 80% of your sales results. Given that 76 % of the team do not like selling, we can see why the Pareto numbers are so universally applicable.

So why do so many salespeople not want to sell?

They find the sales process itself too mechanical, too manipulative and too alienating for both themselves as salespeople and for their customers. They often feel that they are being too pushy, that they feel compelled to go out there and get the sales results not because they have true conviction in the value of their offerings or the integrity of their intent, but rather because they are compelled to do so because of financial pressures — their own financial pressures or those placed on them by the organisation. Someone who feels compelled to sell will always be out performed by someone who is committed to sell. To be committed you have to have conviction in what you are doing, in yourself and in your product or service.

The conviction cycle

Essentially this book serves as a guide to the power of conviction. We plan to outline how salespeople move from being ‘*pushy*’ to being ‘*pully*’. How to move from desperation to attraction, from trying to be ‘*convincing*’ to selling from ‘conviction’.

Conviction begins with commitment. It’s about being true to yourself. It’s like character. A person with character is defined by what they do when no one is watching. So too conviction is about the promises and stories you tell yourself. It’s about delivering on your promises. The most important ones being those you make with only you watching. When you do this you are congruent, integrated and solid.

This congruent state can still be shaken up by circumstances and events, so you need a high level of personal and situational awareness. This allows you to adapt your state in the sales process and equally to get it right before you even begin. Once you have your state management under control, you are able to be present to the opportunities that appear throughout the sales process. Black Belts are all about staying present and choosing their state.

We won’t go into the whole state discussion here but essentially Black Belts realise that they get to choose their response to any circumstances and are not victims to what is happening around them. They are agile and adaptive, believing that if you don’t have control of your state then someone else does.

Thought leaders then realise that every great selling opportunity is about serving the client in front of you. Act as if they are already your client and find out ways to make a difference in their world. Equally, if they are not a match for what you do then serve them by referring them on and saying no to the business. This state of service is the final expression of conviction. You are so aligned with what you know, who you serve and how to best help them that not doing business together would be a crying shame.

Positioning

The tipping point in the new world of selling

The secret to tipping from *push* to *pull* in the sales process is to increase peoples *familiarity* about your products and services while decreasing the *exertion* required to create a sale. It's the dream combination, right? Lots of people know what you do and you don't have to do much to get them to buy from you. It's what has been described by many sales experts, authors and trainers as the contrast between being an *order taker* versus a *sales maker*.

This shift from push to pull is, of course, not as easy as it sounds. It is easier to do today, however, than it's ever been before. Three factors are driving this:

1. the social issue
2. the technological issue
3. the scientific issue

The social issue

People in the developed world are in search of meaning more than at any other time in history. This is a result of the personal development movement, various forms of media, and the advances in living standards. It's a natural progression that once people's basic needs have been taken care of and their institutions have failed them (think Enron, the BBC and recent unethical banking practices and collapses) they start to look for products and services that improve the human condition beyond food on the table and hot and cold running water. They ask, *'How does this help me achieve more of what I want?'* They have moved beyond desiring the self actualisation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs hypothesis and are in deep pursuit of meaning. The book *The Purpose Driven Life*, by Pastor Rick Warren, continues to rate in the highest bands for book sales in the world as people continue to search for significance in their lives.

Now this book is not about Maslow's hierarchy of needs or the spiritual journey towards self expression, it's a book about sales. However this social shift does mean that people are moving away from simply buying stuff and are buying stuff that helps them grow, makes their life better or fixes a problem that they know and experience on a daily basis. This is a critical contributing factor in the shift from convincing people they need what you have to standing in the conviction that what you have is extraordinary for the right type of client.

The technological issue

Doctors are required to be across thousands of medical conditions in order to do what they do. Of course they have databases and medical condition encyclopedias to help them review and retrieve information on just about any condition faced in the modern world. Yet when you are diagnosed with a condition you only need to be across one — yours!

You can study the latest findings, research new drug treatments, and even though you have not studied medicine in any way you can, with minimal effort and the internet, become knowledgeable about your condition with a few clicks. Now when you turn up to your next doctor's appointment you are an informed patient. Many may argue that a little knowledge is dangerous (and it may be true that you are not able to interpret correctly what you learn), but in the hands of an educated client this information is empowering. This does not necessarily mean that you can diagnose sufficiently well to treat yourself but it's definitely changing the game of sales. It's moving you away from features and benefits, about which the prospect can already be knowledgeable, and into demonstrated expertise and advice. It's no longer enough for salespeople to have product knowledge, they now also need demonstrated expertise.

We love this! We love what it means for Thought Leaders, for now when they have to sell their thoughts, they have to be an expert. Not some flash in the pan, back of a breakfast cereal box expert, but a true authority.

We also love what this means for anyone selling products or services. Often (mostly) the product or service is a commodity. It is the advice or knowledge that comes with it that provides the point of difference, and the competitive advantage.

This trend is happening across many fields and is changing the whole client experience. It's driving content marketing and raising the stakes on how you genuinely engage with and enrol clients in your products and services.

The scientific issue

At the basis of all scientific method is the concept of proof—scientific method is essentially the pursuit of proof. It's about testing ideas or hypotheses, finding the evidence to support or discard them. The whole point is to prove or disprove a theory (while recognising it's a lot easier to disprove something than it is to prove it).

In science there is a strong movement now to spend less and less time theorising and more and more time studying the evidence and reaching conclusions from the data patterns. Pattern recognition is what experts use to analyse vast amount of data and reach useful conclusions, and the increased processing power of modern computers is making this possible on a whole new scale. This evidence based thinking is rocking the scientific world. What's fascinating is that it's also reaching beyond the realms of science,

influencing the scripts and dialogues of all kinds of sales conversations.

The longer your area of expertise has been around the more data we have about what works, and more frequently, what doesn't. People are less and less likely to believe the claims salespeople make. It's now about proof.

Take the study of leadership principles. This has been written about and explored for such a long time that we are now interested in '*what's working*', how has that principle been applied, by who and in what context? All these '*show me the evidence*' questions are having an impact on the sales approach.

Proof is required when we doubt what you claim. It's not a question of whether you get challenged in a sales conversation but rather that when you do, will you be able to answer the question in a way that demonstrates more than simple sales patter but rather a deep product knowledge, an expertise? Can we trust you to know what you are talking about? Will you become a partner in us achieving our idea of success or are you simply flogging something?

The tonal journey of the new world sales process

In the new world of sales we need to hit the following notes in the sales process.

1. Here is what I know...
2. Here is who I help...
3. If you are that sort of person, with the problems that what I know can solve...
4. It would be an honour to work with you!

Now its obviously going to require a few more layers, but essentially we have moved from selling to anyone with a heart beat and a cheque book, to finding what makes our heart beat and sharing that with people who value it.

The power of positioning

Business 101 is about marketing, selling and building strong relationships. Each of these three primary business activities are as valid as they have ever been. But there is way more to businesses success than simply sales, marketing and relationship building.

Talk to a solicitor or attorney and they will more times than not tell you that their business is built on two things: a strong network of colleagues who refer work to them, and a

strong client base of satisfied clients who repeat as required and refer when asked.

The way we see it, a successful business has all of these growth platforms in place and needs to add one or two more to truly rock. It's the last of these that has the biggest impact and is key to Black Belt selling — because it's created through the power of conviction.

The following model explains the six platforms for growing a business and demonstrates how conviction powers all of them to impact more effectively on top line revenue growth.

Position	10x	PULL
Recommendation	8x	
Referral	6x	
Relationships	4x	PUSH
Sales	3x	
Marketing	2x	

Marketing

Marketing is all about creating noise and generating interest. To be more accurate, it's probably about cutting through the noise in your marketplace and sending a clear signal to a prospective client that you are here. It should attract new clients and also project what your ideal client looks like. David Ogilvy, the marketing guru, is famous for saying: *"50% of advertising is wasted, but we don't know which 50%."* (He probably adapted this from the early US entrepreneur John Wanamaker, considered by many to be father of modern advertising, who said *"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."*)

We think that people who market are likely to attract two times as many clients as those who don't.

Sales

Obviously, we believe in the power and importance of having a formal sales process. This book is evidence of that. What is well known and proven time and time again is that sales and marketing are joined at the hip. If marketing creates new interest, then having a deliberate process for generating sales turns that interest into business. We think that businesses that get deliberate about structuring the sales process have significantly better success than those that don't.

Relationships

We often look outside of our existing client base to generate new business, when there are huge amounts of untapped potential in the existing clients we work with. Whether it's offering them more of what they have already bought or offering them new ideas they may not have thought of yet, it's all about extending the *relationship*. If 20% of your clients are bringing you 80% of your revenue then what do you have to do to spend more time with that 20%. Call it a cross sell, an up sell or a resell, it all amounts to spending more time with people who already know, trust and use you.

These first three concepts on the model require a certain *push* energy. You have to *push* your *marketing*, your *sales* and even your existing *relationships* to make it all happen.

Referrals

Word of mouth rules! When you have past clients talking about how great you are and actually referring their family and friends to you then business just got a whole lot easier. Basically you get good at what you do then over time get known for being great at it. This is terrific when you have time to become known, it's not so great when you are new to a business or simply trying to grow faster than the natural organic growth that doing great work requires.

There are three essential qualities required to be referable. These qualities instruct the actions you need to take to make referrals an integral part of your business.

Quality one: Be reliable

People don't refer the *smartest* or most *talented* person they know, they refer the *smartest* and most *talented* person they know who they can *rely* on to do what they say.

Referrals become a circle with three reference points, wherein energy moves from the referee to the referred and to the referrer and back again. The dance between each is essentially built on trust. If you refer someone to me you are trusting me with your reputation, the person you referred is of course trusting you that I will do what you promised them I could. So to complete the triangle I need to be reliable.

Quality two: Be grateful

When someone gives you a referral you need to say thank you. Most of the time it's not about the money, it's about showing appreciation for the trust. It's about treating the referral as a gift — at the very least say thank you. And this is a great time to go old school and unplugged. Go out today and buy 100 cards. Every time you get a referral from someone at the very least send them a handwritten card of appreciation.

Quality three: Be generous

A person who is referred has high expectations. It's hard to meet these expectations with *average*. Be as generous with your time and knowledge as you possibly can, because a person who is delighted beyond expectations can become a *raving fan*. But you have to overdo it, be more, do more and make every "stuff-up" a moment of truth. Referrals are great as they are a form of low cost advertising. They are not free though. Exceeding expectations is something you need to obsess about. It's what Steve Jobs called being "*insanely great*".

Recommendations

A referral is great, but they are often passive in nature, hard to track and not always going to lead to the most qualified client. Many who receive lots of referrals end up in an unexpected and odd dilemma. It's easy to think that any client is a good client, but as anyone who has run a client facing business knows, some people are good for your business and some not so much.

Meeting and exceeding the expectations of a referred client, especially when they are not your ideal client, is tough. The referee may be your ideal client (e.g. small business owner), but their father in law may not be. They think they have done you a service by sending you business. A Black Belt knows that often it's as much their choice as to whether

someone becomes a client or not as it is the choice of the prospective client.

This awareness that some clients are bad for business is most often born from hard won experience. Some clients are magic and meet all your qualifications, they do great work, they pay on time, they value you and what you do... and the list goes on. The point is that *referrals* can be hard to manage and can be hit and miss. Don't get us wrong, we love them and they are the fourth platform for growth, but distribution partnerships can offer a high value client type. We call these *recommendations*.

A recommendation platform is one in which key people put you forward and you have a formal relationship with them, an agreement for them to actively position you to their clients and derive a benefit from them engaging with you in some way.

Professional Conference *Speakers* have a formal recommendation relationship with Speakers Bureaus — a speaker gets good at speaking and is then invited onto their list of speakers. Conference organisers call them up and ask who is the hottest, say, '*innovation speaker*' at the moment. They provide a list of three speakers who present slightly different angles on innovation for slightly different fee points. The client selects their preferred *Speaker* and the *Speakers Bureau* then goes about invoicing and contracting the event, taking 20–30% of the total fee.

The things that separate a referral from a recommendation are the commercialization of the relationship and the direct

active nature of the introduction. Recommendation partnerships are like a joint venture agreement.

Five principles for setting up effective joint ventures and partnerships:

- 1. Values alignment.** You have to share common ideals.
- 2. Future scenario conversations.** Talk about what might go wrong, not just what might go right.
- 3. Clear understanding of each other's ideal clients.** Spend time understanding each others business so you can send the best clients.
- 4. Boundary conversations around the agreement.** Be aware of the conflicts of interest and areas of overlap in what you each provide and be sure to manage those boundaries explicitly and in a totally transparent nature.
- 5. A mutually agreeable commercial arrangement.** Make sure that each recommendation partner feels like they are winning out of the deal. Win / lose is not the way to play recommendation partnerships.

Positioning

The final growth platform is, in a way, the whole reason for this chapter. When you are positioned as the Thought Leader in your field, when your company is positioned as

the market leader or specialist in your domain, then things change exponentially.

Being positioned as a Thought Leader, an expert, in your field is a thing of beauty for a salesperson. It means that your job is now to educate, not convince. People come to you for your advice and for your understanding of them, their problems and their aspirations. From this place sales is completely an act of service.

Positioning is the ultimate pull platform — you attract people to you rather than having to go out into the market to find prospects.

Of course positioning yourself as a Thought Leader won't actually work unless you *are* a Thought Leader. We saw earlier in the conviction cycle that the foundation for all this is integrity — being congruent with what you say. So there might be some work to do to become an expert in your field, and to develop your Thought Leadership, before you implement this final platform.

We believe you need all six platforms to make a business hum. A Black Belt salesperson uses the ideas in this book to tilt the table of sales to their advantage and by doing so to affect their results and the success of the business they work within. They do this, not by a few percentage points, but by a factor of ten. One salesperson operating from this space is worth ten who don't.

This is what the rest of this book unpacks and helps you achieve. Black Belt salespeople are extraordinary at

positioning themselves and what they do in a way that demonstrates huge conviction.

We believe that done well, sales is heroic work that improves the human condition and changes lives.

We love being served by great salespeople. Salespeople who understand where we are and what we need, who can teach us what we need to know to get there, and can help us make a decision that we are not equipped to make on our own. Salespeople who are on our side to make things better. Salespeople who not only have complete conviction in what they have to offer, but also have complete integrity in only making a sale when it's the right thing for both parties. Black Belt salespeople.

Respect

Conducting respectful commercial conversations

Technology has definitely changed the way we do business. Many of us can run our businesses online from anywhere in the world thanks to the internet, Skype and cheap phone calls. It can be much easier to do business virtually — to have a webinar rather than a seminar, to communicate via the internet — than face to face.

But sometimes there is no substitute for actually sitting in the same room as someone, being able to look them in the eye and have a real life conversation. And the sales meeting is definitely one of these times. The following process looks at how to manage a sales meeting powerfully and respectfully — in terms of your mindset, your energy and your conversation.

Conviction

	BEFORE	DURING	DECISION
MINDSET	Cool <i>It's a numbers game</i>	Selective <i>Choose your clients</i>	Reverent <i>This is a sacred moment</i>
ENERGY	Sold <i>You be convinced</i>	Dance <i>Be present and joyous</i>	Surrendered <i>Don't be attached</i>
CONVERSATION	Clean <i>Be upfront</i>	Clicking <i>Know their world</i>	Invitation <i>Put it out there</i>

We want to develop the right thinking (mindset), what you need to say (conversation), and the right tone (energetic state) for each and every selling conversation. This applies to each stage of the conversation: before (what happens prior to the sales meeting), during (the body of the meeting), and at the decision point (the end of the conversation where the prospect is choosing whether or not to do business with you).

Strangely enough we believe that the first stage is the most important. What happens before you get into the room with a prospect has more bearing on the outcome than what you say during the meeting, or how you ask for the business (although obviously these things matter too). But

unfortunately most sales training focusses on what happens during the meeting and at the close.

Likewise we believe that your mindset and your energetic state is every bit as important as what you say, even though most sales theory is only about what you say. As you can see, the model explores all three aspects (mindset, energy and conversation) before the meeting, during it and at the close.

Cool

The mindset we want before a sales conversation is to be *cool*, recognising that sales is a numbers game. When people are weak at sales and not powerful with commercial conversations, it generally comes back to a fear of rejection. Anyone with self worth issues (which includes a significant number of salespeople) risks collapsing rejection in a sales meeting with a personal rejection. Instead of understanding that the prospect is saying no to the product or service we're selling, at some level we interpret the no as a saying no to us, to rejecting us.

Thinking about sales as a numbers games helps eliminate that. There is an expected conversion rate. We know that some people will say yes, some will say no, and that's the game. There is an old Amway saying that encapsulates this: 'some will, some won't, so what'. And while we don't love everything about Amway, there is definitely wisdom in this.

Trains in Singapore run a bit differently to trains in Australia. In Singapore there is a train every three or four minutes, so you never have to look at a timetable. And you never run for a train. It's really hot and — importantly — you know that there is another train coming. It doesn't matter if you miss this one.

We want to be like that with our sales meeting — to be cool. Because it's a numbers game, we understand our conversion ratios and how many meetings we need to have to hit our targets. If we have ten sales meetings lined up, we aren't desperate to close any of them. There is always another train coming.

The conversion rate depends on the size of opportunity, the previous relationship and a number of other factors. However, as a starting point, with anything new that we launch we factor in a one-in-four conversion rate. In other words we are aiming to make a sale in 25% of our sales meetings. So if we had a \$3,000 program, and we wanted to make \$120,000 from that product in a year, obviously we would need to sell 40 of them. If our conversion rate is one in four, we would need 160 meetings. The game is then to set up 160 meetings, get 40 people to say yes and 120 to say no.

Going into a meeting knowing that it is a numbers game, and that the aim is to get to a yes or a no without much attachment to which, lets us be much lighter in the meeting. And as we'll see, it helps us be surrendered at the decision point.

Sold

Stephen Covey says that every project is created twice: first in your mind, then in reality. In the same way, every sale is made twice: first to yourself, and then to the prospect.

If you aren't *sold* yourself, you're not ready to have a sales meeting. You need to go back to work on your product or your offer until you're in love with it. Ironically in many of the transaction-based selling methods salespeople learnt that customers were likely to present objections to why they may not want to buy the product. Too pricey, don't need it, not now. In reality we have found that it is more likely to be the person selling who has objections and not the customer. Customers have questions, considerations, alternative options and time. People selling object to the customer saying no as it feels as if they themselves are being rejected. They object to having to sell something they do not truly believe in. They may even object to being a salesperson.

You know you are sold when you almost wish that you were a customer just so you could get what it is that you're selling.

It bears repeating — the first sale is *always* to yourself. If you are not sold, no one else will be. Your work before the sales meeting is to make sure that you are sold — energetically you need to be convinced that what you are selling is going to provide value to the right client. You need to be very clear that ultimately the customer chooses whether the sale occurs or not. Your job is simply to ensure the right

customers are given the option of saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to your offer, recommendations, products or services.

As we saw earlier, conviction selling means saying “*This is what I know, and I help these sort of people, who are experiencing these problems to get these results. If that’s of interest to you, it would be an honour to work together.*”

Before going into a sales meeting there needs to be absolutely no doubt in your mind that if the person in front of you is one of those people, facing those problems and looking for those results, then it would be really smart for them to work with you. The prospect is always looking for certainty, and your certainty makes it safe for them to buy.

Ironically, if you are convinced, you don’t need to convince the prospect. When you have certainty, the person in front of you won’t need to be convinced — that will happen automatically. And if you find yourself having lots of conversations where you are trying to convince the prospect about the value of your offering, its a sign that you aren’t sold yourself — that there is still work to do here.

Effective sales conversations happen when your heart, your mind and your mouth are all saying the same thing — and this only comes from a deep conviction. We’ve all had the experience of being sold to by someone who isn’t sold themselves, and doesn’t have that congruence. We can feel it — and if you are conflicted about what you are selling the people you are talking to can feel it too.

The beauty of this is that when you are sold, sales actually becomes an act of service. You begin to feel as if your offerings are the commercial equivalent to a first aid kit and you are happy to offer its contents to anyone who is in pain or need. So instead of trying to convince people about what you have, you can serve them by helping them determine if what you have will make their life better. It's almost as if instead of sitting across from them you move round and sit beside them — you are on their side.

Clean

There is nothing worse than going to catch up with someone, or showing up at a social function, only to find out that there was a hidden agenda to sell something. Imagine being invited to a dinner party only to be offered a great '*business opportunity*' in a multi-level marketing business or a time-share resort. It's a nightmare, and many of us have lived it.

And unfortunately, when we're not *clean* with our setup, this is exactly what we are doing to our prospects. Perhaps not quite as bad, but definitely in the same spectrum. Too many people will set up a sales meeting with a loose invitation to catch up for a coffee. The meeting won't be powerful and will feel sleazy. You know you are there to sell something, but can't be too overt about it because the meetings intent wasn't set up properly. The sales part of the conversation will be weak, and the experience won't be great for either of you.

You'll end up catching up for half an hour, talking briefly about what you actually want to sell, and not getting to the invitation, let alone to a decision.

The conversation before the actual meeting needs to be a clean set up. Be upfront and transparent about what the meeting is about. If the purpose of the meeting is to tell the prospect about what you are offering, to find out if they need it and to make a commercial offer, make sure that you communicate that. Both parties need to know beforehand what is on the agenda.

A clean setup makes everything else much more powerful. First it means that if the offer isn't relevant, or of interest, you don't have to waste an hour of both your lives finding out. More people will knock back the meeting... but that's a good thing. You'll only meet with people who are interested, and your conversion rate will improve.

This also means that when you get together, you can get right into it. You can spend the time productively and get to a decision point in one meeting. And you won't damage your relationships by trying to sell something when its not expected and feels inappropriate.

So if you want to meet Mary to tell her about a program you are selling, a great setup could be something like: *"Hi Mary, I've got this Workshop coming up on such and such date, that's all about achieving these sort of results. I thought of you, and wanted to make a time to catch up and explore if this is something that is going to be of value to you."* Upfront and clean.

Selective

During the meeting the most powerful mindset is selective — be very clear that you are choosing your clients. Get clear before you meet about what type of people you want to work with, what sort of work you do, and how you want to work.

Our friend Bianca runs a bed and breakfast in Singapore — she uses AirBnB to rent out some rooms in her house. She rejects 40% of the people who want to stay with her. 40% ! Four out of every ten people who fill in the form online, enter their credit card and are ready to pay, she says no to.

How cool is that... her whole attitude is that if people are staying in her house, she wants to enjoy the experience. If someone sent her an email that just says “We need a room for two people”, she knows that they are not her sort of people. It isn't friendly, as she says, it's the sort of request you make to a hotel, not a home stay. So she says no. And she trusts her intuition.

One of our mantras is to do work you love with people you like the way you want. Bianca is the personification of this — she only wants to do business with people she likes.

So when you go into a sales meeting, make sure you are choosing your clients. Have part of your sales system be the point where *you* choose. Have a strategy for rejecting the clients who aren't a fit.

We promise you two things will happen. Life will get better as you do more work with people you like. And paradoxically, you will become more effective at selling as you become more attractive. Notice your reaction when we shared that Bianca rejects 40% of requests — didn't that make her more attractive? Part of you wanted to be in the 60%. The same will happen with you when you choose your clients, and more importantly, are willing to say no to the ones you don't choose.

During the meeting you are interviewing the prospect just as much as they are interviewing you. You are determining if they are someone that you can help, that you would want to serve and that you would enjoy hanging out with. If not, be prepared to walk away. Paradoxically, if this is authentic it makes you much more attractive. If it is clear that you won't just work with anyone and there is a bar that the prospect has to reach to become your client, the prospect of working with you does become more attractive. However, this has to be authentic — please don't do this as a sales technique.

We ask ourselves three things before we take on a client. First, can we get excited by their vision by and what they are up to in their business? Second, do we want to hang out with them, are they someone we would like to catch up with for a coffee? And finally, can we make a significant, strategic contribution? If we don't say yes to all three, then we won't take on the client, and we will recommend that they find someone else who is a better fit.

Our good friend Michael Port writes about this in *Book Yourself Solid*. He calls it the ‘red velvet rope policy’ — and paints a beautiful metaphor of a red velvet rope stretched between shiny brass polls with an attendant only letting the privileged few through. He argues that choosing your clients means that you’ll work with clients that you love, that you’ll love every minute of it, and that you’ll do your best work.

Michael Port lists the following benefits of having a red velvet rope policy (and we agree):

- You’ll have clean energy to do your best work.
- You’ll feel invigorated and inspired.
- You’ll connect with clients on a deeper level.
- You’ll feel successful and confident.
- You’ll know your work matters and is changing lives.
- The magic of you will come to life!

Choosing your clients is easy to say, and easy to agree with in principle, but it takes incredible courage to implement it in practice. Particularly before you are fully booked up, and when it feels like you need the money, or you need the sale. But it’s worth it. All three authors have had the experience of taking on clients who weren’t right, and who our intuition told us not to work with, and always ended up paying for it one way or another. Please learn from our mistakes, and select the clients that you will do your best work with.

Dance

During the sales conversation the energy is that of a *dance*. While you have prepared what you are going to say about how you work, the problems you solve and what your great thinking is, you can't recite this like a written speech. The clicking process described later will lay out the content and structure of the sales conversation, but this definitely shouldn't be followed by rote.

You need to dance with the energy of the conversation, play with how much to intervene, what advice or mentoring to give, and how deep to go how quickly — and have fun with it. Be present and be joyous with it. There might be times where you would ask permission to give some mentoring or coaching, or say that if we were working together this is what I would do. If you are in the business of giving advice, then give some in the meeting.

One of our intents for any sales meeting is that the prospect walks away having received incredible value, whether or not they buy from us. This does two things. First, it means that in the future, if circumstances change and the time is right for them, they are much more likely to come back to you and become a client at that point. Second, they will tell their friends and refer business to you, even if they aren't a client themselves. So use the opportunity to make the biggest contribution that you can.

Part of being present and *dancing* is being authentically you. Be real and authentic, and that way you are much more

likely to get to know the prospect and to discover if they are somebody that you would enjoy working with.

Even if it's just an hour, it's still an hour of your life, and an hour you are spending with another human being — so be real and enjoy it. And even if it doesn't result in a sale now, make sure that it makes a difference.

Clicking

The conversation to have during the sales meeting is a *clicking* process. Conviction selling isn't diagnostic selling. You don't go into the meeting trying to find out what's happening in their world, you go in already having a hypothesis about what their problems are and how you can solve them. You have to know their world to have the right to be selling to them in the first place. If you don't know any CEOs, you've never been a CEO and you've never worked with a CEO, you won't be able to click with a CEO and you shouldn't be selling to them. What you say in the meeting is an extended version of *"I work with these sorts of people, facing these sorts of problems, and I solve this with these ideas, which makes these results possible."* The whole clicking process is explained in more detail in the next section.

Reverent

The mindset to hold at the decision point is one of *reverence*. This is the time when the prospect is choosing whether or not they are going to work with you. The whole purpose of getting together, and everything that has gone before, is to get to this point.

It is like they have come to a fork in the road, and two possible futures are opening up in front of them. The prospect is deciding which fork they are going to take — which future they are going to live into. We think of it a bit like the movie *Sliding Doors* with Gwyneth Paltrow. The movie follows two possible futures as she either just catches a train, or just misses it. The name of the movie comes from the moment when the two futures split, when the doors on the train slide closed and she either catches it or she doesn't.

The decision point is like that — the two possible futures split at this point in time. It is a sacred moment, and we want to treat it like that.

While we don't want to get too significant about it all, we want to hand this moment over to the prospect with due reverence, and allow them to make their decision. In *Fierce Conversations* Susan Scott recommends that we let “*silence do the heavy lifting*”. This is great advice for *how* to give this moment its due reverence. Once you make the invitation, be quiet. Give this moment to the prospect like a gift, and then stop talking.

The ancient Greeks used two words for time, *Chronos* and *Kairos*. Wikipedia tells us that the former refers to chronological or sequential time, while the latter signifies a time in between, a moment of indeterminate time in which something special happens — or the right or opportune moment. What we sometimes call critical moments. Mostly when we think about time management, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, we are talking about using chronological time better. Generally we don't pay enough attention to *Kairos*, those critical moments upon which everything turns.

The decision point of the meeting is potentially one of these *Kairos* moments for our prospects. Giving it due reverence means treating it as such.

Surrendered

Your energy at this point is *surrendered*, allowing the prospect to make their decision. You are not attached to the outcome. You have handed over the moment to the client and are unattached.

You might want to work together, but you don't need to. And there is a world of difference between the two.

We've all had the experience of being sold to by someone who was attached to the result. They needed the money, or they had a sales target they needed to hit. That desperation comes out through their pores, and we want to run a mile.

And most of us at some point have been there too, we are behind on our sales targets, or there is no money in the bank and there are bills to pay. Suddenly we are attached, and it really feels like we *need* this client.

Somehow we need to interrupt this state and lose our attachment. Your energy, your being at this point, needs to be that you are fine either way. You are OK whether or not the prospect chooses to do business with you. And if you think about it, of course you are. Your survival never depends on one customer, even if it might feel like it.

This is linked to your mindset from before the meeting, to knowing that it is a numbers game. That the objective of the meeting is to get to a yes or a no. That's it. And the yes or the no is not your yes or no. The yes or the no decision is the customer's alone. Remember that your job is simply to ensure that they have the opportunity to make that decision. We love this as it takes all the pressure associated with traditional sales methods and dissolves the pressure allowing a calm neutrality to pervade your mind and body. The customer will feel see and hear how relaxed you are and feel better placed to make the right decision for themselves. Allowing them to choose without pressure is in itself a service.

So whilst you would love to work together, you are going to be fine either way, and at one level you don't care what they choose, you'll both be fine either way. After all, how can you be upset with someone else choosing what is best for them?

Only the selfish are ever upset by customers choosing what is best for their situation.

A useful belief to support you to stay surrendered is to acknowledge that you cannot choose another soul's journey. And while we don't actually believe our lives are pre-determined, that can be a useful delusion to hold during a sales meeting. Pretend that the outcome of the meeting is already determined and that you are just getting together with the prospect to find out what it is. That positive delusion helps you resist attachment.

Michael Port gives us another useful perspective to help break our attachment. He says that there are people we are meant to serve, and people we are not meant to serve. Being surrendered means trusting this — trusting that we will end up working with the people we are meant to serve. And either we won't choose the people we are not meant to serve, or they won't choose us. In other words, when someone says no, that is a good thing, because at least for now they are not someone we are meant to serve.

The beautiful thing about being detached, is that you can be much stronger in the conversation without it feeling like pressure. When you are attached to an outcome you end up walking on egg shells because the energy isn't clean, and it can end up feeling manipulative or pressured. When you are truly surrendered you can express yourself fully, say exactly what you think, recommend whatever you want and still leave the prospect completely free to choose either way.

Again, it's a beautiful gift to give — a way of being at service during the sales process.

Invitation

It is almost criminal to get to the end of the conversation and not make the invitation. We see it happen all the time where a prospect is ready to buy, but instead of making the invitation the salesperson says: “*get back to me*”, or “*I’ll be in touch*”, or “*lets email about what’s next*”. DON’T DO THAT. You are ripping off your prospect. You’ve brought them to the brink, you’ve shown them a new possibility, a different future, and then you’ve yanked it away from them. Recalling our metaphor that your services or offering can be likened to a first aid kit, to not ask the customer if they would like the bandage, the pain killer, or the antiseptic is bordering on cruelty. You have the solution, they can certainly see and feel the benefits of your offering, but at the last moment you withhold the chance for them to access your solution.

If you have something of value, something that could change this person’s life, that could make their world better, and you’ve both spent an hour with the express purpose of determining whether this is for them, and you want to work with them — ask for the business! Make the invitation. If you don’t, you have wasted both your time and theirs.

Mostly they are ready to make a decision at this point. They have spent quality time getting to know you, getting a sense

of if they want to work with you, exploring the value they would get and how things would change. If you leave without them making a decision, nothing has changed in their world. And the decision about whether to work with you or not is still in their future, not in their past.

However if they have bought what it is you are selling, their world is already different. Even if they have bought a program that is in the future, the commitment they have made changes everything. They are living into a different future. We have all had the experience of selling mentoring programs to clients and having them show up to the first session already have produced breakthrough results. The program begins when the client commits.

It also makes your life much easier. If you don't make the invitation, you'll have to follow up, have another conversation, and begin to enrol them again. You will lose sales that you otherwise would have made, and not be able to serve people that you should be working with.

As we said earlier, the reason we don't make the invitation is that we are scared of rejection. At an unconscious level we fear being told no. We are tribal animals, and for hundreds of thousands of years our survival has depended upon us being accepted by our tribes, so we are wired to avoid rejection. However, if you are in the game of sales, you need to get over this. You move from a sense of survival to a sense of service. Shift from *'fight and flight'* to *'light and alright'*.

Do whatever work you need to do so that you are OK with people saying no to you in a sales meeting. Part of this is

recognising that when someone says no to your offering they are not rejecting you personally (although this is a bit more challenging when you are selling yourself). However part of it runs deeper than this.

Of course you are being selective and choosing your clients, so if this isn't someone you want to work with, don't make the invitation.

However if you do want to work with them, and they meet your criteria, tell them so, and make the invitation. Tell them how you could work together, what it will cost, and ask them if they want to go ahead and work with you.

If they say yes, secure the commitment (either take a payment or send an invoice depending on the client and the type of work). And if they say no, make sure you thank them for the opportunity to share your offering and have some other system for staying in touch and nurturing the relationship so that they will come back to you when the time is right.

Clicking

The specific agenda of your sales meeting

In the previous section we mentioned *clicking* as what you say during the sales meeting, and we are going to expand on that idea now. Clicking is built on the idea of building conviction as opposed to needing to convince others that they should buy what you have. In essence it's about linking known problems that your target market expresses often with the solutions you know can help them. Problem-bridging is the big idea.

A great idea or product that only you like is not that great. A great idea or product that others love is what makes conviction selling possible. It's about figuring out how what you have can help them get rid of problems they know about, and possibly those they don't.

Every time you create a new idea or a new product you have to ask yourself: "*Who does this serve? Who gets to benefit from this problem being solved?*" Once you get a clear picture of what life in their world is like, you then need to create a connection pathway that links your big idea to their important issues.

When this happens you will see the others ‘*click*’ as they make the connection between their problems or challenges and your ideas and products.

For clicking to work it’s essential for you to have a genuine and deeply held respect for the buyer of your ideas, whether they be an internal leader or an actual commercial buyer. You need to respect that they are in the driver’s seat and you cannot and should not convince them to do something they don’t believe in.

The anti-sales approach

Many of us have issues with selling. Why do so many people dislike the sales process? The number of clever people we meet who actively don’t sell is staggering! The obvious elements that contribute to the anti-selling phenomenon are:

- Bad past experience
- Fear of rejection (be it at a conscious or unconscious level)
- Stigma: the negative reputation attributed to the ‘typical’ salesperson
- The sense that selling is a step down from the ‘*real work*’ we do
- Concern at being seen as arrogant: ‘Who are you to suggest your ideas are worth imparting to others?’

Here's the secret for anyone who has an aversion to sales: *stop selling and start letting people buy.*

For this to happen you don't need to figure out some slick sales script, you don't need to handle their objections, you don't need to learn the six magic steps of influence! What you need to do is know your stuff, know their needs, and place you and your ideas into the conversation so that they *click*.

This is the same whether you are talking to people outside your organisation or to internal staff. Whether you are talking to a large crowd or one to one, you need to make it easier for them to want to listen to your ideas. That's what clicking is all about.

As we have seen, traditional selling techniques are increasingly tired, outdated, and lack rapport with most of today's clients. Our observation is that they are predominantly comprised of common tricks that are used to sell and convince people to buy.

A process you can try

Don't sell, understand.

If you don't know why people might benefit from your ideas, spend time getting to know them and ask their permission

to use them as a pilot to test and prototype your offer. Initially they may not even pay you, but if it works they will tell all their contacts and mates about you. If it doesn't, what you will learn from the experience will be invaluable. This is thought-prototyping, though. Once you know their needs and can show them how you have a solution, then they invite you to dance! It is really simple. All you need to do is:

Know your stuff. Know my stuff.

Place your stuff as the solution to my stuff and always create massive value.

The idea that you have integrity is the price of entry. Without this others will not buy your ideas, your approach, or you. As a consequence, Thought Leaders embrace this new approach because they can evolve from 'selling to' people to 'clicking with' people. Clicking is understanding the people you are communicating with and thus earning the right to pitch your ideas and approach.

Problem-bridging

Step 1: Known, spoken problems

This will be the problem that people openly discuss and believe that to date no one has come up with a good solution for. The fact that these concerns are blatant and openly spoken of is a positive. It gives you a bridge anchor point into their predominant dialogue.

It might be helpful to imagine what the conversation would be if you put 100 of your target market in a room and asked them to share their biggest challenge. What would they say? What keeps them awake at night? What is their primary concern? This will be the problem that they openly discuss and frequently lament the lack of a solution to.

For example if we were selling to small business owners, the known spoken problems might be:

- How am I going to pay wages this Friday?
- I'm working 80 hours a week and never have time for myself or my family.
- I can't find good people to help share the load.

Step 2: Known, unspoken problems

What do they really think about, when they are sitting quietly pondering their situation? They understand the problems

but may not have voiced them yet, either to themselves or others. This is the problem that you don't have to dig too deeply beneath the surface to uncover.

In this case, ask yourself what they would say if sitting with you at the end of a long day, with half a bottle of good red wine down. The unspoken problems are typically personal fears and concerns; doubt often creeps in here. This is the problem that you don't have to dig too deeply beneath the surface to uncover.

For example for our small business owner friends, the known, unspoken problems might be:

- Perhaps I'm not up to this, and aren't good at running a business.
- Maybe I was better off when I had a job.
- I'm exhausted, and the sacrifices don't look like they are paying off.

Step 3: Draw a value model

A value model is a contextual diagram you can draw to explain the placement of your ideas in the context of the person's situation. It's nice to have a metaphor up your sleeve to go with the model. A value model is simply the 'why' piece.

Often we want to solve problems straightaway. We are so into our ideas and solutions that we throw them away on ears that are either not interested or don't know why they

should be interested. The three problems and a value model fix that.

Value models are essentially helping people with three issues:

- Where am I on this journey? (Location)
- Where do I want to go next? (Aspiration)
- What do I value most? (Currency)

We'll unpack value models in more detail in the next section — they are the key to this process, and they rock.

Step 4: The unknown, unspoken problems

The unknown problem is the most dangerous of all the problems. If you don't get this right and you express it as true, you have lost any chance of getting your idea off the ground. If you get it right, though, you will see a light come on in your client's eyes. They will nod as they get to see you put form around something they have known to be true but have not been able to name or identify. If you are the person who does this for someone else, you become the trusted advisor and a partner for life.

In most cases this fourth step is about introducing a piece of intellectual property that serves as a quick introduction to 'how' people go about getting the currency of worth shown in your value model.

For example, the unknown problems of small business owners could be:

- If you want to be in business you need to go big and have a succession plan. Entrepreneurs start, grow and exit businesses in under five years, for more than \$10 million.
- If you want to stay small, you need to stop focusing on turnover and start focusing on take-home amount. Growth is irrelevant. Profit is what matters.

In summary, if you want to convince people that you have something they need, then know their problems and express them. Know the problems they won't talk about (that they do know at some level) and know the problem that they don't even know they have. Too many experts start at number three and wonder why they scare away every opportunity.

Why the process is effective

Many salespeople use this technique for introducing their ideas to an audience in both written and spoken formats. It is simple to construct, easy to follow and elegantly enables you as a Thought Leader to support your audience to 'click' with your ideas. The process is very effective for a variety of important reasons:

It builds rapport with the people we are communicating with

Articulating the situation people find themselves in builds rapport because people have a sense that you are like them, because you understand and can describe their situation. This in turn builds the customer's confidence that they can trust you. Why would you trust someone that doesn't understand you or your situation?

It demonstrates empathy and understanding

When you progress the conversation to further explain people's unspoken thoughts and feelings about the situation they are facing, or the challenges they are confronting, they sense your empathy. They understand that you know how they really feel about this, that you have thought deeply enough about the situation to understand the emotional aspects and the human factors involved. You have 'walked in their shoes'.

It demonstrates your unique perspective

Of course, the moment you announce the unknown facts, ideas, solutions or elements in your communication to others and their eyes light up, or they laugh in relief, or smile in excitement and recognition of the pathway forward, you have demonstrated clearly that you are a Thought Leader.

It enables you to be of immediate service to others

Within moments of communicating with people you are able to share an idea or solution to their problem, so you are offering immediate value. You are not holding back or attempting to enhance the perceived value of the offer you have yet to reveal. You are, with complete integrity, saying, *“Look, I understand your situation. I know how you must be feeling or thinking about it and I have thought of a solution. Here’s what I think you could do...”*

It invites people to engage further

This approach enables people you are communicating with to experience a sense of exploration and possibility rather than feeling patronised or undermined. It hints at more to come. Solving one problem for people immediately suggests to them that of course you might well be able to help them with others, given you are so able to enter into other people’s worlds and grasp the nature of those worlds to the extent that you can see a solution they may not have considered.

Trailer directors

In recent years Hollywood has realised that they need two directors for every movie. The first is the director who makes the movie. The second is the director who sells it. This is such a useful metaphor for how Black Belt salespeople can

often struggle to sell, especially when what they are selling is themselves or some kind of advice or expertise.

The main movie director loves their movie. Sometimes they love it so much they can be a bit of bore when talking about it. Their obsession often gets in the way of people appreciating the movie at whatever level they choose.

If they are being interviewed on stage by James Lipton on his show *Inside The Actors Studio* then they can go all-out. They have dedicated students and masters of the art of film and can explore the finer nuances of continuity shooting, or the power of non dialogue—in Spielberg’s case as a technique for getting the audience to wonder ‘*what’s she thinking about?*’. But...

When an average cinema-goer, who enjoys a few hours of escapism, watches a trailer made by the main director with the precision and thoroughness which makes them a great director, featuring all their favourite scenes, they can be bored.

Some salespeople who consider themselves product knowledge experts do the same thing. They deep dive onto the *how* and *what* of their service or products without establishing a strong enough *why*. They sell so hard they buy it back, they give it all away and, at the risk of introducing another metaphor, it’s as if the prospective client is thirsty and the salesperson is a fire hose.

Trailer directors have an appropriate disrespect for the the main movie. They are not as invested in the art and they know

that their job as the trailer director is to get an audience into the cinema. Much to the horror of the main movie directors they will cut scenes from different parts of the movie and patch them together to build a short punchy narrative. It's always close enough to the movies main story line as not be false. It's just delivered in a way that's more engaging. Because they are not trying to impress the knowledgeable audience, the trailer director is free to impress the theatre audience, or — in the case of Black Belt selling — the client.

In the Conviction world you are both the movie and the trailer director.

Value Models

The key tool you need to master for clicking

A value model is a contextual diagram you can draw to explain the placement of your ideas in the prospect's situation.

A great value model will transform your experience of selling. It is a piece of intellectual property that you will design specifically to empower the sales process. And it is all about why someone wants what you have, not how you deliver it.

Too often experts and salespeople want to solve problems straight away. We dive straight into the how. We are so fixated on our ideas and solutions that we throw them away on ears that are either not interested or don't know why they should be interested.

There are three key elements that need to be in a value model:

1. Currency — the numbers that describe the value.
2. Aspiration — where the prospect wants to be.
3. Location — where they are now.

Imagine a sales meeting that you have coming up. Now imagine that you can not only vocalise the journey that the prospect is on, but describe it in an elegant model that *in*

and of itself turns on light bulbs. And that you could put numbers to the journey.

In other words you are saying to people: “I help people on this journey, who want to move to this point, and get this value.”

Let’s walk through each in turn, and then look at some examples.

Currency

A great value model has a currency the partner will value.

There are four primary currencies that we value, and that can go into your value model: money, time, emotions and status.

Dan Kennedy once said that the easiest sale is discounted money. If we had hundred dollar notes that we were selling for fifty dollars each, we could make as many sales as we wanted. (Unfortunately we haven’t worked out how to make that business model work.)

The closer our sale is to selling discounted money, the easier it will be. For example if we have a \$3,000 program that you think will make you an extra \$240,000 over the next 12 months, you’ll buy it in a heartbeat. Likewise if you are selling a consulting engagement to a corporate that will improve their bottom line by \$5M, and the price tag is

\$300,000, it feels like discounted money and shouldn't be too hard to close.

Of course not everything that we sell can be tied to a financial outcome, so let's look at the other three.

Number two is time. Now more than ever we are all time poor and looking for ways to save time. If you can show me how to be more effective, efficient or productive so that I can get more done in less time, I'll pay for that.

The key with our currency is be able to put a number against it, so show me how much time I'll save. Whether it's as a percentage, or in hours or days.

Third is our emotions. We all want to feel better — healthier, happier, more satisfied and more fulfilled. Freud said that everything we do is to move away from pain or towards pleasure — he called this the *pleasure principle*. Tony Robbins simplified this down to “*everything we do is to feel better*”.

Again, if you can help me feel better, I'll pay for that. This can be trickier to put numbers against, but it's definitely possible. Normally this will be done as a percentage of the potential, or as a multiple. For example if you are selling relationship counseling and the primary value is feeling fulfilled in my relationship you could have different levels that represent the percentage of potential fulfillment (eg 0–20% might be the bottom level, 20%–40% the next level and so on). Or the value model could help me feel twice as fulfilled, or three times as fulfilled, and so on.

Finally there is status. As we said earlier, we are tribal animals, and we crave acceptance and recognition within our community. A university might have diploma, degree, masters and doctorate as different levels on a value model, and a big part of the value of each is the increased status that come with the bits of paper you receive.

Aspiration

A great value model has a sense of a compelling future. It should show you how to get to somewhere better. It should mobilise you in pursuit of a better future.

Every sale is selling a better future. No matter what the product or service you are selling is, your implicit promise is that if you exchange money for this your future will be better because of that exchange.

A value model helps quantify exactly how much better. I want to see how much more money I could have, or how much time I could save, or how much better I'll feel, or how much more recognition and status I'll receive.

Location

Finally, a great value model is one where you can see where you are on the journey. You need to be able to locate where you are on the model in the present moment. Right now I'm here, and I want to be there.

These three diagrams are examples of value models that we use in different scenarios.

Example 1:

10	Fifth Dan	\$1 200 000	<i>Distribution</i>
9	Fourth Dan	\$1 080 000	<i>Capacity</i>
8	Third Dan	\$960 000	<i>Productivity</i>
7	Second Dan	\$840 000	<i>Engagement</i>
6	Black Belt	\$720 000	<i>Investment</i>
5	Red Belt	\$600 000	<i>Leverage</i>
4	Blue Belt	\$480 000	<i>Positioning</i>
3	Green Belt	\$360 000	<i>Activity</i>
2	Yellow Belt	\$240 000	<i>Value</i>
1	White Belt	\$120 000	<i>Decision</i>

This model is used to sell the Thought Leaders Business School—a twelve month program that helps experts (speakers, authors, trainers, mentors, facilitators, coaches and consultants) grow their solo practices. The promise of the program is to “*earn \$500k to \$1.5M a year working 50 to 200 days with one or two support staff*”.

The currency of worth here is clearly dollars, and that is the primary consideration for experts on their own trying to make a living. However all the other currencies are alluded to. The belts are clearly a status symbol, and within the Thought Leaders Community, there is recognition and status that is accorded to Black Belts.

We also talk about time in the value proposition when we say “*working 50 to 200 days*”, and while that isn’t explicit in the value model, its part of the conversation. There is the possibility of working less days, and having more time for everything else.

Finally most consultants and experts looking at this model would identify a number of ways they would feel better if they were higher up the ladder, be that increased freedom, safety, confidence or fulfillment.

We also indicate the ‘sweet spot’, just above blue belt, where your referrals are creating most of your new business. This is a result of the focus on positioning at stage 4 and leverage at stage 5.

Anyone looking at this model can point to the spot where they want to be. I’d love to be a blue belt and make

\$480k a year, or I want to be a Black Belt and \$720k a year, or my aspiration is to be a 4th Dan and pass a million.

And of course it has location. It is very easy to place yourself on the model in the present. Most consultants or experts prior to participating in the program sit on the bottom two or three rungs.

In the Revenue Ladder prospects can say: *“I am here at the moment, and I would love to get to there.”* When people can locate themselves on your model and see where they want to be, it becomes a no-brainer to work with you.

The final slam dunk for a great model is a metaphor that goes with it — in this case the martial arts metaphor of moving from White Belt to Black Belt.

Example 2:

Position	10x	PULL
Recommendation	8x	
Referral	6x	
Relationships	4x	PUSH
Sales	3x	
Marketing	2x	

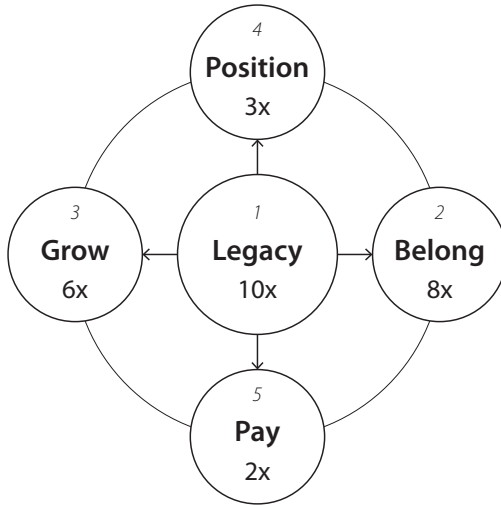
You saw this model at the start of this book and yes, you are spot on — it's a value model. We think that value models are critical in teaching and should be used to explain why what you are about to explain is worth listening to, or in this case worth reading.

The rule then becomes: don't start teaching anything until you have engaged the audience to the why, the what's in it for them. Help them locate where they are, where they want to be and what they value, and the rest will take care of itself.

In this model you can see the distinction between the push and the pull which establishes the primary contrast frame.

The currency is basically leverage. How much return do you get from a unit of effort. So one unit of effort on marketing gets you twice that back right up to one unit of effort getting you ten times at the top.

Example 3:



We use this model to explore the impact that enterprising Thought Leadership can have on the people in an organisation. Basically the program element we are focussing on is the people element. In essence this part of the program is about attracting, retaining and developing talent.

Most value models will be the vertical ladder, ascension type. However this one is a bit different. We included this one to illustrate that the shapes can vary, if the elements are still incorporated.

In this model you can see the location piece in the words, you also see the aspiration in the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the currency is in the 10x, 8x etc. This is powerful if you are the audience. If you are in charge of people you need to find a way to get more engagement out of your people without paying them more or giving them a promotion. We show HR and People Leaders how they can focus on the three drives that outpace payment and promotion in super talented people.

We find that when most people try to create value models they make them too hard. Its a classic movie director moment. The value model is the trailer that sells the main event. Don't try and educate too much, don't try to show how much you know. This is a *why* tool not a *how* or *what* tool.

The End

A quick summary of the book

We hope you enjoyed reading our book *Conviction — How Thought Leaders Influence Commercial Conversations*. We really enjoyed taking a stand for what we believe, which is in essence that selling needs to grow up. It needs to get out of the hands of thugs and into the hands of masters.

We should say that in our journeys and meetings with many great salespeople we are often inspired by the other Black Belts we meet who sell insurance, cars, cameras, concepts, law, accounting, and even education or governmental policies.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank all the wonderful members of our Global Thought Leaders community. If you would like to learn more about what we do and maybe join us then please log on and check out what we are doing at

www.petercook.com

www.mat church.com

www.culturesatwork.com

www.tlbusinessschool.com

We hope one day to help you graduate more Sales Black Belts in your business and unleash thought leaders who can position your value with conviction.

Keep serving, keep solving problems and keeping being commercially smart.

Letters

The rest of the book is made up of commentaries, contributions and the occasional contradictions to the main premise of this book. Various esteemed members of the Thought Leaders Community were asked to read and comment on the book from their perspective and frame of reference.

The letters are the opinions of the writers as noted in each chapter and do not necessarily represent the authors' views or those of Thought Leaders Global Pty Ltd.

Response from

Gabrielle Dolan

Conviction selling to me feels a little bit like the chicken and the egg and which came first. Does the conviction come first or the selling?

I believe it is a bit of both. When you first start out in business it may be almost impossible to have 100% conviction that what you are selling is of tremendous value. The reality is that you may think it is, but how do you really know until you have worked with a client?

In my twenties I played softball and as part of playing you always had to umpire other games. There would be an experienced (often paid) central umpire that called the balls, strikes, home runs and “You’re out!”. Then there was the line umpires like me who had limited experience with umpiring but who knew the rules and looked after first base or third base.

After several years I was asked to do a central umpiring role. I accepted the offer because I knew I could do it and there was part of me that was looking forward to calling the strikes and the “You’re out!” with all the theatrics you see by American baseball umpires. However, by the morning of the game, I was starting to falter in my conviction. Logically I knew I

could umpire the game, but the reality was I had never done it before so a bit of doubt crept in. I spoke to a very senior coach and President of our club about this, explaining to her I was bit nervous. My idea was that when I pulled the two teams together at the start of the game I would tell them that this was the first time I had been a central umpire so they would need to take it easy on me. She looked at me and said, 'You will not say that. You will go out and umpire as if you have done it for years and you will make the calls and you will make them loud and confidently.'

Priceless advice that sounds a lot like 'fake it 'til you make it' before that saying ever became popular. Others have developed that saying into 'fake it 'til you feel it' and Amy Cuddy says, 'Fake it 'til you become it', which is the one I prefer the most.

I think it took me about 10 minutes of faking it before I became it and was giving the best 'You're out!' American baseball style calls of all time.

It seems madness to me now that I even contemplated letting the players know of my doubt. They would have either tried to take advantage of that, or felt a bit ripped off that they did not have an experienced umpire controlling the game.

I often think of this when contemplating conviction selling because I believe the same approach applies. We sometimes know our stuff well, we know it can work, we believe it can work, but we falter in our conviction because we have not delivered it before, worked in that industry before, or delivered it in a workshop as opposed to a coaching situation.

Worrying about those minor points (and they are minor) takes us further away from conviction. We allow these doubts to take over when deep down we know we can do it and we know what we are delivering can and will add value.

The client does not need to know of your doubt, because just like the softballers, they will either take advantage of this (ask for a reduced rate because the way you are talking or acting feels like a trial go) or you will put unnecessary concerns in their head that you cannot deliver or you are not the expert they are wanting. If we know what we do will be valued then we owe it to ourselves and our clients to step 100 percent into that conviction sooner rather than later.

If conviction selling is knowing that what you are offering will add value, then the other side to this is also knowing when you cannot add value and having the integrity to say so. I have been in many situations when I have realised, due to a variety of reasons, that what I was offering would not be right for the client. Sometimes this was because I felt they were not ready for my offering as it was too early in their leader's development. Other times it has been because what they were wanting I could not deliver. On several occasions it has been because what they were trying to achieve or the industry they were in did not excite me and I knew I would not be doing my best work.

When I speak with clients I list my three criteria of working with each other.

1. I have to be excited about what you want to achieve.
2. We have to like working with each other (we don't have to be best mates but we have to like each other).
3. I need to believe I can add value to you.

I don't adopt the Meatloaf philosophy with this in that 'Two out of three ain't bad', as conviction selling to me is ensuring all three criteria are met.

Conviction selling is a lot easier said than done, but I believe it should be the aim of anyone who is selling anything, especially themselves. To me, conviction selling comes from firstly developing your thinking. By taking the time to deepen and broaden your knowledge, you can create unique intellectual property where you truly believe in the value you can offer.

When it comes to confidence, even when doubt has crept in - and it will - go out there and step into the conviction. Make the calls loud and strong. You may just be surprised how quickly you move from faking it to becoming it and doing the moonwalk with swagger as if you have just called in a home run.

www.gabrielledolan.com

Response from

Dan Gregory

We don't buy you, we buy us. Walk onto the sales floor of just about any industry, and typically, the wrong person is doing the talking.

If they're classically trained in sales technique, they'll be deftly trying to spin features into benefits and reducing obstacles that stand in between them and closing the sale. They'll appeal to your rational side before adding a persuasive emotional anchor and then ask for the business with a time-limited call to action including a '*just for you*' deal in the stinger.

It's the business equivalent of water-boarding. If I torture you long enough you'll eventually cave in and sign on the dotted line.

It's also why people often hate salespeople and even the word 'sales.' Recently I was talking to a lecture theatre filled with scientists and told them they needed to sell their information, not simply expect it to catch on, and I could tell that the word sell made a few of them physically ill. Like virtually everyone I meet in every industry, they'd rather be right than rich. So please don't judge the scientists, they often are right, which I'm sure makes that choice even more frustrating.

Now this hard sales technique may very possibly have been effective back in the late 1800s when it was developed. Of course, back then, pretty much everything you bought was a need, not a want, and there really was no competitor in the marketplace and there actually was something about your product that was unique or otherwise useful (ouch!!!).

Sadly, or rather thankfully, that's no longer the case and we need to earn our sales with something more than intimidation and coercion.

In this book probably the most resonant line is on page one of chapter one:

There is a power shift at play here, a shift from seller to buyer.

Truth be told, there is ever increasing competition in homogenised markets with few competitive advantages that last longer than a few hours... and you know what — I've got so much stuff that I just don't need anything you have not matter how good it is.

But that's why sales and the ability to sell matter more than ever.

Being good is not enough — doing a good job, producing a good product, being the right person for the job, or even owning the moral high ground is getting harder than ever to determine and increasingly irrelevant in terms of results.

What that means is, if you've only developed your '*hard skills*' — your knowledge or IP, your craft or competence, your product and service — while neglecting the '*soft skills*'

which are all about human engagement, you're essentially... screwed!

Hopefully by now I've sold you on the need to sell.

But perhaps that's part of the problem We're so focused on the need to sell that we don't focus on why they want to buy.

The truth is we don't buy features or benefits, we're not rational or necessarily emotional, we don't buy the sales guy, the brand or even the product and our friend's recommendations. We buy ourselves.

Our identity drives every piece of our behaviour including what we buy.

We buy products and use services that reflect the way we want to project ourselves to the world.

Usually when I make this assertion, I'm immediately met with some objection, typically from an older gentleman, who says something along the lines of, "*I don't buy all this emotional selling stuff, I just buy what I need based on whether it does the job or not.*" So, of course, I respectfully inquire of them, "*So you're a practical, no nonsense kind of guy.*" And they always puff up with pride as if they've taught this young Turk a thing or two.

But what they've done is told me their identity. And in doing so they've told me how to sell to them. That's the point — The sale is in the prospect, not the product.

(Just as an aside, I tend to think of practical types as lacking any imagination or personality... you know who you are).

So rather than judging our customers, as I just did, perhaps we should spend more time listening, because selling is in fact the process of aligning identities. People will tell you how to sell by telling you who they are. We all love to talk about ourselves, but so few of us give anyone else a chance to tell their story because we're so invested in ours, or our product's.

But we do in fact have two identities — who we really are, or rather who we deep down think we are, and secondly, who we aspire to be.

The best salespeople sell into the gap, not beyond my expectations but just aspirationally enough for me to feel good about who I just became by making the purchase. And in doing so they provide greater value than the product or service provides simply through its utility.

Which goes to my ultimate point, that perhaps the best salespeople are not the fast talkers, but in fact the most insightful listeners.

www.theimpossibleinstitute.com

Response from

Jason Fox

Agility is one of the core proficiencies of any thought leader. Agility means having the ability to rapidly evolve and adapt within a changing context. It's the key differentiator between fresh, relevant, forward-thinking intellectual property and stale, *'seen it before'* ideas. In today's market, a thought leader needs to be agile.

Getting your head into the game

Before the interwebs and wikipedia came along, people would buy encyclopaedias. As actual physical books (crazy right?). People would be paid to write them, edit them, publish them, distribute them, and sell them. By the time you bought one, they'd already be outdated. New elements would have been added to the periodic table, new species would be discovered, new currencies would be created, and so on.

It wasn't such a big deal back then because we didn't know any better. But nowadays it is.

To be an effective thought leader — and to sell with conviction — means that we do not simply search for that *'one*

big idea' we can lock down with patents and trademarks. It means taking what we know and endlessly improving, refining and evolving it to best serve the market in its current context.

How to stay ahead of the game

In the old days, one would simply enrol in new training courses or obtain new qualifications in order to stay relevant. That still holds. But if we want to step out of thought followship and into the conviction of thought leadership, there are some important steps to take.

Doubt yourself properly

One of the classic, well-intended throw-away motivational lines runs along the lines of '*never doubt yourself*.' But this blind optimism can actually be damaging to your conviction. Instead, you'll *want* to spend time in angst, agonising over your ideas from all different angles. It'll help to shape your intellectual property, creating agile conviction rather than blind dogma. Just be careful not to be paralysed by doubt — be proactive with it and you'll be stronger for it.

Curate your content

To stay ahead of the game you'll need to keep your finger on the pulse of the ever-changing zeitgeist. This isn't as daunting as it might sound, if you use the right tools. Content

filtering/curation apps like Zite, Flipboard and Pocket can help you to filter the interwebs and deliver the freshest content in the topics of your choosing. Google alerts can also keep you abreast of key trends. Make this a part of your daily or weekly ritual.

Connect the dots

There's a danger with curation — you can exist only within your own curated thought bubble, oblivious to the world outside it. So, just as it is important to go deep in your own stuff, it's important to keep abreast of the world outside of your filter.

Craft the canvas

Being able to dance through a value model of your making is one of the most joyous ways to sell and deliver value with conviction. A model — be it a simple venn diagram, a quadrant or a grid matrix — is kind of like chalking out hopscotch, except you're crafting and establishing the playing field for your intellectual property.

If you've spent the time in appropriate angst over your models — considering them from every angle, and developing appropriate language palettes, currencies and examples to draw upon — you'll be able to enter any conversation with conviction.

Models also create a canvas for conversation. The context is comforting—just like business is often conducted over a cup of coffee or game of golf (etc), having a model between you reduces the intensity of the conversation while allowing people to view things objectively.

Prepare to wing it

One of the best things I did early in the development of my practice was to obtain speakership mentoring with Matt Church (along with the brilliant core curriculum of Thought Leaders). Matt, like a ninja wizard, has developed, refined and evolved a whole suite of ingenious systems and methodologies that make any presentation or sales conversation a breeze—where you're literally prepared to wing it.

A sales conversation is no different. People are smart—they can tell when something is scripted. It feels manipulative. But, if you know your stuff, if you've done the preparation and you know the game, you can be (as Peter Cook describes it in his eloquent model) *joyously present* throughout the conversation.

Another element is knowing what is not within the realms of your thought leadership. By knowing what you are *not* an expert in—and by actively referring or recommending others who do—you strengthen your own positioning, and stand firmer in conviction.

www.drjasonfox.com

Response from

Bernadette McClelland

I firmly believe that success in selling comes down to two factors:

- Conviction in your purpose and therefore your intention.
- Conviction in yourself and therefore your execution of that intention.

As someone who has been in solution selling for three decades, I have personally witnessed the staged transitions from product based sales, relationship sales, solution sales and consultative sales, bringing us to a moment in time where these styles alone are not enough for a business to succeed. It is no longer about farmers or hunters.

Farmers may sow the seed and nurture and cultivate the relationships, but it's not enough in today's crazy busy world. People are too *'on purpose'* to take calls from the salesperson who calls up to ask 'how are you going' or who wants to while away a morning drinking coffee.

And to those sales hunters who get their energy off the hunt, make the kill and move, businesses are saying NO MORE!

We don't want to be sold to, we want someone to help us make a difference in our business.

A new breed of salesperson needs to knock on doors today — someone who is really business savvy, is able to get in and get out with precision, but still stay on the customers radar. I look back over my solid career in B2B sales and the successful salespeople have been few and far between. They have been the ones who have in common the qualities of precision questioning, calling it as it is, having an opinion, and in some, cases, willing to rock the boat — quite simply being bold.

Not detracting from the meaning of being bold, which is being brave, courageous and taking risks, but in the context of sales it also means challenging old ways of thinking, challenging your customers thinking and challenging the status quo — any salesperson's biggest competitor! The sooner salespeople can understand that the world is not the same world that once called for traditional selling models and they shift their thinking, then the more sales they'll make.

Salespeople need to be remembered, but for the right reasons. *Glengarry Glen Ross* RIP!

The sales landscape has changed but many salespeople haven't analysed the depth of the change. What has really changed is the buying process! The problem is that the majority of salespeople have not adapted to that change. Salespeople are still selling the same old way that got them in the door all those years ago, intent on getting past the gatekeeper, overcoming objections and closing the sale, and

they are wondering why they are not even getting their foot in the door today — the foot simply doesn't fit!

47% of purchase decisions are made before the salesperson is actually engaged because the customers are already aware of what their problems are and are only one mouse click away from their own solutions. They have created their own shortlists of suppliers and vendors, so why would they want to waste time with someone who is asking them all about their current situation, the challenges they are having or the implications, when the customer is already aware of them? I'm not negating any of the selling techniques, but in isolation it is not going to nail it anymore.

The questioning format needs to be completely revamped so that the salesperson can pick up the conversation where the customer is at today and in the future, not just the past. The salesperson must discover what already influences the customer from a psychology perspective before he knows how to influence him in the sale and that takes a different set of questions — a CORE set of questions that rely on circumstances, opportunities, results and envisioning.

Sales is all about change, coaching the client toward an outcome and asking questions that are almost surgical and laser like that cut deep to the issue, and that takes someone who also has a strong level of certainty and personal belief in themselves and the value of their offering. It's about building relationships that are based on a deep seated trust and respect.

It is the nature of the relationship that matters today. Many salespeople create rapport at a surface level and don't move much past that. Forgetting about leaving long winded voicemails, or calling simply to touch base. Forget about becoming your customer's best friend only when the re-enrol, resign or renewal is due.

Selling has to be about being remembered for the right reasons — thinking smarter and having a valid business reason that is going to provide new perspectives, different conversations, fresh insights to help them build their business. They don't have time for anything superfluous these days.

Three ways to do that

Name and Claim - Find something you can be fantastic at being the expert in and OWN IT. Come to the table with competitive strategies, engaging perspectives and quality questions surrounding that topic based at an industry and business level. What are you an expert in?

Think and Grow Rich - When was the last time you made an appointment with yourself to actually sit and think without daydreaming or twitching or watching the time. If Charlie Monger and Donald Trump can sit and do that to silently see what thoughts they could conjure up to make more sales for them and their customers then that is good enough for us.

Innovate and Market - The salesperson who can adapt to the future will be one who is not afraid to say WHAT IF... to

have an opinion, voice that opinion, take feedback from that opinion and act on that opinion. Our customers want us to do that and so do our prospects.

Sales is not what it used to be. Salespeople today, regardless of gender or generation, succeed when they leave their ordinary world of certainty and stability and embrace uncertainty by being open to new ideas, to new ways of thinking, and when they listen for feedback. They realise that conviction and boldness both have genius, power and magic in them.

Sales per se, the economy and lack of opportunities are never the problem — the problem lies in the meaning you place on each of these and the way you respond to each of these. So the challenge is not about motivating salespeople, it's about embracing 21st century strategies such as personal leadership, sales leadership and thought leadership because at the end of the day the first sale is ALWAYS to yourself.

www.bernadetteMcClelland.com

Response from

Michael Licenblat

The fundamental requirement in business is to consistently get your product/service in front of the right people on a regular basis. Selling can often be a numbers game, so if you are not willing/able to get in front of enough people then it doesn't matter how smart you are, how great your product is, or how effective your service might be — if you don't have enough clients then you won't have a business!

Every year companies spend tens of thousands on training their sales teams in areas like prospecting, questioning and closing more sales. While this type of training is clearly valuable, it fails to address a key factor impacting sales performance. That is, the ability of the salesperson to manage the rejection they face on a daily basis.

The vast majority of initial sales calls end in 'No' — setbacks are a part of any sales process. However, most salespeople are never taught how to deal with the impact of hearing 'no', and as a result their effectiveness and productivity are diminished and the likelihood of future success reduced.

When salespeople feel stressed about rejection, supplying them with more sales training usually produces

little improvement, wastes company resources and can often compound the state of self-doubt they are already feeling.

Your ability to quickly, and gracefully bounce back from rejections and setbacks is often the key ingredient that helps good salespeople to stay proactive and consistent in making contact with new prospects. This ability is also known as your *'sales resilience'*.

Mark Bouris, the Australian CEO of the TV show *The Apprentice*, said:

the biggest challenge is the emotion of fear, anxiety and worry. Fear is the greatest thief of imagination and innovation that exists....that is, the fear of failure, the fear of what others will say, the fear what my competitor might do. Fear can't be eliminated — you can push it back — but it always finds its way back. The neutralizer to fear is self belief.

Most people don't fail because they aren't good enough. On the contrary. They fail because they don't fully apply what they do know. The fear of failure paralyses them from doing the necessary activity to get the results.

Being proactive in your sales process by doing the follow ups, making the new introduction calls, having the awkward or difficult conversation with the client when you have fallen short in delivering on your promises — these are not difficult things to do. However, if you dissect what is really behind

the fear of failure and look at the core as to why you really avoid failure, you will see five common issues.

- 1. Success Validation.** The need to *'get it right'*. You resist taking action unless you feel you are 100% sure that you be successful otherwise you won't try.
- 2. Reputation Integrity.** The need to *'look good'*. You don't want to appear pushy, needy or *'salesly'* at the risk of being perceived as unprofessional, so you don't initiate the sales conversation.
- 3. Value Fulfillment.** The need to *'be wanted'*. You don't feel that your product/service has any real need to the client or any point of difference, so you don't ask for the business.
- 4. Schedule Overload.** The need to *'do it all'*. You feel you are far too busy with other high priority work to take on more, new, or improved direct selling activity.
- 5. Emotional Preservation.** The need to *'feel good'*. You take rejections to heart and feel drained by them, so you avoid putting yourself out into the firing line.

Final thoughts

Long ago map makers sketched dragons on maps as a sign to sailors that they would be entering unknown territory at their own risk. Some sailors took the sign literally and were afraid to venture on. Others saw the dragons as a

sign of opportunity, like a door to new territory. It is your attitude that drives your activity, and it is your activity that will determine your outcomes. Are your dragons driving or draining your results?

www.BounceBackFast.com

Response from

Neen James

You don't close a sale with a woman — you open a relationship. Women buy differently than men; create a personalised, positive and productive experience and you will establish advocate relationships.

The new way of selling from conviction rather than from convincing, is more impactful when engaging women in a sale.

Did you know 85% of consumer buying decisions are made by women and women handle 70% of disposal income in most cultures? Understanding how to sell to women will increase your success.

Differences between male and female buying

Brain chemistry research indicates that there are 200 differences in structure and neurotransmitters between men and women. In a sale, traditionally men have focused on the transaction and women on the process. Men have a single, step-by-step approach, while women are more network-oriented and think in multiple steps at a time.

My husband says shopping is like a commando mission — you get in, get what you need and get out, and no one

gets hurt! Regardless of whether women like to shop (and not all do), they are about experiencing the outing.

Interestingly, the online and in-store behaviors are reversed: when men enter a shop they locate the item they want and quickly pay for it, rarely browsing. Women browse first, locate the item and pay. Surprisingly, when men buy online they browse several sites, make multiple comparisons before making the final purchase. When women buy online they go straight to the item on the website, purchase it and rarely browse for other options.

While men are results-oriented and are competitive during the sales process they are also keen to close the sale. Women are focused on the experience and want open, long term relationships and a collaborative approach.

When focused on a sale with women you need to focus on the feelings and experiences as the foundation. They want to feel and experience trust, respect, and being understood.

Build Trust – the foundation of women's purchasing decisions is trust. They want a two-way conversation, not someone to talk at them, someone to talk with them. Building trust involves listening to their questions and answering them honestly. Once a woman trusts you she is likely to provide strong buying signals. If she trusts you she will also refer others and share her experience of you with her network.

Show Respect – avoid making judgments and stereotypes of female buyers based on age, income levels and perceived roles at work and home. Women want to be taken seriously

and need to feel they have been listened to and understood. They will ask more questions and expect answers to every question without rolling eyes and impatient body language.

Be Personal – women want to feel connected to the sales experience, and an important aspect of that is the salesperson. They bring emotion to the transaction, expect salespeople to invest attention, and need to feel comfortable. If they dislike the salesperson it is difficult to experience a sale. Women will pay more for personalised attention, they will invest more time in driving to a favorite store where people remember them, and will invest more dollars if they feel loyal to the seller or the brand.

Many women visualise how your product or service will impact their relationships, their home and their workspace. To build rapport quicker, share stories and case studies of others like them who have purchased your product — women enjoy the details.

Many people use car sale experiences when sharing the differences between how men and women buy. Recently one of our team wanted to purchase a new car for her 21 year old son. She visited a local dealership who provided the much read about, chauvinistic old-style sales techniques. They made her walk to the back of the lot in the incredible heat of summer and they talked not-negotiable numbers with her and she left frustrated by the experience. She called another dealer in the area and asked about the models within her price range explaining she had limited time and money. When she drove onto the dealership not only had

they moved the cars to the front lot for her, but each car also had a sign in the windshield with her name on it! Of course, based on the experience (even though the car was a little more expensive), she bought from the second dealer and she shared her positive experience with anyone who would listen. One of the aspects she valued most was how the salesperson made her son feel included.

Be Positive – women are impacted by the experience of the environment — this includes the salesperson, their style and personality, and the surroundings. They are looking to create relationships with their salesperson and want to become an advocate so they can share their experience with friends and family.

Relationships with their girlfriends are extremely valuable and cherished. They protect these relationships and if they believe in your offering they will share it with those they care about.

Women ‘get a feel’ for you and your brand, your website and your image, and they are constantly paying attention to the overall experience of sight, smell, and sounds.

Do's and don'ts when selling to women

Do	Don't
Be genuine	Be fake
Be time sensitive	Try and rush the conversation
Be positive	Complain about your workload or the day you are having
Be supportive	Be patronizing and dismissive
Answer questions	Roll your eyes when questions are asked
Use respectful language	Say 'I like women, my wife/sister is a woman'
Make information easily available	Make women hunt for information — they are too busy and will move on
Get to the point in conversation	Waste time in too much small talk
Provide the details	Just focus on the main points

They are also focused on how your product or service will impact the environment, not just the external environment or social responsibility but also how the company treats their team and takes responsibility. If your conviction for your services includes awareness of the impact on the environment, share this in the sale conversation and your online tools.

Be Productive – Men are busy... women are busier! Time is the currency of women; they want to feel spending it with you is worth their time and energy. They multi-multi-task and are constantly distracted by juggling multiple roles for home and work. They are always thinking about ‘the list’, their headspace is focused on multiple items at any one time. In the movie *‘I don’t know how she does it’*, there is constant reference to ‘the list’ — this is a list women wake up thinking about and go to bed mentally checking items off. As women feel they have limited time they want to make the purchase and don’t want to feel like you are wasting their time.

The powerful shift that has occurred from seller to buyer based on respect and choice is key when engaging women in the sale. Remember, you don’t close a sale with a woman; you open a relationship.

www.neenjames.com

Response from

Christina Guidotti

*There are only two mistakes
one can make along the road to
truth; not going all the way, and
not starting.*

— Buddha

Truth conquers all. The untrustworthy salesperson continues to be a prevalent picture in today's world. There is no doubt that the 'shrewd salesperson ripping off the innocent' story is widespread. So what is the learning here? How do we paint a new picture and tell a new story about sales? Do sales need to evolve?

Sales take place every day, all around the world at every moment. Life is a series of sales. Many of these sales increase our standard of living, which would have you think the outcome of the sale was a success. However for many people their quality of life is going down. The World Health Organization reports that we have significantly increased stress levels across many areas of our lives — physically, psychologically, emotionally and financially. Which leads us to the question — how successful are these sales?

I believe truth creates a different type of sale — a sale of value and integrity. When a salesperson speaks and acts truthfully, trust follows. When there is trust the final truth is discovered and that is the client's truth. This is the new way of thinking about sales. This is creating sales of value and integrity with two truths — a personal truthfulness and the client's truth. Those that understand the importance of exploring the two truths in sales and selling with conviction will have the best chance to thrive in the 21st century.

During two decades of practicing and teaching different sales processes I've been involved in thousands of sales. For 12 years in my real estate career my clients trusted me with one of the biggest financial assets they will ever own. But in an industry with one of the poorest reputations I have seen many instances where the moment of truth meant 'taking the money'. The stakes are high in real estate — with high commissions on the table — and unless you know and stand strong in your personal belief, it's possible for the truth to be tainted.

The problem is *truth* is actually not required to achieve sales — not in the short term anyway. There are many unethical but very 'successful' salespeople who make loads of sales. Many have such high skill that they could 'sell ice to Eskimos.' In these cases the truth of what is right — what is in the best interest of the client, is absent.

Another example of speaking the truth is saying no to a sale. Some of our real estate clients wanted to auction their property — but we didn't do auctions. We could have changed our

method of selling to suit them and we would have secured a sale — in fact many BIG sales. But we didn't believe auctions were ethical, so we stood in our conviction. This was the culture. Ethical selling is standing in your conviction — speaking your truth — and sometimes this means saying no. Our reputation soared in the industry as a highly skilled and ethical real estate business. This is how we became one of the most profitable offices in Australia and New Zealand.

Similarly this is how clever Thought Leaders sell. But it is *more* than just selling — it is an unwavering belief in who you are, and that you and your product or service can add value. Ask yourself — do you believe you are the best person to help your client? This is why the authors say: “*the first sale is always to yourself*” — where you've first got to make sure *you* are sold. Selling your product or service without a belief is a sale without integrity. Sales without integrity create poor outcomes.

Once *you* have belief it shows up not only as conviction but also as energy, enthusiasm, optimism, courage, persistence and resilience. Conviction selling where truth is the ‘guiding light’ is essential in order for sales to evolve. This move from old-school convincing to standing in your conviction is how we achieve sales with integrity and value. Sales of integrity and value means referrals and repeat business — commercially smart!

As the clients trust may have been weakened by previous sales experiences, the crucial solution to rebuilding that trust is standing in your conviction. Once the client sees

your conviction — the authentic you, your experiences, care, compassion and your truth — trust appears and the client's truth is likely to follow. This is where Thought Leaders have the unique and powerful opportunity to guide the client and open previously unseen doors. Many clients hide under the 'stage make-up.' The 'stage' and 'stage make-up' becomes a metaphor for life and what we are trying to conceal — in this case the truth. When the client takes off the 'stage make-up' they are open to opportunities for change, growth and development. A Thought Leader can help them achieve this.

When the two truths meet — yours and your clients — there is a powerful union. The client will see the value you can add to their lives as you earn their trust and gain credibility. *Value* is vital to their wanting to buy your solutions. Whether the client speaks this truth or whether it remains unspoken but understood by them, the 'clicking' occurs when the client can identify that you have solutions to their needs.

Sales do need to evolve. The essential driving force for this progress is conviction. A Thought Leader has the ability to raise the awareness and fulfilment of their clients through conviction selling, causing a ripple effect with significant and much needed change in the world. These high value and high integrity sales have truth as their strong foundation. Truth conquers all!

www.christinaguidotti.com.au

Response from

Thomas Preiss

Is it about you or about your customer?

What you focus on is critical and in my experience many salespeople are focussed a lot on themselves without really considering their prospects or their customers. I know we *sound* like we are considering the customer, but think about it for a moment. Have you in the past yourself been steering the conversation to where *you* want it to go more so than where your *customer* needs it to go?

In a recent sales training session with a global manufacturer of computer parts we discussed how that organization had chosen the winning supplier for sales training. Their answer was enlightening. They went through all of the normal processes of narrowing down to a small number of suppliers who got a final chance to present their winning proposal. All were quite similar with one major exception: they chose the winner because they spent 40 of their allocated 60 minutes talking about them and only 20 minutes about their offer. The ratio with the other suppliers was the exact opposite. “*We want to be trained by people who sell with a customer focus just like you*” was their summary when they announced the winner. The lesson is clear — customers value it immensely

when we focus on them rather on ourselves and they will reward you for it. When you bring your thoughts to your customer meetings, who are they about?

Why is it hard to focus on ourselves and the customer at the same time?

I am no expert in Psychology but David Rock in his book *Your Brain at Work* compares the brain, more specifically the prefrontal cortex, to a stage. My interpretation of this stage is that it controls what we focus on at any one time. David suggests the stage can only accommodate so many actors or, in my words, so many conflicting thoughts, before the play starts to get chaotic. When we multitask we place more actors on our stage, and if we have too many actors we become overloaded. The actors bump into each other and can't move about in graceful harmony — it's chaos. This translates into stress and frustration and in my opinion leads back to our default position, which is to focus on ourselves rather than our customers — it's easier.

Familiar with this self talk by any chance? “I need this deal, my sales manager is watching, I am short on my numbers, I wonder what this sale might be worth, I wonder how I can make this happen...” and so on.

I observe this challenge time and time again in my ride along coaching sessions. I often ask the salesperson what and whom their questions were really all about during the call. They often and reluctantly respond with “my self interest”, or

“my need to close the deal before the end of the month” etc... Perhaps check in with yourself next time you sit with your prospect or customer: where is your focus at?

We also tend to spend much of our time figuring out “what we can sell at the appointment?” or “what can we get out of the meeting?” versus “what can we bring to the table that makes this customer’s business perform better?” This all begins with what this book refers to as D-based selling: let’s come up with lots questions to lead the customer to our solution.

For years we have been in the ‘*solution selling*’ mode, and through this we have developed more and more questions around our customers pain points so that we can fix them. Most of these questions are based of our own need which is at times driven by business leaders who demand monthly and quarterly wins. Very rarely do you find a leader who asks about the customer first so it is little wonder that sales-people are thinking of little else but themselves.

Are you a solution in search of a problem?

From marketing to sales management, from pre sales to customer service, much of our customer interactions are conducted in a very narrow part of the business such as procurement or IT, with only the top performers looking at the broader value chain of their customers’ businesses.

How does what I sell assist more areas of the customer's business and not just assist the folk who are doing the buying, is what you should be asking yourself.

Enter any sales strategy discussion and you will hear the technical group ranting about their wisdoms like it is a competition of who knows more about bits and bites. You'll hear managers claiming to know the execs so they often big note themselves with: "why don't I make some calls?"

Here is a quote Matthew Dixon, the author of *The Challenger Sale*, said in a recent Harvard Business Review article which supports much of what this book is about as well as what customers have been trying to communicate to us for some time:

Many reps will simply ignore the upheaval and stick with solution selling, and their customers will increasingly rebuff them. But adaptive reps, who seek out customers that are primed for change, challenge them with provocative insights, and coach them on how to buy, will become indispensable. They may still be selling solutions—but more broadly, they're selling insights. And in this new world, that makes the difference between a pitch that goes nowhere and one that secures the customer's business.

Traditional solution selling is based on the premise that salespeople should lead with open-ended questions designed to surface recognized customer needs. insight-based selling rests on the belief that salespeople must lead with disruptive ideas that will make customers aware of unknown needs.

In my facilitation work with the CEB we teach salespeople that creating insights for customers is what the most successful salespeople in the world are doing today. In other words, these salespeople bring insights to their customers attention which the customer has not considered before and they test these insights ideas or hypotheses before they talk about their own solutions. These insights distinguish themselves by being pro-active, well thought through and most importantly not about *your* product or service.

Early engagement

One of the most predictable ways of selling more successfully is to be engaged with your customer early enough to make influencing at multiple levels possible. When we are asking lots of questions of our prospects, as the authors suggest we do in Diagnostic based selling, we are assuming that the customer has a full understanding of their company's issues or opportunities when in reality they often don't.

What's worse is that your customers or prospects don't yet have a way or process of buying because they may not have thought of the issue in the first place. This means you have to go step by step and sell the next step — not all of the steps at once — if you want to speed up the buying process and create buyer driven momentum.

To link this back to the Conviction based selling mantra: *'if we have what you require you will buy it'* means that by developing ideas we can actually be the creator of business

opportunities for our prospects that lead *to* our solution not *with* our solution.

The CEB have researched the topic of buyer behavior deeply and statistics show that the buying process is on average over 57% complete before contact to their potential suppliers is made. So getting on board late in the customer buying cycle is much more difficult simply because the time to influence the customer at more than just the immediate buyer level has all but disappeared and we are effectively at the mercy of their own interpretation of their issues and opportunities. This is a place where good ideas come to die!

Come up with ideas on behalf of your customers early and test them often — you will be a much more respected and respectful salesperson.

www.thomaspreiss.com

Response from

Phil Lee

In 1980 I was hired as a Graduate Sales Trainee by a leading US IT company. Seven of us were placed in a twelve-month training program that was designed to teach us how to successfully sell mainframe computer systems.

In 1980 the investment for a mainframe system started in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and went to several million. We were selling to corporate organisations and government departments. Most of the training we undertook was focused on the technical aspects of the hardware and software.

The sales training was mostly event and motivational training that we now know gives you a short motivational boost and then wears off as the real work starts. We were placed on a Xerox Professional Selling Skills three-day program that taught us about asking closed and open ended questions, ways to handle objections and closing (at the time Xerox was a leading manufacturer of photocopy equipment).

We were also exposed to a series of videos by American sales trainer Tom Hopkins, which I admit to thoroughly enjoying. Tom's techniques were not too dissimilar to the Xerox strategies (they were presented with more 'showbiz') and were a

copy, by his own admission, of the strategies taught by his neighbor, J. Douglas Edwards. Edwards was the leading sales trainer in the US in the 1950's, '60's and '70's.

I didn't know it then, but although this was the best sales training available at the time, those strategies and tactics were really not suited to the sales environment we were in.

They were more suited to a transactional or one call close sales environment where the salesperson pressed to get a decision. Tom's background was real estate sales. Ours was a far more complex sales environment.

Fast-forward some 35 years and I am now a successful sales trainer and coach who has spent countless hours studying and practicing sales methodologies and training and coaching sales and business people. My observation is that many things in the sales world have changed and that, yet, some have stayed the same.

Among the things that have changed dramatically is that buyers are far more sophisticated than they have ever been at any time in history!

The Internet allows them to gather information from many sources so that they often know as much, if not more, than the average salesperson. What has also significantly changed is that buyers have overdosed on the overused and predominately seller and product focused sales tactics that were the norm of the last century.

With the greatest of respect to the sales trainers who are still preaching a variation of these strategies, I have to tell you

that they are sorely out of date. For example, today's buyer knows that the mandatory bonding and rapport at the start of a sales conversation is just a tactical softening up period. Furthermore, incessant closing just irritates prospects.

In many cases these strategies are trust eroding rather than trust building.

The overriding legacy of the sales training from the last century is that the focus of the sales conversation has been on the product and its features and benefits while the salesperson has been working hard to convince the prospect to buy.

Because of this, and unknown to many sales managers and salespeople, an imbalance has occurred. This imbalance manifests in the buyer having the upper hand in sales discussions and an unhealthy control of the sales process.

Today, professional salespeople and managers have realised that to be more effective they must change their approach if they are to thrive and stay competitive in an often overcrowded marketplace.

They have become aware that the costs of sticking to the old and outworn selling methods are many.

These are the culprits that have become the norm and that result in much wasted time, frustration and anger as business growth becomes tougher and more competitive.

- An erosion of trust between the buyer and the seller.
- An over willingness on behalf of the seller to discount as the only option available to try and win the business.
- Too much costly and unproductive unpaid consulting that often does not result in business.
- Buyers being unwilling to be honest with the seller, bleeding them for information and misleading them with positive buying signals.
- Buying decisions taking longer to be made, and often not being made, while unwitting salespeople continue to follow up.

What is clear is that a completely different and more effective way of engaging potential buyers is needed that moves away from this traditional sales focus.

The 21st century antidote for these frustrations and the replacement for last century's product focused selling approach is a trust building, buyer focused approach.

The salesperson who adopts a buyer focused approach immediately positions him / herself as a potentially valuable resource. Much like a medical doctor the emphasis is on diagnosis before prescription.

A buyer focused approach means the sales conversation becomes a collaborative agreement between buyer and seller to determine whether or not a suitable match exists between them.

In business there can be a considerable investment of time and resources expended by both parties to determine this potential match. It is vital that the salesperson has the professionalism, posture and skill to position the discussion in this way.

21st century salespeople are problem solvers and trusted advisors. They help prospects make decisions. They use a proven selling system to qualify their prospects being aware that their biggest adversity is not their competition but the time and resources spent with the wrong prospects.

Subsequently, a well-qualified “No” from a prospect does not faze them - they are quickly looking to either “Close the business” or “Close the file” and move on.

They are no longer prepared to wing it and rely on the law of averages and mindless closing techniques. They know that, just like the numbers of fish in the ocean, in the vast majority of cases there is plenty of potentially profitable business in their market place.

plee@sandler.com

