

# **Selling & Negotiating Skills for Entrepreneurs**



**Kenneth Germaine**

## About this book

This book has been written to assist entrepreneurs, especially those who have no sales experience, to gain a better understanding of sales. It is one of the elements of setting up a business that many entrepreneurs dislike. However, with the right positive mental attitude selling is not as daunting as many people believe. This book is the result of 20 years practice, research and discussion on the subject of sales. It is a guide and starting point for readers who wish to begin their journey on the road of sales and negotiating

## About the author

Kenneth Germaine is a self-employed entrepreneur, management consultant, business advisor, trainer, mentor and author. Ken helps entrepreneurs to assess the viability of and start their new ventures. This includes guiding the entrepreneur to clearly identify their market and competitive advantages which will allow the new venture to build their client base in a shorter time span than otherwise. He assists the entrepreneur to ensure that their business idea makes them money and achieve a rate of return on their investment. Ken also works with nonprofit organisations and has served as chairperson of a number of charitable organisations, social enterprises and EU-funded programmes and was a long-time member of the Irish Red Cross. Ken works with organisations on developing their strategies, business plans and implementation strategies.

Ken Germaine is Principal and founder of Germaine & Associates ([www.germaine.eu.com](http://www.germaine.eu.com)) and is a fellow, board member and past President of the Institute of Management Consultants and Advisers (IMCA, Ireland) and is a member of the committee of the Independent Advisers and Consultants Group (ICAG) within the Institute, of which Ken is a former Chairperson. Ken was Chief Executive Officer of the BASE Enterprise Centre, a nonprofit community-based enterprise centre and registered charity in Dublin Ireland for over 9 years up to February 2010 and was also a member of Enterprise Centres – Ireland East, the network of community-based enterprise centres in the Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow area.

Ken is also an experienced trainer and has written several reports, evaluations and business plans for programmes, businesses and social enterprises. Ken holds a B.A. (Hons) in politics and economics, as well as, an M.A. in political science from University College Dublin (UCD) and a PhD from Trinity College Dublin on community-based social enterprises in Ireland within economic geography.

Ken is author of the Start your own business blog, see:

<http://startyourownbusinessblog.wordpress.com>

Also by Kenneth Germaine (2011), 'How to write your own business plan' (Germaine & Associates) see <http://startyourownbusinessblog.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/how-to-write-your-own-business-plan1.pdf>

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# Section 1

## Introduction

Why was this book written?

What is selling?

The sales approach

The buying approach

Exercise 1

## Why was this book written?

This book was written for a very simple reason; to give self-employed entrepreneurs an introduction to selling and negotiating skills. It was developed in order to give people with little or no sales experience an insight into the training and motivation of sales professionals. I have been self employed, a Chief Executive or a professional business advisor and management consultant for nearly all my professional life. I have worked with countless numbers of entrepreneurs and nascent entrepreneurs. The majority start a business because they are good at a particular skill but have little or no business management experience. The one area where this causes the greatest weakness is in the area of sales. Many start-up and early-stage entrepreneurs simply do not understand the selling process and have built up psychological barriers to selling which, I for one believe, can be reduced by explaining the process and outlining ways to manage this important business process. Sales is simply asking questions to find out what a client needs and presenting them with the best options that they can afford...more anon.

In general, there are a number of things to focus on:

1. Getting the businessperson (you) into the right selling frame of mind
2. To get the businessperson (you) to understand your own personal motivations and understand what you want to achieve
3. Being able to empathise with clients and understanding their needs
4. There will be some techniques to handle particular situations

Having read the book you should be able to:

- ◆ Understand the process
- ◆ Have a more professional sales presentation and approach
- ◆ Have better time management, because you will not be approaching clients you cannot benefit.
- ◆ Increase your 'Strike Rate' - the number of closed sales as a ratio of face to face sales presentations.

The book is designed not only to give information but also to challenge your perspectives and methods of work. Hopefully it will allow you to gain more enjoyment out of your work and abate any fears that you may have had up to this about sales and the selling process.

## What is selling?

I occasionally come across self-employed people who tell me that they are electricians, delivery persons, painters and decorators etc, and they don't sell anything. Inside I begin to cringe. The fact is that every time you are face to face, on the phone or fax, even e-mailing a customer or potential customer, you are selling. Everybody in business today is therefore selling, even if you are sub contracting to one company you are still engaged in an on going selling process with the main contractor.

So you might ask what is selling about? The answer is very simple; the customer. It is not about you or your company. Nor is it about your product or its features. When you go face to face with a busy client they are not interested in you, purely what you, your product or service can do to benefit them. Another way of looking at this is to consider your product or service as a solution to a problem. You can only sell your product to a client who has a problem that your product or service can solve. Selling is therefore related to the solving of buyer problems.

Sales should be a Win-Win situation. The client should benefit from having what you are offering and you should benefit from the sale financially and emotionally. If both sides are not gaining then it is a bad sale and you may never get the opportunity to do business with that person again.

Today's customer can choose their requirements from a multitude of sources, each promising to fulfil their needs. The client will be greatly influenced by the attitude, skill and technique of the salespeople competing for their signature. It therefore follows that we should not sell the product, but the idea behind the product. Focus on how the product or service you offer can solve the customer's problem or issue rather than on how it will do it.

As customers are only really interested in what your product can do for them, then your sales presentations should only address the benefits to the customer of your product or service. A common mistake made is that of salespersons talking about product features. The client does not care if it is the latest model, only what it can do for them. Thus, do not sell the features of the product, but the benefits. People buy benefits not product features.

The only real limitations upon your ability to sell, or do anything, are those you place upon yourself. "If you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're right". When people criticise you they are expressing their opinions on your capabilities. No one has a monopoly on knowledge. If you recognise criticism for what it is then you will not be defeated by it.

The professional salesperson determines the customer's needs by asking open questions and listening carefully. Remember you cannot listen whilst you talk. Learn to be a good listener and talk less: you have two ears and only one mouth so communicate *pro rata*.

Over the years I have seen 2 basic philosophies relating to sales; the sales approach and the buying approach. Before we delve into the nuts and bolts of selling, let us spend a moment to understand the two approaches and the differences between them.

## The Sales Process

The sales process can be considered like getting from one end of a long road to another. As you go along the road you come to many traffic lights and intersections. You have to overcome each junction one at a time and you can only progress when you get the right of way or the green light. Think of selling as going from one end of a road to the other. There are several stages on the journey and you can only pass onto the next section if you have got the client's agreement (green light) or acceptance (right of way). If you are to accept this analogy then the different main road junctions would represent the following stages:

- ◆ Personal Motivation
- ◆ Understanding People and Empathy Skills
- ◆ Prospecting
- ◆ Making an Appointment
- ◆ Making a Good Introduction
- ◆ Effective communication of benefits/Presentation
- ◆ Addressing Areas of Concern to client
- ◆ Gaining Customer Commitment
- ◆ After Care Service

Remember that you must get a green light in the current section before you can progress to the next step in the sales process. A red light means that the journey or sale has stopped.

## The Buying Process

The buying process is how the customer comes to a buying decision. It comes down to 4 stages, known as AIDA:

- Gain the customer's Attention
- Raise the customers' Interest
- Develop the customer's Desire
- Facilitate the customer to take Action

The Attention phase of the buying process is usually associated with information gathering. Let us use the analogy of buying a car and starts with the premise that I like my car but I really should be looking to upgrade before anything starts to go

wrong (or from a B2B perspective, I am happy with my current supplier but maybe we should have a look around to see if they are giving us a good deal). So what am I going to do? I am going to look around for car buying options. I will check the internet for car-selling websites, visit car lots in my area and 'kick tyres'. The point at this stage is that the client is not committed to the purchase but they have a 'cognitive dissonance', they are uneasy in the back of their mind even though they are happy with their current car; they have a psychological unease which they probably cannot even put their finger on. So what are the types of question that the customer will ask and, need to answer for themselves, before they move to the next stage?

'What are the possible options: buy a new car, get an upgrade or stick with what I have?'

'What are the cost implications of the different options?'

'Do I really need to change from the current situation?'

'Do I really want to change from the current situation?'

If the client cannot satisfactorily answer these questions for themselves the chances are that they will put off the discussion/decision until a later point when the impetus for change has increased. If the customer cannot dissuade themselves from continuing with the process or have decided that they do need/want change then they will move to the next stage.

The Interest stage usually relates to clarifying options for the client. In the first stage the client may have gleaned some information on their different options but were really only making a go/no go decision. Now the customer will want to clarify the different options in more detail and examine the best/most preferred options available to meet their potential needs. Remember, the client has not make a buying decision; they are still driving their current car and still have a cognitive dissonance. So what are the questions that the client will need to answer for themselves if they are to move to the next stage and not stop the process on the grounds that 'nah, this is too much hassle!'

'What are my needs if I do make a new purchase?'

'What are my options if I lay them down on paper?'

'Can I exclude some of these options and bring my choice down to 2-3 preferred alternatives?'

'Are these 2 or 3 preferred options better than my current situation?'

'How committed am I to taking the time to have a real look around at my preferred options?'

Actually, if they answer the last question positively and spend the time to investigate their options further, then the sale becomes more concrete as up to this point there has been no 'commitment'. So, if the client has limited their interest down to 2-3 options and decided to explore further, the client has moved a significant way to making a decision to buy but they are not there yet!

The Desire phase is where the client moves from 2-3 options down to one preferred choice. The client has now taken the time to go around the lots and look for their specific options, ask salespeople about reliability, warranties, colours, specs etc. If it is a new car then they have taken home the brochures, colour cards etc, if it is a second-hand car then they have to take one that is currently in the lot. Now what are the questions that the client must answer for themselves at this stage in order to move to the final stage?

'Do I really like this car compared to the other options and, most importantly, my current car?'

'Do I like the interior?'

'Do I like the colour?'

'Will it be expensive to insure, tax and maintain?'

'Will it be more or less expensive to insure, tax and maintain than my current car?'

The key point here is for the client to convert their Interest into Desire and that requires the 'Oh, wow, I really like that...' moment. It happened to me several years ago when my one year old VW Passat got written off (without me in it!) and I had to get a car. I couldn't wait 16 weeks for a new Passat so I had to buy a good second hand. I was looking for a replacement Passat but when I visited the second-hand part of the VW dealership, which also sells Mercedes-Benz, my eye caught a CLK-200. It was a coupe, gloss-black paint and gleaming, full black leather interior, alloys and looked gorgeous. It was the 'oh, wow, I really like that...' moment. Without a 'oh, wow' moment the client may decide that there is nothing that they currently prefer and will put off a decision until the buying impetus increases at a future stage. With the 'oh, wow' moment then you move to the final stage.

The final stage is the stage where the client takes Action. In this case they make a decision and actually buy their preferred option. However, this is not a foregone conclusion and the client has to answer another set of questions before they make the actual 'sign on the dotted line' decision. These questions are:

'Can I afford this?'

'Can I put together a mix of my personal savings and get a car loan for the rest?'

'Can I get credit?' (not such an insignificant question in the current economic environment)

'Do I trust this salesperson and can I believe what they are saying?'

'Am I getting a good deal?'

'What response will I get from my significant others, friends and family' (flash git or great buy)

'Will my significant other kill me?' (never underestimate the effect of the answer to this question in a final buying decision)

But ultimately; 'Do I really love this?'

If the answer to the question is 'yes' then the buy decision is made internally and then it gets down to negotiating. Incidentally, when I said earlier about the 'oh, wow' decision over the Mercedes I certainly didn't tell that to the salesperson, in fact I tried to say that it was too flash etc. These discussions are internal and the person will not tell the salesperson, in many cases, what they are actually thinking. The client having made the buy decision in their mind will now negotiate the best deal they can but will buy once they get a reasonable deal.

## The difference between the sales and buying approaches

The first obvious point is that the 2 approaches are focused on different people. The sales approach is focused on the salesperson and on how you get the client from one step to the next. The buying approach is focused on the client and assisting them through their buying process.

I have spent years working with entrepreneurs and start-up businesses. To my mind, most first-time entrepreneurs have no sales experience. They are wrapped up in their business and their own enthusiasm. They unwittingly fall into the sales approach and develop a sales pitch which is by definition focused on the entrepreneur and their wants and needs. However, if you ask them about their approach they probably dislike the sales approach.

Take a more analytical approach and develop a question-based dialogue with the client that uncovers their wants and needs. Focus on their buying process and assist the client through their buying process. Take your ego out of the equation. Stop telling clients and start asking them. Too many salespeople and self-employed people go into sales presentations so full of information, pumped up and so full of

belief in themselves and their product/service that they try to 'convince' the client of the virtue of what they have to offer. Actually, when I ask participants on start your own business courses their initial views on the characteristics of a professional salesperson, the word ability to 'convince' the client is often proffered. This I find worrying. You are not going to talk to a potential client and pound them into the ground with argument. Ask yourself the question in reverse. If someone came in to you and tried to 'convince' you without knowing your real needs or wants, what would you do? If it was me it would be a short meeting with the salesperson returning out the door from which he came quickly. Don't use tactics that you would find unacceptable if you were the client. Ask yourself which salespeople you like to work with. I suggest that the salespeople you are most likely comfortable with are the ones that are interested in you, ask you questions to find out your needs and present the best solutions for your needs. I accept that there are cultural differences around the world. In Europe and America clients tend to be less impressed with 'in your face' salespeople whereas in many African cultures, 'in your face' negotiating is the norm. However, in most cases, if you ask the right questions of a client they will happily outline their position and needs. The important point is not that they are telling you their needs but in many cases they are using your questions to work through their needs themselves in their own head. In short, stop telling the client anything and start asking them questions and help them work through their buying process.

Is this new, not at all? Sales trainers have been trying to get salespeople to ask questions and listen more and talk less for years. There have been worked out systems developed, for example, SPIN selling is a techniques of asking different types of questions to move the conversation along to its culmination (see Rackham, N (1995), 'SPIN Selling' (Gower, Aldershot)).

On the subject of 'techniques', the sales approach tends to use a lot of these whereas the buying approach tends to focus on the psychology of buying and empathising with the client. A 'technique' is not a magical formula; it is a form of words developed by salespeople over the years to get around a particular circumstance. I will provide a list of the most popular techniques later in the book but be very careful when using them. By all means have 'techniques' in your sales toolkit. Understand their limitations and focus on empathising with the client and uncovering their real needs and wants.

A final difference between the approaches relate to terminology. The sales process concentrates on 'closing the sale' whereas, the buying approach concentrates on 'gaining customer commitment'. I personally dislike the 'closing' term as it tends to conjure brining the process to an end. Most successful salespeople do not 'end' the relationship with an order but develop their businesses by building long-term business relationships with their clients. Throughout the book you will note I tend to use 'gaining customer commitment' rather than 'closing' for this reason. Never close a sale; open a long-term business relationship with the client. This may be psychological but it can make a great difference to your approach to selling and the client.

How you apply this to what you do is, of course, up to you. You may want to make small changes to what you do rather than try and apply a completely new approach. Consider making some changes if you feel that you are not making the most of the sales presentations you are making. One idea is to video yourself making sales presentations to colleagues and look at how much of the time you are talking and listening, could or should you be asking more questions, are you assisting the client through their buying process and how can I get over the cringe factor; 'did I really say that?' When I have done this myself I scare myself so I can only imagine how the client must feel. Do this in the comfort of your own office and keep the exercise real but you might surprise yourself at how you come across.

The book is divided into sections as follows:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Getting into the right frame of mind to sell
- ◆ Looking for new business
- ◆ Gaining customer commitment
- ◆ Wrap up
- ◆ Toolkit

Over the rest of this book we shall examine each section, one at a time. Through gaining a better understanding of the customer and their needs, attitudes and disposition you should be better able to progress face to face selling situations and ultimately to increase your 'strike rate', which is the number of successful sales presentations out of the total number of sales presentations.

## Disclaimer

This book is based upon 20 years of practising sales and marketing as a self-employed person and CEO, reading on the subject of sales and marketing, attending workshops, developing and delivering workshops and having conversations with friends and colleagues on the subject. Over the years I have lost many of the books I read on the subject (moving home, office and lending people books I never got back) than I currently have in my library. So, unfortunately, I have lost some of the references for material in the book. I have adapted much of the material over the years but on a point of principle I always like to properly cite other people's work. So please accept my apologies in advance and if you feel that I should give proper citation for some particular material and please feel free to contact me at [ken@germaine.eu.com](mailto:ken@germaine.eu.com). I do proffer a suggested reading list at the end of the book.

## Exercise 1

### Your Opinions

I want you to think about these questions and answer them honestly to yourself.

Q.1 What do you believe selling is about?

Q.2 Who is the most important person in selling?

Q.3 Can you list the different stages to the selling process?

Q.4 Why are you reading this book?

Q.5 Are you afraid of selling, and if so, why?

Q.6 What motivates you as a person?

Q.7 What is it that you sell?

Q.8 What are the main characteristics of a professional salesperson?

Q.9 What goals have you set yourself to achieve from reading this book?

I will not give guidance on the answers to these questions here. Some way through this book I will ask you these questions again. I ask these questions in my Start Your Own Business Programmes and some of the answers tend to arise again and again. I only ask that you note your answers now so you can compare them with your answers later on.

## Section 2

### Getting into the Right Frame of Mind to Sell

Personal motivation

The human side of buying

Non-verbal Communication

Customer Care

Exercise 2

## Personal Motivation in Selling

**Statement:** Motivation is our main reason for success or failure

You cannot hope to influence or persuade others to do anything unless you are motivated yourself. Motivated people motivate others. Personal motivation begins with self belief. Unfortunately society at large and a high proportion of its members seem to be defeatist, cynical and negative by nature. This is a result of our early learning; being told to be seen and not heard and not to ask: it is impolite. But we know that you can achieve what you set out to do with a realistic plan. The reality of life is that the only real limitations placed upon you are those you put upon yourself.

Let us take a look at peoples' reaction to a crisis. Most people panic and run for cover. They look to take the safest possible strategy. So why has it been that so many personal fortunes were built up during a crisis situation? In a crisis the normal rules of operating do not apply. The vast majority of people stagnate and wait for someone else to resolve the crisis. The person who resolves the situation is the hero; but also the person who profits the most. In a state of flux the usual barriers disappear and things become possible and achievable that would not normally be attainable. If you are able to take the lead and get it right you can achieve more in a crisis than at any other time. Remember a crisis is an opportunity for the best to show who they really are!! Accountants are never idle. During the good times they advise on investments, charge fees for auditing and training and gain large salaries as financial controllers. In a recession they liquidate companies or become receivers. And they still charge fees for accounting and training. There are always opportunities if you go looking for them.

### The conditioning process

From early childhood we are conditioned by the attitudes and influences of others. Sadly many of these influences are negative. Some people will always find a reason why something cannot be done. Our educational process encourages conformity. Criticism also impedes our development. People use phrases like 'You can't do that', 'It's not what you know but who you know'.

Criticism is only someone else's opinion of your capabilities. Recognise it for what it is. No one else's opinion of your ability is better than your opinion of your ability. Of course you should take advice and make educated decisions, but if you can prove to yourself that a risk is moderate and justifiable then what is stopping you. Believe in yourself. Most people envy those who can make strong positive decisions and benefit from them.

## Habits and attitudes

Attitudes and habits are related. If you change your attitude to something you invariably change your habit in relation to same. There is very little difference between people, what difference there is, is their attitude. However, the great difference between people is whether their attitude is positive or negative:

Statement: 'If you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're right'.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to our progress is our own perceptions of our own capabilities. We must analyse our attitudes, recognise our negative attitudes and change them, whilst strengthening our positive attitudes.

## The power of imagination

We act or fail to act because of our imagination. If you believe that you will succeed, then you probably will. In business the most successful businesspeople are those who set out to prove it can be done - none of them even entertain the possibility of failure. It follows that people will only attain what their mental attitude indicates. Thus to succeed you require a positive mental attitude.

## Goal setting

What we do today will shape our future. It follows that we can determine the shape of our future by planning and setting definite goals. Many professional development courses would identify that your goals must be realistic. There is no point in setting goals that you cannot achieve. Your goals must be your own, and you must really want them. Having set your goals you should analyse exactly what you have to do to achieve them. Anticipate the obstacles you will encounter and prepare solutions for them. Set specific start and finish dates for your goals and your sub goals. List the rewards to be gained by you in specific detail. You must have a written down, action plan to achieve your targets and goals.

Goals should be *SMART*:

**Specific:** you should be able to describe what you want to achieve in detail

**Measurable:** you should be able to determine whether you goal or not

**Attainable:** you should be able to achieve the goal in the specific time

**Relevant:** the goal should be something that is worth your while attaining

**Time specific:** you should set specific start and finish times for the goal

If we have nothing to aim at then we become bored and frustrated. By setting new goals we can overcome being bored. Allow your goals to be flexible; don't carve

them in tablets of stone. Remember it does work. If you believe it, want it, and work for it - you will succeed.

## Procrastination

Procrastination is where we put off making a decision until tomorrow when we can make a decision now. Procrastination solves nothing, but its consequences are devastating. It leads to frustration, anxiety and other problems, which only makes the situation worse.

Why do we do it? There are many reasons. The most common is to avoid doing something unpleasant; it is easier to put it off than deal with it now. Many people suffer from a lack of confidence and it is easier to put off a decision rather than front up. Fear of rejection or failure is a common cause, especially in organisations where risk taking is not rewarded.

At some stage most successful people have to accept a degree of uncertainty in life. It is true that one of the best ways to learn is by your mistakes. A person who does not make mistakes is playing safe and is likely achieving nothing. When faced up to what does rejection really do to you? Nothing!!! No salesperson has ever-died from a bruised ego (regardless of the war stories). Put bluntly, if you want to make an easy job seem hard, then just keep putting it off.

## Developing a selling personality

Teenagers are natural sellers. They sell themselves to their peers. They get their parents to let them out late, buy a new stereo, let them use the car. They never say no. However, when we get into a job we forget how to sell. The problem is that when we enter the real world of business something happens - our selling skills become judged. We become intimidated; we put up excuses as to why we cannot sell. We convince ourselves that it is beyond us, or too difficult, or beneath us.

Selling successfully requires many different traits. However, here are a few of the key skill groups:

Being able to communicate, understand the client's needs and the ability to empathise with them are key traits. Selling is about meeting customer's needs and to successfully achieve this you must be on their wavelength.

You need to be self motivated, resilient and have perseverance. It is tough and you need to be able to get yourself out of bed in the morning and get down to your selling activities.

Then there are the character traits. Sincerity and integrity are key traits. If you consider that we do business with people we like, would you do business with someone you don't believe or trust. Being open minded and not judging others is a trait people admire. Being ambitious with a sense of humility is good but being arrogant is not. Being trustworthy and respected are key traits of most successful salespeople.

Listening is one of the most important selling traits. This is the one I have always found it hardest to practice. To understand what someone is telling you requires that you focus on the person and their message, not on having a quick retort ready when they stop talking.

## Communication skills

The professional salesperson must have the ability to convey ideas to others. It is an essential quality. It is communicating. There are several things that you must do at the same time to communicate effectively. Some of these are

- ◆ Listen attentively to others and what they are saying
- ◆ Accept the right of others to hold a different point of view
- ◆ Never over react to comments and views
- ◆ Never interrupt a sentence
- ◆ Observe their body language
- ◆ Pay complete attention

It isn't necessary to agree with others, but you must recognise the legitimacy of others points of view. When communicating with others you should:

- ◆ Talk in moderate and reasonable terms
- ◆ State the facts as you see them, no bragging or exaggeration.
- ◆ Be specific: say what you mean, mean what you say.
- ◆ Talk about the other person's interests and concerns.
- ◆ Use simple understandable language and terms; no jargon.
- ◆ Don't confuse fact with opinions or observations.
- ◆ Remember words can mean different things to different people. So be very careful of your choice of words.

## Effective listening skills

Without effective listening there can be no communication. Good listening skills are essential to the sales professional. Here are some hints:

- ◆ When the customer is talking say absolutely nothing. Let the customer know they have your complete attention
- ◆ Maintain eye contact - 65-80% of the time. This is culturally specific; there are cultures where maintaining eye contact is not acceptable but it is essential in the European/Anglo-Saxon cultures
- ◆ Watch your body language - sit forward and nod when the customer talks, don't overreact
- ◆ Listen for signals - concentrate on the message not the person
- ◆ Don't get emotionally involved. Listen to their point of view. You do not have to agree with them but you must understand where they are coming from
- ◆ Communicate your understanding with comments such as 'I see/ I understand/ agree'

## Ways to communicate better

Sales people, trainers and presenters all use the same communication skill set. If you have ever listened to a boring presentation you will appreciate the need to use vocal variety: a pleasant, natural and varied tone. Vary your volume slightly and always maintain clarity of speech. All trainer courses stress the importance of presenting your ideas in an orderly and logical fashion; make it easy for people to follow your argument. Use 'you' appeal. Highlight things that are of interest to the listener. Use 'you' instead of 'I' and use the KISS Principle (Keep It Short and Sweet) (the Americans have a slightly varied version of this). Stimulate others by engaging their brain, by asking questions, asking for their opinions, and showing an interest. Be conscious of any bias you may have and do not generalise, label or stereotype people. Above all empathise; try to put yourself in their shoes. It is the only real way to understand and fulfil your client's needs. Be sincere at all times and build your credibility.

## The human side of buying and selling

Without mastering the skill of human relations it is impossible to build any worthwhile relationship with colleagues or customers. We must realise that we all have needs which are important to us and that as a salesperson our job is to identify and fulfil these needs. Naturally, our needs vary in importance; some things are more important than other and at different times (buying a St. Valentine's Day card is not very important unless it is February 14<sup>th</sup> or the few days running up to it). We naturally seek to satisfy the most important of our needs first and, once satisfied, a need ceases to become a motivator and we turn our attention to the next most important need. This is the psychological underpinning of economic demand. However, we must always remember that our customers are not units of economic demand but real people with fears, needs and hopes. We need to be able to

communicate with these real people to do our job and fulfil their needs. So we shall now talk about the human side of sales.

## The skills of human relations

Here are a few traits that you should develop and practice as a human being doing business with other human beings:

*Admit your mistakes:* this shows strength of character; it shows that you take responsibility for your actions and that you are someone that will address issues and not sweep them under the carpet.

*Show genuine appreciation:* Telling someone that you have heard great things about them or their company can do wonders, providing this is true. Appreciation for a job well done can mean more than extra money in the wage packet.

*Encourage others:* Recognition is the greatest means of encouragement. Show that you believe in their abilities and that you recognise their efforts.

*Ask for the opinions of others:* By asking the opinions of others you make them feel important and eliminate social and status barriers.

*Be cheerful and friendly:* Cultivate the art of being stimulating and interesting so that people enjoy being in your company. Take a genuine interest in the pursuits of others. Always see the positive side of people's nature.

*Give that little bit extra:* Giving a customer more than they ordered can often lead to repeat business. This does not have to be goods, it can be a follow up on something or it can be an introduction to another contact with similar interests. If you get a reputation for being a 'giver' rather than a 'taker' then you will receive more in return.

*The value of a smile:* it is difficult to smile and be angry at the same time. People like to be around happy people but a fake smile can be spotted a mile away.

*Be positive and enthusiastic:* You can only solve problems for people with a positive and enthusiastic approach. People like being around positive and enthusiastic people.

*Be courteous:* this is a combination of tolerance, patience, understanding and consideration. Selling is customer oriented. If you ask in a proper manner anything is possible.

*Learn and use people's names:* Always get the persons name correctly. Don't be afraid to ask them to spell it as they will be impressed by your interest. Use the person's name as often as appropriate and when leaving. Learn the names of people who work with the customer, i.e. their receptionist, secretary etc.

Above all, be positive and someone people want to deal with.

## Ways to get along with people

- ◆ Make a conscious decision to like and get along with people. Look for their positive points in their character and focus on these
- ◆ Separate irritating traits from their personality. It is their behaviour you may not like, not the individual.
- ◆ Be careful how we criticise others. To criticise other in public is a humiliation whereas guidance is done quietly in private in order to help the person involved.
- ◆ If you knock other peoples ideas do it gently, never maliciously.
- ◆ Never make cheap remarks about people less fortunate. Avoid gossip or back stabbing. Do not threaten people.
- ◆ Never miss an opportunity to be positive about the achievements of others, no matter how small or insignificant.
- ◆ Never back down from a commitment once made. Promises should be kept or not made at all.
- ◆ Develop a genuine interest in the pursuits or difficulties of others. Avoid bragging and make every effort to eliminate social or status barriers.
- ◆ Make a point of being tolerant. Be nice to others and take every opportunity to bring others on board.
- ◆ Be upright and honest in your dealings. Be fair and just in your appraisal of others and always attempt to be reasonable.
- ◆ Lead by example. Don't ask others to do what you will not.
- ◆ Never complain, criticise or condemn others for making a mistake. Remember you learn from your mistakes, so be educated.
- ◆ Be a comfortable person to be with. A smile is said to be the shortest distance between two people.
- ◆ Learn and use the names of people. Compliment and encourage often, but always avoid flattery.
- ◆ Make a positive decision to improve your social skills.

## Reading People: Body Language & Non Verbal Communication (NVC)

All situations, be they sales, negotiations, business, or social, nearly always come down to people situations. It is the person with the keen eye who can get the edge or influence the situation most. What people say and do in the most innocent situations can tell you a great deal about their personality. In many cases you can judge how a person will react in one sphere by their actions in another sphere. How someone plays a game can tell you about their true personality and, as this is consistent, you can expect them to react in a similar fashion in business, etc.

It comes down to the old maxim "judge a person by their actions not by their words". I have always followed this maxim and probably explains why I find this whole subject of NVC so interesting.

### How to read people

It is easy to project several personas, i.e., a corporate persona in business, one at play, one aggressive, one meek, but the real persona, the real self, does not change and is consistent. To read people well it is important to open up all your senses, to observe your surroundings for what is really going on and eliminating your preconceptions. The better your insight into a person's character, the better is your ability to determine their actions in different situations. It is important to listen, look, and keep your mouth closed as much as possible. This way you gain the maximum amount of information and give away the least information on yourself. Some tips on reading people are as follows:

*Listen* - People tell you what they want and are thinking, and if you are observant you will be able to read them and see between the lines. There is always a reason for someone to say a particular thing. The harder you listen and think about their statements and actions the better you will understand what it is they are actually saying.

*Observe* - When you meet someone face to face observe everything they do and say. People show themselves consciously by their status, stance, dress etc., but they also reveal themselves unconsciously by their eyes, reactions etc. To get the whole picture of a person you must observe their conscious image projection and their unconscious reactions.

*Understand ego* - If someone is wrapped up in a project then it may as well be part of themselves. Their ego is affected by reactions to the project, positive and negative. This insight can be used to great advantage. However, beware of your own ego and don't let it get in your way in making decisions and judgements. Notice the

people around the person you are dealing with - How a friend or secretary reacts or acts can tell you a great deal about the person, their style and personality.

*Try and set the environment* - People are more relaxed in quasi or semiformal situations and are at their least responsive in formal situations. Use informal or semiformal situations to get the person in a more relaxed mood and you will communicate far more effectively. In formal meetings it is the few minutes just before or after the meeting that are most useful. Note situations where people break ranks. The reaction of others will tell you a lot, i.e., who they look to as the most important person.

So when reading people listen aggressively; note what people say and how they say it. Observe aggressively; note how people react to questions. Talk less; you cannot talk and listen at the same time. Scrutinise your first impressions and see if subsequent information supports them or not. Take time out to think and consider what you have learned. Be discreet; you do not have to tell people what you have learned. Be detached; step back from the situation and make an objective assessment of what you have observed.

## Creating impressions

People react to you by the impressions you make on them. If you can control the impression you make on them you can have a far more positive impression which should lead to more desirable outcomes. In many cases it can be the addition of a single word, i.e. "nice to see you *again*". The right impression can be made by simply treating people the way they want to be treated. If people have a good overall impression of you then they tend to overlook the odd indiscretion.

Challenge peoples impressions of you. If they expect toughness try using a small face effacing remark. If someone expects that you want something from them then do not ask directly. If someone has a battle plan set up for a meeting with you then do something they were not expecting. Appear less knowledgeable than you are and draw out information from their other side. This is a very disarming strategy and allows others to give more information and show their knowledge.

In correspondence, it is the letter or e-mail by which will be judged. Make sure that the format is pleasing to the eye and with no typos. Written communication gives a strong impression of you and how you do business and present yourself. Try to personalise all correspondence; it may only be a sentence or two about the receivers own interests. So be very conscious of written communication.

The way you dress makes an instant and strong first impression about you. In business it makes sense to dress conservatively as this makes you harder to read. Your business clothes should say nothing about you except that your clothes fit.

Be on time when dealing with people, particularly on first occasions. This sets the tone for prompt business and leads to people being on time for you in future. Also don't waste people's time. Give the other person your full attention and use up only what time is necessary. You are usually best to hold meetings on your ground but this is not always practical. Many business people use the lobby of nice hotels for meetings instead as it is neutral and presents a classy image.

Keep business promises or don't make them at all. If you promise to do something then do it otherwise it will look as if you have tried and failed. Good gestures are doing things for people's kids, most parents appreciate opening doors for their kids. Let people off-the-hook and let them change their minds. Drive a soft bargain, a long term friendship is worth more than a short term gain. Make friends and express an interest in their interests. Flatter legitimately, never falsely.

Make confidantes and mentors and be discreet. If you have an inside track then keep it to yourself.

Have a sense of humour. Laughter is the most potent force for diffusing a situation. A smile is the shortest distance between two people. It is a good way to start a meeting. Humour can also be used as a great way of regaining perspective.

Compartmentalise - if one thing is going wrong then keep it in its own little box. When you move onto another deal, subject, venue, then leave your bad news in the past. Don't let one bad thing destroy other possible good things. Act to situations don't react.

Learn from your mistakes. Everybody makes errors but it is only a mistake when repeated. Falling down is not defeat; defeat is falling down and refusing to get back up again.

## Body Language - Introduction

Reading body language is about understanding the gestures people make. This is important because it is difficult to control many of these gestures and reactions. When there is a conflict between the words a person says and their body language, their body language is usually a more accurate reflection of their thoughts. One point however is important as body language must be read in context. One particular gesture can mean several things and it can only be properly interpreted when viewed with all other gestures being used. So to properly interpret a person's body language you must interpret their 'cluster' of signals.

You must also take into consideration the cultural aspects of some gestures. Different gestures mean different things in different cultures. People are taught to be polite and inoffensive so they often say things to carry off a situation. However people rely on non-verbal communications to convey their real thoughts. Non-verbal communications (NVC) can carry many times more impact than verbal communications.

People also read your body language so it is a good skill to be able to present yourself in the best light possible and eliminate negative gestures. It has been noted that the higher the socio-economic group you belong to the less NVC's you used, as they tend to convey the message through their higher control and range of vocabulary and language.

So, in short, it is necessary to read the 'gesture clusters' a person is emitting and the congruence of verbal and non-verbal communications. The context of the situation must also be kept in mind, as well as a person's mental and physical conditions and capabilities. If you would like to learn more about body language see Allan Pease's, 'Body Language' ([www.peaseinternational.com](http://www.peaseinternational.com)).

### Territories and Zones

People view the space around them as their own property and are very protective of it. The exact size of this personal area depends on where a person is brought up. There are also zones within this or 'comfort zones'. The closer your relationship to a person the closer you will be allowed to approach them.

The comfort zones:

1. The intimate zone 15 - 45cms. This is reserved for lovers, partners, spouses, children, close friends and relations.
2. The personal zone 46cms - 1.2m. This is how close you get to people in social functions and parties.
3. The social zone 1.2 - 3.6m. This is for strangers or people you don't know very well. It is also the zone in which most selling is carried out.
4. The public zone over 3.6 m. For example, used when addressing large audiences.

Do not enter a person's intimate zone uninvited. It causes people to have a negative opinion about you and causes adrenaline to flow. Social standing or rules may affect situations. For example, two personal friends may move within their personal zones in private but at work may keep to a social distance to comply with social rules.

Cultural factors; where you were brought up and live can have a great influence on the size of your personal space. It has been noted that two people from the city will shake hands close up. Two people from a country village will shake hands at full arms length. Two people from a sparsely populated area will not shake hands at all but wave from a distance. This is why country people hold negative views of city dwellers. City people unconsciously invade the country person's personal zone making them feel uncomfortable and intimidated. Asians have a smaller personal zone than Westerners, so we accuse them of being pushy and they accuse us of being stand-offish and cold.

Territory and ownership; property which belongs to people can be used to mark out their personal space. Coats, pens etc being left at a table or space signifies that it belongs to someone. A sales person sitting in a client's favourite chair or position can lead to very negative results. Motor vehicles seem to magnify personal space to include the whole car and several meters in front and behind the car. So never sit on someone else's car.

## Palm Gestures

The open palm is associated with truth, honesty and submission. There are two basic palm gestures. Palm up is like the beggar asking for something, palm down is restraining or putting down. People who show their open palms are usually being truthful, once it is consistent with the gesture cluster. Funnily enough it has been found that people find it harder to tell untruths with their palms showing.

There are 3 basic palm commands:

- 1 The palm facing up is a non threatening gesture. As the person being instructed to do something sees this as innocuous they are likely to carry out the task without rancour.
2. The palm facing down gives you immediate authority. It can make the other person antagonistic towards you. People of equal status may reject your request and see you as dictatorial.
3. Palm closed into a fist with one finger as a pointer. The finger acts as a symbolic club to beat down the other person with. This is one of the most irritating gestures a speaker can use. People who regularly use this gesture should try open palm gestures and will probably get more positive feedback as a result.

## Shaking hands

There are three basic hand shakes:

1. Dominant - this is where you shake hands with your palm facing down and the other persons palm showing up.
2. Submissive - Where you shake hands with your palm up and the other persons palm showing down.
3. Equality - both palms in a vertical position.

In general it is useful to have an equality handshake as this shows that people can get on together. It transmits mutual respect and rapport. It is possible to disarm a dominant handshake by:

- a) Stepping forward on your left foot and extending your hand.
- b) Move right foot leftwards in front of person.
- c) Bring your other foot into pace and shake hands.

Who shakes first? It is a good idea to let the other person shake hands first. If you are uninvited then it forces the other person to do something that they do not want to do and therefore creates a negative impression. Let them shake first or shake hands on the way out.

Hand shake styles:

1. The Glove handshake or the politician's handshake. It is attempted to appear more sincere and honest. However used on meeting a person for the first time it can make the person suspicious and cautious. Only to be used on people who are known well to you.
2. The dead fish handshake. Many people are unaware that they shake hands like this. It does not indicate anything about the person's character necessarily. Remember people with arthritis, musicians etc try to protect their hands by using light handshakes
3. The knuckle grinder. A macho handshake usually detested by people on the receiving end. Not to be used.
4. The stiff arm thrust is used by aggressive people or people from country towns.
5. The fingertip grasp, like the stiff arm handshake is used to keep the other person at a comfortable distance. Can be a sign of lack of confidence in themselves.
6. Two handed shakes. Here the left hand is used to show sincerity. There are four types; the wrist hold, the elbow hold, the upper arm hold and the shoulder hold. The higher up the arm the grasp is made the more sincerity being shown. As this is an

invasion of the intimate zone it should only be used where there is a strong bond present, or it can result in making a very negative impression.

## Hand and arm gestures

Rubbing hands together usually indicates some form of interest or enthusiasm. When someone rubs their hands together quickly it shows enthusiasm, an 'I'm looking forward to this' or in sales the customer is in for a good deal. Slowly rubbing the hands together is cynical and is synonymous with an Arthur Daly character. It usually means that the deal will benefit the salesperson or dealer. However, remember that it is very common in cold weather to rub hands together with no particular meaning except 'I'm cold'.

Rubbing the thumb against the index or other finger is a money expedition gesture. It should be avoided in professional selling.

Hands clenched together are a gesture which indicates frustration. The person is holding back a negative idea or thought. It has three main forms: clenched hands in front of face, hands resting on a desk, or in front of the crotch when sitting or standing. The higher the hands are held the more negative is the thought. Action is needed to unlock the hands and expose palms and body.

Steepled hands are a sign of confidence. This gesture is used a lot in a superior/subordinate relationship. The higher steeple is used when expressing an opinion. Lowered steeples are used when listening.

Hand in hand behind the back is a superior/confidence gesture. It blatantly shows the throat and torso exposed. People who use this are confident. Note; do not mix this up with wrist gripping an arm - a sign of frustration. One arm is holding back the other from striking out. The higher up the arm is the grip the angrier is the person.

Thumb displays show dominance, superiority or aggression. They are secondary gestures and are usually used to reinforce a cluster. They are positive gestures, commonly seen as 'cool'. They are common among people who wear high status or prestige clothes. Thumbs often protrude out of pockets or back pockets. Arms folded with thumbs pointing up are both a negative and superiority gesture. The shaking thumb is a sign of ridicule. Women find this irritating from men.

## Hand to face gestures

Hand to face gestures shows deceit or untruthfulness. As a child we cover our mouth when we tell a lie. As we get older this gesture becomes more sophisticated and less obvious. Generally a hand to face gesture can mean deceit, uncertainty, lying or exaggeration. They may not be lying but they may be deceiving you.

Interpret these signals in context with other gestures. Be careful not to misinterpret hand to face gestures.

The mouth guard is where the hand covers the mouth and the thumb is pressed against the cheek. The person is usually telling a lie, or if they use it when you speak they think you are lying. If you see this stop and check if anyone has any comments and expose their objections.

The nose touch is a subtle and disguised version of the mouth guard. One or several light rubs below the nose is used. Again it can be used to disguise their own deceit or as a listener to doubt the speakers words.

The eye rub is a 'see no evil' gesture. It is an attempt to block out something you do not want to see. Usually it is accompanied by looking away to avoid the other persons gaze.

The ear rub - is a 'hear no evil' gesture. Variants can be rubbing back of ear, the finger drill, pulling the earlobe or covering the entire ear forward. Either way they have heard enough or they want to speak.

The neck scratch is usually done around four times. It shows doubt or insincerity; 'I'm not sure if I agree'.

The collar pull is a sign of deceit. What they are asking is 'can you repeat that?' or 'can you clarify that point?'. Often the deceiver will give up the game.

Fingers or other object in the mouth demonstrates an inner need for reassurance. If you see this gesture then guarantees or reassurances are appropriate.

#### Cheek and chin gestures

Boredom	Any gesture where hand is used to support the head
Impatience	Finger or foot tapping
Evaluation	Closed hand resting on cheek often with index finger pointing upwards, but not as a head support
Decision making	With index finger pointing vertically up cheek and thumb supporting chin signifies the listener is having negative thoughts. The thumb is the give away. Taking action is required Chin stroking; but you have to watch for the gestures after the chin is stroked to interpret the decision  Negative - followed by crossed legs or arms and sitting back. Positive - followed by readiness gestures. Uncertain - something placed in mouth.

## Head rubbing and slapping

Rubbing back of neck	Pain in neck gesture is negative
Slapping back of neck	Forgetfulness and negative gesture
Slapping forehead	Forgetfulness but not a negative

## Arm Barriers

### *Folded arm gestures*

This is the equivalent of hiding behind a barrier. It is an attempt to block out an impending threat. When a person is nervous, negative or defensive they will fold their arms. When you have folded arms or legs you will become less receptive and more critical.

Standard arm cross - signifies a negative or defensive attitude. Also if you disagree with what is being said you will take this position. Remember, even if the person is agreeing with you verbally the arm cross shows you what they are really thinking. You must break through this defence to communicate or sell. Handing someone a paper or other object can break this position, or by asking open probing questions.

Reinforced arm cross - with fists shows a hostile and defensive attitude.

Arm gripping cross - is a negative restraining attitude. A gesture shown by many people in doctor's and dentist's waiting rooms. An arm cross with thumbs pointing upwards is a show of confidence but with a degree of protection.

Partial arm crosses - This is where one arm swings across the body to touch the other or can be holding hands with oneself in front of the body.

Disguised arm barriers - these are highly sophisticated gestures used by politicians, public personalities and salespeople. This is where you touch another object in the other hand or arm. Playing with cuff-links, bracelets, sleeve buttons are examples. Other examples are rubbing hands together. Women can hold on to handbags or posies. Holding a beer glass or wine goblet with both hands is also an example. All of these are attempts to hide and disguise nervousness.

## Leg Barriers

Like crossed arms, crossed legs show a negative or defensive attitude. There are two standard leg crosses, the standard cross and the American figure-of-four lock. The standard leg cross shows a nervous, reserved or negative attitude. It can also mean displeasure and usually reinforces other negative or defensive gestures in this case. The American or figure-of-four lock shows an argumentative or competitive individual or mood. The figure-of-four leg clamp is where the figure-of-four lock is

held in place with both hands and shows a debater with hardening attitudes and demonstrates a stubborn and tough-minded individual. .

The standing leg cross gestures are defensive if accompanied with closed jacket and folded arms; usually the person is in unfamiliar company. The ankle lock represents a 'biting ones lip' attitude. It shows someone who is holding back a negative thought, emotion, nervousness or fear. If seen in negotiations it can mean that the person is holding back a valuable concession. Questioning can lead to unlocking the ankles and gaining the concession.

The foot lock is used mainly by women. The top of one foot locks around the other leg to reinforce a defensive attitude. It shows that the person has gone into their shell and has become a mental recluse and is common in shy and timid women.

## Other gestures and actions

The chair straddle: the back of the chair acts as a body shield and can transform the person into a dominant and aggressive individual. This is commonly used by dominant individuals. The easiest way to disarm the straddler is to stand behind them, thus making them feel vulnerable and change their posture. If they are on a swivel chair then stand close and in their intimate zone. A defence is to get them a fixed chair with arm rests.

Picking imaginary lint; an expression that the person is in disagreement with you but feels constrained about expressing their personal opinion. They commonly look down and away from the offending person at the same time. In short they don't like what they are hearing and you can counter this with an open question or with an open pose.

Head gestures: we all know that a nod usually means yes and a shake of the head usually means no. Beware people who are shaking their heads whilst saying positive things. There are three basic head positions:

1. Head up is a neutral position
2. Head up and tilted to one side shows interest
3. Head down shows a negative or judgmental attitude. Can be accompanied with arms folded

Both hands behind head: used a lot by professional people like lawyers, bank managers etc. Demonstrates a feeling of superior confidence on the person's behalf. It can mean 'someday you can be as good as me' or 'I know it all'. Many people find it irritating. If accompanied with the figure-of-four lock it shows that they are not only confident but are looking for a good argument. If you agree or are equal then you can carbon copy the position. To disarm the gesture put something just out of reach and ask them to read it. Noticeably used in the presence of subordinates, never superiors.

Aggressive and readiness gestures: hands on hips show an aggressive attitude. Can mean readiness but usually means aggression. Can be an achievers stance when ready to tackle a problem but is still an aggressive and forward moving gesture. It makes the person look bigger. However it is important to see it in context. If done with coat closed then it is aggression, frustration and readiness. If coat is opened and pushed back then it is directly aggressive and shows fearlessness; showing an open throat and body. Used by models to show an aggressive and forward thinking woman. This can be done with one hand on hip and the other hand making another gesture.

Seated readiness: this is the buying position. The person's legs and arms are in open positions and the person is leaning forward and showing interest.

The starter position: signals a desire to terminate a meeting. Here the person is leaning forward with both hands on knees or gripping arm rests.

Male to male aggression: when two men are sizing each other up you would expect to see hands on hips and or thumbs in belts. If they are at an angle to each other with lower bodies relaxed then they are evaluating each other. If they are face to face in a closed position and both feet planted to the ground then it usually means that trouble is brewing.

## Eye signals

The eye may be the most accurate revelation of human communication. Particularly of interest is the size of the pupil. In a given lighting situation the pupil size will change or react as the persons mood changes. When people are excited then their eyes dilate. A negative or angry mood will cause the eyes to constrict (beady eyes). If you are attracted to somebody then your eyes will dilate. It was noticed that less games of poker were lost when the players wore dark glasses, as their opponents could not gauge their reactions. Aristotle Onasis was noted for wearing dark glasses when negotiating. By looking people in the eye you can get a good idea of the reaction that you or your idea is getting.

Gaze behaviour: some people make us feel comfortable or ill-at-ease when they talk to us. This has mainly got to do with the time that they hold our gaze or look at us. To get a good rapport you should hold a persons gaze for 60-70% of the time. Wearing dark glasses in negotiations should be avoided as people will get a negative reaction as they think you are staring at them. However, always bear in mind cultural differences between societies. There are 3 basic gazes:

1. The business gaze - Concentrate on an imaginary triangle between the eyes and the forehead. This creates a serious atmosphere and gives a sense that you mean business

2. The social gaze - Concentrate on an imaginary triangle between the eyes and mouth. This creates a relaxed atmosphere
3. The intimate gaze - Concentrates on an imaginary triangle between the eyes and the lower parts of the body. This shows an attraction to somebody

In selling we always use the business gaze as it shows seriousness.

Eye block gestures: people who close their eyes when dealing with you are unconsciously blocking you from sight. If the person feels superior then the eye block may be accompanied by a raised head, leading to the expression of looking down ones nose.

Controlling a person's gaze: 87% of all information received by the brain comes through the eyes. So if you can control what they see you are increasing the amount of information received by the brain. To maintain a person's gaze when using a visual aid you can use a pen or pointer. Go from point to point on the visual aid with the pointer and verbalise what the person is seeing at the time. You can then lift the pen to dissect your line of vision and makes the person look directly at you, allowing you to show sincerity etc.

## Cigars, cigarettes, glasses and pipes

Smoking gestures: smoking is a release of inner tension or anxiety. Non smokers use other gestures like adjusting cuff-links.

Pipe smokers: the performance of cleaning, lighting, tapping, filling and packing acts as a useful way to relieve tension. Pipe smokers take longer to make decisions and the pipe ritual is performed during the tense moments of the interview or meeting.

Cigarette smoking: cigarette smoking is the demonstration of inner tension. The direction in which smoke is exhaled has been shown to be an indicator of mood. If blown down it indicates a negative, secretive or suspicious mood. If blown up it shows a positive, confident and superior mood. This assumes that the person is not acting to avoid offending people. The faster it is exhaled the more positive or negative the mood. In a sales situation if the buyer blows up if the sale is made and down if the sale is lost. If blown out of the nostrils it shows a superior or confident attitude.

Cigar smoking: displays authority because of the size and cost. Most cigar smokers exhale upwards.

General smoking signals: the continual tapping against an ashtray shows that an inner conflict is ongoing and the person needs reassurance. If the smoker extinguishes the cigarette earlier than normal then they are conveying a desire to terminate the meeting. This can help you to take control and end the meeting on your terms.

Glasses and spectacles: putting the arm of a pair of glasses in the mouth is a common sign that the person is unsure and is in need of reassurance. It can be used to delay or stall a decision and commonly appears at the close of the sale. Taking off a pair of glasses and cleaning them is also a stalling technique. The gesture that follows the stall will tell you what decision has been made. If glasses are put back on then they want to see more but if folded away then they are ending the discussion. Peering over glasses at someone is a judgmental gesture and usually receives a negative response.

## Territory and ownership gestures

Territorial gestures: people lean against people or things to show a territorial claim. By touching an object it becomes an extension of the person. It can be intimidating or dominance if the person or object belongs to someone else. Young lovers constantly hold on to each other. Business executives put their feet on their desks. An easy way to intimidate someone is to lean up against their door, desk, car etc., without permission. In selling it can have a negative effect and turn a customer psychologically against you.

Ownership gestures: putting your leg over the arm of a chair shows ownership but with a relaxed attitude. If a subordinate came to you with a problem then they would get the impression of a lack of concern or indifference. Not to be done when dealing with people.

## Carbon copies and mirror images

Two people who are copying each other are telling each other that they are in agreement of attitude or opinion. Friends and couples often do this to show their mutual acceptance. New employees may be seen copying their boss's gestures to gain acceptance. It has been effective in cold canvassing as if the prospect starts to copy your actions then a sale nearly always followed. In a couple or group the dominant partner or leader will lead the members and the less dominant will carbon copy the lead gestures. You should deal with the person leading.

## Body lowering

Height and status are inter-linked. 'Upper and lower class', 'low', 'your highness' etc. Lowering your stature makes it difficult to insult or abstract others. People are always superior on their own territory. Using submissive gestures and behaviour are very effective methods of getting people on side with you.

## Pointers

In general the direction in which a person is pointing their torso or feet is the direction in which they want to be. Even if someone is talking and laughing with you, if they are directing their body away from you it is probable that they want to terminate the conversation. In negotiations when a person wants to terminate the discussion they will commonly sway their body towards the nearest exit (this is a good time for you to terminate the conversation on your terms).

### *Angles and triangles*

1. Open formations: this is where two people stand at an angle to each other focusing on a third point, creating a triangle. This third point is an invitation for someone else to join the company. This shows an acceptance of the third party.
2. Closed formations: here two people are directly pointing their bodies at each other with 0 degree angle. It is used in intimate conversations. In the courtship situation the distance between the two people is less than would be in an open formation. Commonly the pair mirror each other.

### *Inclusion and exclusion techniques*

If two people are in a closed formation and a third party joins then one of two things happen. First, if they are accepted then the initial pair turn their bodies to create a triangle and a third point for the person. Second, if they are not accepted the first pair will continue to hold their bodies in the closed formation. The pair may turn their heads to acknowledge the presence of the third person but they are signalling that the third person is not welcome to remain. Reversely, if you start with three people in an open triangle and two turn towards each other to exclude the other person, then they are telling the third person to leave.

Seated body pointing: if the person is interested they will point their knee towards you. If you are interested then you will point your knee back at them. As you become more comfortable with each other then you will notice that you start to mimic each other as well.

Talking to two people: if you are asked a question by person A; then whilst you are replying keep turning your head between A. and B. and as you finish to answer turn to look at A. This keeps both people involved and keeps B. on side.

Foot pointing: feet act as pointers as not only to where a person wants to go but at whom they are interested or attracted to. If the other person is interested they will probably point their foot back.

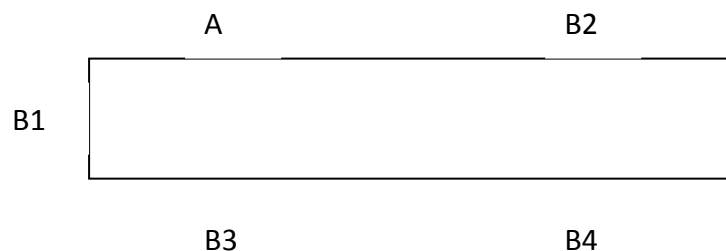
Seated body formation - There are differing ways to handle a seated discussion. If you have control of the situation then do not use a desk but use two chairs. Best for you to have a swivel chair and the second person to have a fixed chair without arms. There are three main angle formations.

1. Open triangular position, where you sit at an angle to each other. This leads to an informal, relaxed atmosphere and is good for an open discussion. Both torsos point towards a third point showing mutual acceptance.
2. Direct body point, where you point your body directly at the other person and tells them that you mean business and want a straight answer. This combined with a business gaze is a very effective use of non verbal pressure.
3. Right-angle away position, when you turn at a reverse right angle to the person and take the pressure off the discussion. A good way to discuss delicate or embarrassing questions.

Foot and body pointing takes practice to master but are effective for controlling the atmosphere of a discussion. The use of triangles and body pointing are very useful interpersonal skills to know.

### Desks, tables and seating arrangements

In a general office situation, you can get varying degrees of co-operation from people depending on where you are seated in relation to them. There are four basic seating positions at a rectangular table:



B1 - the corner position: usually used when having a friendly or casual conversation. It is the best strategic position for a sales person to deliver a presentation. By simply moving your chair to a B1 position you can relieve a tense situation.

B2 - the co-operative position: the position taken by people who are working together on a mutual project. If interviewing a third person you can take this or the corner position.

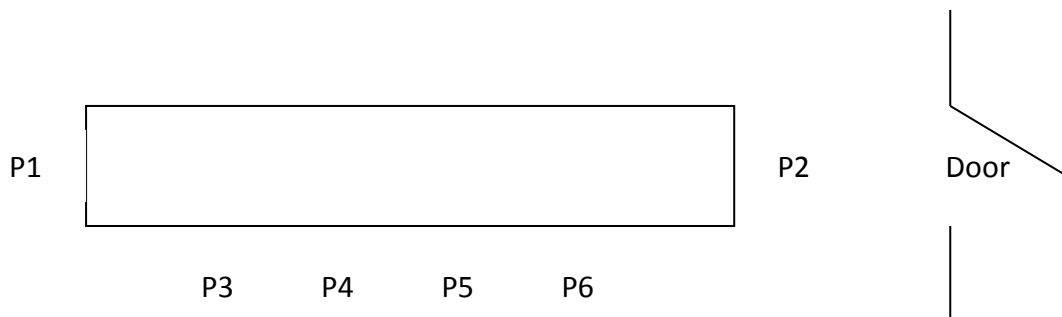
B3 - the competitive/defensive position: worst position in which to persuade a person to do anything. It creates a formal even adversarial atmosphere. You also divide the table into two equal regions. Be careful not to invade the other person's territory in a situation like this.

B4 - the independent position: taken by people who do not want to interact with other people. Obviously not to be used in discussions with people.

## Table shapes

Square tables are very formal and can be used to keep meetings short or create a superior/subordinate relationship. Round tables (or coffee tables or a circle of chairs) create a relaxed or informal atmosphere between people of equal status. Good for encouraging discussions or dialogue.

Rectangular tables when used in power plays and gives the person at the end of the table away from the exit the most powerful position. The person at the other end of the table is next powerful. Then the power goes down the table, the people nearest the most powerful person having the most power.



## Getting a decision over dinner

To get barriers down and another person relaxed then here are some general rules to follow:

- ◆ Have the other person seated with their backs to a solid wall or screen.
- ◆ Use dimmed lights and muffled background music.
- ◆ Use a round table.
- ◆ Have the view to others obscured by a screen or large plant.

This leads to a captive audience.

## Power plays

### *Power plays with chairs*

Chair size and accessories: the higher the back of the chair the higher the status, the lower the back the lower the status. Senior executives have high back chairs, visitors have low backed chairs. Swivel chairs have more status than fixed chairs and allow their users freedom to move when under pressure. Fixed chairs allow for little movement and thus more body gestures are used. Chairs with arm rests, that lean back or have wheels are better than those without.

Height off ground: the higher off the ground a chair is the more status it confers on its user. The visitor's seat may also be adjusted lower than the owners.

Chair location: most pressure is exerted on the visitor in the competitive/ defensive position. Their status is lowered further by placing the seat back in the social or public zones.

*Office layout - general comments*

- ◆ Placing your desk against a wall or window near the door allows everybody to see you when they come into your office.
- ◆ The visitor's seat can then be placed in the corner position instead of the competitive position. This allows for more open communications.
- ◆ Glass partitions lower status as everybody can see what is going on. If they exist get them sprayed with a mirror finish, allowing you to see out but nobody to see in.
- ◆ A round coffee table and some identical swivel chairs can be placed at the other end of the room, allowing informal meetings to take place on an equal basis.
- ◆ Use open arm and leg gestures with open palms regularly at meetings.

## Summary - gesture clusters

### Positive gestures

- ◆ Palms exposed in submissive position, fingers spread
- ◆ Legs and arms open (openness)
- ◆ Coat open
- ◆ Forming a triangle (acceptance)
- ◆ Foot pointing (interest)
- ◆ Knee pointing (interest)
- ◆ Exposed wrists in women (interest)
- ◆ Exhaling smoke upwards
- ◆ Preening (interest)
- ◆ Head up or tilted (interest)
- ◆ Sitting or leaning forward
- ◆ Smiling
- ◆ High or low steeple
- ◆ Raised eyebrows (Interest)

### Negative gestures

- ◆ Looking down and away from a person
- ◆ Head turned away and down (Hostile)
- ◆ Rubbing eye (deceit)
- ◆ Touching nose (deceit)
- ◆ Head and body turned away from person
- ◆ Head slightly down (disapproval)
- ◆ Eyebrows turned down (anger)
- ◆ Full arm cross (defensive)
- ◆ Coat closed
- ◆ Legs crossed (defensive)
- ◆ Hands on hips (readiness)
- ◆ Thumb displays / in belts (readiness or courtship)
- ◆ Body pointing
- ◆ Clenched fists (aggression)
- ◆ Exhaling smoke down
- ◆ Leaning against wall or object (Claiming or
- ◆ Sitting or leaning back
- ◆ Starters position (ready to leave)
- ◆ Pain in neck gesture
- ◆ Thumb point (ridicule)
- ◆ Upper arm grip (self control)
- ◆ Palm in pocket (unwilling to contribute)
- ◆ Leg over arm of chair (lack of interest)
- ◆ Lint picking (disapproval)
- ◆ Gripping arm rests (self restraint)

## Confidence or superiority

- ◆ Hands behind head (know it all attitude)
- ◆ Feet on desk or lower drawer (territorial)
- ◆ High backed or swivel chair
- ◆ Sitting in competitive position
- ◆ Straddling a chair
- ◆ Body pointing
- ◆ Figure-of-four ankle lock (confident or argumentative)
- ◆ Exhaling smoke upwards
- ◆ Looking down nose (arrogant)
- ◆ Thumb or crotch display

## Lack of confidence

- ◆ Partial arm barriers
- ◆ Foot or ankle lock (frustration)

## Customer Care

### Maintaining sales through better customer care

The customer appears twice in the selling process; firstly as a consumer in the market place and, secondly, as a customer with the after sales service. The customer will naturally evaluate you on your performance in both these aspects. It is essential to differentiate yourself from your competitors. Any company who demonstrates top quality service consistently will succeed in any market conditions. Good customer service and courtesy to everybody results in a company behaviour that enhances the company image with your customers. Remember everybody in your company sells; receptionists, secretaries, and back room staff are all involved in the sales image of the company. A good sales team's work can be corroded by the bad attitude in the service department. Van drivers can give a bad impression of your company on the road by impolite behaviour to an existing or potential customer.

Everybody who comes into contact with your company should be treated with warmth, kindness and consideration as it always pays dividends later. If you make a good impression at a time when no business is available you will find that people will come back to you when the business is available. Staff attitudes play a major part in the continuing flow of business. A positive attitude generates confidence and makes a good impression. For example the US hotel chain whose staff all wear name badges which state 'Yes I can'; it may seem pat but it is a psychological motivator, as it is difficult to be negative when you are wearing such a positive message; and it does result in an impressive level of service.

### Why do customers stop buying?

This survey was conducted of professional buyers who had changed a major supplier in the past 12 months (admittedly, some years ago). The professional buyers gave the following explanations of why they changed supplier:

1% stated that the person they were doing business with died (note business was with the salesperson and not their company)

3% stated that the person they were doing business with changed jobs or moved away (again the relationship was with the salesperson not their company)

5% stated they changed supplier to favour friends

9% stated that they changed supplier for better prices (notably, only 9% changed on price)

82% stated that they were unhappy with the supplier and the service they received.

I have always drawn the lesson that if you keep your customers happy then it is very difficult for another company to take them from you. Note 82% would have stayed with the supplier if they had given better service.

## Why are customers unhappy with suppliers?

There are many reasons why customers can become dissatisfied with a supplier. Usually they boil down to dissatisfaction with the product or the service. Examples of poor product include not delivered goods when agreed, parts being missing when delivered, parts not in stock when the customer needs them, it taking too long to get parts or service, the product is inadequate for the intended use and, most annoying, being referred to manufacturers when problems occur, even though they have a contract with their supplier.

Poor service is a more common cause of annoyance. Among the most common causes of dissatisfaction are the response times being too slow, service not given when promised, lack of perceived urgency or understanding by service department and having no follow-up by salesperson or company.

You can also lose business and esteem by the actions of other staff members. The first point of contact with your company is usually through your receptionist. Here is another area for issues to arise resulting in unhappy customers. Examples are the phone not being answered promptly, your company not being properly identified and getting the standard 'whose calling?' Other annoyances can include all questions answered by 'just a moment please' with many unexplained interruptions resulting in long periods of silence. Abrupt or aimless transfers really annoy people as are requests for messages to be repeated and ignorance of whereabouts of personnel or movements (the "he's in a meeting at the moment" lie and the "he'll ring you back in five minutes" lie)

Remember your company's reputation is in the hands of the first person to pick up the phone. Make sure you have a competent receptionist. More importantly, if you are using a commercial answering service you should make regular checks to see how they are answering your messages on your behalf.

Other staff can also make a negative impression. Here are a few things to look out for and correct immediately. Remember that good customer service is driven from the top. Please correct these in yourself or your team:

- ◆ Disinterested staff; the 'I only work here' or 'it's not in my contract' attitude
- ◆ Making false promises
- ◆ Customer not listened to properly
- ◆ Passing the buck; 'I'll pass on the message'
- ◆ Defensive attitudes; 'it's not my fault'
- ◆ Not coming back to people when promised
- ◆ Rudeness, arguing with the customer, or insinuating that the customer is wrong
- ◆ Interrupting the customer
- ◆ Showing a lack of courtesy

Remember it is the customer's perception that matters. Ultimately they pay all the salary and they must be the focus of all your activities.

## How to welcome someone to your company

1. Look the person in the eye
2. Smile warmly
3. Greet with a friendly 'good morning or afternoon'
4. Ask 'how can I help you' (never use "can I help you")
5. Question skilfully and wait until the purpose of the call has been explained
6. Summarise request to verify accuracy. Get the person's name and use it
7. Avoid 'we can't' statements without offering a realistic alternative.
8. Explain exactly what you will do and how long it will take.
9. Offer a coffee or newspaper; this keeps the person occupied and away from reception
10. Keep the person informed of progress; do not leave them in the dark
11. When business is finished give them your name, so that they can contact you if they need to call back
12. When leaving always 'Thank you for your business Mr/Ms [person's name], please come back and see us again'

## Handling complaints and arguments

You cannot win an argument with a customer. In any case it is unwise to be drawn into verbal conflict because you cannot sell or communicate with the person in the subsequent atmosphere and even if you win the argument you will almost always lose the order. When you challenge someone's judgement, you will never convince them to buy.

So what can we expect when dealing with an unhappy customer? Firstly, do not expect the customer to be in a rational frame of mind as complaints evoke emotion. Maintain a professional approach. Unhappy people will be oversensitive to casual or uncaring attitudes so be careful of what you say and how you say it. Remember, complaints are an opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism, so don't pass the buck. Take personal responsibility for solving the complaint. Show that you really do care. The ability to communicate another point of view to someone who is emotional is a very important skill. Here are some rules to follow:

- ◆ Listen aggressively. Listen carefully to what is being said so that you can ascertain what the person is really complaining about. Trying to calm people down only fuels the flames.
- ◆ Remain calm. Control your body language and tone of voice. Remember you must think and you cannot think if you do not remain calm.
- ◆ Never interrupt. Not only is it bad manners but will be perceived as a lack of full attention.

- ◆ Ask appropriate questions. Ask open ended questions. Show real interest.
- ◆ Ignore insults. The customer is likely to be emotional and say things they will later regret. Normally people will apologise for untimely remarks when the situation has been resolved. This is an important but worthwhile skill to develop.
- ◆ Wait for calmness. They cannot keep shouting forever.
- ◆ Summarise the points at issue; 'If I understand you correctly this is the position...' Never use phrases like "disagree" as this only highlights the conflict, not the solution.
- ◆ Find an area of agreement and state it.
- ◆ Demonstrate empathy. We do not have to agree with the person but they can at least expect us to understand their point of view.
- ◆ Agree on action. Whatever is agreed should be done with haste. It is this that will determine your future relationship with the customer.
- ◆ Thank the customer for their complaint. This is important as they could have gone to the opposition.

### What is a customer?

- ◆ The most important person to ever contact us
- ◆ The customer is not dependent on us: we are dependent on them
- ◆ The customer does not interrupt our work: they are the purpose of it
- ◆ The customer is doing us a favour: not the other way round
- ◆ Customers are not statistics: they are human beings with feelings
- ◆ Customers are not for matching wits with
- ◆ Customers bring their needs and wants to us, it is our job to fulfil them

### Customer service in PRACTICE

Promptness: we are always ready to serve

Reliability: we are trustworthy, deserving of their faith and business

Accuracy: we are precise and deliver what we say we will do

Courtesy: we are gracious, obliging and polite, even under pressure

Tactfulness: we say the right thing and keep confidences

Information: we communicate knowledge and inform our clients

Competence: we have the capacity to do what we say we will do

Empathy: we understand the client and their needs

#### *Common phrases to avoid*

Over the years I have picked up some of the following from books, training courses and being a business person and CEO. They all get down to the psychology of selling and phrasing what we say is very important.

<b>Phrases to avoid</b>	<b>Use these instead...</b>
'Can I help you'	'How can I be of assistance'
'with all due respect...'	Just don't use the phrase
Objections	Areas of Concern
Customers	'Clients' or 'people we serve'
I'll have to...	I'll be happy to...
A Contract	Our understanding is...
Price or money	Investment
'without getting technical' 'to put this in simple terms' 'I hope I'm not going over your head'	'I hope I am explaining myself clearly...'
'I hope I'm not boring you' 'without boring you further'	Do not go there and never raise a negative
'that's not what I said' 'you misunderstood me' 'you've got me wrong'	Accept responsibility: 'I'm sorry I have not explained myself properly...'
'this is not a criticism' 'now don't take offence'	Never make a criticism: 'If I may make an observation...'
'I disagree' "you are entitled to your opinion"	'this is true and I could not agree more. However, if I may, there is another view point...'
'if you want my opinion.' 'if I were you' 'My advice would be...'	Stop talking about you. 'What would you think of...'
'we guarantee same day service' 'our service is second to none'	Don't talk nonsense. If you can do it then actions speak louder than words
'we are cheaper'	'we provide great value for money...' 'we provide a much better return on your investment...'
'I just happened to be in the area'	Why, had you nothing better to do? 'I was in the area visiting other clients and thought I would call in...'

'we have a problem'  
'were having some difficulties'

'as a way of compensating you...'

'That was stupid'  
'What you should do is'  
'I can't believe you did that'  
'I have a better idea'  
'now let me tell you'

'perhaps'  
'could be'  
'should be'  
'might be'  
'maybe'

'The current situation is...'

This implies a right:  
'as a sign of our goodwill we would like to...'

Never use these statements, they undermine the client:  
'Okay, the current situation is...if I am right, so we have the following options...'

Never talk indecisively:  
'we can'  
'we will'  
'of course'

## Exercise 2

### Your Opinions Revisited

Without reference to the answers you gave at the beginning of the section and in light of the information we have already covered, answer the following questions:

- Q1. What do you believe selling is about?
- Q2. Who is the most important person in selling?
- Q3. Can you list the different stages to the selling process?
- Q4. Why are you reading this book?
- Q5. Are you afraid of selling, and if so, why?
- Q6. What motivates you as a person?
- Q7. What is it that you sell?
- Q8. What are the main characteristics of a professional salesperson?
- Q9. What goals have you set yourself to achieve from reading this book?
- Q10. What significant changes have you made to your opinions on the above questions over the course of the book so far, if any?

## Section 3

### Looking for new business

Territory and time management

Exercise 3

Prospecting

Exercise 4

Getting an appointment

Networking

Exercise 5

## Territory and time management

There are basically two ways to increase sales; sell to more customers or sell more to existing customers. Ideally you would like a balanced approach over time between increasing customers and the average customer volumes. The key to increasing your sales (be it numbers of clients or volumes through existing customers) is selling productively and, within this, time management is the crucial element.

Surveys have shown that salespersons spend on average:

Travelling	30%
Waiting	15%
Phone calls and administration	11%
Internal sales meetings	5%
Face to face selling	39%

It can also be assumed that entrepreneurs, who have many other items to attend to daily, would have less time available for face-to-face selling. So with this in mind, how can we increase our sales? The answer is good territory management which entails:

- ◆ seeing as many of the right people as possible
- ◆ at the right time
- ◆ under the best conditions
- ◆ at the least possible cost
- ◆ getting the maximum sales from every suitable outlet

## Territory Management for new business

This requires dividing your market into areas, be they geographic, sectoral or demographic. You concentrate on one section at a time. You will not leave a sector until all prospects have been visited, unless you have a client to deal with or a solid new enquiry elsewhere. By the time you go around the whole area you will have amassed a sizeable number of new prospects. This goes back to plan your work and work your plan. Planning ensures that you maximise your use of that finite element: time.

## Time Management

An excellent way to increase sales is to scrutinise and guard time. We tend to waste 20% of our time doing unproductive things. Remember the 80/20 rule; 80% of your business is done with 20% of your customers. This leaves us with a simple message; do not waste time and 'fish where the big fish are biting'.

Bad territory management is a notorious time waster. Examples are having your first meeting in the west of your sales territory, the next in the north and the next in the south. It is the result of a lack of planning. Try to spend a day in an area and do all you need to do in that area in that day. Maximise the work you can get done in a day in an area. Have a systematic approach to sales calls and meetings.

One tip is to making flexible appointments instead of fixed ones. Set your first meeting at 8.30 am. If you suspect this will take half an hour and that you have to travel half an hour extra to get to your next appointment, set your next appointment at between 9.30 am and 10.00 am. Even if your first meeting runs over 20 minutes you still arrive before 10.00 am. If you had set the second meeting for 9.30 am then you would be 20 minutes late. This way you arrive in the agreed time frame and are still on time. So all of your meetings after the first one should be given a time range: between this time and that time.

Then there is the issue of using the appropriate mode of communication. There are simply times when you physically have to attend a meeting but you do not always have to. Making a phone call may achieve the exact same result and you can make your calls in a controlled environment. Do you need to write a formal letter which takes more time or a simple e-mail? Other time wasters are spending too much time talking on the phone and tying up your time and the other persons.

There are the socialising time wasters. Networking is a useful business tool but it can also be a great excuse to hide. Extended lunch breaks and coffee breaks are another example of habitual time wasters. Starting late and finishing early are serious time wasting exercises. Remember your customers work earlier and finish later than most people and you are missing great opportunities. Another example of time wasting is talking to the wrong people. Giving sales presentations to the wrong people is a classic mistake for the uninitiated entrepreneur and one you learn to address quickly.

## Time saving tips

- ◆ Identify your daily goals and priorities and have a definite action plan. Keep a 'things to do' list (I am convinced the reason the back of compliment slips were designed)
- ◆ Plan your work and work your plan
- ◆ Distinguish between efficiency and effectiveness; the former is doing the job right, the latter means getting results. You are paid to get results. Remember Parkinson's Law - 'work expands to fill the time available'. Thus, reduce the time available and the work still gets done. Try it!
- ◆ Analyse your calls. Spend the most effort on those customers who will yield the best results. Complete all 'high priority' tasks. Eliminate obvious time wasters

- ◆ Listen to self development material in the car. Keep trade magazines in your briefcase for reading while waiting. Do training outside working hours
- ◆ Carry a flask and sandwiches when travelling
- ◆ Handle small marginal accounts by phone, where possible.
- ◆ Not everybody works nine to five. Breakfast and lunch meetings are useful. Customers may be impressed by calls when they work outside normal hours

### Exercise 3

#### Your Time

Look at your diary for last week or the week before and fill out the weekly time table below:

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Weekend</b>
7.00am						
8.00						
9.00						
10.00						
11.00						
12.00						
1.00pm						
2.00						
3.00						
4.00						
5.00						
6.00						
7.00						
8.00						
9.00						
10.00						

### Exercise 3 - continued

Now having made out your diary commitments work out:

1. How many hours were spent in face to face sales meetings?
2. How many hours were spent prospecting for new business?
3. How many hours spent travelling?
4. How many hours spent doing administration / paperwork?
5. How many hours spent working on products, orders, etc?
6. How many hours spent not working?
7. How many hours spent waiting for people, appointments, etc?
8. How many hours spent non-productively?
9. What goals are you setting yourself as a result of the discussion on time management?

Write your goals down now.

## Prospecting

### Your Market

The first step in the process of looking for new business is to identify what market you are in. Some people think that this is easy to answer but it usually requires more analysis. The motor trade is a good example. Most people think that the motor trade sells cars but of course the trade is much more complex. There is the small car market, the small family car, the large family cars, the corporate car market, the executive car market, the luxury car market, the sports car market, the 4 X 4 market, the small van market, the large van market etc. Each separate section has its own market strategy. As the old joke goes when a car company is telling you about the excellent use of space, they are trying to sell you a mini.

The next thing for you to do is see how many different market sectors you are serving. Different ranges of the same good can be in completely different market segments. There are 3 elements to a market and each should be analysed. We call these the 3 C's:

your Customers  
your Competitors  
and your Company

It is the interaction between these which will affect the outcome of your business venture. What you are looking for are gaps in the market, i.e., Customer demands that are not being met by the Competition. These are Your market opportunities.

## Prospecting

Prospecting is an important part of a sales person's plan and must be carried out regularly. Prospecting is the term used for seeking out new business customers. Without new leads you will soon go out of business. The good salesperson will seek out leads 'in the parts that others cannot reach', by using a creative and imaginative approach. Keep your eyes on the daily papers and business magazines. Note new appointments, expansions and staff expansions. Get into the habit of doing this at all times, not just when leads are slow. An old lesson I was taught is always read the jobs pages. If a company can afford to take on staff and spend a lot of money advertising the position, it is a good bet they are doing well.

But finding leads is only good if you can be of service to them. When preparing a targeted sales campaign there are several questions you should ask yourself:

'Who can I be of benefit to'? We know people buy benefits not features so look at your product or service. Who has benefited from it in the past? Why? What were the unique selling points (USP) that made our existing customers buy from us in the first place? Who else is in a similar business or position that we can help?

Remember, if you solve a problem for a client there must be other people out there with the similar problem. When prospecting for business you can either use an unsolicited approach (cold canvassing) or adopt a more subtle approach and solicited approach.

## Unsolicited or Cold Canvassing

Cold canvassing is the least liked part of selling. It can muster up visions of door to door salesmen. However, cold canvassing can include any approach to a prospective client that is unsolicited. A systematic approach is needed in all cases. Here are a few suggested methods:

Door-to-door sales: in my experience the least productive method of prospecting. In principle you are saying that the best approach to finding new business is to take a housing estate or industrial estate at random and go door to door. This is a hit-and-miss method and is a very low percentage game. Many businesses will not deal with people cold canvassing and many householders will perceive it to be an unwanted disruption. There are more productive ways to prospect.

Mail shots: here you write a letter or send a brochure to a specific individual but it is still unsolicited. You are going to have to do something different to stand out from the competition. Mail shots can only be effective if followed up by a phone call or visit. If you are intent on doing a mail shot then do a trial run. Have plenty of 'YOU' appeal and a clear call for action. Follow up and analyse results. Try sending three personal letters each day to top prospects and follow up with a phone call; it has worked for others and it can work for you.

Leaflet drops: these work well only for a few types of business in my opinion, usually fast food outlets and phone-order food outlets. As a rule of thumb be able to communicate your message in the time it takes the householder to pick up the leaflet at their front door and put it in the bin. This is the usually the rate of return on leaflet drops for most businesses. This is again a very hit-and-miss method.

Telephone canvassing: can be very effective as it is cheap and quick. You can find out what the client wants to buy and from whom, who makes the decisions etc, very quickly. It can also motivate inactive accounts, collect overdue accounts, inform customers of impending price rises and deals.

## Solicited approaches

Exhibitions: these can be a tremendous source of leads. If a large space is too expensive then share with allied but not competing companies. Their leads can become your leads. But always remember that you should conduct a cost/benefit analysis on the rate of return for the investment in exhibitions. Exhibitions only yield top results if you are selling to the most focused market you can. In general, the more general the exhibition the less benefits accrue from them. Also the more

targeted the exhibition the higher the attendance price. So make sure that you are maximising your time and investment. A final comment is that you do not have to have a stand at an exhibition to attend. Get an invitation or pay at the door.

Swapping leads: usually with an associate from a non-competing company. Only works if you give as good as you get but can be an excellent way to generate sales. Also remember that you can swap leads with some clients as well.

Referrals: referrals are a source of business often overlooked. A referral is where someone recommends you to someone they know. Referrals can come from family and friends, acquaintances but best of all from satisfied customers. The difference between closing a qualified referral and cold calling is remarkable. Only 10% of cold calls lead to a selling situation as compared to 60% of qualified referrals. When you get a referral it is like being introduced to the potential client by a good friend of theirs. Example:

"Good Morning Mr. Potential Customer. I am calling you on the recommendation of Mr. Referral whom I have had the pleasure of serving. They recommended I call because they are using our 'Service or Product' and felt that you might benefit from our service, as they have. I wonder if I might have a few moments of your time to discuss how our 'product or service' can benefit you"

Don't be afraid of social outings and informal meetings. All are opportunities to meet prospective buyers. Search out new business seven days a week and don't be afraid to ask for referrals! If you have done a good job for someone and they are pleased with you then they will be only happy to recommend you to others. Put yourself in the customer's shoes. Have you ever gone to an electrical shop looking for a high value item? Usually there is a high amount of jargon and specifications. Have you ever come across a salesperson who really gave you great service, explained technical jargon, or better again helped you find what you wanted without going near the jargon. Have you ever been impressed by a salesperson. If so, would you go back to them again for similar products? Have you ever recommended a company or business to a friend? If that salesperson asked you for a referral would you have concerns about recommending them? Probably not and, in fact, you would probably rave to your friends about this great company that sorted out your problems. Remember, you are a customer when you are not working. The client you are serving has the same fears, needs and impressions when buying from you as you have when buying from someone else. If this helps you to empathise with your client then you should now never be afraid to ask for referrals again.

Networking: there are many opportunities to business network today. The problem is trying to figure out the ones where you are likely to have a productive outcome rather than just socialising. Before you go to a networking event try and know who will be there, who are the people you want to meet and know why you want to meet them. In other words have a plan. Pre-plan every network event or you will just be going around introducing yourself pointlessly. However, I do most of my

networking by meeting up with people over coffee or lunch. Remember to look after those in your existing network. They are more likely to be of use to you than someone you have never met before.

Requests for Tenders (RFT): these are an increasingly common way of bidding for business. They are solicited as the organisation has made a formal request for companies to tender for the business but it is blind bidding. You can spend a lot of time writing tenders (I know I do) and get little return for this investment of time. Try to check out any tenders you are interested in and make sure there is not already an incumbent supplier. Many organisations are required by law to re-tender for suppliers even though they are happy with their current vendor, so always do a background check. It does take time to write a good tender but it can be a very productive way of prospecting.

Old customer records: a person who was not able to buy from you last year may be in a position to buy from you now. Perhaps business has improved or they may be expanding or have a new purchasing manager. Keep an eye on old customer records and see if you can rekindle the business relationship.

## Paperwork

Unnecessary paper work should be eliminated from all processes. However a customer and prospect record system is essential to keep. An index card system is common and now there are readily affordable customer relationship management (CRM) systems available. Keep two copies; one alphabetical and one geographical. Also keep your client and prospects lists separate; they need different approaches.

### HINT!!!

If you are self employed do all your paperwork and administration on one day and make it a religious devotion. Not only should you do your accounts, invoices and statements but also plan your sales prospecting for the week ahead. Set down specific goals and targets. As a rule Monday morning or Friday afternoon are good times as little business tends to be done at these times but that depends on the business you are in. But setting a time during the working week that suits you and does not interfere with business is essential and unfortunately, good sales systems and good administration are synonymous.

## Exercise 4

### Marketing

Here are a few questions that you might find useful to think out in advance and have answers for. You might get some inspiration from my blog; <http://startyourownbusinessblog.wordpress.com>

Q1. What market are you in?

Q2. Who are your competitors?

Q3. Who are your customers?

Q4. Where are your customers?

Q5. Why are your customers buying from your competition?

Q6. Why should they buy from you?

Q7. What is the best form of promotion suited to your product?

Q8. What have you learned from this exercise?

Q9. What new goals have you set yourself regarding prospecting?

## Getting an Appointment

As said earlier all selling situations get down to people situations. But getting into the face to face selling phase can be a challenge. There are two basic elements to getting an appointment. Firstly, knowing what you want from the meeting and, secondly, getting to the person and getting the appointment.

### What am I looking to get from this meeting?

Over the years I have attended many, many meetings. I have regularly found myself wasting time unproductively at meetings and asking myself 'what am I doing here?' Unplanned meetings are a scourge to the human race and should be exterminated. I now will only attend a meeting if I know what I want to get from the meeting and have a plan of how I am going to achieve these goals. Please remember that goal setting is a vital part of any meeting. In sales we cannot afford to waste our client's valuable time, not to mention our own. Thus before we make a phone call or use another media to make an appointment we should clearly identify what the purpose of this visit or call is, set clear objectives and then do not vary from the plan; usually implementing the KISS principle (Keep It Short & Sweet).

There can be several purposes for making an appointment:

*Information gathering:* where you are looking to gain information from a prospect or an associate. Clearly identify the information you are trying to ascertain. If you get an appointment on the pretext of gathering information then do not try to sell to the person (unless the client leads the conversation there). If you abuse the privilege then you will lose credibility and damage your long term relationship.

*To arrange a face to face sales meeting:* in this case be clear to introduce the benefits to the client of meeting you. However, remember that the purpose of the call is to get the appointment not to sell the product. Only give enough information to convince the prospective client that it is worth their while to meet with you. For example:

"Good morning Mr. Prospective Client. Thank you for talking to me. My name is [you]. As you will be aware health & safety is becoming a major concern for businesses. Apart from legal considerations most employers wish to make sure that their staff members are well looked after and are safe in their workplace. My company provides a range of products and services that will be of benefit to you and I would appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about how we may be of service to you. I promise not to take up more than five minutes of your time. Would ...'

So make sure that you know what you want to achieve at the meeting and then plan how you will attain these goals.

## Getting to the Prospective Client

Busy people are very protective of their time. During the working day, they usually have a screening process in place to ensure that only real business contacts get through to them. This screening process may be a receptionist, secretary, administrator or personal assistant (PA). If you are going to deal with busy people you must recognise that:

1. They are doing you a favour by talking to you not the other way around, so be respectful of this privilege
2. Don't contact a prospective client unless you have something that will benefit them

This comes back to call preparation. If busy people agree to listen to you then you have already said something in the screening process that makes them feel that there is something in this discussion that may benefit them. (This goes back to interview skill training for job seekers. Remember that you will only be given an interview if the hiring company thinks you can do the job).

There are 2 ways to address this screening process; go through it or go around it.

## Getting through the Screening Process

Receptionists, secretaries, personal assistants (PA) and in some cases middle managers are often given the role of screening out nuisance calls by their boss. It can be equally as difficult to find busy self employed people as well. Why? These people are very busy and they have to put in place a time management system which allows them use the finite time they have to produce the maximum results. So how do you get to the decision maker? Answer; by understanding the screening process and using the rules of the game to your advantage. Salespeople, including you, have been taught to empathise with their clients. So let's do so.

Let us consider a few years into the future. You are still engaged in your business but it has grown substantially. You have ten times the amount of business that you are doing now. You have an office, a secretary and a sales team. Based on your current working arrangements you can assume that:

- ◆ You work a long day. Most successful self employed people work from 8.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. and then work some evenings and weekends. Successful people work then there is work to do. Whereas, their offices only operate 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
- ◆ During normal hours they are very busy conducting the business of the day. They do their planning and creative work in non-office hours. We also know that people are more receptive and less on guard during evenings and after-hours environments and in less formal situations.

- ◆ During office hours there is a screening process in place. Usually the person's secretary or receptionist. It is possible to get to the decision maker through the secretary/receptionist if the item is deemed important enough but you must be serious, polite and respectful.
- ◆ Managers and self-employed people are business people. They are professionals and expect the people they do business with to be professional. They are also interested in new business opportunities or openings to improve their service, business or profit margins.

If you accept these assumptions then a number of things become clear:

1. If you work office hours only, then you will have less chance of getting to the decision maker.
2. Screeners are very important people as they are the gate keepers to the decision makers. In other words receptionists, PA etc must be seen as a vital step in the selling process. If you can win over their opinions and show that you have something to offer the decision maker then you get past the door. If you do not then you cannot progress the sale.
3. The screening process is there for a reason. It is in place to ensure maximum efficiency for the decision maker. See it as such and you can go beyond it. Never see the screening process as a road block set up to stop you getting to the decision maker. Use the process to your advantage and not to your detriment.
4. Professionalism is the key to making the appointment.

### Making an appointment by going past the screening process

Receptionists and Personal Assistants are important people. First of all they are people. They have good and bad days; feel depressed, happy and sad by occasion. They are important because they can get you to the decision maker. Here are a few pointers as to how to get them to get you where you want to go:

- ◆ Be clear as to your purpose, you are trying to get this person to let you talk to the decision maker. They are not the buyer. Do not make a sales presentation to a screener. However, you must make sure that they believe that it is worth their while and their decision maker's while to connect you.
- ◆ Be respectful, professional and polite. People do business with people that they like. If they take a disliking to you or your manner they will not connect you to the decision maker, no matter how good your proposition.
- ◆ Get the person's name and use it when addressing them. Particularly when you call again. This requires making a note after every call or meeting.
- ◆ Be professional. This is a professional business relationship being developed not a chat-up line situation. Be funny, pleasant but do not try it on.
- ◆ Put yourself in their shoes. Back to Planning; what is it that you have to say that will get their attention and connect you through. Be honest and factual.

- ◆ You can start by looking for information. 'Good morning. I was wondering if you could help me with some information. Who is the person responsible for health and safety/finance/purchasing etc... Would Mr/Ms Decision Maker be available please?
- ◆ The next thing you have to do is give enough information to get you through without giving away your sales presentation. 'I would like to talk to Mr/Ms Decision Maker about (your area of expertise) as I represent (Company Name) and we specialise in (what you feel is of benefit to the decision maker). I believe that this would be of great interest and benefit to Mr/Ms Decision Maker. My name is (your name)...
- ◆ If it is not possible to connect to the decision maker then find out as much as you can and maybe follow up with a letter or other suitable approach. 'That's a pity because I have something that will interest them. Could you tell me when they might be available or do they have an e-mail address for them?' When you find out what you need say 'thank you very much for your help (Persons name). I look forward to talking to you again'.

Another thing the screener can do is allow you to qualify the client. By this I mean making sure that you can be of benefit to the client. Ask questions about what machine or system is used. Do they use your product and how much. If at all possible get the information that allows you to tailor make your presentation when you get face to face with the decision maker. Remember to ask questions in a manner that makes the screener feel important, i.e. 'What is your opinion', 'Can you use your influence', 'I'd like your advice'.

Don't take rejection personally. Some people react badly to pressurised situations and you may have just called on a bad day. They may have a headache etc. Remember if you ring tomorrow you may get a completely different attitude, so remember to be polite no matter how short and to the point the person at the other end of the phone is.

## Making an appointment with the decision maker

Again, you are only trying to get a face to face appointment. This is not a selling situation. What you are trying to do is convince the person it is worthwhile meeting you as you have something that benefits them. Here are a few tips:

- ◆ Be professional and polite. Respect that this is a busy person and you are taking up a valuable resource of theirs; their time.
- ◆ Be prepared. Know what you want to say to the person and have back up positions prepared if the person resists the idea of a meeting.
- ◆ Be flexible. Meet before and after office hours. Not everybody takes a lunch hour. If possible meet the person off their territory. If they are going to a local conference meet them at a suitable time there. Go to a local coffee shop etc. Meet them wherever it suits them. Many consultants like to meet in the lobby of nice hotels as it is classy and convenient.

- ◆ Try to build a rapport. Again, people do business with people that they like.
- ◆ Outline the benefits to the person of meeting with you but this is not a sales presentation. 'I can show you how we can improve your production/lower your cost/ increase efficiency etc. by using (our service or product). It will take me (amount of time necessary to make presentation) to show you how I can be of benefit to you.
- ◆ If they say that you can post the information etc. and they will get back to you (and we all know that they won't) then try the following line. 'Thank you for your suggestion but if I send on brochures then the true benefits to you will not become evident as I need to assess how they relate to your business. I can do this in around (number) of minutes. I promise it will be worth the time investment.
- ◆ When suggesting a time to meet always give two alternative times to meet. If you give one then it is easy for them to say they can't because of a meeting. 'Then could I suggest Wednesday at 11.00 a.m. or Thursday in the afternoon'. As you are being reasonable and accommodating then they will feel the need to respond in kind.
- ◆ Always finish up by thanking the prospective client for giving you their time and promising the benefits to them.
- ◆ After you get the appointment send a letter in confirmation, either by post, fax or e-mail. It is very important that the client sees the appointment in writing as it makes the event real.
- ◆ The day of the appointment ring in advance to make sure that there are no sudden hiccups. People do get sick, urgent meetings do happen.

## Going around the screening process

In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on networking. Why is this important? Well, many successful business people see it as an obligation to attend business networking events. Furthermore, many highly successful people see it as an obligation to take on senior roles in networks, chambers of commerce and professional institutes; President, Chairperson etc.

Thus, many of the people you want to talk to are attending networking events. They do these after work or at morning networking events. They help organise conferences and seminars. They will talk to everybody who attends these networking events, conferences or seminars. So, the quickest way to access the person you want to talk to is through developing a networking strategy. This is predicated on:

- ◆ You knowing who you actually want to talk to. This requires some market research; use Google, LinkedIn, Facebook and personal contacts to identify the people you need to talk to.
- ◆ From your research find out what networks the person is in
- ◆ Find out when and how that network operates and who runs it

- ◆ Try and get an invitation to the network manager and ask for an introduction to the person you want to meet
- ◆ Ask for an invitation to an event to see if the network might suit you
- ◆ Know what you want to say and ask the person you want to meet; have a plan
- ◆ Remember, a networking event is a screening process in itself. You talk to several people and get a sketch of what they can do for you and then you follow up with these people afterwards, usually by e-mail or with a meeting
- ◆ So, follow through on an invitation to talk or meet
- ◆ The following day, send an e-mail thanking the person for their time and asking for a further meeting. You might also send a linkedin invitation to the person to join your network.

Some of the most senior and important business people in the world are members of local chambers of commerce and other networks. You can get to talk to senior people this way in a productive but informal atmosphere.

Hint! One of the rules of business networking is that you take everybody in the room at face value. If you are in the room you are a legitimate business. So, even if you feel inadequate the rest of the people in the room will take you seriously. If you are in the room you are one of the crowd.

## Developing a Networking Strategy

Before you go to a networking event there are a few things you need to pre plan. So first, have a goal and know why you are there. Research your audience and know who you want to talk to. Know what they do and what you can do for them or they can do for you. Be comfortable with small talk. These events inevitably start with lightweight conversation. People assess who they want to meet further and then arrange meetings after the meeting or the next morning. Listen and question, ask and gain information. Prepare an elevator pitch (tell me about yourself in 25 words; see the toolkit in Section 6). Be prepared to ask for what you want. This is a business event, albeit an informal one but you are there to do business.

Get over your fears; they are only in your head. If you have planned ahead and understand your objectives then you will be fine. A lack of confidence is the result of a lack of planning. To develop a networking strategy you do need to allocate sufficient time to attend the right meetings. Ultimately, networking is a matter of perception; if you see networking as a business resource you will take the time to do it properly.

## Exercise 5

### Getting Appointments

Outline how you have approached making sales appointments?

Look at each part separately and analyse:

What have you identified as in need of improvement?

What changes will you make?

What new goals are you setting yourself?

## Section 4

### Gaining Customer Commitment

The approach

Exercise 6

The sales presentation

Selling on the phone

Addressing areas of concern

Gaining customer commitment

Exercise 7

## The Approach

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. You have less than sixty seconds to make a positive impression on the buyer. Buyers and decision makers are busy people and you must get their total attention in order to sell to them. Avoid bad selling conditions. If the conditions are wrong make an alternative appointment or try the polite 'could we go into our office'.

### Getting their attention

Your function is to identify a problem and explain it to the buyer, in a short opening statement and then explain how your product can eliminate the problem. You are not selling a product or service but the solution to a problem. Don't talk about yourself; talk about the customer. The customer wants to talk about their company, their achievements, problems and needs.

### Hints on making a good first impression

1. The customer is not interested in you but only in what you and your offering can do for them.
2. Some salespeople prefer to shake hands on the way out rather than on the way in. This is purely a matter of preference and related to the circumstances.
3. Don't smoke.
4. Compliment sincerely; never flatter.
5. Communicate at eye level. If you are much taller or shorter than the client, then stand well back and it will be easier to compensate for height difference.
6. Don't be a bearer of bad news; customers already have enough problems. Keep the conversation positive.

### The importance of product knowledge

Your claim to be an expert comes under most scrutiny when discussing or demonstrating your product. The occasional 'I don't know but I will find out' will be accepted as a sign of credibility, but you should know as much as possible. The salesperson which makes himself an expert in his area will soon win the respect of his customers and their orders.

*Product features:* It is important that you cultivate an understanding of the idea behind the feature. Every product will have several features and the benefits of these will vary in importance from one customer to another.

*Product benefits:* It is important that you emphasise the benefits of your product and how they relate to the customer. Very few of the salespeople today actually sell the benefits of their products to the customers. However, clients buy goods and services only because they are of benefit to them. So a good way to sell is to sell a customer the benefits accruing to them from buying your product. A benefit must:

- ◆ solve a customer's problem
- ◆ save time or money
- ◆ increase productivity or profits
- ◆ decrease costs or overheads
- ◆ improve image or prestige
- ◆ satisfy a particular customer need

*Product performance:* Many salespeople can explain how a product feature can meet general needs. However, the professional goes one step further and demonstrates how the product is going to satisfy the customer's specific requirements.

*Product price and how it compares to the competition:* If you are faced with an unfavourable price comparison with a competitor, you will have to be able to substantiate that your product is worth more. In certain cases you will have to defend the lower price *vis-à-vis* the competition and that your product is not inferior. One point to remember is that you only have to justify the price difference; the gap, not the full price. In other words, if a personal computer is selling for €999 and you are selling laptops retailing at €1,500, you only have to justify the extra €500. The client is already willing and has decided to spend the €999. If you can show the extra benefits of owning a mobile computer and that it only costs an extra €500 then you have the sale.

*Product construction:* What materials are used in the products construction and how the model is made or transported are all useful pieces of information as they can help explain price differential or quality control. A hike in the price of raw materials will feed through to the final price and this will often be accepted by the customer as a reason for paying a higher price. You must be able to explain the company's service, distribution and credit policy. The extent and limitations of warranties can be turned into a good selling point. A proper explanation of these things in the first place can lead to better product use and less service calls later.

*The present state of the industry:* This can be gleaned from trade magazines, etc. It can also give you the edge over the competition. Make a point of having detailed knowledge of the competition. If a competitor is doing something better then find out what it is and see if you can adapt or improve the idea to your selling techniques.

*Every product has at least one Unique Selling Point (USP):* It can be a money back guarantee, free service contract, etc. Your USP is your best weapon so find out what it is and use it. A USP is what makes your product stand out and be more distinctive or better than the competition.

There is no substitute for knowledge. The more you know the more confident you become. Nothing can hide ignorance.

## Pre-call preparation

Professionals do their home work. The first benefit is immediate self confidence. Remember the more information you have on your client and their company the better able you will be to gain the sale. Here are a few things you need to know in advance of a meeting:

*The prospect:* Get their proper name, first name and surname. Get the correct pronunciation. Get their title and whether they have the final authority to buy. How long have they been with the company and where did they come from. Make a record of all this information and keep it for future reference.

*The company:* What is their business and what products do they sell. What is their size vis-à-vis, competitors, market share and number of employees? Names of receptionist, secretary and general manager will prove useful. Who are their competitors; and of course, make sure they have a good credit rating.

*Your preparation:* Who are they dealing with at present? What are your strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the competition? How much do they order and when?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ What exactly is my call trying to achieve?
- ◆ What problems can I help the customer solve?
- ◆ Why should they change to my company?

There are several steps to a sale. These are AIDA:

Attention  
Interest  
Desire  
Action

Get the clients *Attention*. This is done by saying something that demonstrates something of benefit to them and makes them believe that there is something in this discussion for them.

Getting a clients attention is purely marketing and it is only when the client believes that there is something of immediate benefit that you start selling by gaining their *Interest*. Remember that we see many adverts every day and some of these we look at and say 'that is interesting' but until we actually do more than look; maybe make a phone call or go visit a website or shop that we have gained their 'interest'.

At some stage in the presentation the client starts to believe that the product will be useful to them and the client will eventually want to go ahead with the sale. At this stage the client has built up a *Desire* to own the product.

When you ask for a commitment then the client only has three options. Buy, seek further information or reject. For the sale to go ahead the client must eventually take *Action* by means of signing or ordering the product.

Think your sales presentation through each step; one at a time. Before you visit check your briefcase and make sure you have everything you need; brochures, price lists, order forms, etc. Remember you have the right to ask if the person has the authority to buy, of course politely,

'...will you be the person making the final decision on this?'

'...will you be making the final decision on your own or would like to bring someone else in on this?'

Be prepared!

## Handling comments about the competition

1. Do not put down or advertise your rivals; never knock the competition. Say 'I know the company', or 'very nice people', or 'Yes, I have heard of them'.
2. Watch your body language. Be careful as if you react the customer might ask why you are worried about the competitor mentioned.
3. If the competition is alleged to have knocked your company, then say 'Glad to hear it. If my competitors are singling me out for attention we must be worrying them. I have always found that this is really a form of compliment...' 'I can't give you a better reason to buy from us'.
4. Keep trading standards high. If you knock the competition you debase the whole industry. Nobody likes dealing with a bunch of cowboys. In short tell them HOW GOOD YOU ARE and not how bad the others are.
5. Do not single out a competitor; 'Look, there are ten different companies in Dublin alone in my business. All take a market share as they are all pretty good companies. However where we seem to excel is ...'

## Exercise 6

### The Approach

Here are a few basic questions you should prepare for:

- ◆ Tell me about your product in under 25 words (see Section 6)
- ◆ List 5 Product Features of Your Product
- ◆ List 5 Product Benefits of Your Product

## The Sales Presentation

The presentation must be designed to highlight the benefits of features of your product. It must also convince the buyer that:

1. The need exists
2. Your product can satisfy the need
3. They can afford the offering

You measure the success of a presentation not by how well you present it but by how much the buyer understands and is motivated to buy. It must satisfy six basic requirements:

Good presentations are planned. You should incorporate client details into the presentation as much as possible. Include only the relevant material to the client. Tailor make each presentation.

It must follow a logical step-by-step sequence, to guide the buyer to a mental acceptance of the product. Present only what relates to their expressed needs.

There must be a combination of enthusiasm, self confidence and a positive mental attitude. Remember no matter how many times you give a presentation the buyer is hearing it for the first time.

Where possible give proof about claims made against your product or service. A third party letter from a happy customer is more believable than any words of yours.

Visual aids help you maintain control of the presentation and maintain the other person's attention. They also help condense information into a short concise aid.

Getting the customer in on the act is very important. Involve them in words and actions. Ask plenty of questions. Do not go on until you have satisfied a query fully. When a customer makes a positive comment stop and ask why this is of particular interest for them; they are about to give you a good reason for them to buy.

### Buying signals

When a buyer starts to take an interest in a presentation it usually means:

- a. They see a solution to a particular need of theirs
- b. They are interested but have not yet decided to buy, or
- c. They have made the mental decision to buy.

Buying signals are very important. We have already covered this subject in some detail earlier under non-verbal communication but here are some key buying signals:

Some examples of non-verbal buying signals are:

- ◆ Picking up the product to read instructions
- ◆ Going back to an item you have already shown him
- ◆ Eyes dwelling on a particular item
- ◆ Moving forward to get a closer look
- ◆ Suddenly sitting up in the middle of the sales presentation

Some examples of verbal buying signals are:

- ◆ What kind of guarantee do you give?
- ◆ Do I have to pay cash right away?
- ◆ Do you have quantity discounts?
- ◆ What colours do you have it in?
- ◆ How much is it going to cost?
- ◆ How much space will it require?
- ◆ Do I have to pay for supplies?
- ◆ Can we take this on lease?
- ◆ Do you have a maintenance contract?

Always ask yourself why should a client ask or do something specific. Buyers, in all categories, are on guard and will only show their hand if there is a good reason. If we take it that most buyers are being cautious then actually engaging in the sales presentation by picking up an item to get a better look, focusing on a particular item or showing a non-verbal signal demonstrates real interest. The verbal clues are much more revealing; where along the buying process are you when you are asking about guarantees, payment methods, colours and maintenance contracts. Buying signals are very important to notice and understand.

## Buying motives

This is one of the most important things to understand in sales or even just developing a sales approach for an entrepreneur. Buying motives fall into two categories; rational and emotional.

Rational buying motives:

- ◆ Profit: people buy equities in the main because they think the price will go up and they will make a profit. People have very little interest in the real virtues of the company intrinsically
- ◆ Health: if you are sick you want to be healed. You probably don't really care about the medicine you take once it works
- ◆ Security: people buy care insurance just in case something goes wrong and because it is a legal requirement. People rarely have an emotional attachment to their insurance broker and will change for a better price

- ◆ Utility: people buy batteries because they want something to work and usually have little emotional attachment to a brand of battery
- ◆ Caution: people buy first aid kits and fire extinguishers for their home so that if something goes wrong they can deal with it. Rarely, is it an emotional decision

### Emotional buying motives

- ◆ Fear: of being left behind or of the competition. People buy houses at the top of a housing bubble for fear of being left behind. This is the 'herd' mentality and if you follow the stock markets you will see people selling stocks regularly because of fear of being left behind
- ◆ Envy: buying all sort of things because your friends, relatives or neighbours have bought them. This is the 'keeping up with the Joneses' mentality
- ◆ Vanity: ego, ego ego...Why do we buy the type of car, clothes, homes that we do. Ego is a very powerful emotional buying motive
- ◆ Love: a certain brand of card maker has been credited with developing St. Valentine's Day into such a major event and one where you must send a card. How to develop a market!
- ◆ Entertainment: people do not buy plasma screens etc because they look good when not on. They buy them to maximise their enjoyment or relaxation when watching television or a film
- ◆ Sentiment: family traditions are very important emotional buying motives be it putting flowers on graves at anniversaries and a range of other examples.
- ◆ Pride: ever bought a football jersey? What was the buying motive?
- ◆ Pleasure: people buy things because they make them happy and they like to look at them; aesthetic value.

### Emotional influences on the buying process

Earlier we stated that there are two reasons affecting the decision to buy; rational and emotional. So which is most important? Well ask yourself have you ever bought anything because it was logical. A friend of mine bought a house. When they went to buy a fridge etc. they had the option of three or four identical fridges but picked out one in particular. Why? Three of the fridges had white interiors. One had a lovely blue coloured interior. Even though my friend went out to buy a fridge because they needed one for the house (rational), they bought the particular fridge because of the interior colour (emotional). Even if you set out to buy something for a rational reason, you will inevitably make a final buying decision based upon emotion (i.e., colour, design, shape, or it was just so cute).

As a rule people make buying decisions only on emotional impulses. In a Harvard Business School survey of top U.S. buyers some years ago, 84% of all final buying decisions were based on emotion. While the original need was based on a logical

need, the final decision was motivated by a number of emotional influences, i.e., colour, design, materials, etc.

So why is this important to an entrepreneur? Well, what is the focus of your sales presentations? Are you focusing on the rational reason for someone to buy; efficiency, price etc, or are you focusing on the emotional reasons why the buyers should buy. The successful sales person and entrepreneur will focus on what the offering does for the person rather than focusing on how it works.

## Selling the idea behind the product

In the sales process the product is only secondary. The primary factor is communicating the idea behind the product; the purpose it fulfils. You must know what market you are in. If you understand the exact idea behind your product, selling it becomes easier, as you will clearly identify your market segment.

Charles Revson of Revlon allegedly said 'In the factory we manufacture cosmetics; in the pharmacy we sell hope'. Other examples are easily found. Rolls Royce and Ford both sell cars, but Rolls Royce is in the luxury/status symbol business, while Ford is in the family/executive car business. Rolls Royce does not advertise in the public papers, it doesn't have to, as it is not where it sells its product. Ford advertises in the public papers as this is how its target market can be reached. So identify what your product exactly does, and to whom your product exactly appeals to.

Sell the idea behind the offering. There are 4 things that will influence the buyer:

1. The customer's attitude to you.
2. Your company-client relationship in the past
3. Price and credit policy
4. The customer's relationship with present supplier

The successful business person will understand the emotional side of buying and focus on the buyers emotional buying motives.

## Hints on making effective presentations

1. KISS: keep it short and sweet (or the American version: Keep it simple stupid)
2. Tell a stimulating sales story: which is always more convincing when told by an expert with enthusiasm.
3. Avoid emphasis on technical features. The buyer is only interested in what the product or service can do for them. You are there to sell benefits, not technology
4. Emphasise the U.S.P. It is your biggest competitive edge. Use 'you' appeal throughout. Try to line up your USP with the buyers emotional buying motive.

5. Explain guarantees; used properly they can be a powerful sales tool. It can reduce the risk in the buyer's mind if he has a safety net of money back guarantees, replacements, etc. It also avoids needless irritation in after-sales situations.
6. Create a more relaxed selling environment. It is about asking the right questions. You are there to listen to the buyers and discern their needs. A good way to get a buyer relaxed is to talk about things they are comfortable with. We all like to talk about our successes.

## What not to do

- ◆ Do not knock the competition, colleagues or your own company. If everybody in your industry is a \*\*\*\*\* then what does that make you?
- ◆ Do not show a lack of knowledge or self confidence
- ◆ Do not beat around the bush; get to the point and do not waste time
- ◆ Do not outstay your welcome
- ◆ Do not give the impression that you know it all; a real turn off for buyers
- ◆ Do not talk too much and listen too little
- ◆ Do not appear only interested in selling product, you are there to serve the person
- ◆ Do not exaggerates the benefits of product, be real, honest and reliable
- ◆ Do not talk about your interests
- ◆ Do not interrupt the buyer and be over anxious to make your point
- ◆ Do not whine about poor business
- ◆ Do not make a poor personal appearance
- ◆ Do not put too much pressure on customer to buy

If you cannot empathise with the customer you are unlikely to be successful in selling. All the above can be summarised into one word, 'attitude'. If you want to see a change in your approach then three things must happen:

1. You need a sincere recognition that change is necessary and clearly identify the area involved
2. You must passionately want this change and be motivated by the benefits to be gained by changing
3. Set out with determination to alter habits. Attitudes and habits go together. Change one and you automatically change the other.

## Sell the sizzle not the steak

People do not buy

Furniture  
Cars  
TV systems  
Insurance  
Clothes  
Lotto Ticket

People actually buy

Their particular style or colour palate  
Status, ego or transport  
Maximum enjoyment experience  
Peace of mind  
Personal image or statement  
The dream

This is why you do not sell product features. Buyers buy benefits so analyse why people actually buy your offering and focus your sales and marketing efforts on this.

## Using sales literature and visual aids

97% of all communication is transmitted via the eyes to the brain. The more the customer sees, the more likely they are to remember. Unfortunately memory recedes: 25% forgotten after a day, 50% after two days and 97% after seven days. Thus what chance has a client to remember a purely verbal presentation? Use visual aids with discretion but remember a visual image will stick in the person's memory far longer than a few words.

### *Some hints on using visual aids*

- ◆ Be enthusiastic. No matter how many times you have used a presentation, they are hearing it for the first time.
- ◆ Keep visuals clean. Shabby = unprofessional
- ◆ Become totally familiar with visuals; especially know when they are the wrong way up.
- ◆ Show one page at a time.
- ◆ Show the absolute minimum required to convey message.
- ◆ Do not read off the visual. Use different words; this helps to reinforce the message.
- ◆ Personalise the visual wherever possible. Tailor your visual aids to the buyers needs.
- ◆ Verify understanding. Do not go on until you get the green light.
- ◆ Arrange visuals before you meet the customer.
- ◆ With time and practice it is possible to develop an enthusiastic, professional, stimulating presentation even if you dislike presentations.

## Selling by telephone

The telephone can allow for efficient time management. However, it does lose the opportunity to do face to face selling and you do lose the opportunity to read the customer's body language. However, for small accounts it can be useful. It is also useful if the client is a fair distance away. The telephone is best when used for:

Making:	appointments cold calls
Following up on:	quotations mail shots sales enquiries a letter
Getting:	repeat orders referrals market information 'add on' sales
Increasing:	sales orders
Dealing with:	low-potential accounts overdue accounts customer queries

## Drawing Pretty Pictures

When selling by phone your only real selling tools are words. If you realise this then preparation is essential. You must be careful of the words you use but importantly it does give you the opportunity to evoke the client's imagination. In other words draw a pretty picture, i.e., 'imagine the pleasure that you and your family will have while you sit watching your children playing on a summer day with your new slide and swing set'. The person is seeing his children playing and having fun and thanking Daddy for the new garden play set. Daddy is the hero and can do no wrong. A powerful picture, particularly if it is a busy person who is conscious of not spending enough time with his/her children.

## Techniques for selling by phone

Proper preparation and planning is essential. Have all relevant information at your finger tips

- sales aids
- price lists
- brochures
- market information
- competitor information

### *Call Plan*

You must have a clear plan of action. As the only tools you have to use are words; there are no visual aids or non-verbal clues, you must be very careful and deliberate as to what words you use and how you use them. Before you contact a client by phone there are a number of questions answered in your mind:

- Who you are going to phone?
- What is the objective of the call?
- How will you open the call?
- Write down your points in a logical order
- What areas of concern may the client have?
- Decide on how you will ask for their commitment
- Concentrate for two minutes on your call

### *Introduction*

- Identify yourself and your company
- Ask for your contact and check pronunciation
- When put through explain purpose of your call
- Ask the customer for his time

### *Fact finding*

- Ask open questions
- Get customer to talk about their business
- Write down useful information
- Lead the conversation and question skilfully
- Identify the customer's problems

### *Discuss and agree customer's needs*

- Explain your understanding of the customer's needs
- Back up claims with good third-party stories
- Be enthusiastic about your proposal
- Convince the buyer that you believe in your product

### *Sell your product*

- Create customer desire to buy
- Outline and explain the relevant benefits
- Explain how your product can help the customer
- Do not mumble the price to the customer
- Sell your product with energy and enthusiasm

### *Overcome areas of concern*

- Listen to the customer's area of concern
- Restate the customer's concern as a question
- Ask for agreement about your interpretation

- Seek agreement

#### *Gaining customer commitment*

- Ask questions to ensure that the customer has agreed with your presentation thus far
- Ask for the order
- Do not give up on the first 'no'
- Restate your areas of agreement and persevere pleasantly
- Restate the benefits already agreed

#### *After order is given*

- Thank customer for the order
- Reassure them that you will deliver as agreed
- Leave them on a happy note
- Thank them for their time
- Let the customer hang up first

Selling by phone presents serious limitations although if you use it prudently, it can be a useful sales tool when used in the correct situations. Pre planning is essential if you are going to make it work. Over the years I have heard the following suggestions made for people selling by phone:

Make your phone calls when standing up. This gives you better posture and the ability to move around a little. This helps for breathing and allows you sound more dynamic.

Be happy and think of nice thoughts before you call. Easier said than done but one suggestion was to stand in front of a mirror and make sure your body language is right before you make the call.

Have a writing pad handy to outline your call plan and write down comments as the person speaks.

Do not make a sales call when you are in a bad mood. Get yourself in the right frame of mind and then make the call.

Always remember that people get better at sales calls the more of them they do and the more they learn by their poor performances. Learn by your weaknesses and get better over time. Very few people are naturals at selling by phone, it is an acquired skill.

## Addressing Areas of Concern to the Client

Good customer objections are important milestones on the road to a sale. A sale does not really begin until the customer starts to have enough interest to raise areas of concern. Remember, when a client raises real concerns this leads to real communication, which leads to customer commitment.

The salesperson's attitude to the client's concerns is very important. Negative or bad reaction to the customer's concerns will lead to a negative outcome. We must be very careful of how we react.

### Responding to client concerns

1. Listen carefully to the objection raised. Listen with all your senses. Show understanding and find out exactly what is being said.
2. Remain calm; show that whatever questions the client raise with you that you are quietly confident of resolving them. Be very careful of your body language.
3. Never interrupt; it is not just rude but is conveying; 'shut up, what I have to say is more important'.
4. Restate the concern rephrased as a question. By doing this you ensure that you are not misinterpreting the customer's message.
5. Use a consistent tone of voice. Lowering your tone shows a degree of defeatism, raising your tone indicates antagonism.
6. Empathise with the customer when responding. Your response must show consideration for the customer's point of view.
7. Seek the customer's agreement for your response. You cannot go on until you get agreement about the problem. Ideally your response to the objection should end in a question that is logically answered in the affirmative.

### Handling issues relating to price

Price is normally a reflection of the product's value. Buyers invariably do not buy on price alone; otherwise you would never sell a Mercedes or Chanel. At some stage in the presentation you must however be prepared to justify the price of your product. You must have a definite plan which allows the buyer to see the price as one of a number of factors, not the deciding one.

People's attitudes to price are subjective and are controlled by their particular needs and desires. Your attitude to price is important; if you don't believe it is a good product and value for money then you will never convince anyone else to buy it.

## Hints on handling price

I have always defined the 'price' of a good or service as the perceived monetary value that a client is willing to pay for that offering. It is a perception; raise the perceived value and you raise the price someone is willing to pay. Price can be a smoke screen for other underlying concerns. However, if you are more expensive than the competition then remember that you don't have to justify the whole price; just the extra difference between you and your competitors. If you can show that your product is worth that extra amount then the price should be no barrier to closing a sale.

Emphasise the 'value for money' not price alone. Make the benefits outweigh the price. Remember, value for money is not the price the client pays but the value they get from the offering.

## Gaining Customer Commitment

Gaining customer commitment, or the close, is the moment of truth. This is the culmination of a process but it is the part that you get paid for. A salesperson who cannot get the customer's commitment is not a salesperson but merely a conversationalist. The first person to follow a presentation with a strong call for action will get the business.

### Inside the customers mind

You must empathise with the customer. They are being asked to part with hard-earned money for a solution to a problem that they may not have realised they had. The more of the customer's fears you allay the more likely you are to get their commitment.

However, before buying the customer must believe that:

1. You are a professional from a professional company and that everything you have told them is truthful and accurate.
2. That the product or service has a good track record and you can deliver what you promise.
3. That they understand exactly what they are getting and what they are not getting.
4. That after sales commitments will be honoured without difficulties and further expense.
5. All questions have been answered and there is nothing blocking a final buying decision.

The salesperson who covers all of these in their presentation will find gaining customer commitment much easier to accomplish.

### Points to remember when seeking customer commitment

- ◆ Seek the customer's commitment when the benefits are fresh in the buyer's mind.
- ◆ Radiate confidence. You will influence the customer. A salesperson who believes they will sell, will sell.
- ◆ Get the person to say 'yes' as often as possible.
- ◆ When asking for the order be polite, persistent and pleasant; demonstrate a quiet calmness.
- ◆ Never introduce anything new into the close; it is distracting.
- ◆ When you ask for the order SHUT UP. They who speak first lose.
- ◆ Avoid questions that invite a negative response.

- ◆ Try to keep something in reserve. A final carrot that might clinch the sale; usually your USP.

## Call backs

Call backs, when the customer will not make a decision but asks you to call back in a few days, are never as successful as expected. Customers tend only to remember the price tag and never the benefits. However, always leave the door open for a call back.

If you have to make a call back never start with the standard 'Have you thought about it?' It is better to say

'The most important point I raised at the last meeting was...'

It allows you to reopen the discussion and remind the client of the benefits.

## Test Closes

A test or trial close is where you ask a question of the client to ascertain how the client feels at a particular stage in the selling process about your presentation. It is essential that you try a test close before ask for the final commitment. Test closes allow you to find out where you are in the selling process and therefore is vital information. Examples of test closes are:

'My understanding of what we have agreed is...is this your understanding of what we have agreed'.

'How do you feel about what I have said so far?'

'Are you comfortable with what I have presented so far?'

You can use test closes at several points in the selling process. But if you are getting positive responses to the test closes then it indicates that the client is ready to make a buying commitment. If you are getting negatives or unconditional responses then go back and restate the benefits and try to re-engage the client and try again.

Always use test closes in your sales presentations.

## Exercise 7

### Your Sales Presentation

Please answer the following questions:

Outline 3 opening statements for your offering?

Outline 3 major concerns a customer might raise with your offering?

Give responses to these concerns

Why should I buy from you?

What is your unique selling point (USP)?

What are the main benefits to a client of YOU?

What types of visual aids, folders, etc. are best for you?

Give a draft outline of your new sales presentation?

## Section 5

### Wrap Up

Bringing it all together

Being different

## Bringing it all together

At the beginning of the book we started with the analogy of the selling process as being a journey down a long road. Each intersection of lights is part of the selling process and you could not get from one end of the road to the other unless you got green lights at each stage. This translates into the following steps on the road to the sale:

- ◆ Personal Motivation
- ◆ Understanding People and Empathy Skills
- ◆ Prospecting
- ◆ Making an Appointment
- ◆ Good Introduction
- ◆ Effective communication of benefits/presentation
- ◆ Addressing Areas of Concern to client
- ◆ Gaining customer commitment
- ◆ Aftercare

It should be clear to you now that all the steps are influenced by two things: you and your client. Thus for a successful selling relationship to flourish there are certain things that you and the client must be:

You:            Must be motivated and professional  
                    Empathise with your clients and prospective clients  
                    Continually upgrade your interpersonal skills  
                    Must be continually open to change  
                    Must enjoy what you are doing

The Client:    Must be Open to Doing Business  
                    Be Positive and Interested  
                    Must Gain from the relationship

The business relationship must be a Win-Win situation. Otherwise there is no business relationship. Much of this book is about motivation and understanding. Selling is about people; understanding and empathising with them and wanting to be of service and benefit to them.

## Learning from the experiences of others

Failures need not be written off completely. If we learn from our mistakes then they can be foundations on which to build future success. Remember, failure is not falling down; it is falling down and refusing to get back up again.

However, we can learn from the mistakes of others as well as our own.

The morale and motivation of a salesperson is of prime importance. We are all affected by negatives. Here are some negatives to be avoided:

- ◆ Associating with negative people or views
- ◆ Paying attention to newspaper, radio or T.V. news. Be a bearer of good news not bad
- ◆ Home life; keep personal problems away from work
- ◆ The effects of worry, about personal, financial, health, etc, all affect concentration and affect sales. The best thing is to recognise the futility of worry, or put it another way, 'what has worry ever achieved?' Answer = NOTHING. A person with a positive mental attitude will always see the bright side of life.
- ◆ Don't have "problems". If you turn them into 'situations' then you will find them less problematic. Situations have remedies and are redeemable.
- ◆ Stress can be adrenaline or arsenic. Stress is necessary to perform and is good for you in small doses. A person with a positive mental attitude is less likely to be 'over stressed'.

## Being different

The real difference between good companies and salespeople in most cases is not that their products are better or worse but the attitude and approach they take.

A creative salesperson:

- ◆ is always open to the views of others
- ◆ is hungry for knowledge
- ◆ is not discouraged by failure
- ◆ is prepared to persevere in the face of opposition

Creative salespeople believe that:

- ◆ every problem creates an opportunity
- ◆ to every problem there is a solution
- ◆ making mistakes is part of a learning process
- ◆ ideas are multiplied by seeking the views of others

Creative salespeople keep asking:

- ◆ why am I doing this, this way?
- ◆ is there a better way?
- ◆ have we tried any other ways?

If you believe you can, or you believe you can't; you're right

## Final comments

My own philosophy is that you cannot sell anything to anybody in reality but you can help the client through their buying process. This is why the focus must be on the client at all times. Any 'technique' that tells you how you can make someone buy is not one I personally like.

The only way to get better at sales is practice. This is a process of trial and error but pre planning and a logical approach will help minimise the issues that might arise. Selling is simple; ask questions of the client, find something they need and present an affordable solution to their problem. Entrepreneurs do not just sell their offering; it is very personal and very different to hiring a salesperson. Your ego is heavily involved. You must work to take your ego out of the sales process and focus it onto the client. In short, entrepreneurs must become good at sales and influencing people.

# Section 6

## Toolkit

Techniques to open a presentation

Techniques to address areas of concern

Techniques to gain customer commitment/close

How to develop an elevator pitch

Further Suggested Reading

## Techniques to Open a Presentation

Health check! Techniques are simply forms of words developed by salespeople to get around particular circumstances. They are not magic formulae and whereas they might be useful in some circumstances, they have their limitations. Use these techniques carefully and where appropriate. We give examples but make sure that you adapt the particular approach to what you do and make them yours.

### The News Approach

Probably one of the most commonly used opening approaches, you start by discussing something of current relevance but also relevant to your presentation. Use carefully, as this could appear corny by if you can adapt them into your normal conversation patterns then this can work well

'I was listening to the radio on the way in and they were talking about...If that happens it will affect business generally. Had you considered what you could do to protect yourself/exploit the opportunity...We could help by...'

The new legislation requires that all businesses [take appropriate action]. We have been helping other businesses to achieve this and it will result in not only compliance but also savings...

The new government has just been elected and they are focusing in on...This will create opportunities, such as...If you were interested in taking advantage of these opportunities we would be happy to assist and partner with you on...'

### The Referral Approach

A referral is a recommendation from another customer, friend or associate. This can be the most successful opening of them all, as the person giving the referral has pre-qualified the client. I prefer to have the person giving the referral make contact with the potential client in advance but if you have to say 'John Smith said I should talk to you...' then that is fine just so long as John Smith has really suggested the contact.

'Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith recommended that I contact you. He has been a valued customer for some time and we assist Mr. Jones by...He believes that we could provide the same benefits to your organisation. Would you mind if I asked you some questions...'

## The Bonus Approach

This is where you offer a bonus as an introductory offer. It is commonly used as a way to engage the customer by giving an additional bonus. The problem with this is that if you use it too regularly, then it stops being a bonus and you get a reputation as a flake, so use wisely.

'Mr. Jones, how would you like to make a 20% saving on your expenditure on...'

## The Customer-benefit Approach

This is where you get straight down to business and outline the benefit that you can be to the client. Naturally, you will have to back this statement up as the first comment from the client will be 'prove it!'. The other problem with this approach is that you are making an assumption in advance of the client's needs.

'Mr. Jones, you are involved in...I believe that we can offer you a superior service/product/benefit by...'

'Mr. Jones, what would you say if I said I can save your company €,000...'

## The Service Approach

This works if you have a number of similar customers in an area. Use this opening honestly.

'Mr. Jones. I have a number of clients in this area such as...We deliver our clients a superior service/product by...As we are regularly in the area, would you be interested in allowing us to serve you by...'

## Techniques to Address Areas of Concern

### The Forestalling Method

One way to get around a client's concern is to build it into the presentation, accept it and explain why it is not an issue, saving the client the need to raise the objection.

'Mr. Jones, I know that you might believe this to be something for the engineering industry but I believe that I can demonstrate how it would be of benefit to your organisation...'

### The Digging Technique

This is where you ask probing questions of the client to ascertain if there are any underlying concerns. If there are more serious underlying concerns then address them and the initial concern raised will fall by the wayside. Price is a common concern raised to obscure another underlying concern. So if it is a price concern and there are no other issues, then address the price concern and ask for the order.

'Well, Mr. Jones, apart from price, is there any other reason why you would have reservations about progressing with this...'

### The Deferring Technique

This is where you defer a concern raised too early in the presentation until you have had time to assess the client's needs and address the concern. Commonly used when price is raised at the start of a presentation.

'Mr. Jones, I understand that you want to know about the cost involved but before I address the cost I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your needs. Once I have a clear picture as to the best options for you I will happily present them and the price associated with each option. Is that acceptable to you...'

## The Boomerang Method

Use this carefully. This is the response to an 'I'm sure I can get this cheaper from...'  
You come back to the client with the reasons why you are better.

'Yes, Mr. Jones, there are several companies that sell similar products, some of which are cheaper. However, based upon our conversation I believe that this is the best solution to your needs. I think you will agree that nothing is cheaper if they do not meet your requirements...'

## The Indirect Denial

This is where you agree with the client but go on to explain the benefits of your product. It is a response to, 'this is very expensive'.

'Yes, of course being a more reliable model and able to handle higher volumes, it will require less maintenance and expensive peripherals and the result is that in the medium term that...'

## Techniques to Gain Customer Commitment

Also known as 'closing techniques'

### The 'Can I have the order now' approach

There are times when just asking for the order and not trying a 'technique' is the shortest distance between two points. You have asked your questions, you understand the customer's needs and have agreement from the client at each stage. You have tried test closes and are confident that the client is ready to order. Just ask for the order, shut up and let the client work through their own buying decision in their head. When you ask the question the client speaks next.

'...if we agree that this will meet your needs then can I suggest that we go ahead with the order and I can have it delivered in...'

### The Superior's Method

This is useful when dealing with senior executives who want to control the buying decision but do not have the time to actually get involved with the nuts and bolts.

'Mr. Jones, if we agree that this will benefit your organisation can I suggest that we make the decision to buy now and I will deal with your [junior managers] to arrange delivery dates etc and I will not take up more of your valuable time'.

### The Assumptive Close

This is where you believe the client has made their mind up to buy and you make a comment or suggestion that assumes the purchase decision has been made. This makes it easier for the client to agree to the purchase without having to make the awkward decision face on.

'When you receive your product where would you like it installed?'

How do you wish to pay, cash or cheque?

I can deliver on Monday, to whom do I make the delivery documentation out to?

What software would you like installed on your machine when you receive it?

## The Isolation Technique

This is a technique used where there is a wide range of options available. You ask the client questions and ascertain their needs. Bring the options down to the 3 most suitable. Having discussed the 3 options, eliminate the least best option leaving you with 2 options. Then discuss with the client the pros and cons of both options and eliminate the least favourable option, leaving you with the best option.

## The Alternative Technique

This is where you give the client a range of 2 or 3 options, all of them positive. Used when making appointments also, you give 2 best options and it makes it more difficult to say no to both.

'I can deliver on Monday or Wednesday afternoon...'

'Would you like to pay cash or should I invoice?'

'Can I put you down for 20 or would 25 be better?'

## The Balance Sheet Approach

This is where you draw up a simple 'T' account on a piece of paper and on one side put the positives and on the other column put the negatives. You write out the positives and you ask the client to list the negatives. Usually, the positives significantly outweigh the number of negatives. Quite a good technique when talking to someone who has to bring your proposal to a committee.

## The Part-by-Part Technique

This is where you break down your sale into smaller parts and build up the final order with the elements required by the client. This is also useful for breaking a project down into incremental steps which allows the client to make an initial agreement for a limited budget but allows a provisional agreement to go progress.

'As you can see this project has 3 stages. Can I suggest that we break each step down with appropriate budgets? At the end of each stage you can make a 'go/no go' decision' and can control how far the project progresses and limit your financial exposure...'

## The Urgent or Impending Event Technique

This is playing with fire so only use honestly. Here, you call the client and advise them of a price increase or other significant event that will affect their business and offer them the opportunity to buy now before the price increase/impending event. If used too often then it becomes a scam and the client will react badly to it and you.

'Mr. Jones, we have a special offer this month where we give clients a 15% reduction on order above...'

'Mr. Jones, the new budget increases come into effect on Friday, if you place an order today we can guarantee delivery at the current, pre-budget prices'

'Mr. Jones, we only have 10 widgets left in stock and once they are gone we do not believe that we will have restock for several months. Would you like to order...'

## How to develop an Elevator Pitch

The elevator pitch was developed as a sales tool in America in the 60' and 70's. It was originally intended to assist sales people at conferences get to key buyers and decision makers. The idea was that you waited for the person you wanted to pitch to, to get into an elevator. You then had however long it took for the elevator to get to the floor selected by the client to make your pitch. The elevator pitch is also known as the 'tell me about yourself in 25 words'. Today we use the elevator pitch more for networking and having a concise explanation of our business and ourselves for informal networking. You should develop your own elevator pitch as it comes in useful every time someone asks 'what is it you do exactly' or 'tell me about yourself'.

Describe yourself personally, use key words:

What are you, use key words?

What do you do, use key words?

What do you want, what are you looking for?

Your elevator pitch, bring the key words together and play with them until you can answer, 'tell me about yourself?' (Try to keep to maximum of 25 words):

## Further Reading Suggestions

Gladwell, M (2005), 'Blink; the power of thinking without thinking' (Back Bay Books, New York, NY)

Hopkins, T (1998), 'Sales Closing for Dummies', (IDG Books Worldwide Inc., CA)

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Rackham, N (1995), 'SPIN Selling', (Gower, Aldershot)

Rackham, N (1996), 'SPIN Selling Fieldbook' (McGraw-Hill, New York, NY)

Underhill, P (2003) 'Why we buy: the science of shopping' (TEXERE Publishing, London)

Notes







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<http://startyourownbusinessblog.wordpress.com>