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## INTRODUCTION: WHAT WILL YOU GAIN FROM THIS BOOK?

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**W**ould you like to begin your sales career with top-notch training targeted at getting you up to speed quickly, no matter what you are selling? Would you like a go-to manual that will rejuvenate your skills and offer a sales tune up? This is the sales-training-in-a-book you've been looking for!

Many good books are filled with sophisticated ideas that should be part of a salesperson's toolbox. Those books offer advanced techniques on how to ask specific need-benefit or problem-definition questions which help the prospects understand how to benefit from your products or services and solve their problems. Some books discuss specific topics in detail, such as how to close a sale, or how to handle objections.

However, during my career in sales and sales management, I found there was very little readily available practical information for the *beginning* salesperson. It was difficult to find information on how to use simple and basic techniques and concepts to get in position to develop a relationship where the customer looks for ways to do business with you. That's the kind of relationship that makes you the customer's first choice, and that ultimately achieves your goal: having the customer buy your products or services.

***5 Star Selling: From Beginning to Excellence*** is that missing sales book. This book provides new salespeople with the nuts and bolts of how to succeed in sales and also contains many great tips for more experienced professionals. It presents the lessons that I have learned in sales, sales management, and marketing in a thirty-year career with a Fortune 500 company.

Using the principles taught in this book, you will learn how to prioritize your customers and prospects, and how to organize your territory so you can make calls on key people more often and more

efficiently. You will learn how to make appointments, and how to deal with voicemail and email. You will learn how to prepare for a sales call, how to understand the ebb and flow of the call itself, and how to use this knowledge to your advantage. You will learn the importance of follow-up and how and when to do it. You will learn how to use entertainment effectively, and how to make management your ally and not an obstacle. You will learn how to overcome the fear that sometimes keeps salespeople from performing up to their full potential. Most importantly, you will learn how to develop the kinds of relationships that make people want to buy from you.

This book focuses on the timeless basic aspects of the selling process. The information presented here will serve you well, even when encountering the future changes that occur as the sales profession continues to transform in order to meet new challenges. Trendy buzzwords and the “latest, greatest ideas” for selling come down the pike all the time. Some will be useful, many will not. However, the basic concepts, tools, and necessary skills taught in this book will always be important to your selling efforts and will provide an excellent foundation for success.

Along with the basics, you will also benefit from a few advanced concepts to consider. Some sales positions require many of these ideas and tools. Other “one shot” sales opportunities require only a few of them. When selling real estate, appliances, or cars, for example, you need to establish your credibility and a relationship with your customer quickly. Even in those one-time situations, knowing and using many of the basic tools in this book will help you sell those buyers and also bring them back to you the next time they are in the market looking for the goods or services you offer. You will also benefit from learning to develop “word of mouth” recommendations which will bring those kinds of buyers to your place of business.

Other types of selling require more frequent calling and follow-up. Mastering the essentials presented here will help you to develop the right kinds of relationships for any situation. This is a good time to mention a few basic concepts to have under your belt before proceeding. I would call them the *Three Rules of Salesmanship*. This is a short overview so I will be expanding on these and adding other ideas in more detail throughout the book.

**1. *Speak briefly with your prospect about something in which they are interested.***

This generally applies no matter what type of selling you are doing, or what product or service you are offering.

In a retail store this could simply be a greeting. If you observe a customer examining a product (a car, an appliance, an article of clothing), you can ask, “May I help you find something?” and you may receive a yes or no answer. But if you ask, “Would you like to know more about this particular model (or item)?” it may help you learn more about what the potential customer is looking for and why they are in your place of business. Or perhaps in industrial selling you might ask about what products or services they are currently using so you will have a good place to start.

**2. *Then provide the customer with enough facts and benefits until he or she is convinced they are justified in buying.***

This, of course, is the key portion of the selling process. The salesperson must educate and inform the prospect and provide examples of how the product or service might benefit that customer. (“This car goes from zero to 60 in 3.4 seconds, so you’ll impress the teenaged boys in the neighborhood and scare all your friends.” Here, the fact is acceleration, and the benefit is to impress.) This process generally takes longer when selling industrial products and/or services that a customer is buying repeatedly or specialty products to replace current products they are buying, but is critical nonetheless.

During this part of the process, the salesperson should elicit comments from the prospect to determine what needs/desires the prospect wishes to fulfill. Then the facts and benefits can be tailored to the particular situation. There may be many other facts/benefits of the product, but it is a waste of time to focus on them if it is not in the prospect’s interest (for example, if the prospect wants a car that is comfortable and safe to drive, the fact of its acceleration may not be a major point in its favor).

Finally, the salesperson should (if possible) express a “word picture” of the prospect using the product/service, enjoying the product/service, and benefiting from it. This is more important in “one shot”

selling, since in most industrial applications the prospect or customer typically is using a product or service like yours already.

### ***3. Ask for the order — or the next step in the process — and shut up.***

I've had prospects take five minutes to think over a proposal — and if I'd said anything to distract them or interrupt their thought processes, the sales interview might have been over... and a failure.

These are very basic selling tools that are typically part of the various contact points in the selling process. Regular/repeat customers may not need as much convincing at each contact when trying to keep and grow your business, but stressing the features and benefits that are important to them should continue to be done on a regular basis. In fact, doing this in later contacts with the “one shot” customers and your regular repeat customers is an important part of what is called the “aftersell.” This confirms the satisfaction they obtained by purchasing from you, and will encourage them to come back to you for future purchases.

One school of thought says a person has to be a “born salesperson” to make it in sales, that there are people with natural talent and that's the reason for their success. Another school says a person can be taught and mentored to be a successful salesperson. My experience says it is a little of both. That being the case, what is it that makes a successful salesperson?

Years ago, a major business publication issued an article that concluded that every successful salesperson possessed two traits, empathy and drive. Empathy is necessary in order to really want to know and understand the person you are trying to influence. That is a major factor in developing relationships. Personal drive is the key that keeps one coming back even after rejection, continuing to call on the prospective client or “prospect” and working to make the sale. One of the strongest attributes of personal drive is determination. Determination keeps a person going until success is achieved. Empathy, drive, dedication, persistence, and patience, along with some basic mechanics and a little fine tuning, are the attributes of a top-notch salesperson.

If you enjoy the selling process, genuinely like people and let it show, and feel good about your company and what you are selling, your enthusiasm alone will achieve good results. But, if you master the basics and learn the “extras” when needed, you will have an even more successful and rewarding sales career.

*All of the stories presented in this book are true. I have given many examples of how to do the right things correctly. Occasionally I have added a few stories that illustrate the “pitfalls” inherent in taking a wrong approach. The names have been changed in all of these examples to protect the innocent ... and the guilty.*

*You can be assured that by the time you finish this book and put these ideas into practice, you will be well on your way to being the best salesperson you can be.*



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★★★★★  
**POINTS**  
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**This book will give you:**

- ★ **Important basic tools to help you sell now, and in the future**
- ★ **Proven approaches to use in all types of selling**
- ★ **Information on prioritizing and organizing your territory**
- ★ **Proven skills for getting appointments with the right people**
- ★ **Sales call and follow up techniques**
- ★ **Tips for building customer relationships**
- ★ **Power to overcome fear and build confidence**
- ★ **Advanced concepts and ideas for achieving excellence**

