

Professional Selling

Practical Secrets for Successful Sales

Rebecca L. Morgan



A Fifty-Minute™ Series Book

This Fifty-Minute™ Book is designed to be “read with a pencil.” It is an excellent workbook for self-study as well as classroom learning.

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Learning Objectives for

Professional Selling

The learning objectives for *Professional Selling* are listed below. They have been developed to guide you, the reader, to the core issues covered in this book.

The Objectives of this book are:

- 1) To explain how to make the most of a selling opportunity
- 2) To show how to organize for better sales
- 3) To discuss customer resistance and how to counter concerns
- 4) To explain ways to understand customer styles

About the Author:

Rebecca L. Morgan, CSP, is a people-productivity expert. She travels nationally to share her research and experience to help make people and organizations more productive and profitable. Her areas of expertise include: sales, time management, communication, and creating customer service excellence. In addition to authoring three popular books, *Professional Selling*, *Making Time for Excellence*, and *Calming Upset Customers*, Rebecca has produced six audio cassette programs. She has been featured in *Home Office Computing*, *Sales and Marketing Management*, *USA Today*, National Public Radio, and the “Oprah Winfrey” Show. Rebecca has earned the designation of Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), which is conferred by the National Speakers Association. In 1993, when Rebecca received her CSP, only 214 people in the world—less than 7% of the 3200 NSA members—had earned this ten-year-old designation.

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THE SLIM MARGIN OF SUCCESS

The difference between winning and losing is sometimes very slight. There were eight finalists in the men's 100-meter dash at the 1976 Olympics. The Gold Medal winner beat the eighth man by less than half a second. There are five million people engaged in selling in America. Can you image what our Gross National Product would be if each of them had made just *one more sale* last year? In sports, in business, in politics, in romance, winning isn't everything. But it sure beats losing. Go get 'em, *Tiger!*

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INTRODUCTION

The sales profession can be either exhilarating or depressing. It all depends on your attitude and your ability to handle success or disappointment. When you've closed a sale it is normal to fly high. When no one is buying, dejection often occurs. This book is designed to help you do more of the former and survive the latter.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is designed to assist any person who is, or who plans to be a professional salesperson. If you are not, yet in sales but considering it, first read another book in this same series titled *Sales Training Basics*. You will find more information about it on page 94.

Sales Equals Service

As a professional salesperson you are actually a professional service person. To do your job properly you must be doing a service for your client. Alan Cimberg, a well known sales trainer says "stop selling and start helping." When we sell, he explains, we are doing something *to* our prospect. When we are helping, we are doing something *for* that person.

In fact, if you are not offering a product or service which would be of use to a prospect, you are doing a disservice. If you are hesitant about suggesting a new product or a larger order because you don't want to come across too pushy, think about how your customer will feel if you have something that could help but you didn't suggest it. You both would lose.

Before you continue, answer this question in the space provided below:

What would it mean to you if you could be a better salesperson? How would your life be different?

SALES SUCCESS: DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Sales is either an exhilarating career that adds meaning to your life, or a depressing job that drives you to despair. You can experience limitless income, or barely scrape by. No matter what your product, company or background, much of your success is based on what *you* do.

It's easy and tempting to blame other things—the product, your boss, the company, the customer, the economy, or even the weather. The truth is, however, that the ultimate factor of success or failure belongs to you.

In an article in *Nation's Business* Jeanne and Herbert Greenberg reported that "more than 55 percent of (the salespeople studied) have no ability to sell. Another 25 percent have sales ability but are selling the wrong product or service. The remaining 20 percent are doing precisely the right jobs for themselves and their companies, and invariably they are the ones that make 80 percent of all sales."

We asked top sales trainers and salespeople what they thought made outstanding sales representatives.

Before you read their answers, write as many characteristics of successful salespeople as you can think of in the space provided:

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SALESPERSONS

The attributes of successful salespeople that sales professionals identified were in four main areas: 1) commitment, 2) a healthy ego, 3) effective listening skills, and 4) humor and perspective. Of course there is more to being a professional salesperson than these characteristics, but they are a great place to start.

1. COMMITMENT

“You need to have commitment . . . real commitment to what you’re doing. Total and full commitment,” comments Judy Sadlier, Senior Vice President of Dean Witter Reynolds. Judy started as a clerk in her company in 1957 and later became the first woman to complete the company’s management training program.

“A successful salesperson has persistence” says Deanna Zimmerman, Territory Manager at Herman Miller, Inc. and past president of the Association of Executive Saleswomen. “Persistence is so important, yet most salespeople feel that after 3 calls to a prospect, it’s time to give up. Successful professionals realize that persistence is a basic key to success. They always hang in there if the sale has potential.”

Commitment includes persistence. This means not giving up when things look bleak. Many ex-salespeople couldn’t handle early failure. Either they expected instant success, or their egos were too fragile.

Pros are committed to continuous learning. Cavett Robert, a respected sales trainer and speaker says, “School is never out for the professional.” Sheila Murray Bethel, President of Getting Control Inc., and a well-known sales speaker and trainer believes to succeed in sales (or in life), you need to “work harder on knowing and improving yourself than on anything else in your life.”

Tom Johnson was the #1 Avis Leasing salesperson in the country three years in a row. When asked why he was so successful, he responded “One habit I have is to participate in one sales seminar a month, no matter how basic. If I learn one new idea from that seminar, it was worth it.”

Professional athletes continually review the basics, so why not professional salespeople?

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SALESPERSONS (Continued)

2. HEALTHY EGO

“The successful salespeople I know” comments Pat Bailey, Regional Manager of Telos Consulting, “use their healthy egos to measure room for improvement. They ask, ‘What could I have done better?’”

Top salespeople also realize a client first “buys” them. They are confident that they can sell themselves as competent and professional.

“To be good in sales, one must understand the difference between a business refusal and a personal rejection,” offers Sheila Murray Bethel. “Once you understand that when a client says ‘no’ it is not a personal rejection, you make a quantum leap into the ranks of professionalism.”

Having a healthy ego also makes it easier to take calculated risks—to be bold in a positive way. Successful salespeople know they can pick themselves up and continue if their boldness causes them to fall flat.

When salespeople are proud of their company, product/service, and selves, they don’t have to disparage competitors. They build upon their strengths, not the weaknesses of others.

3. LISTENING SKILLS

A common stereotype of a salesperson is someone who talks non-stop. Actually, top sales professionals listen. Bailey explains that professional salespeople “explore people’s needs. They ask questions, and *listen*. A truly great salesperson listens, not to get information to manipulate, but to assist in serving the customer. There is no point in selling something that will cause the client ‘buyers remorse.’ In a successful buyer/seller relationship, there is mutual interest and benefit.”

Julie Yozamp, Sales Training Manager for Digital Equipment Corporation, agrees that listening is essential for any good salesperson. “Salespeople customers respond to, are those individuals who say, ‘Talk to me. Tell me your problems and needs. These salespeople don’t let their egos interfere. Effective questioning and listening are key skills.”

Many top salespeople see themselves as counselors and problem solvers. Only through effective questioning and listening can they understand the client’s concerns well enough to offer solutions.

4. SENSE OF HUMOR AND ENTHUSIASM

Judy Sadlier advises: "You must have the ability to laugh at yourself, and avoid becoming egotistical about your successes. There have been many people who could have been more successful, but let their successes make them serious, pedantic, and overbearing."

A positive attitude is a strong asset in any profession, but especially in sales. With one, rejections become learning experiences or challenges, rather than problems. Having the perspective to learn from your mistakes keeps you growing.

Enthusiasm reflects a salesperson's excitement for the product and what it can do for the prospect. Rarely will one find a successful salesperson who isn't sincerely excited about his/her product or service.

Summary

None of the four attributes mentioned are easy to acquire. Commitment, humor and a strong ego come easily so long as you are consistently winning. When you have days of "nos," too many bad breaks and no commissions, then commitment, humor, and ego may desert you. As for listening: although most of us think of ourselves as good listeners, few are.

Success in sales can be yours, provided you're willing to work on these basic attributes, keep working on them, and then work some more.

Sales can drive you to the bank, or drive you crazy. Only you can decide. If you continue reading this book it's clear that your choice is to be the best professional salesperson possible.

PROFESSIONAL SALESPERSON'S QUIZ

Be honest when taking the following quiz. We like to believe we do everything well, but unfortunately that's not always the case. See if this quiz can help you identify some areas in need of improvement.

Scoring key: 1=Always or yes; 2=Usually; 3=Sometimes; 4=Rarely; 5=Never or no

In sales, I am:	ALWAYS			NEVER	
1. Assertive	1	2	3	4	5
2. Honest	1	2	3	4	5
3. A believer in my product	1	2	3	4	5
4. Self-confident	1	2	3	4	5
5. Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
6. Outgoing	1	2	3	4	5
7. Focused on my objective	1	2	3	4	5
8. Professional in demeanor and dress	1	2	3	4	5
9. Displaying good posture and expression	1	2	3	4	5
10. A good listener	1	2	3	4	5
11. Perceptive (hear what's said as well as what isn't)	1	2	3	4	5
12. Thinking "What does my prospect want?"	1	2	3	4	5
13. Relaxed and alert	1	2	3	4	5
14. Able to restate my prospect's needs accurately	1	2	3	4	5
15. Anticipating concerns/objections	1	2	3	4	5
16. Not personally rejected when someone says no	1	2	3	4	5
17. Making cold calls without any hesitation	1	2	3	4	5
18. Prompt with follow-ups	1	2	3	4	5
19. Generating sufficient prospects	1	2	3	4	5
20. Willing to try new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
21. Working smarter not necessarily harder	1	2	3	4	5
22. Pleasantly persistent	1	2	3	4	5
23. Acknowledging and working on what needs improvement	1	2	3	4	5
24. A self-starter, self-motivated	1	2	3	4	5
25. Willing to take calculated risks	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring: A total of 25-50 = Excellent; 51-75 = Good; 76-100 = Need Work; 101-125 = Help!

The facing page has an assessment for you to photocopy*. Give it to your boss, a colleague, and/or selected customers—anyone who is capable of assessing your sales skills.

*Permission to photocopy for personal use only, not for classes or other uses.

PROFESSIONAL SALESPERSON'S ASSESSMENT

Salesperson's name

Thank you for taking time to help me. I am interested in your honest feedback of my skills and attitudes. Don't feel you have to "fudge" and not tell the truth. To be the best, I need and want your candid responses.

Scoring key: 1=Always or yes; 2=Usually; 3=Sometimes; 4=Rarely; 5=Never or no

In sales, I am usually:	ALWAYS			NEVER
1. Assertive	1	2	3	4 5
2. Honest	1	2	3	4 5
3. A believer in my product	1	2	3	4 5
4. Self-confident	1	2	3	4 5
5. Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4 5
6. Outgoing	1	2	3	4 5
7. Focused on my objective	1	2	3	4 5
8. Professional in demeanor and dress	1	2	3	4 5
9. Good posture and expression	1	2	3	4 5
10. A good listener	1	2	3	4 5
11. Perceptive (hear what's said as well as what isn't)	1	2	3	4 5
12. Thinking "What does my prospect want?"	1	2	3	4 5
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