



# 21st Century Selling

The final decade of the 20th century saw more changes in the world of selling than the previous 90 years of the century. And this century's changes promise to dwarf those changes in speed, magnitude, and velocity.

So, congratulations! You are about to jump on board a fast-moving train. However, no matter what your level of sales experience, this book will deal with the newest, most up-to-date ideas and proven strategies. Welcome and all aboard!

## **What Is Sales All About?**

Professional selling is all about getting in front of the right people with the right message at the most opportune time. It's all about how you position yourself and your organization, prospect for business, properly plan your presentations, build trust, and uncover the right set of answers that your prospects are looking for. It's about how you make your answers or solutions available to your prospects under the conditions and terms that they are most interested in. It's creating compelling

**CAUTION!**

**Two Ways to Win**

By far, the biggest mistakes salespeople make, no matter what they sell, is that either they fail to invest enough time prospecting for business or they fail to ask enough of the right questions when they do get in front of a qualified prospect.

value for your product and maximizing margin. It's then servicing your new accounts in order to exceed their expectations, sell them more, and use them as referral sources. That's sales. And it's that simple. But not so easy.

## The 20 Biggest Errors in Selling

Selling may require a slightly different approach based on the product or service you're selling, the type of prospects, and the nature of the sales cycle or process that is required to sell it.

However, regardless of what you're selling, there are 20 errors that could prove to be fatal to you:

1. Talking too much and listening too little
2. Not asking enough questions
3. Too little pre-call planning
4. Inconsistent or insufficient prospecting
5. Quoting price too soon
6. Not creating value
7. Presenting too many features
8. Giving a presentation that doesn't address the issues the prospect wanted to address
9. Raising objections yourself by talking too much
10. Not listening
11. Failing to provide proof of other, happy customers
12. Asking leading questions
13. Using tie-down questions (e.g., "If I could show you a way to save money you'd be interested, wouldn't you?")
14. Memorizing canned closing techniques or ways to overcome objections
15. Not having a flexible personality
16. Dropping your price too soon

17. Making claims that can't be backed up by facts
18. Underdelivering on promises
19. Not revealing all the facts
20. Failing to ask for the order

### Put Yourself in a Position to Win



Knowing what *not* to do can be as valuable as knowing exactly what you should do. Smart salespeople avoid losing a sale as aggressively as they work to make the sale. Don't be your own worst enemy. Know the biggest errors—and then avoid them!

## The Seven Universal Rules for Sales Success

Now that we've listed the 20 biggest mistakes, let's talk about how to avoid making them. In order to avoid them all, there are just seven universal rules that you need to follow. These universal rules will serve you well no matter what you sell or to whom you sell it.

These universal sales rules are based on a series of principles that have proven successful with hundreds of thousands of salespeople worldwide. Here are the rules:

1. Proper positioning, prospecting, and pre-call planning will guarantee that you will be in front of the right people with the right message at the most appropriate time.
2. Building trust with the buyer is based on the proper approach and not dominating the conversation.
3. Professional selling is based on asking enough of the right questions in the right way and not determining or presenting any solution until you have discovered:
  - What they'll buy
  - When they'll buy
  - How they'll buy
  - Under what conditions they'll buy
4. Properly presenting your solution based on the conditions, terms, and parameters under which your prospect will buy is the essence of the successful sale.
5. People expect salespeople to make claims for their product



### How Full Is Your Toolbox?

The salesperson's best tools are the energy to prospect, the interest to research prospects, and the patience to learn about the prospect before the face-to-face sale ever starts.

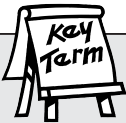
- or service. They are impressed, however, when someone else does it or if they are able to experience claims themselves.
6. No sale is ever made unless you ask someone to buy your product.
  7. The real work begins after your first sale.

## The Universal Rules in Detail

Let's take a look at each of these principles in some detail.

**Principle 1:** Proper positioning, prospecting, and pre-call planning will guarantee that you will be in front of the right people with the right message at the most appropriate time.

Top sales professionals invest a lot of time in everything that occurs prior to the sale. Amateurs and marginally performing salespeople tend to wait for prospects to find them and then subsequently are ill-prepared to deal with prospects in any type of intelligent, well-informed way. For example, 21st-century sales pros know and understand the power of network-



**Positioning** The relative ranking or perception that prospects and customers have of you, your product, and/or your organization relative to your competition.

**Prospecting** The proactive steps taken to identify, isolate, and get in front of qualified prospects.

**Pre-call planning** The research, data gathering, and preparation that you must make in order to be totally prepared for a sales presentation.

ing, the Internet, direct marketing, oriented e-mail campaigns (as distinct from spam), and even seminars and authorship to prospect for business. They understand the difference between *pull* prospecting and *push* prospecting.


Successful salespeople know that pull prospecting tends to posi-

tion them better in the marketplace as true, winning sales professionals. In the final analysis, people want to do business with you if you are a busy, highly sought-after professional far more than if you appear to be a desperate, hungry, aggressive salesperson seeking your next dollar.

Pre-call planning is perhaps the most overlooked, yet essential selling skill you can master. You need to gather essential information before you ever attempt to get in front of anyone, anywhere. Pull prospecting allows you the opportunity to invest more time in this process because you can invest time in the most valuable prospects—those who respond to you. If you are simply running up and down the street asking people to buy, you have no time to invest in learning about prospects and their organizations before you ever get in front of them.

**Principle 2.** Building trust with the buyer is based on the proper approach and not dominating the conversation.

In professional selling, building trust is far more important than just being liked. A fatal flaw for salespeople occurs when they believe that they need to “sell themselves to the prospect.” This is not correct: it is “old school” selling and leads salespeople to eventually overselling themselves.



**Pull prospecting** Attracting prospects through a broad-based process that could include such methods as authorship, networking, and gaining industry specific celebrity status.

**Push prospecting** Contacting prospects one at a time, individually, proactively, through such methods as cold calling or phone solicitation.



### Knowledge Sells

It is far better to position yourself as a business advisor, strategic partner, industry expert, or product-specific guru than to position yourself as a salesperson. Unfortunately, salespeople are just not positioned nearly as well in the marketplace as the others are.



### Vital Questions

Ideally, you should research the following issues before you ever get in front of any prospect:

- Who will I be competing against?
- What questions is the prospect likely to ask me?
- What is the formal and informal structure of the prospect's organization?
- Is the person I'm calling on a decision maker or influencer?
- How can I develop internal advocacy?
- What is the biggest single problem I can help the prospect solve?
- How far along is the prospect in the buying process?

You need to understand and remember that being trusted is truly more valuable than being liked when selling. Also, once you're trusted, it generally follows that you'll be liked. You need to avoid seeking approval.



### Aim to Be Trusted, Not Liked

If you build trust, you're in a better position to sell value. If you seek to be liked, you're only going to be able to sell price. Buyer trust means that the prospect has the belief, confidence, and full expectation that you, the salesperson, are a person of integrity and that you and your organization will deliver all that you promise.

This doesn't, however, mean that you should be rude, offensive, or abrasive. But it also doesn't mean that you need to be overly aggressive, dominate the conversation, or be too friendly, too soon, either.

**Principle 3.** Professional selling is based on asking enough of the right ques-

tions in the right way and not determining or presenting any solution until you have discovered:

- What they'll buy
- When they'll buy
- How they'll buy
- Under what conditions they'll buy

To excel in sales, you'll need to excel at asking the right questions and then concentrate on listening to the answers,

recording those answers both in writing and mentally, and then prescribing the exact solution that your prospect is seeking based on those answers.

This is perhaps the most fundamentally overlooked secret to successful, smart selling. The

biggest error that you will need to avoid is the tendency to start explaining how your product or service works, looks, functions, or performs without knowing exactly *how* the prospect wants it to work, look, function, or perform.

If you neglect universal sales rule 3, you'll lose far more sales than you'll ever make. You cannot presume, ever, that you know exactly, precisely, and accurately how to present your product or service unless you know exactly how your prospect wants to see it! And the only way to do that is to ask the right questions.

**Principle 4.** Properly presenting your solution based on the conditions, terms, and parameters under which your prospect will buy is the essence of a successful sale.

Smart salespeople understand that there's a big difference between badly outdated price and demonstration selling and 21st-century application-based selling. You will, indeed, become

### Don't Overwhelm

Good salespeople don't dominate the conversation. They also don't come across as too aggressive. They don't offer *unsolicited* small talk. If the prospect wants to talk, let him or her talk. If not, simply tell the prospect why you're there and what you'd like to accomplish on that call.



### Understand First

Most salespeople start to provide solutions before they've learned about the situation!

To guarantee that you always ask your prospects enough of the right questions in the right way, never go on a sales call without prepared questions that allow the prospect to answer these questions. Then never, ever begin telling, selling, demonstrating, or discussing your product or service until you've got precise and exact answers to your four questions—what, when, how, and under what conditions.





**Application-based selling** Presenting the product or service in the context of precisely how it can be applied to solve your prospect's biggest problem, agitation, or difficulty or to address a solution your prospect is seeking. This is in contrast with focusing on features, benefits, price, or design. Your prospects are looking for answers. Application-based selling is the essence of professional selling.

a real sales master once you understand this truth.

People can focus on only one thing at a time. And where you place that singular focus can have a lot to do with your sales success. Let's take a look at the four potential areas where you can focus:

1. yourself
2. your product or service
3. your organization
4. the prospect

The only way to focus correctly is to have a deep-seated, 100% total commitment to building and sustaining a focus that's



### How Do You Focus?

Consider the following three situations. How do you focus appropriately?

You've had a bad morning and you're in a miserable mood. Everything has gone wrong. Your child is sick, your car needs repairs, and the bills are due. Your focus has been on yourself and how you can deal with all of these problems. However, you have a sales call at 1:00 p.m. How do you suddenly and easily shift gears?

You've had quality, service, and delivery glitches with your product. You're concerned that it may not function, yet you've just gotten an upgrade announcement and have to learn 32 pages of new, technical information. Is your focus on whether the upgrade will work? You're going out on a sales call. How do you prepare to focus?

You just heard that your company may be sold and you don't know if the sale will affect your future. Where is your focus? You now have to go to a critical sales presentation and put on a great show. How do you shift your focus?



solely on your prospects and customers. You must be able to compartmentalize your life and your thinking so you can commit every phase of your presentation to the one, single thing that drives sales success—a singular focus on your prospects and customers. Period.

**Principle 5.** People expect you to make claims for your product or service. They are impressed, however, when someone else does it or if they are able to experience claims themselves.

You have something to gain if you make a sale. You know that and so does your prospect. Unfortunately, lots of people have dealt with salespeople who stretched the truth and they remember that. Also, some have become jaded by oversell.

The only way for you to go is to be in a position to offer your prospects the opportunity to talk with satisfied customers, to read strong testimonials from them, or to actually experience the value of your product or service themselves.

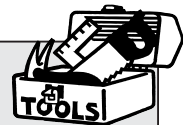
It's essential to select your testimonials with great care. You need to be sure that they are strong and describe you and your product or service and organization in the most positive and powerful ways possible. That's why you need to solicit these letters and comments from totally pleased and highly satisfied customers.

Another method would be to ask your customers to agree to be on a list you compile for prospects to contact if they choose to do so. This is another proven, powerful way to involve your prospects with super-satisfied customers who can verify your claims.

### **Developing Testimonials**

To get satisfied customers to be willing to place their comments in writing, here's what you must do:

1. Convert prospects to customers.
2. Service and deliver in ways that exceed expectations.
3. Follow up to be sure your customers receive what you sold them.
4. Ask them for a strong reference.
5. Thank them and continue to service their accounts.





### Get Customers to Help You Sell

To get customers to agree to be on a list of satisfied customers for prospects to contact, you should take the following steps:

- Solicit their involvement.
- Tell them that you will rotate them off the list regularly.
- Ask them to provide their name, address, phone, and e-mail or fax.
- List the type of service you've provided to them.
- Ensure them that you will phone them if you expect that a prospect may contact them.
- Send them a thank-you note or small gift whenever they talk with a prospect.

Tests and trials of your product or service allow your prospects to actually experience your claims and are valuable. However, if you're going to provide the opportunity for some sort of limited experience with your product or service, be totally sure that you establish the parameters that define a successful trial exactly and that you fully expect your prospects to buy your product or service based upon a successful outcome of the trial.

**Principle 6.** No sale is ever made unless you ask someone to buy your product.

In the final analysis, your success in sales is determined by how much of your products or services you can be responsible for someone buying. That means being assertive enough to ask someone to buy what you're selling.



### How to Do Trials Without Errors

To have a successful trial of your product or service, you need to clarify exactly what a successful outcome is. In order to do that, you need to:

1. Define what your prospect is looking for and what the outcomes of the test should be.
2. Establish a method for evaluating the results objectively and for implementing your product or service properly.
3. Set the criteria that the trial results must meet for you to assume that your prospect is pleased and ready to buy.

It's not unusual for salespeople to get caught up in the process and never ask anyone to buy. You must avoid that at all costs. The real puzzle is to learn why so many salespeople go through the hard work of prospecting, getting in front of a prospect, and making a great presentation—and then fail to ask the prospect to buy.

You need to avoid that at all costs!

Part of the foolishness of unprofessional selling is to teach someone the “20 power closes” or “10 changed scripts to follow to overcome objections.” The real truth is that you are far better off learning one or two ways to close sales or deal with issues and using them correctly than having a whole host of manipulative tricks that you're hesitant to use and that probably won't work, anyway.

Remember this: if you don't ask your prospect to do something, nothing will happen! And then, unfortunately, you've become a professional host, a visitor, or a tour guide. And you're none of those. You're a professional salesperson.



### Closing

Closing sales is a consequence of what has happened earlier in the sale. It's not something salespeople build toward. However, if you don't ask prospects to buy, most will never buy on their own. So you must urge them to take action. Most people need help in making decisions, so you should suggest the steps they need to take in order to make the decision to buy your product or service.

### Simplicity Sells

Most successful salespeople use some form of the assumptive close. They don't use manipulating maneuvers.

Old school selling suggests that you learn “the puppy dog close,” “four-square close,” “Ben Franklin close,” “impending event close,” etc. The truth is that it is best to act as if the prospect has agreed to buy.

Simply say or ask some form of the following:

- Can we go ahead and get started?
- Let me show you how we can move ahead.
- Shall we handle the paperwork now?



**Principle 7.** The real work begins after your first sale.

Professional salespeople know that servicing accounts, exceeding expectations, anticipating problems, and being available instantly are all part of the sale—even though these things occur after the sale is made. Hit-and-run salespeople don't understand this at all. Their philosophy is to make the sale at any cost, promise whatever is necessary to get the sale, and then do all in their power to avoid having to deal with their new customer again.

You need to understand that earning the customer is the hard work. Your job is to convert prospects into customers and then do all in your power to sell them more when they legitimately need something you have and to keep them more than totally pleased. So pleased that they will readily refer you to more prospects like them and agree to serve as sources for top-flight testimonials to help your sales effort.

However, in order to earn this right, you'll need to establish a long-term relationship based on superior service, total integrity,



### **A True Story**

Barry bought a new office condominium. After renting for almost 15 years, he decided that it made more sense to own a building and rent offices to himself, with his company paying him. It seemed like a good idea. And it was.

Unfortunately, Barry dealt with Robert and Richard. When he started to do the construction, Barry found a problem. Apparently, the office next to his had purchased 1200 extra square feet that hadn't shown up on the final blueprint.

Robert couldn't be found and Richard denied any wrongdoing. So did the developer and the architect. Barry ended up having to pay extra rent in his old facility since construction slowed by two months, his new offices were 1200 square feet smaller than anticipated, and he's still looking for Robert and Richard to help him!

Would you consider Robert and Richard professional salespeople or commission-seeking opportunists? How quickly will Barry refer either of them? Will he purchase more property from them? How about the developer and architect?

commitment to delivering what you promised, and consistently treating your new customers as your most valuable prospects—because that’s what they are.

Many salespeople do not seem to understand this universal rule or maybe they just do not believe it. It’s really the difference between sales as *transactions* and sales as *relationships*. Making a sale is the first step in forming a relationship. Future sales to any customer depend to at least some extent on how you handle the first sale.

One recommendation is to make a follow-up call within a short time after the sale. It’s a good way to find out if your customer has any questions or problems—before he or she worries or gets upset or complains to others. You may also learn something about the product or service that will help you sell. After more time passes, it might be smart to send a personal thank-you note. Such simple steps help build a relationship by going above and beyond the sale as a transaction.

## Sales as a Profession and Where You Fit In

Sales is a profession. It’s far more than just a job. And, as a profession, it provides you the opportunity for significant income and exceptional prestige if you are a top performer. It requires specialized skills and training for superior performance. It also allows you to bring great value to your customers.

However, in order for you to be able to get the most out of sales as a profession, you’ll need to believe in what you do and how you do it. And you must believe that the skills and strategies you master are credible, professional, and totally honorable.

### Sell with Integrity

To ensure that you feel good about what you do and how you do it, it’s essential that the skills you learn, assimilate, and apply be consistent with your value system. Applying old school, manipulative techniques flies in the face of the way most 21st-century people want to feel about themselves and creates a situation where you don’t believe in what you do or feel good about it. This is demotivating. Avoid it at all costs.



Once you've employed a process that is totally focused on the customer or the prospect, is based on sound and honorable principles, and allows you to feel good about what you do and how you do it, you're on your way to being a sales professional. Then you'll become a top performer in one of the world's most lucrative and valuable professions.

## Checklist for Chapter 1

- Professional selling is all about getting in front of the right people with the right message at the most opportune time.
- Selling is how you position yourself and your organization, prospect for business, properly plan your presentations, build trust, and uncover the right set of answers that your prospects are looking for and then how you make your answers or solutions available to them under the conditions and terms under which they are most interested in buying them.
- Regardless of what you're selling, there are 20 errors that could prove to be fatal to you.
- To avoid errors in selling, there are seven universal rules to follow, based on a series of principles that have proven successful.
- Sales is a profession, not just a job. It provides the opportunity for significant income and exceptional prestige if you are a top performer and it requires specialized skills and training for superior performance.
- As a profession, selling is based on sound ethics and standards. Help the profession and yourself by following those standards.