

THE
ZEN

OF SALES

Richard Hart

"Whether you're just starting out or have spent a decade in sales, this book will make you money and improve your position." Harry F.

"Richard Hart is a writing genius. His books are clear, concise and easy to read. Much of his information can be found nowhere else, giving you the edge." Tracy M.

"Richard's unique style of writing permits excellent retention." Susan G.

THE WORLD IS SALES.

Whether you are a housewife, businessperson, college student or actually engaged in sales as a profession, you sell. We negotiate with family, friends, co-workers and virtually every other person we come in contact with, on a daily basis. Ask any parent if they negotiate with their children and their immediate response will be, "all the time." We just don't think of these interactions as negotiations or attempts at selling -- but they are.



Award winning author, Richard Hart, has received accolades for both his business and social contributions. He has occupied the Sales Manager position in 3 real estate related companies. And is now one of the highest paid mediators in the state of California. He leads training events on mediation, negotiation and sales.

Richard's first true love is training. And in this book, he brings his experiences and observations with poignant clarity, in a down to earth, easy to read and retain format. Welcome to the Zen of Sales.

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**THE
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OF
SALES**

Richard Hart

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**My thanks to God for giving me the
inspiration and ability to make a difference.**

And to my mother for being a great mom.

**And to my high school English teacher,
Michael Callahan,
the greatest teacher
in the history of the world.**

**Thanks also to Apex Book Awards for
recognizing *Keep Your Daughter Safe: 171 Ways
Young Women can Prevent Sexual Assault*
and *Hit the Brakes on Car Repair Rip-Offs* as
books that make a difference. Both winners of
Excellence in Writing Awards in 2008.**



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About the Author

INTRODUCTION

People ask me what I do. My response has always been, “I’m just a guy.” This response never really seems to satisfy anyone, but I’ve always had a problem with people judging others by what they do or how much they earn. So, this is my answer.

Over the years I’ve developed skills in a number of arenas, but looking back on those skills, be they mediation, high-level negotiation or public speaking, I realized that what I am is a salesman.

I remember, back when I was 8, helping my sister knock on doors to help sell her Girl Scout Cookies. I remember asking people if I could wash their cars or mow their lawns.

When I was in the 8th grade I did something to tick-off one of my teachers. He sent me to the principal who said, “1-hour detention and you don’t need to get a parent’s signature.” I responded, “30 minutes and I DO need a signature.” Sold!

Somewhere around the age of 20, I realized, I’m not a salesman - - the world is about sales and I am in the world, therefore I sell. And, it didn’t hurt that I happened to be good at it.

Is there such a thing as a natural born salesman? Absolutely, just as there are natural born athletes, artists, scientists, etc. Does this mean those dominions can only be occupied by the “natural borns?” No, it does not. People can be trained to excel in any field or endeavor.

A few months back, I was chatting with an associate who said, “I’m always nervous before I go on.” I responded, “Really??!! I don’t ever remember being nervous before speaking. I just go out there and start talking.” This individual was a very good speaker. Suddenly it hit me: The *true distinction* between a “natural born” anything and an “extremely well-trained” anything, might be nothing more than comfort level.

The natural born athlete is just plain good at throwing a ball or running, but will still use a coach to fine tune those skills. A person who has a burning desire to achieve a certain goal can also be successful, although it may take a little more time and/or training. The mere fact that speaking in public may not have been second-nature to my colleague, did not mean he failed to do a good job.

The interesting fact is, while we spoke on different subjects, the audience probably didn’t notice any difference between his abilities and mine.

As a matter of fact, the only true distinction between us may have been nothing more than the absence of nervousness, butterflies and perspiration on my part. Is this apparent to the audience. And more importantly, did it impact the effectiveness of his speech? Probably not. But if there was an impact, it was not at any discernable level that prevented him from landing jobs and earning a pretty darn good living.

THE WORLD IS SALES. A baby tries to convince its mother that he or she is hungry. A guy tries to persuade his girlfriend that seeing his movie pick is a better choice than seeing hers. Someone else sells their kids on the value of eating vegetables and may even negotiate dessert in exchange for consuming the vile green stuff on the plate. We negotiate rates of pay, vacations, social activities, how we are willing to spend our free time, and thousands of other insignificancies each and every day. Remember that speeding ticket you tried to talk your way out of?

The world is sales, and if you don't believe me, spend tomorrow just noticing what negotiations you're involved in. For married people or people who have children the world of sales is much more noticeable, but even single, childless, individuals can notice attempts at selling friends on things as simple as, what will be the activity for a night out.

Just watch, for one day. Notice how many interactions involve some type of negotiation – even something as simple as where you and your co-workers will go for lunch.

We think that unless someone is actually a *salesman* as a job title, e.g. a real estate agent, a car salesman, someone in retail, etc., that *we* fall outside the dominion of sales. And while *sales* may not be our chosen occupation, it does not negate that we are all actively engaged in some type of *selling* process on multiple occasions each and every day – whether or not we, or the people we engage with, recognize it.

As a mediator, my goal is to bring about agreement between disputing parties. I'm still *selling* a plan or course of action to one party or the other. As a parent, a mother or father might be *selling* eating vegetables or the value of school or homework to their children. Someone else may be trying to *sell* their boss on giving a pay raise.

We are all salespeople. We may not have it as our job title, but this is what we are.

This book is directed at sales as a profession or job classification, but the tips and techniques are transferrable to all walks of life.

Welcome to The Zen of Sales.

Chapter One

WHAT IS SALES

Dictionary.com defines a sale as: “The pinnacle activity involved in selling products or services in return for money or other compensation. It is an act of completion of a commercial activity.”

BusinessDictionary.com defines a sale as: “A contract involving transfer of the possession and ownership (title) of a good or property, or the entitlement to a service, in exchange for money or value.”

My definition of sales is: Any activity involving one person’s attempt to have another person purchase or accept a product, service, or idea.

Notice that in my definition, a sale can take place **absent of an exchange of money.**

Let’s use mediation as an example. Two people have already agreed (written a check) to allow someone to mediate a dispute. The mediator’s job is to *sell* a settlement that works for both parties. And while part of that settlement may have originated with one of the parties, since both

parties are in “dispute” mode, the only way the proposal could be “heard” is through delivery by a disinterested third party. In this particular case, the mediator has already been paid, thereby leaving money outside the equation of the “sales process” taking place during the actual mediation event.

In another example, someone may make a “sale” in the context of a relationship. As exemplified in the Introduction to this book, I might try to *sell* my girlfriend on *The Terminator* instead of *The Bridges of Madison County*. There is no money at stake, but at least the risk of me opening fire in the middle of a crowded theater will be pulled from the equation. On the other hand, I might agree to accompany my girlfriend to *Message in a Bottle*, if I think it may earn me “points” somewhere else in the relationship.

In each of these cases, there is no money being exchanged, but there IS value.

Sales is, all-too-often, associated with money being exchanged for goods or services. If we can broaden our minds to accept that *sales* can be involved in virtually any relationship – whether professional or personal, the process becomes more palatable and simple.

Sometimes it's easier to define something by what it is NOT.

Sales is not necessarily about getting your way.

There are times when it may be in your best interest for someone else to get their way. This is sometimes referred to as “giving up the battle for the sake of winning the war.” Parents do this all the time with their children. A mother may give her child another 30 minutes of television or video games rather than spending that 30 minutes arguing about how these activities are total wastes of time. The “war” is peace and harmony; the “battle” is the parent not really wanting the child parked in front of a television or game console. In this particular case, there is also “future battles” a parent may need to consider. Such an event might be where a parent would have cause to say something like, “Remember the other night I let you watch your show? Well, tonight I really need you to clean your room.”

Some of the best referral sources I've ever had were people I could NOT help, and who I informed would be better served by a competitor's product or by shelving their purchase decision altogether. **The battle:** making a sale to someone who my product or service will not benefit. **The war:** being honest and being able to look at myself in the mirror knowing that I am treating

my clients as I would wish to be treated. Not to be forgotten, is that people appreciate this type of honesty and it is often rewarded by additional business (in the form of referrals). Your competitors appreciate your honesty as well, and may even return the favor by referring people who *they* are unable to help.

By placing clients' needs before your own, your business will actually increase.

Sales is not about convincing the other person that your way is the only way.

I have 2 primary sales techniques – the Back Door and the Assumptive Closes. However, my true “technique,” if you wish to call it that, has always been to give people enough information about their available options so as to enable them to make intelligently based decisions as to what course will best suit their particular needs.

The Back Door Close (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10) is an information-based technique. The effectiveness of this style is grounded in the fact that, given enough quality information, a customer or client can, and will, make his or her own decision to purchase.

“Well Mr. and Mrs. Smith, living in this home will permit Travis to walk to school. Since you both have full-time jobs, you won’t have to worry about how he’ll be getting back and forth each day. Also, this is a “kid-friendly” neighborhood, so he’ll have plenty of opportunity to make friends nearby. And while that other house may be a little bigger, I would rather have a smaller place that satisfies my and my family’s needs.”

In the above case, I have given options which are important to today’s busy parent, while letting my clients know this is my opinion, thus allowing them to make their own decision.

Sales is not about stuffing people into a product that does not serve them.

People rely on salespeople to *help* them. They do not rely on salesmen to lie, scheme or manipulate them into spending their hard-earned money.

A family of four does not need me to sell them a 2-seater sports car, even though I would be selling them freedom, speed and a coveted lifestyle (all of which are important in the sales of sports cars).

In another example, I am not doing a female client one bit of good by talking her into

purchasing an outfit that does not complement her figure, knowing full well that after she wears it one time, it will be relegated to some distant corner of her closet.

If you look at sales as being a position of trust, you will never sell someone into any product or service that does not work for their particular situation. Returning to my movie/girlfriend example: If I know that horror movies give my girlfriend nightmares, it serves no purpose for me to drag her to this genre of film merely because I want the company. In a relationship, your mate places similar levels of trust in knowing you will not *sell* him or her into doing something that serves no good purpose or, worse yet, that actually may cause emotional or physical harm.

Selling is about matching clients with their needs or desires. The paycheck you receive is merely a by-product of providing this service.

Sales is not a numbers game.

Plenty of people, especially those in management, believe in faulty math. They think that if it takes 5 qualified prospects to close 1 sale, and it takes 20 non-qualified prospects to get the 5 qualified prospects, their salespeople need to be speaking

with at least 20 non-qualified prospects each day in order to close 5 sales each week.

This cannot be further from the truth! There is no faster way to burn out a sales staff than by forcing them into this type of “work.” There are very few salespeople who are so in love with having telephones or doors slammed on them that they do not quickly sour on this type of sales process.

The problem most managers are faced with, given most salespeople’s inability to fill their time with *actual work*, is that the manager feels he/she must occupy their employees’ time by filling it with the meaningless, dreaded process, called “blind prospecting.” **In the *numbers game* world, activity becomes more important than results.**

I remember having one person who worked for me who just loved going to the gym. He would spend 3 to 4 hours each day doing various exercising or sport activities. However, he felt guilty about doing this on “company time.” I remember telling him, “Just go to the gym and have fun. Let the people around you know what you do for a living and tell them you need to meet people who may be interested in purchasing your service. I guarantee you’ll do just fine.” Was he one of my top salesmen? No. But he earned a good living and had a lifestyle that totally worked for his situation. Everybody won. He was happy.

I was happy. His clients were happy. Who could ask for anything more?!

Focusing on *qualified* potential clients is the only way to effectively manage the sales process. Even qualified clients are not always easy to close, but at least they are people who have been identified as needing or desiring your service. Having a sales staff chasing after unqualified leads is a tragic waste of time, energy and talent.

Sales is not superior to Sales Support

Yes, it's true, salespeople make the world go 'round; but be clear, there is no such thing as a successful sales team without a strong support staff backing it up. It is incumbent upon every salesperson to treat support staff with the respect they are due. All-too-often, sales departments believe they run the world and it's everyone else's job to bow down to their requests (demands). And while it's true, the world wouldn't move without sales, it will also not move without product. Sales support delivers product. Whether a retail store buyer, an engineer building a piece of software, or a cook baking cakes, back-end support is equally important to front-end sales.

Without producers, developers and other support staff, there would be no product to sell.

Last but not least, “sales” is not a dirty word.

I have been involved in sales in one form or another since I was a kid. I have been able to take time off when I want – whether for a day or a month. I have the ability to travel anywhere I wish. I can afford to purchase nice clothes, cars and other luxuries. I have the ability to give to people or causes that help make the world a better place. Basically, I have the ability to live a lifestyle that many people cannot. Does this make me better than others? Of course not. But it definitely pushes a career in sales into the stratosphere of nice jobs to have.

I love selling. Whether in the form of delivering a successful mediation, putting a transaction together that no one else can, or just doing what I want to do when I want to do it. Sales is the greatest.

By defining sales and understanding what it is and is not, we are able to move forward to the more important components of what will produce success in this field.

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Chapter Two

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN SALES

People get into sales for a myriad of reasons. For some, schedule flexibility is the primary attraction, for others it's the amount of money they can earn, and still others take advantage of the fact there is often minimal, or even no, required training.

I remember making the decision to enter the field of real estate at age 16. A friend's mother, who was new to the business, had made \$50,000 in roughly 6 months with no experience or training. This was back when dinosaurs roamed the earth and 50,000 dollars, even in an entire year, was considered a pretty fair sum of money. I remember thinking, "any business where someone with no experience, can grab that amount of cash within such a short period of time... well, that's the business for me."

At age 16, there aren't too many things more important than getting money into one's pocket, so clearly real estate sales was the direction to travel. In the summer of my 17th year, I studied for the California Real Estate Sales exam and as the perfect birthday present, I received a notice

one day before my 18th birthday congratulating me on having passed the test.

Is money a good enough reason for deciding on sales as a career? It's no better or worse than any other. Many people say that money alone can be a poor motivator, but in my case, I thoroughly enjoyed running around selling high-end homes. It didn't hurt that I was also good at it. And I got to be part of the *American Dream*. So even if the statement is true about money not being a great motivator, in my case, I had additional components of the job that kept me motivated to be in the job and to do it well.

We've all known people who were driven by the quest for money – driven by either the fear of lack or the desire to accumulate. The true distinction of whether these people became top salesmen was not whether money “ran them,” but that they enjoyed the process of *selling* (and all that accompanied it).

The top salespeople I've known or met through the years have been the people who not only enjoyed the sales process, but who also believed in the product they were selling. People have told me that I could sell refrigerators to Eskimos. This may or may not be true, but I do know that selling refrigerators is of no real interest to me and further, the idea of selling refrigerators to people who don't need them is repugnant.

Can a Chevrolet salesman be a great salesman if he owns a Toyota believing it to be a superior vehicle? Can a saleswoman in Macy's shoe department rise to # 1 status if she believes Nordstrom offers a better product? I believe the answer to these questions is "no." While both salespeople described above could be good, or even very good, at their respective jobs, without passion for the products they're selling, neither could ever achieve true greatness.

How can you convince someone that driving a Chevy is the thing to do when you honestly feel that Toyota makes a more reliable or safer product? I don't think you can. Does this mean that every person who sells Bentleys is driving a Bentley? Or every person who sells mansions lives in one? No it does not. But the people selling these items do have a passion for them. And the buyers of these products realize that not every salesperson selling these, or other high-end products, is in a financial position to own them.

So look in the mirror and ask yourself, "Why am I in sales?" I don't really care what the answer is, but part of your answer should contain the word "love" in one context or another. For example: I *love* selling. I *love* working with women. I *love* making a difference. It's not necessary to love every aspect of the selling process or of the product itself, but the more components of the

process or the product that you can attach the word *love* to, the more likely you are to reach the pinnacle of your organization or industry.

I left real estate because of what I perceived to be a low level of professionalism and competence among many people in the field. This perception was not necessarily right or wrong, but it had a negative impact on how I engaged with others in the industry. And, while I was very good at selling real estate, I knew this perception would prevent me from becoming great - - so I left.

If you enjoy sales but are selling a product or service that does not excite you, quit. Go to a company that offers what you want to sell.

If you work for a company in a specific industry but that company is not considered #1 and this is important to you, then become the best salesperson your company has ever seen, then transfer to the other company. However, keep in mind, sometimes it's better to be a big fish in a small pond, than the other way around.

Smaller companies can offer greater flexibilities in pay, time off, or other arenas. Whereas, in a large company, regardless of your abilities, you may be just another cog in the corporate sales wheel. The only times I recommend jumping ship are when you run out of room for growth or

when quitting is taking place over moral ground, such as when you are being asked to lie to prospects or to use sales methods that fail to honor you, the client, or the process.

So, why are YOU in sales?

Make a decision today that where you are is where you want to be and what you are selling is what you want to be selling.

Make a decision today that being anything less than the best is not okay with you. One of my quotes from my book, *LifeLines: inspirational quotes on money, health, relationships and living*, goes like this: “Anything worth doing, is worth taking the time to do. And anything worth taking time to do, is worth taking the time to do right.”

You can only be the best once you’ve actually made the decision to BE THE BEST.

If during this process of introspection as to why you are in sales, you find that sales is not really your thing, do yourself, your company and your clients a favor – go do something else. I’m not saying this in a bad way. I’m saying it because life is too short to be doing something you dislike for 8 or more hours every day.

If you know sales is where you want to be, get and stay clear on the fact that you have the best job in the world. Where else can you play golf while cutting deals with clients? Where else can you take a 2 or 3 hour lunch and create income at the same time? Sales professionals earn more money and work fewer hours, than people in virtually every other profession. **The most important thing is to find a product or service you not only believe in, but *love* to sell.**

Chapter Three

KNOW YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE

Know your product or service.

There is almost nothing more important to your success in sales than complete knowledge of your product or service. And there are few things more damaging to your reputation than attempting to lie in an effort to cover-up your ignorance.

When I first started out in real estate, I knew there were many things I did not know. As a matter of fact, I knew so little about real estate that I did not even know what I didn't know. So I made 2 rules for myself. Rule 1: I would learn as much as I could, as fast as I could. Rule 2: If someone asked me a question I did not know the answer to, I would simply respond with, "I'm sorry, I don't have the answer to that question, but I promise to have it within the next 60 minutes." And I would go get the answer.

I read everything I could get my hands on – newspapers, magazines and books. I attended specialized seminars. I took classes. I became Salesman of the Month in my second full month in the business and I attribute my intensive studies to a good part of this success. My learning was

accelerated to such a level that at age 21, I was admitted to the California Association of Realtors Teaching Staff as their youngest member.

In discussing these accomplishments, it is not my intent to brag. What I am trying to illustrate is the importance of knowing your product or service inside and out. This is even more important today, where prospects have much more access to information than they've ever had in the past.

When I was a kid, there was no internet. If a prospective client was interested in purchasing a home, television, or any other product or service and wanted to know more about the subject, he or she would have to go to the library and just start reading. Few people had the time for this, so they depended on professionals for guidance.

Today, if people want to find the best widget, all they have to do is punch a few lines into some search engine and VOILA!, they have their answer in seconds. Because of the massive amounts of this readily available information, salespeople can no longer bluff their way through the process. These days, salespeople need to work much harder to stay ahead of their customers.

Think about this: If your customer knows more about your product than you, you are no longer a necessary component of the purchase equation.

Once a client has gained enough knowledge to make an intelligently based decision, they are afforded the luxury of giving their business to the **lowest bidder**. In few fields is this more apparent than that of *consumer electronics*. If a woman is searching for a flat screen TV, she can learn virtually everything she needs to know within 15 or 20 minutes, and, without leaving the comfort of her home or office. Once learning what she needs to know, she can simply order the product online and wait for its delivery.

Do some people still need to see or touch a product before making a decision to purchase? They might. But this 24/7 access to vast reservoirs of information has helped drive prices down across many sectors of our economy – not just that of consumer electronics.

So now look at your business. What are you selling? What makes your product unique when compared to competing products? Does this uniqueness validate the possibility of your product costing more than your competitor's? What if you're selling a service instead of a material product? Why should someone use you, instead of your competitor? What unique quality or skillset do you bring to the table?

As has clearly been addressed in this chapter, I believe depth of knowledge plays a huge role in differentiating one's self from the competition. I'll go back to my time spent in real estate lending for examples of this. One of my favorite methods of ensuring that my sales staff *knew* their product was, as I would walk down the company corridors, I would just fire out at an agent, "What's the definition of an appraisal?" or any other of a myriad of questions. The answer to this question is: *a neutral 3rd party estimate of value*. I wanted to hear this answer (or something pretty close) within seconds of my asking. I wanted to hear the answer without any stumbling or hesitation on the agent's part, because I knew that if my sales staff could answer me, they could speak intelligently with clients.

Here's another example where knowledge of my "product" made a huge difference. In real estate lending transactions, there is something called a sign-off. The sign-off normally takes place at a lawyer, title company or escrow office. The purpose of the sign-off is for the client to sign lender documents enabling a lending transaction to close. For years I heard horror stories of how these sign-offs could take upwards of 2 hours. Imagine if you were the client sitting in a strange office being told to sign dozens of pieces of paper without being told what they contained. Could this leave a bad taste in your mouth? It would me.

The good news is clients who worked with me, or my agents, did not have to experience these horrific events. First, I and my agents were some of the only people in the lending industry who even *went to* sign-offs. For most people in the field, sign-offs were “someone else’s job.” Second, and almost equally important, I could get clients in and out of a sign-off in less than 25 minutes. I attribute this to my ability to describe the documents (and there were roughly 70) in such a way that clients felt comfortable about signing without taking the time to read each piece of paper in its entirety at that time and at that location. I required my agents to be able to do the same. Engaging in these 2 simple practices produced happy clients who had never experienced this level of care in any previous borrowing experiences.

Over time, I built an organization that had more top-producing agents in the field than any other, due, in part, to my demand for excellence in this arena called knowledge.

If you sell a product, make it your business to be able to answer ANY question about that product. Make it your business to be able to discuss your product with a 10-year old so that they understand what you are talking about. Make it your business to never be stumped by any question from any person – ever.

One of the fastest ways to learn about your product is to have to teach about it. If you sell Nissans, go home and tell your spouse all about the new Nissan Altima; why it's superior to last year's model and why it's superior to other manufacturers' makes and models. Do the same thing with the Maxima, the Titan and any other models. Be able to quickly calculate the approximate monthly payments for a purchase or a lease. Know the advantages or disadvantages for tall or other special needs drivers. Know the vehicle's blind spots or other potential shortcomings. By having this level of depth of knowledge, when a client brings up an issue or concern, you will be in a position to quickly respond with the exact description of the issue and how it may or may not apply to the person's situation.

For the extremely well-trained sales professional, many times it's possible to "see the client coming" with an issue before it has even been verbalized, thus enabling the salesperson to move the client to a product more suitable to his or her specific needs – even if that means referring them to the competition.

The goal is that a prospective client should never be able to tell you something you do not know about your product. You see, clients *really do* want it to work this way. They don't want to waste

their precious time researching, if they can trust an expert to serve their needs.

It's never too late to start. Instead of downing that extra thousand calories at lunch, grab a trade journal or product manual and just start reading. Get hold of audio programs about your particular product or service and listen to them during "down times," such as while commuting or during breaks. Listen to these programs until you can repeat the information to any person at any time.

Test yourself by testing your co-workers. For example, as you're headed to the restroom, turn to a co-worker and say something like, "Quick, what's the towing capacity of the Ford F150, the Chevy Silverado and the Nissan Titan?" or any other series of questions that will require that you have the answer when, and if, your co-workers do not. Turn it into a game; all of you will become better salespeople through this practice.

Here's a story that should drive this point home. I was in the market for a high quality accountant. I chose a firm that had an excellent reputation. I remember the first time I sat down with the accountant they had assigned to me. He was only a few years older than me, maybe late 20s. I remember telling him that I knew enough about taxes to be dangerous. I remember having discussions with him where he would disagree

with something I said, to which I would respond, “Check it out. If I’m wrong, then we know I’m wrong and we’ll do it the right way. But I don’t think I’m wrong.” He would check, and roughly 70% of the time, I would turn out to be right.

As he grew in his knowledge and skill, this ratio of him being wrong and me being right moved closer to 50/50. But I vividly recall a new season in our relationship where, if I suggested something, I might or might not have been right, but **HE WAS NO LONGER WRONG – EVER!** This was the day where I was afforded the luxury of having him make a statement and I could just accept it as fact. No longer did I need to research. No longer did I need to waste time asking him if he was sure. I could just do what he told me to do, knowing that it was correct, legal and honest.

Your clients are no different. If they can see that you have a strong understanding of your business, they will “hand you the wheel.”

Whether you sell a product or provide a service, learn every component of it from A to Z. Become familiar with those products and services that compete against yours. Learn enough about your competition that you could sell their product or service as easily as your own. When you bump into a client who has spoken with a competitor prior to speaking with you (and you will) you’ll

have the edge. Once your clients know that you know your competition as well as you know your own business, they will place their complete trust in you.

And don't stop there. Learn about services that are ancillary to yours. An ancillary service would be something that is part of your product or service chain, but is not in direct competition with you. Put another way, ancillary could mean, services that support the products or services you sell. Here are a few examples of ancillary services. **Example 1:** Your business is new car sales. Ancillary services could be: used car dealers, aftermarket parts distributors, trustworthy repair facilities, etc. **Example 2:** You sell real estate. Ancillary services would be: title companies, lawyers, escrow companies, loan companies, and so forth. Find out what differentiates the good from the bad of those people or companies, and have names and phone numbers handy when your clients ask if there is anyone you can recommend for such and such.

Having a good knowledge base of ancillary businesses holds tremendous value. Clients often ask for referrals to related businesses. As your sales numbers increase, more and more clients will make these requests. By having a good referral network, not only have you saved your client time and energy, but these companies may

pay you referral fees or return the favor by sending new business back in your direction. However, even if you never receive a single referral fee or any client referrals, by referring your clients to quality ancillary service providers, you will create increased goodwill with them, which will translate to increased referrals. **And even if *this* does not take place**, wouldn't you want to be treated this way if you were the client? I know I would. So, no matter how you slice it, having a good "book" of ancillary services available for your client is the right way to go.

Read and study items that are indirectly related to your product or service.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about. Even though my job was selling high-end single family homes, I read articles about rental property, commercial real estate, real estate law, retail space, land acquisition, etc. So, let's use reading about commercial real estate to illustrate why reading about related products or services can hold value.

Obviously, there is little, if any, apparent direct relationship between commercial office space and single family homes. Yet, I knew there was *enough of a relationship* between them that I needed to know this information. If I was speaking with a client who said something like, "I don't

think values will continue to rise.” I could immediately respond with, “San Francisco office space is at an all time high, with vacancy rates at all time lows. Clearly, at least for the foreseeable future, we are looking at a very strong economy which will continue to hold inventory down, thus supporting higher prices.”

If you were the client, could you have argued this comment? Probably not. Understand, I wasn’t trying to look like some hotshot/know-it-all guy; nor would I ever try to fight with the client. I was merely stating what I believed to be the more probable future, based upon my *professional* opinion.

Further, if the client was a layman, the response I gave did not really leave any opening for additional discussion. It was highly unlikely this, or any other client, would have read the office space article. And it was also clear that I probably knew more about real estate than he did. And again, I cannot stress this point enough; it was not about me being right and the client being wrong, it was about me being the professional and him not. Could I have stepped into my client’s job and just started doing it? Of course not. And your client should never be able to step into yours. When prospective clients see that you have a firm grasp on your product or service, they can relax knowing they are in the hands of a professional.

Become *the most knowledgeable* person in your business and you will be well on your way to becoming *the best* in your business.

Chapter Four

KNOW YOUR CLIENTS' NEEDS

(listen rather than talk)

One of the most important practices you can engage in is listening. The Bible contains a story about how a man named Samson killed 1000 soldiers with the jaw-bone of an ass. I've been around long enough to know, that millions more deals have been killed by salesmen using the exact same tool!

I've NEVER begun to work on any client's behalf before learning their needs, perceived needs, wants and desires. Notice also, how I differentiated between these 4 items, especially the first two. A client can tell you that he or she *needs* something, not realizing that you could deliver a product or service, that not only meets that need, but which also costs less than what they *thought* they needed.

The Importance of Asking the Right Questions

The following will illustrate how important it is to ask the right questions.

A client walks into Best Buy® and tells the salesman that he, “needs a computer with 2 meg of RAM and a 500 gig hard drive, with a flat screen monitor.”

Instead of merely walking over to the storage room and picking up a box containing the requested product, the salesman decides to ask a few questions.

1) **“Mr. Jones, what do you plan on using the computer for?”** Jones answers, “It’s for my wife. She’ll be using it mostly for internet, emails, and writing letters.”

2) **“Great. Will anybody else be using it?”** Jones: “No just her. My daughter is leaving for college in 3 months.”

3) **“Okay. How big is the area where you’re putting the computer? Will it be going into an office, or will it be located in a common area such as a kitchen or bedroom?”** Jones: “It will probably stay in the kitchen/family room. That’s where my wife spends most of her time.”

4) **“Okay. And about how much did you have budgeted for your new computer?”** Jones: “I figured on spending around \$700.”

Salesman: “Great. Let’s go find that new computer for your wife.”

The salesman then leads Jones over to the laptop section, instead of the desktop section. And engages Jones with the following conversation:

Salesman: “Mr. Jones, I could sell you that computer over there (pointing to the desktop units). It has the RAM and gigs you asked for, but based upon your wife’s usage, she probably only needs half a meg of RAM and maybe a 100 gig hard drive. She also probably does not need a DVD burner.”

Jones: “I’m not sure she even knows what a DVD burner is.”

Salesman kind of smiles and continues: “Take a look at this laptop. It takes up less space than a desktop model and, of course, the monitor is built into the unit so you don’t have all kinds of junk cluttering up a common area of your home. It has no DVD burner, a little less RAM and a 100 gig hard drive, but still more than enough of both to get the job done. But by ditching the 2 gig of RAM and the DVD burner and cutting the size of the hard drive, we can actually knock the price down to an extremely affordable \$450.”

Salesman continued: “Also you mentioned that your daughter was headed off to college in a few months. My guess is that you’re probably going to be looking for a computer for her also. Am I right?”

Jones: “Yes, you are. I just didn’t want to think about it right now because I wasn’t prepared to write a check for \$2000 for 2 computers.” (Notice how Jones just admitted that he was actually ready to purchase 2 computers at up to \$1000 each?)

Salesman: “I understand completely. I can tell you I wouldn’t be ready to write that check either. But let’s take a look at this. You mentioned that you were planning on spending approximately \$700 on your wife’s computer. Approximately means to most people in the world of sales, that you might have been willing to go to 750, 800 or even higher. Is this a correct statement?”

Jones: “Yes. But I really didn’t want to.”

Salesman: “I totally understand. Who wants to spend 800 or more dollars on a computer that will probably be outdated in 3 or 4 years anyway?”

Salesman continued: “But let’s say that you *were* ready to spend the 800. We could not only bring home a brand new computer for your wife, but for just about \$100 more than your top price, you could also bring one home for your daughter. This will give her a little bit of time to get comfortable using it before she actually starts school. Also, is she going to be living at home or going away to school? (Salesman already knew the answer to this question because Jones had said his daughter was leaving for school in three months. Salesman is also now getting Jones focused on the daughter’s needs since it appears the wife’s have been met.)

Jones states: “She’s going to college in another state.”

Salesman: “Well I’m sure you’re well aware of the fact that most students have very limited living space. Also, your daughter will probably

need a computer that she can, not only use in her room, but that she can take to class to make note-taking easier. Also, this computer is set up for wireless internet thus permitting her to do online research. I was reading an article the other day that over 80% of all college students now use laptops. And that almost 98% of them use the internet to research papers they're required to write."

Salesman continued: "The good news is for less than half of the 2000 dollars you did not want to spend "right now," you can take both these computers home and have a happy wife and a happy daughter. And let's say that for some reason your daughter wants a different computer – but I don't know why she would since this one meets virtually every need of today's college student - - portability, functionality, internet- ready, etc., but if she does not like it for any reason, you can bring it back for a full refund and you will still have purchased your wife's computer for around half of what you thought you were going to be spending - - killing 2 birds with one stone. You'll probably be the hero in your home for the next month."

Breaking It Down

Now ignoring the multiple forms of sales techniques that were being used – especially in the last paragraph, do you see how asking the right questions gave the salesman an opportunity to

completely meet Mr. Jones' needs? Both current and future? Even if Jones does not purchase the 2nd computer, he'll be happy the salesman saved him over 300 dollars on the computer for his wife. Not forgetting the fact that the computer was going to be located in a common area, so a desktop, even with a flat monitor, would still have not really met Jones' needs. Jones will probably return for his daughter's computer and/or refer friends or co-workers.

AND, if Jones does purchase both computers, the salesman has made 2 sales and Jones has probably spent a few more dollars than he would have had he purchased only the single computer.

- Salesman gets credit for 2 sales instead of 1.
- Salesman probably sells higher volume than if he had sold only a single unit.
- Jones gets the right computer for his [wife's] situation.
- Jones saved about 300 dollars compared to what he was planning on spending.
- Jones gets to surprise his daughter with a "gift" for her also. And can justify the spending to his wife by showing her that it cost only \$100 more than he was planning on spending on the wife's computer alone and now their daughter's needs are also met.

Everyone wins.

The above scenario happens every day in every field with sales professionals who are smart enough to be asking the right questions **before** attempting to fill a prospect's needs.

So what are the right questions, and when do you ask them?

I'll answer the second question first – **when do you ask the questions?** I NEVER get started working for any client before asking qualifying questions. I inform each person that we will spend a little more time up front, but that it will save a ton of time later on.

I've always used this time to, not only ask questions, but to describe the process of my business. When you take the time to do these 2 things, clients will almost always be beholden to you right from the start.

So what are the “right” questions?

The *right* questions can vary from field to field and product to product. However, one of the easiest ways to determine appropriate questions is by looking at what it takes to complete a purchase of your product or service. Another avenue is to go to a superior and ask him or her

what he or she believes are the important questions you should be asking any prospect considering a purchase of your goods or services. Or, you can just start with the basics. (See below.)

Who - - Who is purchasing or who has the final say in the purchase. You want to make sure the person you are dealing with is the person who will be signing the contract and/or the check. There is nothing worse than spending time and effort *selling* a person on your product or service only to learn they need secondary approval, or worse yet, they were merely advance scouts for the true decision-maker or purchaser of your product.

What - - What are they looking for specifically. Have they shopped your product or services elsewhere? If they have, what did they learn? Someone who has done a lot of shopping or research is a *real buyer*, whether or not they decide to purchase from you. Few people will waste substantial amounts of time and energy for absolutely no reason.

When - - What time frames is the prospect dealing with. The more time a prospect has, the more they can shop you – especially if your product or service is a regular commodity. Consumer electronics is a perfect example of a regular commodity. A multitude of stores and online sites have access to the exact same product;

each trying to undercut the other for a customer's business. This sets up a situation where a sales professional can go through the entire qualifying process and still lose the sale to a discounter, because all the prospect ever intended was, to milk the salesman for information then purchase the product from the lowest available supplier.

The smaller a prospect's purchase window, the more likely this individual is to purchase from the first person who appears to be the most knowledgeable while still offering a quality product at a reasonable price. The "first person" in this situation could actually be *the first person* the customer speaks with or the first "professional" they encounter compared to other salespeople they've already met.

Why - - Why is the client in need of this product or service. This is where the sales professional has the opportunity to learn the motivating factor(s) behind a potential purchase. A strong motivation will beat out virtually every other facet of the sales process every time. In its early years, Federal Express built its reputation on creating a motivating factor called *saving your job*. "When it absolutely positively has to be there overnight." Their entire platform was: If your job is at stake, you better use us to make sure you still have a job next week. **AND IT WORKED!**

Someone may have a short time frame to make a purchase, but through this qualifying process you learn that the person is merely trying to get someone else “off their back” and that this is the **true driving force** behind speaking with you.

There are few things more important than learning someone’s motivating factor. Too few salespeople realize just how important this component is and many make the unconscious decision to skip this vital step by “just getting to work.”

Benefits of Asking the Right Questions

By going through a strong prequalification process you:

- will have set yourself apart from your competitors;
- will be better able to actually service the client by delivering a product that meets their needs;
- will be able to use the information you have gleaned to help close the sale;
- may open the door to additional sales, and finally;
- may open the door to referrals.

Taking time to identify a prospect’s desires and needs will save you time and make you a better

salesperson, while increasing your odds of closing the transaction. Never skip this all-important step.

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Chapter Five

COPY SUCCESS

From age 17 to 20, I was spending anywhere between 100 and 110 hours per week working (split between school and actual work). This schedule took its toll on my body, which had fallen severely out of shape. I was fortunate enough to have a close friend who was in incredible condition – 4% body fat and virtually nothing but muscle. He had been a high school athlete and was still in great condition. Even though I was only 21, I knew I needed to make some changes. I asked him if I could follow him around for a few days to watch his fitness routines. The idea here was that if I duplicated my friend’s routines, I too, would be in excellent physical condition – maybe not 4% body fat, but more physically fit than I was. I did not copy all his routines, because many of them were body-building related. Of the routines I did duplicate, I added my own “twists,” which enabled me to maximize the benefit I would receive from each particular exercise.

It does not matter what business you’re in, it doesn’t matter if you’re selling a product or a service, nor whether you’ve been in business for

1 month or 20 years, success leaves footprints. And those footprints are available for any of us to follow.

Who cares if others say that you are not doing original work? The bottom line is, as long as you're not violating copyright or patent laws, if your efforts, through duplication, are producing positive results, then... more power to you. These days it seems that most "new" ideas have actually been stacked upon older ones anyway. And the mere fact that something is not original does not mean it should not be used.

When I entered the field of real estate, I looked at the most successful people in the business and mimicked their activities. I was not knowledgeable enough to mimic all of them, but those that I could, I did. This practice contributed to my status as a high producer, in a company that contained many seasoned professionals.

One day, when I was in my mid-twenties, I was speaking with the manager of a large real estate company. I had been a sales agent for one of the local offices years prior and was still in communication with a number of the managers. We were discussing the new wonderboy (actually manager) of one of the company's newly established local offices. I said, "Joe (not his real name) is stealing calls from his agents; that's how

he's achieving his incredible 'success.' I know this because he did the same thing when he was an assistant manager in my office." The person I spoke with responded, "I won't argue that point; but sometimes you need to understand that activity begets activity. As a manager, Joe is doing all kinds of things to drum up business – the same way you, I and multitudes of others did when we were new to the business."

While I knew my statement was correct, I also knew that I needed to heed this man's words. The more I thought about what he'd said, combined with watching what others (including myself) were doing or had done, the more I realized the truth behind his comments. Was this new manager stealing calls from his salespeople? I know he was. But this does not negate that he was also engaged in all kinds of other activities that other managers, in other offices, had engaged in when they were trying to build their new offices. He was duplicating success and it was working.

Have you ever noticed how lucky people always seem to be in the right place at the right time? I've never hit a jackpot in Las Vegas. The primary reason for this is that I don't gamble. At this point, most people usually respond with something like, "Well Richard, of course you can't win if you don't play!" And my answer to this is, "YOU'RE

ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! You can't win if you don't play." The longer I've been alive, the more I've noticed that it has always been the same people who were "getting lucky" in business – being in the right place at the right time. But I also noticed these people were doing many things others were not.

"Luck" doesn't happen without activity. It happens when salespeople are continually doing what they need to do, so they are where they need to be when that prospective buyer or client appears. This high level of activity is clearly a success pattern that anyone in sales, especially newer people, should follow.

Traits of Successful Sales Professionals

While there are industry-specific characteristics of success, there are also some standard behaviors or patterns we should follow. The following list is in no particular order. In my opinion, each trait listed below is of equal importance to the others.

1) A willingness to work. No matter what business the superstars have been in, I've noticed they've always been willing to do whatever work needs to be done. No complaining, no whining, no "this isn't my job," just pure and simple doing the work. As a boss there were times when I

would deliberately throw a piece of paper on the floor, just to see who would pick it up. I'm happy to report that over 85% of the people who worked for me would. I use to tell people, if you are interviewing a candidate for any job, look at the car they drive. I don't care if the car is old or new, **what I do care about is**, is it dirty with all kinds of papers and garbage strewn about the inside, or is it clean and neat. The dirty, unkempt vehicle has always led me to believe the owner is lazy – too lazy to wash the car or too lazy to put their trash in the garbage when they get home at night.

I'm not a giant believer in working hard as opposed to working smart, but I've never had any problem putting in a full day's work. Moreover, whenever I've started a new project or business, I've always been willing to do whatever it takes to ensure future success, which has usually meant putting in some extra hours.

I sometimes joke with people that “a hard day's work never killed anyone... but why take chances?” But this statement has always been just that – a joke. My longest “workday” was 37 hours with no breaks and no sleep (and also no drugs or caffeine). I've known people who have gone over 40 hours on a single stint. When I started one of my first companies, I averaged between 115 and 120 working hours per week for almost 7 months.

And when I started a new venture in late 1990, I worked 352 days the following year. This is not about bragging, it's about my willingness to work when there is work that needs to be done.

Successful people are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure success. Willingness to work is a key component.

2) A willingness to learn from the mistakes of others. Success-driven people do not have the time or desire to reinvent the wheel. These people are not interested in trying and failing in arenas where others have already proven that certain actions do not work or that others do.

A friend's father used to always say, "A fool learns by experience; but a wise man learns by the experience of fools." I really took this saying to heart. It became my quest for the Grail to NOT learn my lessons from the School of Hard Knocks.

With that being said, I don't think I've met a single person who learned to not touch hot stoves by any method other than... touching a hot stove. It seems there are just certain things we need to learn for ourselves. But there are many lessons we can easily learn from the trailblazers who have preceded us.

Whenever any person with more experience than I (such as, a boss, a book-writer, an experienced co-worker or associate) said, “Such and such is the best way to do such and such,” **I followed that method or advice!** Why should I waste my time and energy (and subsequently, money) just to learn that my way is the wrong way or that there is an easier way?

Do I still make mistakes? Absolutely. I believe that if you’re not making mistakes, you’re not trying anything new. But on the rudimentary issues, I’ve always tried to keep my learning curve as short as possible.

Successful people are more willing to allow others to aid in their “education.”

3) A Desire to work *smart* instead of *hard*. Any person can work hard. And there is nothing wrong with this when it’s called for. However, if productivity can occur by putting out ½ the amount of energy, why would any person do anything else? In a world of sales, many people will do things to appear to be working hard to keep bosses off their backs. As a manager, I was always concerned with the bottom line - - was the person producing what they said they would or what I knew they could.

There are some fields where the term “it’s a numbers game” is frequently thrown around. Insurance and securities sales are two. But even for these industries, the question begs to be asked, “Does it really have to be a numbers game?” It seems to me there must be a more efficient way to market rather than just picking up a phone book and calling people who may or may not have the desire, need or money to buy?

In an episode of the television show *Friends*, a door-to-door salesman talked one of the characters into purchasing a set of encyclopedias. But upon further review, it turned out the character could only afford a single encyclopedia so he bought the letter “V.” Cold calling unqualified candidates to see if they desire your product or service has always lived for me as one of the most ill-conceived notions that’s ever been derived.

Salespeople are notorious for engaging in activities that waste their time or that fail to put them in front of *qualified* prospects. I’ve been guilty of this myself. It’s an easy trap to fall into because there are times when these activities fill time with easy work rather than the tough work of trying to locate qualified prospects and actually close sales. So, managers, in an effort to fill this time, come up with programs that are really nothing more than work for the sake of *appearing* to work.

Working smart is about working in such a manner so that time and energy are not wasted. Think about the burnout rate of a salesperson whose job it is to pick up a phone directory and start dialing numbers of unqualified candidates. Even if the caller actually connects with someone who may be interested in their product or service, the prospect may still not have the need, or ability, to purchase.

Successful people do not engage in activity merely for its own sake; they do things that will put them in front of *qualified* potential purchasers of their product or service. This is one of their 2 jobs – the other being, closing deals.

4) Avoidance of activities that do nothing more than waste time. While sounding similar to the previous trait, there is a difference between busy work and activities that are complete time-wasters. Gossip, reading the paper during business hours, surfing the net, none of these serve any purpose whatsoever. Like video games or TV reality shows, these activities may be fun, but there is no room for them in the world of work.

Engaging in complete time wasting activities is a success-killer. When was the last time you saw the top salesperson in your company standing around gossiping? Or reading the newspaper during prime prospecting/work hours? Or spending 2 or 3 hours

a day posting updates to their Facebook page? My bet is, you probably can't name one.

Successful people do not have the time or desire to waste time by engaging in activities that will not result in success. This group of people rarely watches television, and if they do, it's nighttime television (after the world has shut down). These people don't spend time chatting about the inconsequentialities of life. They do not rehash the same problems over and over. They work. And if they aren't working, they're taking time off.

Pure timewasters are exactly that. In the Time chapter of my book, *LifeLines*, one of my quotes reads, "Each of us receives the exact same 24 hours in each day. Successful people just use those hours differently."

Want to be successful? Cut out pure time wasters. Nothing will sidetrack your path to success faster than engaging in valueless activities.

5) Drive; better known as *A Burning Desire*. Every superstar I've ever met, whether in the field of sales, sports, or any other endeavor, has had some type of "fire" burning inside them. Whether it's the desire to be the best or just a hardcore

competitive spirit, for these people, **failing is simply not an option.**

The professional speaking circuit has more speakers having *Motivation* as their presentation than any other category. There appear to be 2 reasons for this. One, we are a nation of people who “need the fix.” Two, motivational speakers do not need to have any degrees, competence, or even knowledge to be standing in front of an audience. The primary problem with motivational seminars is that their effects are short-lived. Many of the participants come out of these events “on fire,” only to run into a problem or hit a speed bump, which immediately douses the flames.

Successful people are rarely in attendance at these cheerleading events. These people have an internal drive moving them towards ultimate success that rarely goes into “off” mode. It’s rare that this drive is sourced through the quest for the almighty dollar, although it can be. Nor is it about being better than other people. This drive is most often about being the best this person can be. **The person in the mirror is driving them; not some external force.** This *drive* is what helped to make America great. People who wouldn’t take “no” for an answer. People who *knew* there must be a better way to build a mousetrap. History is filled with accounts of such people.

Drive makes the difference between good and great. As an example: There are approximately 77,000 NCAA college football players in the United States. However, the NFL, which every college player aspires to become a part of, has less than 1700 players – total. Only about 224 players are fed from the college football pool into the NFL each year and, of this group, only about half of these individuals will ever see regular season play. For players who are drafted by NFL teams, virtually every one of them have roughly equal capabilities. But if you listen to current or former NFL coaches talk about many players, they will discuss the player’s “fire” or “heart.” That’s because in a world where speed, strength and overall athleticism are pretty darn close to equal, the only qualities remaining that can truly differentiate these players from one another is the *will* and/or *determination* to be the best.

No matter what field of endeavor, the people at the top of the field almost always have some type of **burning desire for success**.

6) They accept responsibility for everything that goes on in their lives. Star salespeople do not blame others when things go wrong. Even if something is not their fault, you will not hear them complain.

The Pittsburgh Steelers had a coach by the name of Bill Cowher who, season after season, would appear in virtually every post-game interview where his team had lost, crying, LITERALLY, about how the referees had cost his team the game. People would ask me why he made me so sick and my answer was always the same: “A) If a team is going to win or lose on 1 or 2 bad calls, they don’t deserve to win. By season’s end, each team has had roughly the same number of calls going in their favor as against. B) This guy [Cowher] is always willing to *accept praise for his victories*, but is always looking to *place blame on others for his defeats*. Whatta Punk.”

Stars know they are “cause in the matter.” These people will do whatever it takes to be successful, but they also know that success does not occur every single time. Even Tiger Woods loses once in a while. And when he does, you don’t hear him whining about how inclement weather or a jet flying overhead cost him the victory, because he knows all the other players are playing under the same conditions. What we also don’t have the privilege of seeing are the thousands of hours that Tiger Woods has placed into his game behind the scenes. Weightlifting, practice rounds, private coaching, and so forth, all go into the unbelievable play we see when he’s competing in a tournament. I’m not a giant fan of Woods because of how he operates in his private life, but there is no question

in my mind that he expends every ounce of energy to ensure success when he's on the golf course.

True sales professionals take every possible road they anticipate will lead to success. But inherent in their journey, is a willingness to accept responsibility for everything that occurs around them, be it good or bad.

7) Superstars have a positive self-image. Positive self-image is nothing more than a person feeling good about their self. I've never met anyone at the top of his or her game, who did not have a strong sense of self. Once in a while, you might hear some self-deprecating remark from these people, but you become very clear, very quickly, they are merely joking. When these people look in the mirror, they like who they see.

Many character traits of good people: honesty, hard working, moral, no garbage-mouthing, etc., are also part of the sales professionals' lives. These people feel good about themselves, what they do, and how they can have a positive impact on all those around them – including their clientele.

Star salespeople have some innate quality that attracts clients to them. I do not mean prospects can locate sales stars simply by using a divining rod. I mean that when a true sales professional

enters the presence of a potential client, the client(s) are clear that someone “different” has entered their space. I believe, positive self-image plays an important role in this “being different.” I feel the true sales professional is so different from the rank and file, that they really do kind of leap out at prospective clients.

Positive self image is not necessarily a birth right. Many people have beat insurmountable odds to become who they are. Larry Ellison, the head of Oracle and one of the richest men in the world, was born in the Bronx to an unwed 19 year old. He never graduated from a secondary institution, yet, at the time of this writing, he is the 3rd richest man in America.

People can train themselves in the arena of self-worth. And while this topic is far too vast to give the considerable attention due it in this venue, there are a few practices people can engage in that will increase their image of their selves.

A) Very rarely do you hear these people speak negatively about their intelligence, their looks, or any other personal characteristic. And if they do utter any negative remarks, they are almost always used for purposes of self-deprecating humor.

B) You will almost never hear these people speak poorly of others. They know there will always be people greater and weaker than

themselves and they are thankful to be who they are.

C) Many of these people maintain a fit lifestyle. No smoking, heavy drinking or other body-hurtful vices. Healthy Body/Healthy Mind – that kind of thing.

D) These people do not associate (spend time with) crappy or low self-esteem people. Low self-esteem people oftentimes lift themselves up by putting others down.

E) High self-worth people maintain a positive outlook on life.

Positive self-image does not guarantee success; but I guarantee a negative self-image will prevent it.

8) A commitment to honesty. It's very rare for true stars to be dishonest. They don't need to be. They truly believe in the product or service they're selling. They believe in their own skills and knowledge, or know how they can improve or obtain either. These people understand that tricking someone into making a purchase may close a single sale, but it will not lead to referrals or repeat business. (Referrals and repeat business being the cornerstones of sales longevity.) At the end of the day, the person this individual sees in the mirror is more important than any other

and there is no ability to escape the judgment of that person.

These people deal fairly – whether with prospective clients, bosses or co-workers. They are the people whom others come to because they can be trusted. These are no BS people - - once again, they have neither the time nor desire. They will be the quickest to respond with “I don’t know,” if they do not know something.

One of my quotes from *LifeLines* is, “Lying is acceptable when you tell your grandmother that her less than perfect dinner was delicious. In all other cases strive to tell the truth – no matter what the consequences.”

Honesty has always been a key character trait in every sales superstar I’ve ever met.

9) Star salespeople are problem-solvers. Through the years I’ve noticed that the best salesmen were people who viewed their positions as being those of problem-solvers. Whether a prospect was purchasing a computer, a suit, or a new home, these salespeople viewed themselves as someone who was there to help the client solve a “problem.” The client may not have viewed their issue or desired purchase as a “problem,” but, by the sales professional

viewing their job in this manner, it seemed to make them somehow more capable at, not only maintaining a tight grip on the client, but also at closing the sale.

Seeing successful people viewing themselves as problem-solvers did a few things for me in my own professional development. First, I became unafraid of the word “problem.” To me a problem is nothing more than someone throwing down the gauntlet. It is my “dragon to slay.” Problems energize me. And, when I solve them, I get to feel like the hero. Do I successfully solve every problem? Of course not. But I have become known as a problem-solver? Also, in efforts to somehow lessen the negative connotation associated with the word “problem,” many people have substituted the word “challenge.” I have never done this. A problem is a problem and it exists as something to be conquered.

The second thing I gained from successful people viewing themselves as problem-solvers was that I became a critical thinker. I hate using the next term because it has become so pedestrian, but problems that no others were solving forced me to look *outside the box* for solutions. Attempting to solve problems made me: interact with more people, speak with people who had greater knowledge than I, learn things I would not have otherwise learned, and appreciate others for the

skills or information they had developed in their lives.

Last, but not least, I got to earn a bunch of money. Early on, it became very clear to me that people who were solving problems were paid better than almost everyone else. It also seemed that these people had created an environment of complete mobility, as that mobility pertained to being able to get work or make money almost anywhere, at any time. By developing their abilities to think critically, these people were able to solve problems outside their chosen fields. Loaded with all this information, I concluded the world needs problem-solvers and **is willing to pay for them in any economy**. This was huge for me since I'm easily bored doing the same thing day in and day out. By being able to jump from sector to sector, I've been able to keep variety in my work life.

Shift your view of your role in work to that of being a problem-solver and I guarantee you are one step closer on your path to the top.

Of course there are other qualities or traits of successful salespeople. The important thing to remember, especially for new salespeople, is to duplicate success. Copying the habits of successful people in your company or field will save time and energy and will accelerate your professional growth.

Chapter Six

BUILD YOUR BRAND

be distinct from the masses

I know what you're thinking... Copy Success was the previous chapter... now he's telling me to be unique. And you're right!

Copying those actions or traits that others have developed to create success can and will lead to your own success. But intelligent branding can lead to massive success. Branding creates longevity and when done effectively, can deliver a knock-out punch to your competition.

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the following company names?

MaryKay Cosmetics - - For me, it's pink Cadillacs for their top saleswomen.

Motel 6 - - An inexpensive place to stay that always seems to have an available room.

McDonald's - - No matter what part of the world you're in, a Big Mac tastes the way you expect a Big Mac to taste.

Are there better burgers, hotel rooms and cosmetics than those provided by the companies above? Of course there are. But these companies have done a great job of getting everyday people to recognize them without doing any *real* thinking. I'm sure you could come up with a dozen more examples. Volvo is not the safest car on the road, but it is the first car people think of when they hear the words "automotive safety." Porsche may not be the best performing car, but it's not unusual for people to respond that it is, when asked for the first model that comes to mind when the word "performance" is used.

The point here is that at one time, Porsche and Volvo were just different makes of cars. But at some point, some person, decided to *brand* them in a way that separated them from the myriad of other manufacturer choices available to consumers. Every industry has examples of this activity. It doesn't matter if the industry is fast food, real estate sales or pharmaceutical supplies. What does matter is when I say, "How do you spell relief," you respond, "R O L A I D S." When I say, "Sports drink," you say, "Gatorade."

Branding is not quite as easy as it may appear. Technically, every competitor of yours is, or *should be*, looking to set themselves apart. Even within your own company, salespeople who have overlapping territories will try to

distinguish themselves. In few fields is this more clearly exemplified than the field of real estate. A single real estate office may contain as many as 100 sales agents. Most offices service the city they sit in. This is especially true for metropolitan regions. However, it's not unusual to find larger companies with offices separated by less than 5 or 10 miles. And in some larger cities, you may find one company with multiple offices, not to mention the presence of competing real estate offices/companies. Some towns may have over 500 agents vying for the same customer. This situation demands that agents do something to set themselves apart from the others.

Have you ever driven through an area, district or complex where every *For Sale* sign seems to have the same agent's name on it? We all have. What this agent has done is develop a niche. They haven't really branded themselves in the normal sense of the word, but if you ask people in that neighborhood who they would use if they were buying or selling a home, they might say something like, "Jane Smith. She knows this area better than anyone." Jane has successfully branded herself as the professional for that section of town. And in that neighborhood, whether you are buying or selling, Jane would be considered the "go to" person.

So let's take a look at the primary component of *branding*.

Branding is defined by Dictionary.com as: "A kind or variety of something distinguished by some distinctive characteristic; a distinctive category; a particular kind."

A "distinctive characteristic." Is your company's product or service set out in a manner that would be considered *distinct from the masses*? Even if it isn't, can YOU set yourself out as distinct from your competitors?

Methods of Becoming Distinct

Price Cutting is usually the first way most people or companies seek to distinguish themselves. "Come see us. We have the lowest price!" There are 3 problems with this approach.

1) The time and money cost of obtaining a discounted product or service may not be worth the savings. If the consumer has to spend 7 more dollars in gas and 20 extra minutes of driving time just to save 10 dollars on a DVD player, the savings won't justify the spending of extra time and money.

2) Cost cutting creates a downward spiral which, not only impacts profit, but can put a company out of business. Once one person or entity starts

cutting prices, other people or companies are forced to follow suit. All-of-a-sudden it seems with each passing week, someone new is offering the *lowest price*. This, of course, leads to further discounting from other competitors, causing a downward spiral that ends up forcing everyone out of business except for the biggest and strongest.

3) Cutting prices will almost always remove any consumer distinction of value from the product or service. Once consumers become clear that they can always purchase a product or service at a discounted price, they will never be content with paying the full retail price.

I am not a fan of using this method to distinguish a person or company. I believe, in the end, even the consumer will lose.

Service is the second most common area where people or companies try to distinguish themselves. Nordstrom did a great job of this when they first hit the California market. “100% satisfaction guaranteed.” Someone could purchase an item, wear it to a party or parties, bring it back and expect and get a *full refund*. I personally consider this stealing, but ethics aside, Nordstrom, through this and other *service* oriented campaigns, clawed their way to the top of the California retail market almost overnight. They did this by adding a dimension to the industry that had previously not

existed. Other retailers tried to follow, but by the time the competition realized what had happened, Nordstrom had already become a permanent fixture on the California retail landscape.

I like *service* as a way of distinguishing one's company or self from the competition. There is almost always something that can be done differently or better than others. Of course, once any degree of success occurs, copycats appear, forcing you to come up with something new or different again, or risk falling behind. I enjoy this type of "reinvention." When I first started in business, I did anything and everything to create business, but I was also constantly trying to do things that set me apart. And it worked.

Here's an example of one of the techniques I used to set myself apart. Whenever I closed a transaction, I would always send female clients a dozen red roses (not \$30 dozens - - \$100 dozens) and to male clients, a bottle of Dom Perignon champagne. In addition, I always mailed handwritten *thank you* notes. While these practices would have been very easy for any competitor to duplicate, none did, because roses and/or Dom Perignon had so quickly become established as Richard Hart's "thing." Since no one had ever done this before, the effect was dramatic and striking. Now also understand, I did not do this to make a splash, attract attention, or somehow

purchase business. I did these things for the specific purpose of sincerely saying *thank you* to people who had had faith in some guy they didn't know; trusting that he would be able to help them or their clients.

Take some time to look at your business, industry and competition. What service could you perform better, faster, more efficiently or differently that would label you as *distinct*? Once you come up with a few ideas, start putting them into practice.

Slogans and Phrases are another way to brand one's self or company. Century 21, a nationwide real estate company, use to urge their agents to wear gold jackets. (In some regions they still may.) I came up with a slogan which they did not use, but which to this day, many people still seem to respond favorably to – “Excellence speaks in gold.” Would gold jackets combined with this tag line have been a good combination?

“Quality is job 1” - - Ford.

“We try harder” - - Avis.

“I'm lovin' it” - - McDonalds.

In each of the above examples, consumers had a preexisting awareness of these companies' existence, but by coming up with unique phrases,

these companies were able to further ingrain themselves into people's memories and lives.

The danger with a slogan or phrase is that you REALLY need to live up to it. Do you remember when Lucky Supermarkets originated the campaign "3's A Crowd?" The promise of this slogan was that if there were more than 3 people in line, Lucky would immediately open another check-stand to speed you along your way. It didn't work. Stores couldn't staff up with fulltime workers just to service a lunch or evening rush, so customers quickly became very bothered when they were forced to wait in lines containing more than 3 people with banners hanging over their heads exclaiming "3's A Crowd."

I remember walking into *Toys R Us* one time around the same time the "3's A Crowd" campaign was under way at *Lucky*. *Toys R Us* had duplicated it and the check-out areas made claims similar to Lucky's. I was standing in 1 of 2 open lines with at least 4 people in each line. After I had completed my purchase, I approached the manager and said, "You should not have the banners up if you can't deliver on your promises." The manager curtly replied, "We're doing our best, sir." I responded, "Look, I'm not the one making the promise. If you can't deliver, just don't make the promise. I understand that waiting in line is part of the shopping experience; but once you make the

promise, you have now shifted my expectations. Don't get mad at me because you can't do your job."

Now understand, I was not mad. I was not in a bad mood that day. I was not upset because I had to wait in line for an extra 3 minutes. I just wanted the manager to "get" that the promise was causing a perception problem for every customer in line, not just me. The fact that the manager copped an attitude added insult to injury.

McDonald's "*I'm Lovin' It*" is innocuous. There is no room for customers to get upset about this line because it doesn't contain any type of promise. On the other hand, Avis' "*We Try Harder*" did contain a promise and, therefore, posed a potential risk to the company. And for someone who had been to Hertz, the # 1 car rental company at the time Avis rolled this campaign out, Avis had darned well better at least *appear* to be *trying harder*, or run the risk of losing a customer – forever.

My *Toys R Us* episode took place more than 20 years ago, yet I still remember it as though it occurred yesterday. Having never shopped at *Lucky*, I don't know if they ran into similar problems with over-promising and under-delivering, but I suspect they did since the campaign seemed to disappear pretty quickly.

Taco Bell: “*Think Outside the Bun*” = Good.
It’s catchy and gets you thinking, “Ya, instead of a burger, I think I’ll get a burrito.”

Taco Bell: “*Run for the Border*” = Not Good.
You don’t want Americans thinking “run for the border” when contemplating Mexican food.

“Jane Smith Your Neighborhood Specialist”

“Think Safety. Think Nissan.”

“ABC Corp. Maker of the Best Widgets in the World.”

Slogans and Phrases can be a great way to gain name recognition and to set yourself apart from the competition. Just remember, catchy slogans get remembered. If your slogan contains a promise, you *must* keep the promise or you will be remembered as the person or company that didn’t, thus causing irreparable harm to your reputation.

Images and/or Characters can be used to have companies quickly identified by the masses. This is what logos are all about. I don’t believe that logos are that important for small businesses. I’m not saying small companies shouldn’t spend a few extra dollars on a nice, professional logo; what I am saying is that logos are generally used as a way of bringing brand recognition to the masses and usually through some heavy advertising medium, such as television.

Images, characters and logos work very well when combined with massive video or print advertising campaigns. Ronald McDonald, the Geico gecko, McDonald's golden arches, the Taco Bell Chihuahua and Jared, the Subway Sandwich guy, are a few examples. The idea with each of these is that an image, person or thing is burned into people's minds that will cause immediate recall of the company anytime the consumer encounters something even close to the company's image or character.

I'm not a giant logo guy for any person or company that does not invest in television spots. Spending a few dollars on a nice logo can make a good impression on customers – which is a good thing – but for small businesses to invest thousands of dollars on logos seems to me to be wasted money. Absent heavy advertising campaigns, characters and logos don't make that much difference in smaller companies' efforts to differentiate themselves or their services from the competition.

Niching is my final brand-building category. The people who make the most money are not the people who become everything to everybody. The people or companies who profit the most, do one thing and they do it better than anybody

else. (Niching is also discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.)

Think about doctors. You go to your general practitioner for a check-up. He/She informs you that you appear to have a brain tumor. Picture the next words you hear, “Oh, and by the way, I can take care of that.” How would you respond?

You’ve been in an automobile accident and see a personal injury lawyer. While you’re speaking with the attorney, you mention that you are considering filing for bankruptcy. This invokes the following response, “Oh I can help you with that.” At this point you would probably start to wonder, “Is this person very good at either personal injury or bankruptcy?”

While each of these examples may seem overly simplistic, it’s important for you to understand that, just as a general practitioner does not perform brain surgery and a personal injury lawyer should not be practicing bankruptcy law, you should not be trying to do more than one thing either.

Let’s take a quick second look at the lawyer example. Bankruptcy Law can be broken down into personal or corporate. Of these two categories, bankruptcy can be further broken down to *reorganization* or *dissolution*. Of those two categories, an attorney may decide to narrow it

further to only taking on clients where the estate exceeds 10 million dollars. The more narrowly the lawyer can define his or her market, the more likely he or she will become the “go to” person for that type of law.

So, let’s say our example lawyer decides to niche all the way down to Chapter 11 (reorganization) for electronic supply businesses located in the Southwest region of the United States, where assets and/or liabilities exceed 10 million dollars. By niching this far down, this person will most likely be so highly skilled at practicing just this one type of law, that he or she will capture the lion’s share of this business. Other lawyers, judges, creditors, and even electronics companies, will end up referring this person due to his/her highly specialized knowledge of this specific type of bankruptcy.

When you niche, remember one important thing – you still have to know what you’re doing. You cannot niche and be untrained. You cannot niche and perform sloppy work. Just as a company’s reputation can be ruined by putting out a great slogan but failing to deliver on the promise contained in that slogan, an untrained or mediocre performance will make you the person who clients should “*never, under any circumstances, use.*”

There are thousands of divorce mediators and many of them may actually be smarter than I. However, few are able to “**glide the edge**” that exists in the touchy arena of dealing with 2 people who at one time cared deeply for one another but, who now, can’t stand the sight of one another. Having this unique ability allows me to charge higher rates than probably 95% of the mediators in the business. At the same time, I am able to deliver quality results, in less time, and with less pain experienced by the participants than the majority of my competitors. In many dispute situations, and more specifically – divorces, it’s next to impossible to set an actual price on the value of minimizing or putting an end to the pain. I’ve made my niche *better, faster, more painless divorce than anyone else.*

Whether you are niching, creating a distinctive service, or actually branding your product or service through slogans or logos, setting yourself apart as *distinct*, can dramatically increase your business and overall longevity.

Chapter Seven

RAPPORT

people work with people they trust

I had a tough time deciding whether Rapport should be included in Chapter 5 as a *trait* of successful sales professionals or to dedicate an entire chapter to the topic. I decided *rapport* is too important to get lost in the middle of another chapter.

People work with people they trust. When you build strong rapport, you have a client for life.

Dictionary.com defines rapport as “relationship, especially one of mutual trust or emotional affinity.”

So now, what is relationship? To me, *relationship* means: 2 or more people “connecting” on any level. The important thing to notice is that rapport is not just relationship, **but a relationship BUILT ON mutual trust or emotional affinity.** Trust and/or affinity are integral parts of *relationship*. However, while *rapport* CAN exist without affinity, it canNOT exist in the absence of trust. I will example this later in the chapter.

ALSO, BEFORE I GO ANY FURTHER: It's important to note that rapport-building techniques are not tricks or tips to get people to do what you want. In building rapport, the sales professional's only true goal should be to *establish trust*. If your goal is to trick someone into *relationship*, you've already failed.

So how does rapport or relationship get established, especially in the environment of sales? Rapport can come into existence through **Information, Similar Causes, Similar Experiences and/or Interests**, or any combinations of the above.

Information

As addressed in previous chapters, prospective clients are looking for a professional to be knowledgeable about their product or service. While moral trust is also extremely important, a key component of building the moral trust is building the information-based trust. **What this means is that clients are actually looking to trust salespeople on 2 levels – morally** (that the salesperson will not try to cheat them) **and intellectually** (that the information provided by the salesperson will be both accurate and complete).

In Chapter 3, I discussed the importance of knowing your product or service. In building rapport, I personally use **information** in a very specific way. As I mentioned, I view my job as that of a “hired gun” or problem-solver. I believe that when someone calls me, they are calling me to: get in, get the job done, and get out. Since this is my starting point, the flow of information from me to the client and from the client to me is absolutely essential for me to complete the job I’ve been hired to do.

I bleed clients for information as to who they are and why they’re talking to me and I bury clients with information about me, my services and the process.

I do not use information to brag or show off. I use it to make the client clear that I care and to enable the client to make intelligently based decisions. This, in turn, enables me to be more efficient and effective at doing my job.

Since one of my goals has always been to learn as much as possible about my product or service, I know that I know more than 99% of my competitors and 99.9% of my clients. This vast reservoir of information serves to build both credibility and trust – almost instantaneously. It’s next to impossible for a client to bring up a question that I don’t have the answer to.

On a side note: Studies show criminals spend more time at the shooting range than police officers. You would think it would be the other way around. Just as peace officers should be able to outshoot criminals, I believe a client should **never** know more than the sales professional about the service or product being offered or sold. I understand new sales associates may not be in a position to know more than every client or customer they meet - - **at first**. But it should be every salesperson's goal to acquire as much knowledge about their product or service as quickly as possible.

Building a reservoir of knowledge is of great importance today. We live in a time where, by merely hitting a few keys on their computers, people have immediate access to tons of information on any topic known to mankind. Again, people don't want to have to hassle with finding things out, but they will – whether fueled by a need to know, in efforts to separate puffers and story tellers (liars) from honest salespeople, or merely out of simple curiosity. But, regardless of why people might be trying to get this information, never before has it been so important to know your product or service, and your competition, inside and out.

Common Cause

Common Cause, as I use it here, does not mean that I and my clients desire world peace or that we believe in God. **It means we are committed to the same *end result*.** A woman wants to purchase a quality car; I want to sell a quality car that meets her needs. A customer wants to buy a computer that will accomplish his purposes; I sell computers. A couple desires to purchase a nice home so they can raise a family; I want to sell them the perfect home and be part of delivering the *American Dream*. These are all examples of a common cause.

Upon my initial meeting with any client, I ALWAYS make it crystal clear how my cause and their cause are in TOTAL alignment. The money I'm being paid is secondary. It's merely a by-product of doing the best job I can, while simultaneously helping clients meet their needs. Money does not run me; the process does.

Common cause is really nothing more than what I've described above. It doesn't take hours of talking. It doesn't require anything other than clarity of communication between the salesperson and client(s).

Establishing *common cause* can be as simple as speaking the following sentence: "Mr. and Mrs.

Jones, I need both of you to understand that I am here for you. There is nothing more important to me than your complete satisfaction. If at any time you believe something I've done, or said, does not line up with this statement, I need you to call me on it immediately. I only work with people I like and trust and I can only work with people who trust me to do the job I've promised to do." When spoken with conviction of heart, this 20-second statement causes clients to form an immediate and almost unbreakable bond. **WARNING: Do not speak these words unless you absolutely mean them.** A client will see through an insincere delivery of this communication instantaneously; and once you've blown trust, you can kiss the client good-bye.

In building rapport, I utilize *information* AND *common cause* with every client I meet. The reason I use both techniques is, in many cases, especially where big ticket items or big money is at stake, **information** by itself will usually NOT complete the relationship-building process.

Similar Experiences and Similar Interests

Similar Experiences and/or Interests also work towards building relationship. This is important to many people in the sales profession. Many people go into sales because they truly love

people. They enjoy talking to them, being around them, and most importantly, helping them. Being in relationship with others is really the foundation of sales, so the second a “people person” sees something he or she has in common with a client, they will latch on to it, because relationship is one of their “drivers.”

So how do *similar experiences* or *interests* build rapport? Two Marines from entirely different upbringings and from different parts of the country have **instant rapport** - - they are both Marines. They do not have to have *anything* else in common; with Marines, this is enough. There are certain experiential events that will throw people into a state of *instant rapport*. A single phrase is all it takes. Example: You’re a marathon runner. You visit someone with a marathon medal hanging in their office. “You run marathons? I ran such and such last month (year).” Bam!, you’re connected.

Instant Rapport-Builders could include any of the following:

Military Experience

Fitness Events (marathons, triathlons, biking)

Sports (baseball, football, etc.) but only if you are fans of the same team

Any activity that is not shared by all members of the public. For example: Everyone watches television; not everyone rides horses. Everyone has kids; not everyone has kids who play varsity football.

You will always know when you've hit upon an instant rapport-builder, because you and the person you've met will get so caught up in the ensuing conversation that you'll have to be torn apart.

There is a difference between an *instant rapport-builder* and regular rapport-builders. **Instant rapport-builders form immediate bonds.** We both may have children, so a client will now relate to me as a fellow parent (regular rapport). But if we both have autistic children or twins, we are bonded (instant rapport).

Also, NEVER fake interest in someone's "thing." I remember watching a show when I was a kid, where a salesman entered an apartment and said, "My, what a lovely 3-piece living room set," even though the room did not have a 3-piece living room set. Insincerity in attempts to create a common bond will get you nowhere - - fast. The prospect will recognize the empty nature of these attempts and will quickly distrust you. And, once again, overcoming this distrust is next to impossible.

Similar Experiences and Interests is a great way to connect. People like to do business with people they like. From time to time, they are willing to give up *like* for *trust* (when dealing with people like me) **but, no client will EVER sacrifice *trust* for *like*.**

When building rapport on similar interests or experiences, a good salesperson must still add another dimension to the equation. Let's return to the example of the 2 Marines. These individuals may have created *instant rapport* upon learning that each was a Marine, but as soon as the discussion moves toward the purpose that's brought them together, the first question heard will be, "So how long have you been doing this?" This is the start of the prospect's qualification process. What the prospect is saying is, "I'm really glad we've connected, but now I need you to *prove to me* that I should trust you with my business." If the prospect is making a small purchase such as a \$150 DVD player, this next level of trust may be unnecessary. If, however, the purchase is a 2 million dollar home, I guarantee – you better know what you're doing; and you will need to bring more than just a common interest or experience into the mix.

I do not expend any effort on connecting on the Similar Experiences and/or Interests level. Even if I do have something in common with prospective

clients, I am there to do a job, not chit chat about stuff. The reputation I've built is not that of a nice guy, but the guy who cuts through the stuff and gets the job done. This style may cost me a few clients, but the vast majority of people don't need new friends, they need the job done - - that's why they've contacted you. If friendship is "in the cards," there will always be time to build it AFTER you've helped your clients meet their needs.

How Do I Build Rapport

In the early days of my career, at the time of my initial interview with clients, one of the first things I did was hand clients a folder describing me and my services. This folder also contained letters from a multitude of satisfied clients. The folder and my "interview" were part of my relationship-building process. I will go into greater detail regarding this initial interview shortly.

It was also at this initial meeting that I would discuss my *money back guarantee*. This was a *no questions asked* money-back guarantee. It wasn't exactly a *money back guarantee*, because my fees were paid by someone other than the client. But it was a return to the client of the full compensation I'd earned on the transaction. This guarantee was unconditional

and occurred if the client was dissatisfied for ANY REASON or if I *believed* the client was dissatisfied. Understand this was not a return of tens or even a few hundreds of dollars, it was the promise of a return of monies that ranged anywhere between 3 or 4 thousand up to 15,000 or 20,000 dollars. **I did not take this guarantee lightly - - AT ALL.**

It's also important to note, that in my early years, my tax returns showed client refunds that easily approached the \$50,000 mark – annually. Equally important is that NOT ONE CLIENT ever actually *requested* a refund. So, you might ask, if clients didn't request that I stand behind my guarantee, how did it come to pass that they would receive these refunds? And more importantly, why would anyone (I) *voluntarily* give up such large amounts of money each year? Keep reading.

Upon the completion of my transactions, I would go through a short series of questions with the client(s). Those questions were intended to accomplish 2 things:

- Determine whether the client(s) was/were *truly* satisfied with the service I had provided, and
- Learn what I could do to improve the level of service to this/these or future clients.

My true goal in asking these questions was to be the best. Nothing meant more to me - - not the money, not anything other than knowing I was the best in my field.

If, during my questioning process, there was ANY HESITATION AT ALL from the client, I would complete the process and would say, “Thank you and I want you to know that you will be receiving a check for \$5875 [or whatever the amount was] in a few days.” The client(s), who I informed were getting these refunds, would invariably argue with me, stating they didn’t want my money and that they were happy with the job I’d done. My response to these comments was always the same, “If I had done my job perfectly, you would not have hesitated in your response when I asked such and such.” The clients were never able to disagree with the fact that they had indeed hesitated in their response to a particular question, so my refunds were always begrudgingly accepted.

However, I began to notice an interesting pattern: These few clients who had received refunds each year, gave me more referrals than all my other clients combined. But, just as with the roses I discussed on page 66, Chapter 6, I did not engage in this practice in an effort to coerce people into sending me more business. I did it to improve the level of service I was offering to all people,

while also being able to look in the mirror at the end of the day knowing I had done my best to treat my clients the way I would want to be treated.

Whenever I tell the above story, it never fails that someone asks: **“Richard, what were your post-completion questions?”**

1) From the start, did you understand who I was, what I was going to do for you, and my commitment to you?

2) During every part of the process, did I give you enough information to enable you to make intelligently based decisions?

3) Did I do an excellent job of keeping you updated through the process? (This was the question that most frequently triggered a refund.)

4) Did I return your calls in a timely manner and did I have acceptable answers to your requests for information or status? (This would also trigger refunds since it has always been my belief that clients should not have to call to find out what’s going on. If a client has to call to get a transaction status, I’m not doing my job. Non-status based questions did not trigger refunds.)

5) If any person you know - - your brother, sister, co-worker, boss, preacher - - ANY PERSON,

told you tomorrow that he or she needed someone who could perform my services, would you give them any person's name other than mine? If so, why?

6) Was there any part of the process that had you think or say, "I wish Richard had done such and such?" Or, did you see anything I could have done better that would have improved my level of service or your experience? (The answer of "yes" to the first question would trigger a refund. Responses to the 2nd question would not.)

As you can see, client satisfaction is one of the most important components of my business. Once clients become clear on this, our relationship is almost completely unbreakable.

The ability to build rapport is, most likely, the single most important trait a sales professional can have. The inability to build trust and relationship enables a client to feel free to go anywhere or use anyone else for their purchase. A strong rapport guarantees your ability to close the transaction almost 100% of the time.

Chapter Eight

NICHE MARKETING

an inch wide and a mile deep

Niche Marketing is the technique of developing a market so narrow in focus that almost no competition exists, and any competitor attempts at entry into that market are fruitless.

An example of a niche market is a personal injury lawyer who only handles dog bites resulting in death or loss of limbs in Southern Florida.

Any lawyer handling cases with such specificity would probably know more about this type of case than any other personal injury attorney. This lawyer would probably be considered the “go to” person for any other attorney running into similar cases fitting these parameters. As the “go to” person, this lawyer would most likely receive large numbers of referrals from other lawyers. These other attorneys would be safe in assuming that whatever this attorney produced in the way of settlements or verdicts would, most likely, far exceed anything they could produce. By having such a reliable resource for this type of case, it becomes easier for other attorneys to simply refer clients and be paid some type of referral fee.

Here's another example: Imagine you sell car parts. Your company is nationwide. But in New Jersey you are known as the *Nissan Parts Guru*. You know more about Nissan parts, where to find them (new or used) and what part goes with what model and year, than even the people at the Nissan parts desk. You soon find yourself middle-manning parts throughout the state, and maybe even throughout the nation, collecting a fee for each part being bought and sold.

And another: You're a back specialist. Your niche is performance of a very specific and complex surgery that bears a high risk of paralysis if anything goes wrong. You are 1 of only 12 such surgeons in the United States. You are constantly booked and are charging as much as brain surgeons.

The above are only a few examples of niches. The idea with a niche is to create a market so restricted that most competitors would be afraid to even *attempt* entry.

Once you've developed a niche, your next job is to "go vertical" (an inch wide and a mile deep). Going vertical references your attempts to capture any and all clients fitting your niche – whether in your county, state, or nationwide. Obviously certain professions, such as the legal field, may have state-defined boundaries. **The goal in**

building a vertical business is that you become *the person* for getting this particular job done.

Many people believe that if they focus-in so narrowly on just one facet of their business, they will lose customers. This belief IS correct. But, while focusing with such specificity will definitely produce fewer clients, the income received from those clients will far outpace any lost revenues.

Once you become known as the “go to” person for your niche, you will be able to charge whatever you desire for your product or service. Example: When anti-lock brakes were first developed, the inventor had a complete monopoly on the technology. Any company wanting to add this safety feature to their vehicles, was required to pay whatever the inventor requested. There was no other choice. Most people, when stuck in the middle of the desert, won’t argue about the cost of a bottle of water.

Building the Niche

The fastest way to create a niche is to know your product or service well enough to know where people who use it spend their time – whether in the real world or online. Once you’ve sourced this location, go there and just listen. What you

are listening for are problems coming up on a recurring basis. These problems are easy to spot. The conversations will go something like this, Samantha: "I just can't figure this out." Travis: "I know! Three people in my office have run into the same problem and no-one's been able to come up with a solution." But you don't just hear Samantha and Travis discussing this problem, you also hear Mike and Steve, Joanne and Meghan, etc.

Once you've identified a problem, work towards producing a viable solution. When you have the solution, you can: charge fees to: deliver the solution (if a product), deliver the information, or teach others how to deliver the information.

When you drive through a neighborhood and see sign after sign bearing the name and picture of the same real estate agent, that agent has built a niche. I knew a real estate agent who grossed over a million dollars per year, because she successfully built such a niche. It wasn't until she retired that the competition was finally able to break into her part of town.

Depending on the niche you're attempting to build, it might happen quickly or it may take a few years. In the case of the real estate agent I referred to in the previous paragraph, it took about 5 years for her to fully develop her niche. But think about this, if you were doing your

regular sales job while merely adding one other dimension to that job, knowing that in 5 years your efforts would result in a million dollar annual income, would you do it? I hope your answer is “yes.”

Building a niche does not need to stop you from doing your regular work. Most people in sales have large amounts of spare time. By utilizing this extra time to develop a highly specialized niche, you will be able to ride the wave to automatic, countonable, income for the remainder of your career. **Get rich by building your niche.**

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Chapter Nine

REFERRAL NETWORKS

Where would a book covering the topic of Sales be, if it did not have a chapter on Referral Networks?

The reason I am kind of trite with this topic is because, if you're doing a great job, referrals will flow like water. If you're doing a poor job, find another one because you will be in a constant struggle to locate new business from new clients.

When we hear the word “network,” many of us get this picture of *networking* - - like chamber of commerce networking mixers or the like. While these too are **networks**, they are not my definition. My reference is to *chains or sources of qualified leads*.

Referrals are the greatest form of new business. Amazon built its entire business platform on what was basically a giant referral network. However, even if you have to pay for referrals, it's usually cheaper than most advertising campaigns and results can show up much faster. As a sales professional, your true job is not to be

chasing down or generating qualified leads, it's *closing* them.

Below are some of the more common ways to generate leads.

Existing Client Base

I am going to parse this section into 2 different categories: **Current Clients** and **Closed Clients**.

Current Clients

The # 1 source of referrals is your Existing Client Base and more specifically your *Current Clients*. Current clients are ALWAYS your best referral source. What is a *current client*? A current client is a person who you are in the process of **moving towards closing a purchase**. It is someone who has signed on the dotted line, but is now waiting for the product to be delivered or the service process to be completed.

The time to ask for referrals from this group is almost immediately following the initial purchase, and not the close of the original purchase, the *signing* of the original purchase. It is at this moment the client is at their height of satisfaction

and gratitude for the service you have provided or the product they've purchased.

In real estate, for example, clients are ecstatic when they first learn the offer they've made on a home has been accepted. However as the process of escrow starts to drag, or there's a hitch in obtaining financing, clients can become less enthusiastic about the process. And since you are linked to that process, clients become less enthusiastic about you.

At the time a customer purchases a new computer, they're high on their purchase – whether for business or pleasure. But then they get home only to run into a problem hooking the computer to the internet or maybe one of the speakers isn't working and Bam!, they've lost their enthusiasm.

Another client makes a large software purchase from your company and they're very happy. Your software met both their physical and monetary specifications. But now, the software has to be delivered through the fulfillment division of your company, which is backlogged due to a recent surge in demand. You start receiving calls from the client upset that the software you promised 2 weeks ago still hasn't arrived.

These souring events take place every day. It's for this reason, you must ask for the referral at the time the deal is "inked."

Things happen in life and unfortunately, anything that links you to those events, can potentially prevent you from receiving referrals. The roof starts leaking in their new home and your clients have to spend \$4000 replacing the rugs and another 2000 repairing the roof. You didn't know the roof leaked and the clients know you didn't know, yet they still have a sour taste that will prevent you from being referred - - even though they were completely satisfied with the job you performed.

Again, the best time to ask for a referral is immediately following the inking of the deal. Do not wait. **This is your lifeblood.** "Mr. Jones, thank you for trusting me to handle your purchase. Do you know of anyone else I or my product may benefit?" And don't leave this one to chance. Ask further, "Any family members, sister, brother in-law, any co-workers or someone at your church?" The more specific you get, the greater the odds the person will respond with something like, "Oh ya. Sandra in the office next to mine mentioned she was in the market for such and such last week and I completely forgot to give her your name."

It's not unusual for me to receive the greatest number of referrals within a couple days of inking a deal. It has always been a standard practice of mine to send out handwritten thank *you* notes immediately after meeting a client. The purpose of sending these notes is to thank the client(s) for entrusting me with their business. My secondary purpose is to ensure the clients have ready access to my contact information. But, time and time again, what I've found is, that within mere days of my getting these notes into the mail, I would receive calls from people who my ***brand new*** clients had referred.

Don't wait. Ask for the referral immediately. It's even better if you can get the client to do some type of introductory phone call before you call the prospective new client. If, however, there will be any delay caused by your client needing to make this call, act on the referral as soon as practicable. By taking immediate steps to contact this referred person, he or she will be impressed by your speed of follow-up and you will lower the likelihood of one of your competitors beating you to the punch.

Closed Clients

A Closed Client is anyone you have *closed* a transaction with. Clients falling into this category

are those who have *completed* the entire purchase process.

Star salespeople will set **closed clients** into some type of automatic contact management system. There are also many services that ensure closed clients receive cards or mailers for all sorts of occasions: birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and so on. These companies not only ensure the cards go out in a timely fashion, but the cost associated with these services is usually less than the cost of you or I doing the job ourselves. If you have a newsletter, these companies will also deliver those. These systems have become very easy to use. It's normally as simple as punching a name and address into the support company's database and with a click of the mouse, your client is now set to receive cards or mailers for any occasions you choose.

Additionally, if you do any type of internet marketing, you should strongly consider developing a weekly newsletter and investing in some type of contact management program that will deliver this newsletter each and every week. Also known as Ezines, these newsletters are delivered into people's email. This is just one more way to keep your name in front of your *closed clients*. Ideally, your Ezine should be sent to every person you meet. The recipient always has the ability to opt out. The more

people who have access to your name, the more likely you are to receive referrals.

Building a strong referral base from satisfied clients is very important. First, there is no expectation from the referring source of anything other than you doing a good job for the person they've referred. Second, the lead itself exists because the prospect is a **true prospect**, as opposed to someone who may just be *looking* or some other type of time-waster. Lastly, if someone is unhappy with a product or service, they will go out of their way to tell the world. And, to add insult to injury, the person does not have to be *really* dissatisfied to engage in this behavior, merely a little dissatisfied. Whereas a referral will normally only show up when someone is ECSTATIC with you and your product or service. This energy and enthusiasm fills the person that has been referred with actual excitement about the opportunity of working with you.

Networking

Networking is the process of meeting new people at events or meetings where the intended purpose is to generate new business. Chamber of Commerce mixers are perfect examples of this.

New business could be generated either through the person you've just met choosing to purchase your product or service or by this individual making a decision to refer others to you.

I'm not a giant fan of networking mixers. I've always viewed them as pick-up events, no different from a dance club or bar. The law of averages says that it's unlikely you will form any type of quality business relationship beneficial to you over the long run. These events require precious time to prepare for and attend and seem to provide little opportunity to truly connect with people you're meeting. The follow-up takes even more time. And unless you happen to meet a true "sphere of influence," odds are, you will spend a great deal of time and energy with very little return.

This being said, if networking is your thing, try this technique whenever you meet someone new: After the initial introduction, find out what the person does. Instead of trying to sell this individual on you, your product, or how great you are, ask her or him what their greatest hurdle is. This will usually get people talking immediately. Depending on what the person has to say, you may be able to offer tips or suggestions as to how to solve their problem. In my book *LifeLines*, one of my quotes is "Another way to make money: Solve a problem. The bigger the

problem; the greater number of people impacted by it – the more money you will receive.” By helping someone with an issue they are dealing with, they are more likely to remember you and/or they may feel obliged to send business to you as their way of saying *thank you*.

Someone who is strong in networking will not waste any time getting back to their office immediately following the event and getting *nice to meet you* cards into the mail. This person will also enter all pertinent information – vitals of the person they’ve met (name, phone, etc.), what the person looked like and detailed information on the conversation – into some type of database or contact management program. Within a few days of mailing the *nice to meet you* note, they will call the recipient of the note to say hello and extend an invitation to maybe grab some coffee. This is how these relationships are developed.

Networking is time-consuming and difficult for anyone who’s not a total extrovert. And unless you have a killer contact management program and system, you will be forgotten within 24 hours. My suggestion is to spend your time in other lead-generating arenas. I almost prefer cold-calling to networking.

Organizations and Industry Functions

Organization and Industry Functions would be any event that brings members of your company or industry together. Virtually every sector of commerce has some type of weekly or monthly gathering, usually for the purpose of obtaining new information. Most people see nothing wrong with attending these meetings.

However, for the most part, I consider these events *wasted time*. The only reason(s) to attend these meetings is/are: 1) If they are mandatory. 2) If the meeting will be offering valuable information or updates regarding your product or service. 3) If there will be people in attendance OUTSIDE your specific field that may turn into possible referral sources.

Since mandatory meetings are just that, attending is not a choice. For informational meetings, pick and choose carefully. Don't attend any meeting merely for the sake of attending. Make sure you are going to get something out of it. And regarding reason number 3 above, you have to be pretty darned good at communicating and schmoozing to get referrals from "outsiders," since many of these people have usually already built their own referral networks.

Unless the meeting is mandatory or it is clear your time will be well spent, I would skip these events.

Related Industry Functions

A Related Industry Function is any event held by people or companies engaged in the sale of a service or product that is ancillary to yours. **This is a great method of connecting with people.**

Here are a few examples of such functions and how they can be capitalized upon: If you write books, attending a library convention might be a good way to meet people who may help get your book into the thousands of libraries across the country. If you're a podiatrist, going to a local shoe convention might put you in front of people who could refer patients to you. If you're a chiropractor, you might attend local fitness shows in an effort to meet people who could refer people to your practice or who would like you to come to their facilities to speak on back-related health issues.

What you want to be thinking about here is, **“Who uses my product?”** and **“Who might have access to prospective clients before I do?”**

When mediation became my primary profession, I marketed to MFTs (Marriage & Family

Therapists). Many of these people needed someone reliable and qualified to handle mediating people's divorces in the event therapy was unsuccessful.

Let's say you're in the insurance industry. If you're spending time with other insurance people, you may get a referral here or there. But, if you're attending meetings that real estate people frequent, you will meet people who have access to clients who will definitely be in need of insurance in the near future.

Think about other businesses loosely related to yours where you could build relationships with people who have immediate access to people in need of your product or service.

You sell tires and wheels: tow truck people.

You sell high-end televisions: remodeling people.

You sell air-duct cleaning services: heating people.

You sell cars: body shop or insurance people.

Above are just a few quick examples. **The goal here is to think of anyone who may come in contact with prospects for your product or service – especially before you.** Someone actively looking for a home is absolutely going to need a homeowner's fire insurance policy and a moving company. This person may also need a home loan, new furniture, a home remodeler, a

handyman, or earthquake, flood, or life insurance. So anyone involved in any of these fields, should be spending at least part of their time attempting to develop relationships with real estate people.

Here's your attack plan: Once you've identified ancillary services or businesses that support your product or service, find out where those people spend their time and put yourself in their space. Make sure you come up with some good reasons these people should refer potential clients to you. Again, if you can help any of these individuals solve a problem, they will be far more likely to refer people to you. Remember, it's rare that people send referrals to people they don't know or haven't known very long, so make sure you can bring something of value to the table.

Ancillary services and industry-related functions are great ways to meet people who can send business your way. I believe this should be one of the primary points of focus for all sales professionals.

Professional Referring Entities

Important: Different states have differing laws on who can pay referral fees to referring entities. Make sure you know the laws in your

state before making any arrangement to pay money for referrals.

This section covers Affiliate/Referral Programs and Lead Generators. While appearing very similar, there are enough differences that require addressing them separately. There is also a dramatic difference between clients referring someone to you because they *really* want the person they are sending dealing with someone who is trustworthy, while offering a quality product or service, **versus someone who is referring only in anticipation of being compensated.**

Affiliates

Affiliates are people who offer your products or services (primary through the internet) to whom, upon the completion of a purchase, you will pay a percentage of what you have received.

Affiliate programs is/were Amazon's primary business model. When Amazon first started out, they offered to pay people for linking to their website, where the link resulted in an ensuing book purchase. Amazon had tens of thousands of affiliates doing their marketing for them. There was no payroll or overhead associated with these affiliates who went unpaid until a sale took place.

Picture you have a website that gets heavy traffic. The website could cover any topic. Let's use dog breeding as an example. There will always be a certain number of people who will want more specific information about breeding than your site (or any site for that matter) has to offer. Your website has pictures of books entitled: *7 Things You Must Know About Dog Breeding*; *8 Dog Breeding Mistakes That Will Cost Time and Money*; etc. When a visitor clicks on one of these books, they get directed to Amazon's website. If they decide to purchase the book, Amazon pays you \$2 (or whatever).

Two dollars may not seem like much, but let's say your website has a thousand visitors a day (30,000 people per month). Even if only 3% of these visitors decide to purchase a book, that's 900 sales, times \$2 per purchase or \$1800 per month you're being paid, for doing **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING** more than providing the opportunity for your visitors to buy a book.

There are online sources that can help you locate people who want to be affiliates for your specific product or service. There are systems that make this process almost seamless – especially if you are dealing with a product that is being purchased such as a book or similar item. If you are selling a service, tracking can be a little more difficult since the sale may not take place until after you

have personally spoken with a prospect. It's still doable, just more difficult. There are certain affiliates who specialize in sales of services; many do not. Most affiliates limit their activities to quick online links and the ensuing purchases.

Affiliates **are** considered referring entities and certain businesses are not allowed to pay for business generated in this fashion. In California, for example, it is illegal for me to build a website that refers clients to an attorney when that attorney plans on paying me a fee once he or she has converted the referral to a paying client.

However, it is not illegal for an attorney to pay me a monthly advertising fee for managing the website and generating traffic. But beware: this *advertising fee* cannot be a disguised referral fee. The fee must be a set monthly amount, just as though the attorney were advertising on television or radio. You can be paid more or less depending on traffic generation, but you cannot tie the fee to the number of clients the attorney converts or the number of leads you are providing. Insurance is another business that does not permit referral fees. Make sure you check the laws for your industry in your state.

Lead Generation Companies

Lead generation companies specialize in warm-lead development. These leads are then sold to people or companies who follow up on them. In the past, these companies have commonly used telemarketers to source their leads, but today, they are quickly moving towards internet-based platforms. Online lead generation seems to be obtaining a higher quality lead than telemarketing ever did.

The problem with generated leads is that until you start contacting the leads **you have already paid for**, you have no way of knowing whether or not they are good quality or nothing more than groups of names pulled from some online directory. Also, depending on who you have following up on these leads, a lead may not get converted. When I ran a phone bank in my company back in the early 90s, the exact same lead pool would produce very different results depending on which agent was making the follow-up phone calls. I finally scuttled the project due to the high cost of generation, combined with low conversion rates.

Professional lead generation can inject warm or qualified leads into your system quickly, but in order to maximize the return on them you need to have 3 things in place:

- 1) You must obtain the leads from a lead generation company with an established reputation.
- 2) You must have an organized internal follow-up system that **immediately manages the leads.**
- 3) You must have quality people who are doing the follow-up.

I'm not a giant fan of using lead generation companies. This position may change as the internet is used to create higher quality leads. However, at this time, I believe there are superior methods to locating potential clients.

Pay Per Click Campaigns

A great way to generate new business or quality leads is Pay Per Click. The best way to describe **pay per click** is through an example. Let's say you sell custom wheels for cars. You have a website. When people go to Yahoo or Google and type in "custom wheels," your website is 1 of 63,128,000 web pages offering information and/or products relating to *custom wheels*.

This 1 in 63 million makes it highly unlikely that the person searching "custom wheels" will ever find your website. However, notice along the top

and the right side of each results page, the “Sponsored Links.” These companies are paying for these page positions. When a visitor clicks on one of these *sponsored links*, the owner of the website pays a fee to Google or Yahoo. This fee can be as low as 5¢ or upwards of \$20. The fee depends on the amount of competition and the value of the product or service. **This fee is paid even if the website visitor does NOT make a purchase.**

A few years ago, when the mortgage business was going through the roof, the company in the number one position of these sponsored links, was paying more than \$15 per click. Now \$15 may not seem like much, but picture that there were literally thousands of people searching “mortgage loans” every single day. A company could spend \$10,000 in clicks before making a single dollar. Was it worth it to these companies? Absolutely. A single closed deal could bring a company 5 - 20 thousand dollars. Even if a company converted a mere 1 out of every 100 visitors, they were still making gobs of money.

Pay per click seems like it would violate referral fee laws, but for some reason, it does not. Lawyers, insurance companies, stock brokers, tire companies all use pay per click to generate business. People “click” on a certain link which takes them to a company’s website, where the

person can decide to: make a purchase, call the company for additional information, or hit the “back” key to view the previous results page enabling them to click on another link.

Pay Per Click is not for the weak of heart. Money can disappear very quickly. And if your website is schlocky, slow loading, or does not have what the prospect is looking for, he or she will leave your site within seconds, **but you will still have paid for the traffic.** Ensure your website is ready for a pay per click campaign before committing to write any checks. Have at least 20 friends or business associates visit your site and critique it. If more than half of them think it should be changed, do NOT start a campaign until the site is updated or made to be more user-friendly.

Are there other ways to get business? Of course there are. The sources found on this chapter, however, are usually the fastest. **Just remember, nothing generates good leads faster than keeping your promises, while providing a quality product or service at a reasonable price. Referral business is, and always will be, your best bet for true longevity.**

Chapter Ten

CLOSING TECHNIQUES

This is the “tips” section of this book. I enjoy discussing the topics found in this section especially when someone approaches me at a meeting or conference and says something like, “Richard, I tried the *Free Puppy Close* and I couldn’t believe how great it worked.”

There are many more closing styles than those listed here. I’m covering the most effective. There are literally hundreds of closing techniques, but knowing them and being able to use them effectively are 2 different things. If you can practice and learn those found in this chapter, you will have little need for additional techniques.

Also, understand: The information found in this chapter SUPPORTS the sales process.

It is NOT a substitute for it.

Attempting to close any client through the use of these techniques without: first training yourself on your product or service, building rapport, or caring about client’s needs, will only cause pain and heartache for you and your clients. **These techniques are most effective when combined with being a professional.** Don’t try this at home.

The top sales professionals can jump from close to close effortlessly. During a sales process, one could easily use multiple techniques, multiple times. By practicing these techniques with loved ones or co-workers, you will become more adept at jumping from one to another or using them in combinations.

Each of these techniques is manipulative in nature. But they are being used to move clients in a direction that will ultimately benefit them, their companies, or their families. There are times when we (as buyers) have made up our minds to do something or make a purchase and we require zero prodding. But, more often than not, we need that little extra push to get us over the decision-making hump, causing us to do what we *really know* we should do, which is - - **commit to make the purchase.** These techniques exist to accomplish this “little extra push.”

The way I will deal with this chapter is to:

- 1) Name the close.
- 2) Quote/Example the close.
- 3) Describe what we are attempting to accomplish.
- 4) Describe the best time to use the technique.

These closes are in no particular order of importance.

The Assumptive Close

“Mr. Smith, once you’ve hung this new TV on your wall, you’ll be the envy of all your friends.” (Assumes the customer is purchasing the TV.)

“Well Mr. and Mrs. Jones, I can’t wait to find the perfect home for you and your family.” (Assumes the clients have made the decision to work with this particular salesperson.)

“Joanne, I wish I could be there when you knock your co-workers dead with this outfit. You’re going to kill!” (Assumes the customer is purchasing the outfit.)

What we are doing here is *assuming* the client is purchasing the product or service. And while I use the term “assuming” above, it refers more to the fact that, as far as the salesperson is concerned, the client **IS** making the purchase. This close sets into the client’s mind that the purchase is a foregone conclusion and now the only remaining issue is some minor detail. The “minor” detail could still be something important such as price or delivery, or it can be something that is... truly minor. **The value of this close is that it makes it sound like you and the client are in this together - - which you are.**

When to Use: This close is best used in issues of vanity. What you are trying to do is get the person to “see” into their future by sensing the satisfaction he or she will get by having made this intelligent decision.

The Assumptive Close can work anytime and anywhere. I frequently use this technique. “Mr. and Mrs. Jones, I guarantee when we are finished with this mediation, you will be happier and will rest easier.” In this case, I have already been paid, but I am *assuming* the success of the actual mediation event, because I want the clients to assume the same.

The Free Puppy Close

“Mrs. Smith, it’s clear to me that your daughter loves this puppy. Why don’t we do this – take him home for the weekend. I will NOT charge your credit card. If on Monday you decide he’s not for you, just bring him back. No questions asked. How does that sound?” (How many people do you think would return a puppy after bonding with it for 2 or 3 days??)

“Mr. Jones, I can see you’re not quite sure about this computer. Let’s do this. I’ll write everything up. I’ll take your credit card information, but I will NOT charge it. If on Monday, you bring the

computer back, I'll rip up the charge slip – no questions asked. How does that sound? The reason I can make this deal is because I know this is the perfect system for you, but sometimes we just need to try things out before making important decisions.”

What we are doing here is taking advantage of an emotional person. We are also assuming that once the item is home, the person will fall in love with it because it REALLY IS what they want or REALLY DOES serve their needs. **While we are taking advantage of the emotion, we are not taking advantage of the person.** Sometimes people just need to spend some time with a product before making the decision to own it. For this type of customer, this close works perfectly with their need to *experience* the product before completing the buying decision.

When to Use: This technique should be used anytime a client may need to try a product before committing to an actual purchase. This is very similar to the “money back guarantee,” yet does not involve the actual outlay of cash until after the “decision” has been made to purchase. **NOTE:** Make sure you confirm the person has the dollars to complete the purchase before allowing them to leave with the product.

The Back Door Close

(this is my favorite technique)

“Mr. Jones, I’m not really sure this is what you want. I know you described what you were looking for, and while this product has many of the features you said you needed, I’m not sure it has all of them.” (Jones will normally respond that there is probably no single product that would have **all** of his desired features.)

“Mrs. Smith, as I mentioned when we first met, I’ve been doing this a long time. And while I try very hard to match people with the product they’ve described, I’m just not sure I’ve done that with you. Maybe we should just walk away from this right now. We can always revisit it tomorrow. I mean it’s not like someone else is just going to walk in and buy it in the next 24 hours.” (Smith will normally respond that “We might as well take care of this right now; I really don’t have any more time to devote to this.”)

“Mr. and Mrs. Jones, at our first meeting I thought I remembered you saying that you wanted a vehicle that was not only safe, but stylish and yet still affordable. Did I mis-hear something? Because I really thought this vehicle met all of your needs.” (In this case, a **true objection** may get flushed out. The Jones’ may need an entirely different car.)

What we are doing here is *forcing* the client to do a mental review of what they said they wanted, or to review their needs. This closing technique usually ends up with the client being the one making the suggestion to write up the contract or purchase request, as opposed to the salesperson suggesting it - - thus, *the Back Door*.

When to Use: This technique works well in a stalled closing mode. What I mean by this is, based on my personal and professional desire to only put people into a product or service I believe they truly want or need, I stall before I write the contract forcing the client to kind of push me to complete the paperwork. I use this time to get the client refocused on what they said they wanted way back when we first decided to work together.

I also use this close to allow the client to “remain in control.” The client gets to feel that it was HE or SHE who made the decision to move forward, not some heavy-handed salesman talking them into something. If, afterwards, a client was to have a conversation with a friend or co-worker, the conversation would probably sound something like this: “Gee Jeff, I didn’t realize you and Mary were in such a hurry to buy a new home.” “Well Mike, we really weren’t, but once we found the perfect home, we realized ‘why wait?’ So we had the agent write the offer.”

The benefit of this close is that the client actually makes the decision to move forward. Thus creating a situation where the odds of backing out become very slim.

He/She/They Have Been Where You Are Close (also known as: Feel Felt Found)

(this is another of my frequently used techniques)

“I understand that you would **feel** that way Mr. Jones. A number of my other clients **felt** the same way at first. But once they got this flat screen home, they **found** that it was exactly what they needed all along. It takes up no space. The picture is perfect. And their family and friends love it.”

“You’re not alone Mrs. Smith. Let me show you something. I carry this *thank you* note everywhere I go. It’s from a client who spoke those EXACT same words. The note was thanking me for nudging her to move forward with her decision. But you know what’s really funny, Mrs. Smith? If I were to carry every note that I’ve received like this one, I’d be carrying a binder around with me. I’ve been in sales for a long time, and for whatever reason, this particular product has more people saying what you just said than any other I’ve ever seen. Yet every one of these people got home and either wrote or called to thank me for helping them make the right decision.”

“YOW! I wish I had a dollar every time I’ve heard that. Sometimes it even makes me wonder if I’m doing something wrong. But you know Mike, every time a client speaks those words, within 24, maybe 48 hours, I get a phone call saying, ‘Richard, I can’t tell you how happy I am that I decided to move forward with my purchase.’ Thank you.”

What we are doing here is reinforcing, that people **just like the client** have had the same questions, objections, or issues, but in the end, all were very happy that they made the decision to purchase.

When to Use: This close is best used when a client uses the following phrase (or something similar), “You know, **I’m just not sure** this is the product I’m looking for.” This type of statement is usually just a rambling by a customer who needs a tiny bit of reinforcement that the decision they’re about to make is the right decision. Since people go with winners, “others have been where you are” will give this person that little extra nudge they need to complete the transaction. This close is usually most effective when combined with the Back Door Close. It not only reassures the clients, but gives them the opportunity to make the decision to move forward on their own.

The Beat Down

(This is also known as The Guilt Trip Close)

(I HATE this technique. I am including it only so you will recognize it if it is being used on you or by your employs.)

“Mom, I really want that Transformer.” 2 minutes later: “Mom I gotta have that Transformer.” 3 minutes later: “MOM I WANT THAT TRANSFORMER!” (Repeated until Mom or Dad gives in.)

“You said you were going to do such and such, but now, after all my hard work, you’re just going to walk away. What am I supposed to do now?” (This close is usually accompanied by the appearance of heavy emotion – crying, anger, etc.)

“YOU PROMISED!” [Even though you didn’t.]
“You said that if I did this, you would let me do that. Well then, next time I just won’t keep my promise and we’ll see how that makes YOU feel.”

What is happening here is the primary person is *beating down* the secondary person. This is something a 5 year old does, not an adult. If you have someone like this in your company, they need to be fired. Even if this person is closing deals, they are hurting your reputation. **If this technique is being used on you in an “adult” relationship, GET OUT! This is the beginning**

of a relationship that, at some point in the future, will absolutely escalate to physical violence.

When to Use: NEVER! This is the single most insipid form of “closing.” There is zero respect for clients or their needs. The reason my first quote started with a kid yelling at his mother, is because this is the situation when you will most frequently see this technique being used - - a child with a parent, whining, complaining, screaming and/or crying until he or she finally gets his or her way.

There are 4 things that make the use of this technique so repulsive. 1) The person is literally going to hammer you until you reverse your decision. 2) Reversal of your original position is usually NOT in your best interest. 3) When you decide to reverse position from your original stance, you’re doing it for the wrong reason. 4) And, this is the worst: Once this person sees that this technique works, he or she will use it again and again. This person has now trained themselves to revert to this final, most base level of behavior in their attempts to get their way, whenever they aren’t.

The Apples to Oranges Close

“I understand that 42,000 may seem like a lot of money, but with our unbelievable financing program, you’re only paying around 20 dollars a day. Heck, you and I probably spend more than that on lunch.”

“I understand 10,000 may sound like a lot of money. But how much is your time worth? You see Mr. Jones, if you get paid 100,000 per year, and you lose 3 months dealing with this garbage, you’ve lost 24,000 \$ and that doesn’t even take into account the mental pain and suffering.”

“What’s more important to you, Mr. Smith? A couple of dollars going out the door each month, or the benefits of having a wife who thinks her husband is the greatest guy in the world? I mean, Really!, can you even come close to putting a price tag on that?”

Also notice in the 1st and 2nd examples used above, I only used the word “dollars” when I was referencing how much money was being lost - - not when I was discussing the cost.

What we are doing here is taking an apple and comparing it to an orange. Clearly the two have nothing in common other than the fact they are both fruit. When performed correctly, this

close is indisputable, because you aren't really addressing the issue that has been raised. You are converting the objection to a different discussion, which ends up sidetracking the initial objection. If the initial objection is just some type of smoke screen, the client will kind of allow you to set it aside in this manner. However, if it's a *true* objection, the Apples to Oranges Technique will usually flush out the *real* issue, enabling you to address it head-on.

When to Use: This close normally has to be fully developed before even knowing when and where it will be used. As a professional, you should know your business well enough to know the standard objections raised by clients. This close requires that you “build” an Apples to Oranges conversation **before** the objection that would trigger it ever comes up, so that when the objection is raised – Bam!, you hit the client with the comparison and keep moving toward the close.

In my mediation business, I will sometimes run into objections regarding the cost of my services - - especially when compared with other mediators who appear to be doing the same work for far less money. By converting the discussion of hourly rates to the fact that I can do in 1 day, the same job that takes others 3 days, permits me to show clients how, by using my services, they may *actually be saving money*. Am I misleading them?

Absolutely not. I usually do get the job done in less than a day. And while my fee for that day is not anywhere remotely close to cheap, when it's over, it's over - - and the clients are finished. There is no need to return for 2 or 3 more days of hassles and terror. The clients get to, immediately, move on with life. And, they usually do end up saving money, since my day can actually cost less than competitors' 3 days.

The Takeaway Close

“I understand your decision to wait, Mr. Jones. But I think it's important to let you know there was another couple looking at this car an hour ago. They said they were going home to get their daughter over here to test drive the car.”

“We have space for 100 participants. Not 101 or 105 - - 100. Once those seats are filled, you will have to wait until next year, when we return.”

“We can't keep this on the shelves. It wouldn't even be here right now if weren't for the fact that we just got a shipment 90 minutes ago.”

What we are doing here is building urgency into a purchase decision. Study after study has shown that many purchases are impulse in nature. Meaning, that if the client chooses to study it or

“sleep on it,” a decision will be made to NOT purchase. Infomercials are notorious for making anywhere between 3 to 5 “calls to action” during a 30-minute spot. The producers know that they have to build urgency into their delivery. As a matter of fact, infomercials are also known as *direct/immediate response marketing*. They have less than 30 minutes to deliver a message and move a prospective customer to act.

When to Use: This close is most effective on impulse purchases. Luxuries that people may not need, but would really like. (“Luxuries” as used here does not necessarily mean “expensive,” it simply refers to items that may *not necessarily be essential*.) The threat of the takeaway, however, must be REAL. If the prospect looks around and sees the same product everywhere, if the prospect knows there is a glut of homes available for sale, or that the new car market has never been slower, he or she will see right through your attempt to force the sale, thus probably killing-off any potential for closing the deal.

The problem with *the Takeaway* is that it is the most frequently mocked selling technique. Television shows, movies, and other media continually spoof the Takeaway, enabling the masses to immediately recognize its use.

The few times I've used this technique, I've made whatever statement I was making followed by something like, "Mr. and Mrs. Jones, I know you've heard this 'better hurry up and buy right now because this item won't be around much longer' a million times. But I need you to really step back and look around. How many homes have you seen that meet your needs? How many homes have you lost, before you met me, because you didn't move quickly enough? Let's write this up. We can put a few escape clauses in the contract which will enable us to get out, if you truly decide this is not the perfect purchase for you."

The Fear Close

(I'm not a fan of this close. It's usually used to cheat people.)

"I understand it's a lot of money. But can you really put a price tag on the safety of your child?"

"We only have 7 spots available. Chances are they will be gone before this afternoon. Sign up now and get the discounts and bonuses we've promised and insure that you will be able to attend the program."

"I would never let *my daughter* drive her car with the brakes in this condition."

What is being done here is fear is being used to motivate someone to act. The auto repair industry is notorious for using this technique. Read my award winning book, *Hit the Brakes on Car Repair Rip-Offs*, and see just how frequently this close is used to get us to pay for products or services we don't need or to upsell the customer into paying for additional unnecessary parts and repairs.

When to Use: As previously mentioned, I am not a fan of this closing style. It should only be used if something is indisputably true and causing fear is the only way to *shake* or *jolt* someone into making a decision they **MUST MAKE** for their safety or that of those around them. “Mrs. Smith, do you see how these steel strips are jetting out of your tire. This is the steel belt cutting through. You have to replace this tire immediately.”

When NOT to use: Any other time. This technique does not honor the sales process.

The Ego Close

“Mr. Jones, do you have any idea how great you're going to feel as you're cruising down the road in the fastest car **on that road?** Well I guess you probably do. And, based on what other clients have said, the feeling **NEVER** goes away.

As a matter of fact, just seeing it in your garage, is going to make you feel good.”

“Samantha, you look fantastic in that outfit. It’s as though the designer made it especially for you.”

“Steve, you make the decision to buy this and for a few dollars a month, you get to feel and look like a million.”

“Mrs. Smith, your boss is going to give you a raise when she finds out how smart you were to grab this opportunity.”

What we are doing here is appealing to ego to drive a decision to purchase. I have no problem with this, as long as the statements being made are accurate and/or true. Many people, myself included, enjoy having and wearing things that make us look and feel better. There is nothing wrong with appealing to this trait of human nature.

When to Use: Any time a purchase will potentially enhance a customer’s status, self-worth or sense of self. It’s staggering how many purchases are made every day by people who are really only looking to feel better about themselves or look better in the eyes of others. Catering to these needs is merely obliging the client.

When NOT to use: Any time you would be lying about the outcome of the desired effect in an effort to close the deal. Example: A woman asks how she looks in the outfit she's picked out. You tell her it's the perfect complement to her figure - - even though it isn't. This practice fails to honor the client or the sales process.

You're Very Intelligent Close (similar to The Ego Close)

“I can tell just by the way you speak, Mrs. Smith, and the quality of the questions you've been asking that you're pretty darn intelligent. When I've bumped into others similar to you - - **and believe me, it doesn't happen often**, they too have made the decision to purchase this particular model... for many of the same reasons you've already addressed.”

“Mr. Jones, I would love to be there when your wife wakes up on Christmas morning and sees this car sitting in your driveway with a big red bow around it. You're going to be the neighborhood 'smartest married guy.’”

“Mr. Jones, people who don't know anything about flat screen TVs purchase the plasmas. But anyone who's done their homework, as you obviously have, purchases the LCDs. So I guess

all that's left is for us to decide whether you want the 42 or 50 inch model.”

What we are doing here is appealing to ego based on intelligence rather than vanity. Intelligent people like to think there aren't many like them. By appealing to someone's intelligence, you are basically saying, “You already have the answer, you just need a professional to confirm that what you're thinking is correct.”

When to Use: Any time someone appears to know more about your product or service than the average customer or client. **WARNING: These people usually do NOT consider you to be more intelligent than they.** They *do believe* you MAY know more than they do about this very specific product or service, but overall consider themselves much smarter than salesmen. When discussing the potential purchase, make sure you use **other** intelligent people as sources of reference – not yourself. “Mrs. Jones, being so close to the University, **I get a lot of scientists in here.** And many of them have done the same homework you have. Probably more than 90% of the time, these people have chosen the same model you're considering. Furthermore, not one of the people who have purchased this model has ever returned it or called to complain about it.”

While there are numerous other closes, the above techniques are some of the most effective. I've listed a few more below. The important thing to remember is, the use of these techniques is not about making the sale. Using these techniques is about moving a prospect to make the right decision - - the decision they *should* make - - **the decision that will absolutely serve their needs, wants, and/or desires.**

Yes Yes Yes Close

Getting a client use to hearing and using the word "yes," so that when they are asked if they are ready to purchase, their answer is... "Yes."

Even Our Competitors Use Our Product Close

Endorsement through competitor use. If a guy who sells Chevrolets drives a 350Z, and I sell 350Zs, I guarantee you, I would use this information in selling to potential buyers.

High-Level Endorsement Close

This is the *Star Quality Close*, and it's the reason famous people are paid so much money to endorse products. If Michael Jordan wears Reebok, then Reebok *must be* a quality shoe. If Jeff Gordon takes his family car to Oil Changing Is Us, then *I probably should* too.

Alternative Close

The alternative close assumes a purchase and merely causes the prospect to hone in on the specific item they want. “Well Sally, I think you’d look great in the white car, but how do you feel? Which do you prefer white or red?” This is part Alternative Close and part Assumptive Close. The Alternative Close will almost always be used in unison with the Assumptive Close.

“Can’t Afford Not To” Close

This is where “bonus” items are stacked upon the actual item being offered for sale. When the bonus items are totaled up, they end up being “worth far more” than the cost of the original item, leading a customer to think they can’t afford to pass up such a great deal.

Testimonials Close

This is a version of The Popular Use Close. “I use this product or service and it has truly enhanced my life.” This close will normally have 5 or more testimonials and usually no fewer than: one from a white male, one from a *not immediately apparent* black person (usually a male), one from an Asian female and one from a black female, with ages ranging from roughly the late 20s to the late 50s, unless there is a specific target audience that is younger or older.

The idea is to give the impression that regular people like you and I, feel this product or service improved their lives or position in life and will, therefore, produce the same results for us.

The Stacking Close

This close is used to add additional items onto a client's decision to purchase. Amazon is great at this: "Readers who bought this, also bought this." A few other examples of *stacking* would be: "Add this to your purchase and we'll cover the cost of shipping." Or, "Just cover the cost of shipping, and we'll double your order... **free of charge.**"

If I, He, or She Can... You Can Close

This close is frequently used in *how-to* seminar sales. "I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed. If I could do this... anyone can." The close is used to make a potential buyer think, "I'm at least as smart as this person... if he or she can... then I can." You will never see a perfectly cut and tailored speaker selling any program where a testimonial from someone less sharp, is not also part of the presentation.

Daily Cost Breakdown Close

This close takes a monthly payment and cuts it down to a daily cost. “For just pennies a day...”
“Less than you spend on the cost of a meal...”

Heart-String Close

ATT made a fortune in the old days of long distance with its slogan, “Long distance, the next best thing to being there.” This phrase would overlap a picture of a young man calling his grandmother. Who could watch something like this, then NOT pick up the phone to call Mom? Another use, primarily in live events, is during a testimonial where the speaker starts to cry while talking about the **life-changing** effects a product or event had on his or her life.

Chapter Eleven

9 COMMON MISTAKES

Over the years, I've identified 9 primary mistakes that definitely seemed to hinder people's or companies' sales success. Spotting these mistakes enabled me to be more efficient at delivering my own services.

I suspect the subheadings found in this chapter could each be chapters unto themselves. If forced, I could probably drone on for 30 to 60 minutes on each topic. I've placed them into a single chapter to try to keep the information clear and concise. With the exception of **Mistake 1**, the topics found hereunder are in no particular order of importance.

Mistake 1 “Living” in a Negative Environment

We hear the term “living” and immediately think of our households. This is NOT my reference. My reference is to *living* - - as in the world. My reference is to: who we spend our time with, where we work, what we do when we're not working and last but not least, the home environment.

The world seems to thrive on negative energy. Once in a blue moon, we get to hear the lone heartwarming tale; but far more often, we are bombarded by stories of death, kidnappings, crime, fires, car chases or crashes, fallout from drug and alcohol abuse, and a myriad of other stories of terror and dread. If we are fortunate enough to live in a community that did not experience any of these things this past week, various media sources are more than happy to import these “breaking stories” from OTHER, less fortunate, communities. In his song *Dirty Laundry*, Don Henley seemed to illustrate better than any other, this situation, “... The bubble-headed bleached blond comes on at 5. She can tell you ‘bout the plane crash with a gleam in her eye. It’s interesting when people die. Give us dirty laundry...”

We slow down to look at accidents. We turn up the TV to hear about the latest movie star’s drunken car crash. And we do these things without giving the slightest thought to their toxic nature. I polish chairs for a living. That’s my job. I sit in an office with the windows and door closed. Each morning, while I’m in the shower, I wash my face and by midday, I need to wash it again. Somehow, my face gets dirty just sitting at my desk doing nothing. We live in a world that is toxic and if we don’t pay attention to this fact, our faces will continue to build dirt upon dirt,

until the day comes where we can no longer see the color of our own skin.

Negative energy is a killer. It's my belief this is a major culprit in a world where cancer and other malaise, can only be likened to runaway trains. Do I have some solutions? Maybe.

1) Turn the TV off at night. Or, if you are unwilling to do this, then watch Seinfeld or some other stupid comedy just prior to going to sleep. By watching one of these fun sitcoms instead of the news or some crime drama, you'll find that you will sleep much more soundly.

2) Turn off the TV news in the morning. Listen to light jazz on the radio instead. You do not need to poison your mind, as soon as you rise, with yesterday's or last night's stories of death and destruction.

3) Read your news instead of watching it and stay away from stories of woe. By reading your news, you will be able to filter those stories that enter your consciousness. If you want to read about politics, business, sports or entertainment – knock yourself out, but stay away from toxic stories.

4) Avoid toxic people. Gossipers and other people who can only talk about how bad

everything is serve no purpose. We are already bombarded by enough garbage, without hearing more from those we work or spend time with. If you have toxic friends, find some new people with whom to spend your time.

5) If a toxic person is part of your world (e.g., a boss, parent or spouse) **try to limit the time spent with this person.** If you *have to* engage with such a person, engage only on innocuous topics. Do not discuss politics or social ills; instead, talk about sports, movies, and so forth. The idea here is to avoid any topic that triggers this person to jump on their soapbox about how bad the world or life is.

6) Avoid toxic environments. Examples of toxic environments would be bars or other venues where people are drinking, drugging or smoking. If you go to parties where these things are taking place, stop going. If your life is so bad that you need these things to get through it, make a decision to change your life.

The first step after making this decision is to change the environments where you spend your time. Most every parole officer has the same requirement of their wards – they are not to return to the group they spent time with prior to landing in jail.

7) Listen to self-help, motivational, sales, success and/or informational products. Try to listen to at least 1 hour per day – maybe a half hour in the morning and half before going to bed. These programs could be in the form of downloadable mp3s, CDs, or even cassette tapes. I suggest audio over written formats, since reading is difficult for most of us and requires a higher degree of concentration. If you are an excellent reader, then go ahead and purchase the actual book formats.

I've had some people tell me they don't have the money for these products. Here are a few tricks for people where money may be tight. Go to eBay.com and type "motivation cassettes," "sales cassettes," etc. into the search bar. These days cassette tapes sell for next to nothing (10 or 12 \$) because the format is so outdated. However, the information found in these is still pretty good. Furthermore, when you purchase a "lot" of tapes, you will find there will be speakers who may be "out of print." It is not unusual for these *out of print* speakers to be relaying information heard nowhere else. It's for this reason that, to this day, I still listen to cassette tapes. If you don't have a cassette player, you can purchase one of those on eBay for about 5 or 10 dollars.

Another method, if you are short on cash but desire more up-to-date information, is to again go on eBay, and look for used CDs by speakers or writers covering the topics that interest you. **Make sure you look for *used* CDs.** Listen to the programs and take notes. Then, when you're finished, package the product up and relist it for sale on eBay.

Used products generally sell for around the same price you originally paid. Once you receive your money from the buyer, purchase another program or audio book and repeat the process. If you choose this path, make sure you are purchasing the entire set of program CDs.

Here's a quick way to ensure that you are purchasing a complete set: Tony Robbins *Get the Edge* sells new on eBay for around a \$120. But it can be purchased used for 30 or 40 dollars. However, if you see a copy of it selling for \$5, something's wrong. I learned this lesson the hard way. **Make sure you read the product description before bidding.** Legitimate eBay sellers usually make every effort to give accurate product descriptions – especially as it pertains to damaged or missing items that are part of a set.

NOTE: I don't normally suggest listening to informational or motivational programs while driving, due to the fact that concentrating on

driving prevents us from gleaning the majority of the content. The only time I listen to informational programs in the car is if I'm on a long stretch of open road where I do not need to be concerned about lane-darting drivers, kids running into the street, speed limits, or other distractions.

8) For 1 week try to avoid sugar, processed or fast foods, and negative speak about any person or thing. This “cleanse” will produce unbelievable results. There's nothing easy about this process. Most people (myself included) fail some component of this exercise within minutes of starting. It's so easy to have another driver cut you off, creating a negative thought or response. Try to notice this trap and start over immediately.

And there is **NOTHING** easy about cutting sugar or other processed foods from our diets. Virtually every food we eat contains either sugar or corn syrup. Further, many of our foods no longer contain the nutrients they once did. Worse still, are the massive numbers of chemicals found in almost everything we eat. The other day I had a blueberry muffin. I decided to read the ingredients list and **there were 31 ingredients. 31!!** I'm no cook, but there should have been 4 or 5 – flour, eggs, blue-berries, sugar and butter. But somehow, between preservatives, additives, food coloring, the bleaching process of flour and other things that I didn't even know what they were, there were 31.

Fast foods have little nutritional value and contain massive amounts of chemicals, salt and sugar. I don't want to beat a dead horse - - but eating these kinds of foods can't be good for us. **Try this cleanse... just for one week. No negative statements, no fast foods, no sugars. It will change your life.**

By restricting what goes into your body (whether food or information) miraculous things will start to show up.

Mistake 2 Failure to Know the Lifetime Value of a Client

(also known as: treating each client as a standalone transaction)

How much would you pay for a client who would be willing to purchase your product TODAY?

In the world of Direct Response Marketing, it is not unusual for companies to give away the entire up-front sale, just to capture a customer into their database. "Give away" refers to a company not making any money on the cost of acquiring the client. Example: an infomercial product costs the consumer 49.95 + shipping and handling. The cost of production and delivery of the product combined with the cost of the infomercial and air-time equals 49.95 + shipping and handling.

These companies know that once a client has made a purchase, odds are, they will purchase again and again. **These companies have calculated the lifetime value of a client down to the dollar.**

If you were scheduled to make a \$22,000 commission on the sale of a home, **would you be willing to give away your entire commission**, if you *knew* you would have that client for life? Keep in mind, the average homeowner purchases a new home about every 5 years. Before you answer that question, would you give up the \$22,000 in exchange for being able to sell that client a new home every 5 years and a home to every person he or she refers to you over the span of your career?? Your answers to both questions should be a resounding “**yes.**”

The problem is most of us are so busy trying to make a living, that we forget that each customer, if treated with the respect they deserve, is a **customer for life**. The idea of giving our hard-earned money away for the potential of future income, in a world of mortgage, car, and credit card payments, seems unconscionable. Understand, I’m not saying it’s necessary for you to give this money away; I’m just trying to point out the importance of the consideration.

Try to find the story of Chuck Bellows. This man is a master salesman who happens to sell cars.

He made it his life purpose to sell a car to every person he met. But what's interesting is the fact that he did NOT make it his purpose to necessarily sell each person a car on his initial meeting. Chuck knew that some people just weren't ready to purchase the make or model he was selling. Many people who became Chuck's customers were people who had originally gone into Chuck's dealership, yet ended up purchasing their vehicles from other dealerships. But Chuck's methods of follow-up and follow-through, grabbed every person he came in contact with in such a fashion that he built a huge referral business. The reason I discuss him here, rather than in *Referral Networks*, is to example the fact that Chuck was acutely aware of the **lifetime value of a customer**, even for people who had originally decided NOT to be his customers.

Calculating the Lifetime Value of a client is relatively easy.

- 1) Calculate the average purchase, commission or charge for your product or service.
- 2) Calculate the average number of purchases a client will make over his or her lifetime.
- 3) See if there are additional products or services you may be able to offer.
- 4) Add these figures together to determine the lifetime value.

5) As a bonus, attempt to approximate the average number of referrals you receive from any given customer. Multiply that number by the total from item # 4. Then, by adding this result to # 4, your new total should skyrocket.

I once met a real estate agent who was earning approximately \$175,000 per year. Not bad, but not nearly as well as I thought she could do. When she asked me if I could help her, I told her that I could double her income inside 12 months. I told her my fee would be 200,000 dollars. She balked at the cost.

To which I responded,

“1) When I get you to \$350,000, it won’t be for 1 year, it will be for the remainder of your time in this industry.

2) If you’re in this business for only another 5 years, you will still have made an extra \$675,000 on top of what you would have earned otherwise. [This took into account subtracting the fee for my services.]

3) When I say you will earn \$350,000 per year for every additional year you remain in the industry, I’m lying; you will make MORE. Year after year, the increased business will produce an increased number of referrals resulting in additional business. In 5 years you could well be at an annual income of half a million or even more.”

When you look at what this woman may have been able to earn in just 5 short years, my fee almost seems kind of low.

There are very few industries in which clients make only a single purchase. And even if you are in one of those fields, satisfied clients will still refer family, friends and co-workers, so take a few minutes and run the numbers.

Mistake 3 Failure to Innovate or Grow

Everything on earth is either growing or dying. Your business is no different. No matter what business you're in, stagnation will do you in. Stagnation is defined at Dictionary.com as follows: "to stop developing, growing, progressing, or advancing."

There are examples of this everywhere. Some new hotshot blasts into town and through hard work combined with some slick new marketing campaign, successfully grabs a huge amount of business. Other people start to duplicate this person's campaign, slowly chipping away at the share he or she has acquired; absent a new campaign, this person, at some point will be relegated to the general industry ranks.

The neat thing about business is we get the opportunity to continually reinvent ourselves. In today's competitive environment, there is no time to let the grass grow under your feet. Even when things are going great, it is incumbent upon you to be constantly trying to improve the way you do business.

Be careful though, I'm not talking about changing something that's working. There are many examples in which someone took a successful campaign, changed it in an attempt to make it better, then ditched the whole thing when the revamped plan failed. **DON'T DO THIS.**

There is nothing wrong with tweaking marketing campaigns or ideas. As a matter of fact, in Direct Response Marketing, the powers that be are always trying different twists and turns in scripts or other promotional materials. Marketing veterans know that each new idea needs to be tested, tested, and retested, before the decision is made to scuttle the original idea for the replacement.

I was speaking with an infomercial guy the other day. The company that had produced his infomercial had been running the same show for the past year and a half and business was starting to fall off due to the fact there was no *new* communication taking place. Since the infomercial

had been running with such a high degree of regularity, the content had grown stale. This is normal. The company revamped the program at a rough cost of \$150,000 and results SANK. The company had changed the program to be a little more fun. But in doing this, they had failed to take into account the fact that many people in the 2009 economy were just plain scared. This new “fun” program actually alienated their target audience, which was already reluctant to part with their money – even a mere \$39, which was the cost of this system.

Luckily, the company watched results very closely. They quickly realized the campaign was a total failure. They pulled the spots, replaced them with the original version and went back to the drawing board. Someone might say, “Gee, \$150,000 wasted.” Not necessarily.

- 1) There will probably be a day in a couple of years when this “new” program can be aired and will produce an entirely different result.
- 2) The company quickly learned that nothing even remotely close to a *flip*-based program would generate the level of business they were seeking.
- 3) Once the company had a more clear understanding of the marketplace, their return to the drawing board would most likely result in a program that will generate even greater revenues.

Just because you have a good idea that has been duplicated by the competition, does not mean you need to abandon it, or even make changes to it. But once you feel anything even remotely akin to a dilution of your sales, you need to have your next great idea or campaign lined up and ready for immediate delivery into the marketplace.

Today's business landscape requires diligence in staying one step ahead of the competition. And don't forget: this is not about beating the competition; it's about being the best you can be.

Mistake 4 “Knowing” A Prospect's Needs

There are 2 types of “knowing.” The first *knowing* is the general state of what someone needs. If I sell widgets, I can assume someone calling me is looking for widgets.

But the second type of *knowing* is a little trickier; and is extremely difficult in virtually any business involved around the sale or delivery of services. The second type of *knowing* is “knowing a client's specific needs.” Even the client calling to purchase widgets has specific needs. Such needs may be related to financing, time, or delivery, or could be something so specific that it falls entirely outside the normal scope of your business.

When a salesperson assumes to *know* the prospect's needs, the sales process has already gotten off to a bad start. The only person who *truly knows* what the prospect wants or needs is... **the prospect**. And the only way a sales professional can learn what those needs are, is to ask questions then shut up and listen.

In my early years, I was in such a hurry to make a sale that listening wasn't something I wanted to do. I loved my job and was so excited when I met new prospects, that I was trying to move them into a sales process before I even knew what they wanted or needed. This cost me a lot of cash until I realized that I needed to slow down and start asking questions and start listening to the answers to those questions.

If you work in retail, there will always be those few customers who come in and say something like, "Do you have the Sony Blu-ray player model 12345? I want one." But, more often than not, the client is actually looking for information about your product or service. And, upon obtaining this information, will then be prepared to make a buying decision.

In the service sector, it's next to impossible to tell anyone what you can or cannot do for them until you know what their needs and expectations are. I would be a fool to enter a mediation before

knowing the nature of the dispute and the needs of the parties. Most people would say, “Well no one would ever do that.” Yes and no. Yes – no one *should* every do that; but no – salespeople *do* that all the time. Salespeople/Consultants will walk into a company offering business consulting services stating “this is what you need” before spending the time the assessment stage demands. Other salespeople will walk into professional offices saying, “I can improve your company’s sales” without even knowing what the company does? Indeed, salespeople *do* make these mistakes every day.

The reason many salespeople fall into these traps of assuming clients’ needs is primarily due to the fact that they are having more prospecting conversations than selling conversations. It is through these conversations that salespeople are trying to weed out people who may not be actual customers.

In attempts to develop business with new prospects, we are forced to *assume* every person we speak with, needs our product or service, but there are problems with this approach. If I walk into a retail store and say, “You need a website,” I don’t know: a) If they already have a website, b) If they currently have a website under development, or c) Whether or not the business owner even owns a computer, making the

thought of having a website completely foreign to him or her.

I understand this may be a simplistic example, but it displays the point I'm trying to make which is, until we *truly know* a prospect's needs, we have little ability to deliver any product or service.

This happens less frequently when a prospective client **has called you** to discuss business. It still happens, just not as frequently. But, once again, when we are trying to develop business with someone we have no previous interaction with, we are left to assume that they need something they may not. This is really no different than picking up a phone book and calling random numbers to drum up business.

If you are forced to cold-call to develop business - - a method I HATE, you should try to practice one thing: Before walking in, learn exactly what that business does, then enter and say something like, "I sell such and such. I don't know if it would be of value to your company, but I would like to just ask a few quick questions to find out. If the answers to those questions lead me to believe I can help you, I will tell you. If they don't, I will also tell you that. The questions take less than 60 seconds. Do you mind if I run them past you real quick?" (**Note: you may not like the English, but there are specific reasons why**

these words are spoken EXACTLY this way.) Have a piece of paper that has the questions on it so you can quickly rattle them off. Leave enough space between each question so you can write the person's response. Do NOT try to remember their answers.

Several things are being accomplished by using the system outlined in the previous paragraph.

- 1) You have let the person know immediately what you do and why you are there.
- 2) You have made it clear that you have not come to force anything down their throats. You have done this by acknowledging they may not even be a customer.
- 3) You are being professional by requesting permission to ask your qualifying questions.
- 4) You are promising the interaction won't take much time.

The cold-call is usually unsuccessful because the salesperson is forced to assume that he or she knows the client's needs. If you are involved in this type of selling, try to switch it up to the method I've described above.

On any call other than a cold-call, your job at the initial interview or meeting is to ask as many questions as possible and listen carefully to learn as much as you can about your prospect and his or her needs, wants and desires. Then, and only

then, can you offer a potential solution tailored to their situation.

Mistake 5 Doing Other People's Jobs

Moonlighting is having a second job. Many people in sales have second jobs and they're not even aware of it. One of my quotes is, "If you are paid \$100 per hour, do not do \$10 an hour work."

When I was in real estate, I found myself picking up the phone to "help out." I would show other agents how to use the new computer systems, because I was a nice guy and it only took a few minutes. I would clip newspaper ads, print listing reports, preview properties, stuff and stamp mailers... you get the picture. I was performing all kinds of activities that, while being part of my business, could and *should* have been handled by an hourly assistant.

The business of selling homes lends itself to the availability of loads of free time, so my thought was, "Why not put that free time to good use?" **The problem was that my highest and best use was *selling* real estate, NOT stuffing envelopes or answering phone calls.** I should have used any available free time to put my face in front of as many potential buyers or sellers as possible.

I'm not saying that we should never help out, or that it will kill you to run your own reports once in a while. What I am saying is, doing these things or anything that takes you away from your *real job*, especially on a regular basis, is not what you should be doing.

One of the primary tasks in *sales* is prospecting. While many salespeople love selling, they hate prospecting since this is where rejection enters the picture. In an effort to avoid prospecting (rejection), salespeople start performing junky little tasks that are really nothing more than busy-work. This "work" makes these people look and feel like they're actually working when, in reality, they aren't.

Nowhere have I seen this more than in the field of real estate; but I suspect that virtually every sales arena could qualify to some degree. The average real estate agent performs less than 5 hours of *actual work* in any given week. Sure the agent may be looking at inventory - - even though he or she has no clients. Yes, attending company meetings is necessary - - because they're mandatory. Agents may read For Sale By Owner ads in the local newspapers, but will never call on these ads. They might help other agents in the office or take 2 hour lunches because "they have to eat *some* time." But when everything is said and done... more has been said than done!

I'm not trying to paint the real estate industry as lazy, but it's such an easy industry to target since the majority of its salespeople do not work very hard. Sure when things are hopping, agents are showing homes and writing offers, but the second things slow down, these activities come to a grinding halt. It was the very rare agent who I saw farming (knocking on doors in a specific neighborhood), or picking up the phone and calling FSBOs (For Sale By Owners), or giving First Time Buyer Seminars. It was very rare that I met an agent who had a thorough understanding of the purchase contract and disclosures, the laws regulating their industry or anything else that displayed a clear, complete knowledge of their business. But I was IN real estate. So maybe every industry experiences similar lacks. If these deficiencies exist in other industries as well, it becomes simple to see why true success comes to so few. Because, it is the few who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the EXACT jobs that must be done in order to ensure success.

Once-in-awhile I would joke with friends about my "pretend job." Someone would accuse me of being a hard worker because I was in the office 7 days a week. To which I would respond, "I may be in the office, but that doesn't mean I'm working. *I'm just pretending to work.* You know... reading the news, calling people on the phone, cleaning my desk, reading books - - you

know - - everything other than doing actual work. So please don't spread false rumors about me." While this was a joke, there were times when there was some truth to it.

These days, when I work, I work hard and smart. I am both efficient and effective at what I do and get paid well enough that when I finish working, I get to relax. However, relaxation for me is still being in the office, and while in the office I'm engaging in activities that help make me better, faster and stronger at what I do and who I am. Some of these activities are: keeping up to date with industry changes, reading books or articles that will improve me as a person, reading books or articles that will increase my knowledge base, reading books or articles that can support my business model, and developing new and better ways to serve my clients. None of these things constitute "work" in my world. Because, in my world, "work" really has only one meaning: **doing those exact things necessary to produce income** – nothing more and nothing less.

If you find yourself performing other people's jobs or work that should be parceled out to hourly workers, either stop doing it or at least acknowledge it for what it is – busy work. Doing work that has nothing to do with the production of income is not what you've been hired to do. You were hired to be a sales

professional. And while it may not be the easiest job in the world, the rewards far outweigh the costs.

Mistake 6 Step-Skipping

Step-Skipping is **taking the easy way**. I am constantly telling clients that sometimes things need to happen at a certain speed and in a certain order for the intended result to show up. The people who have the toughest time with this statement are either OCD people or control nuts. Oddly enough, these also seem to be the same people who hate flying because they can't be in control. Like somehow their no-training-at-all status would make them better pilots than the *actual pilots!*

If I have to drive to the same destination more than twice, I start trying alternate routes to find the fastest way from point A to point B. When I do this, I am striving for efficiency. However, I still have to get from my point of origin to my destination and there is no step that can be skipped in this process. I need to get up, get dressed, get in my car and the car has to be gassed-up and in driveable condition. I still need to negotiate traffic, stop signs/signals and speed limits. I need to park and get from the car to my final destination. I don't get to skip any of these

steps, no matter how simple any may seem. Sales steps are no different.

However, many salespeople are continually trying to skip steps in their efforts to accelerate the sales process. Sometimes the cause of this is the need for the paycheck, but it's generally derived from laziness. "Knowing" a client's needs, as described earlier in this chapter, is a form of skipping steps in the sales process.

A normal sales process should consist of the following:

Prospecting

Developing a list of potential buyers of your product or service. This could include cold-calling, following up on warm leads, or following up on generated leads.

Initial Interview With Prospect

This meeting should produce a laundry list of your clients' needs. This meeting is intended to determine: a) **if someone is in need** of your product or service, b) if they have **the desire to acquire** your product or service, and most importantly, c) if they have **the ability to pay** for your product or service.

Conclusion That You *Can* Service The Prospect (Conversion of a Prospect to a *Qualified Prospect* or Active Client)

This is the outcome of the *Initial Interview*.

Doing The Job

This may be something as simple as completing the necessary paperwork to effect a sale, or it may be the entire process, from start to finish, of completing a transaction. For example in real estate, this would include: locating prospective properties for the client, showing those properties to the client, getting the property under contract and going through the escrow process – culminating in closing of the transaction.

Completion

This occurs after the transaction is completely closed or the sale has been completed. It would be similar to a *post-closing interview* or a *performance review*. This permits you the opportunity to a) thank the client, b) get feedback on your or your company's performance, and c) improve the quality of the service you will deliver to this or future clients.

All of the above are components of the sales process. Do sales take place outside the thorough completion of each step? Of course they do... and quite frequently. The problem is the resulting fallout is: fewer sales, increased product returns, fewer repeat customers and fewer referrals.

Salespeople can earn money by skipping steps, but the process is more difficult and less

thorough, thereby forcing the associate to be on a constant, never-ending search for the next customer or client. Thorough completion of the sales process from A to Z, permits the sales professional to obtain additional business from repeat customers and those who they refer, resulting in a strong and reliable stream of income.

Mistake 7 Making Promises You Can't Keep

Do I really need to go into detail on this?? If you have to lie to close a deal, don't. Your reputation is worth far more than the couple of dollars or even several thousand dollars you may make by lying.

Sometimes people say, "But Richard, I didn't *mean* to lie or mislead the client; I was merely passing on information that was given to me." My response to this is, "Fine, but after the first time, *you knew better.*"

One of the keys in being a sales professional is knowing what you can and cannot deliver. If you cannot make the promise of a certain time or certain price, let the client know; they may be disappointed, but at least they will appreciate your honesty. The client may also decide that if you are running into something such as a delivery problem, your competitors may be

dealing with the same issue, resulting in the client still using you to make their purchase due to you're having been up-front with them.

Mistake 8 Managers Should Not Sell and Salespeople Should Not Manage

Managers are paid to manage and salespeople are paid to sell. There should be NO crossover between these 2 jobs. Qualified managers do not have the time to sell; if they do, they are most likely failing at both jobs – or, at a bare minimum, achieving only marginal success at each.

Further, there is nothing worse than the friction brought about by a salesperson being forced to compete with his or her manager. Many sales operations receive inbound calls. The higher the ticket-price for the product or service, the more often the caller will request to speak with the manager. If managers are cherry-picking the best clients for themselves, or if they are handing those clients off to a favorite agent, resentment can quickly spread through the entire sales staff, having a negative impact on morale and overall production.

A second common problem with the marrying of management and sales, is the practice of promoting a top salesperson to a sales

management position. The reason this is usually a mistake is because those traits and practices the person had or used to acquire their top sales position, are usually very different from those skills necessary to effectively manage. With over 25 years in business, I've seen only a few examples of this transition going in a beneficial direction. And when I say "beneficial," I mean beneficial to the promoted person, to the staff they were now supervising and to the company.

Collateral Damage Caused by the Decision to Promote Sales to Management - - EVERYONE UNHAPPY.

The promoted salesperson usually sees a decline in his or her personal income and an increase in the type and level of workload he or she is unaccustomed to.

The sales staff is unhappy because they are either competing against the new manager or, at best, having a difficult time dealing with someone who was never really "management material."

The sales staff is unhappy because the manager's work almost always receives higher priority treatment and greater attention by support staff.

The support staff is unhappy because they are usually kicked around by sales but at least *were* minimally supported by management. Now, a "manager" is interacting with support staff

in much the same way she or he use to interact with these people before their promotion.

The Company is unhappy because revenues fall due to a decline in the star player's sales performance combined with lower overall sales staff productivity resulting from the new manager's inability to effectively manage.

NO ONE WINS.

A salesperson's job is to prospect, qualify and close transactions.

A manager's job is to manage the activities of salespeople, resolve disputes between sales staff members or between staff members and clients or between sales staff and support staff, report to upper management, and develop and implement programs that will support the sales staff – either through increased leads or more efficient closings. **If a manager is properly performing her or his job, there is no time to be selling.**

Mistake 9 Following Other People's Rules

Don't get me started on this topic. First, I must tell you that I march to the beat of a different drum. If I see a *Wet Paint* sign, **I absolutely have to check (by touching the paint) to see if the paint is *actually* wet.** The more arbitrary a rule

appears to be, the less likely I am to follow it. If I believe a rule has been made to serve some special interest, as opposed to the greater good, I will fight it to the death.

Rules get laid down for us from the day we are born. The rule says, my “Mom has to leave the hospital in a wheel-chair to limit the hospital’s liability.” On my way home, I will be strapped into some kind of government approved baby-holder seat thing. As I’m driving (actually not me, but one of my parents) I will be subjected to all kinds of laws – speed limits, traffic controls, etc.

This situation does not get any better once I’m home. My parents will begin setting rules almost immediately. Once I’m old enough, strangers will also start making rules for me to follow. These people will be extended family members, school teachers and bosses. And some of the rules these people will come up with will be sooooo far out in left field that even a 2nd grader would question the reasoning behind them. But nonetheless, I will be required to follow them or suffer the consequences.

Don’t get me wrong. I completely understand the necessity for laws and rules in an organized society. I have no issue with rules per sé. My problem comes in when rules are generated

for their own sake. We hear funny stories all the time about how it is illegal to kill squirrels in Kentucky on the 3rd Wednesday of the month or where a man cannot ask a woman to dance after midnight in such and such town. Many of these “rules” (laws) were originated by people who believed they knew what was best for everyone. Similarly, when I’m told that I need to act a certain way because that is how someone believes I *should* act, now we have a situation. “*Should*,” of course, being according to the other person’s idea of what is right.

I remember back when I was studying for my real estate exam. I was working for a company and I would use my lunch hour to study. I remember a boss telling me, “You cannot sit at your desk during lunch.” To which I responded, “Why not? It’s *my* lunch.” I had the job for less than 30 days. If I had followed their rule, I might not have passed the real estate exam. I’ve had only one other employer/employee job in my life and that too, lasted less than 90 days.

While it may be clear to anyone reading this that I should never work for anyone other than myself, what slips past most people are the day to day “rules” they unconsciously agree to live by. Here are few examples: It’s okay if someone is late - - as long as they have a good excuse. If your neighbor buys a nice car, you have to buy a nice

car. When are you going to get a *real* job? Once you're no longer a kid, running around and acting like one is not acceptable. Eating in a specific room in the house is necessary – but only when certain people are visiting. Following your dream won't pay the bills. Women hear this one all the time - - if you're not married by 30, something's wrong with you. If you're not for the war, you're un-American. If you don't dress, act, or look a certain way, you will be excluded. I'm sure you can come up with countless others.

People in multi-level marketing are constantly dealing with people's perceptions of the “second class” nature of MLM-based business. I have a friend who once told me that she would never purchase anything from an infomercial, yet she has purchased 3 items that were originally sold through infomercial formats and has received 2 others as gifts. MLM organizations and infomercials are responsible for the sale of billions of dollars in product each and every year, so maybe someone can explain to me why these vehicles command less respect than more “mainstream” marketing methods.

The problem is, everybody has opinions as to how things *should* be. At some point, we have to look in the mirror, take stock of who we are and where we want to go in life, and just do it. Three years ago I decided to run a marathon. I had

28 days to train. **Everybody said** it would be impossible for anyone, but especially someone my age, to accomplish such a feat - - especially taking into account that I have never been a long-distance runner. At the time I made this decision, I was running 3 or 4 miles, 2 or 3 times a week and I wasn't very fast. Never in my lifetime had I broken a 6-minute mile and only twice had I run beyond 8 miles. On the 29th day, after making the decision to run the marathon, I completed it. I did not walk. I did not stop. And I finished in the top 8% of all runners.

Notice how I placed “Everybody said” in bold in the previous paragraph? If every time I stopped doing something because “everybody said...,” I, and many others, would be nowhere in life.

I find it interesting that when we're babies crawling along the floor, everybody around us can't wait for us to start walking. I've NEVER heard someone say to a crawling baby, “Stop trying to walk. If God wanted us to walk, He would have given us legs.” Ya Right! No, instead, what is heard in homes throughout the world is constant encouragement for babies to take those first few steps. But, at some point, in close proximity to this point in time, many people in our lives decide that anything else we want to do is... a mistake, or stupid, or will “never work.”

I understand, “Don’t run into the street.” I don’t understand, “Why do you have to draw those pictures?” or “Why are you always reading? Go outside and get some fresh air.” Nobody ever said these things to me, because I was a lousy artist who did not like to read. But I’ve heard these and similar comments made by others to their children.

“Draw inside the lines.” **Who cares if I draw outside the lines? And why does it matter to anyone?** Maybe these people think that if I don’t draw inside the lines, that someday when I’m old enough to drive, I won’t DRIVE inside the lines. People must have looked at Edison while he was dealing with that whole electricity thing like he was some kind of nut. I heard a marketing guy a few weeks ago discussing *brainstorming*. He quoted Einstein as having said, “If your idea doesn’t sound insane, it’s probably no good.”

Make a decision to increase your awareness of arbitrary rules. Make a decision that if you believe a certain way is the right way to do something (as long as it’s legal and moral), that you will not allow any person to talk you out of trying it. And I don’t mean trying it one time; I mean trying it until you are crystal clear the idea or method will absolutely not work.

Through the years, I've bumped into many people who have accumulated some money – not alot, just some, giving others advice on how to build wealth. I've also come in contact with many people who were in okay shape – not great, just okay, professing to have **the answer** on health and fitness. I've heard people with no business experience, tell other people that their ideas were “too stupid to ever work.” Lore has it that Frederick W. Smith, founder of Federal Express, received a “C” on one of his college papers. The topic – developing an overnight courier company. Some guy in the mid-70s decided to put a rock in a small box, punch some holes in the box, and include a small instruction leaflet on *Caring for Your Pet Rock*. He became a millionaire.

Bottom Line: Unless someone has tested your idea and failed, move forward with your plan. Even an idea which failed 20 years ago, might succeed in today's market or in some new market existing a decade from now.

Don't follow the “rules.” The people who blaze new territories are the success stories of tomorrow. If everyone knew how to become a millionaire, we would be a nation of millionaires. If everyone's definition of what constituted “art” was correct, there would be few artists. I've heard on more than one occasion, “Music is the space between

the notes.” **WRONG.** The space between the notes is **SPACE** - - it’s empty. Space does not define sound, sound defines it.

The second everybody starts saying something can’t be done, that’s when you need to forge full-steam ahead.

There are many more mistakes made in sales every day, but these are the primary 9 that seem to occur most frequently and which also seem to have the greatest impact on success. I use to have a rule in my company: “If you have the question running through your head, ‘is this okay?’ - - it probably isn’t.” **Bad rules and bad decisions** are like that. When you run into either, you will usually experience that nagging feeling that what you’re doing, or contemplating doing, is not okay. When this feeling hits you, **STOP!** Consider what you’re doing, and alter course in the direction that honors the sales process and respects you, your company and the clients you serve.

EXIT

There you have it... everything you will ever need to know about sales. (I'm kidding of course. Get your hands on as much information as possible.)

99% of your competition is unwilling or unable to follow these 2 simple rules:

- 1) Honor the sales process.
- 2) Treat clients the way you would like to be treated.

By practicing these 2 simple habits, you will enjoy successes beyond your wildest dreams.

As a salesperson, you are part of an elite group. A group of people responsible for their own destinies. A group of people who, in many cases, earn more money than anyone else in their companies.

A group of people who make the world go 'round.

Thank you for reading The Zen of Sales.

Best

Richard

Other books by Richard Hart

Keep Your Daughter Safe: 171 Ways Young Women can Prevent Sexual Assault

Award winning book that **Tanya Brown, sister of Nicole Brown-Simpson**, called “**a must read for every young woman in America.**” The book is a quick, yet thorough guide that informs young women on how to avoid date rape, rape and sexual assault. Much of the information found in this book can be found nowhere else.

Keep Your College Daughter Safe: 161 Ways College Women can Prevent Sexual Assault

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At age 18, in only his second full month in the real estate business, Richard was named Salesman of the Month. He is the only person to have been awarded the prestigious National Association of Realtors and California Association of Realtors scholarships simultaneously. He passed the California Real Estate Brokers Examination at the youngest age possible (age 20). He graduated U.C. Berkeley at the age of 20 and 4 months later was admitted to the California Association of Realtors teaching staff. **He was the youngest member of this staff.**

At age 23, Richard left the business of high-end single family home sales and joined the largest mortgage brokerage company in California. One month later he was their top salesman. He repeated this performance the following 2 months and was made a regional manager shortly thereafter. Three months later he left the company to start his own operation – he was 24. Richard took a 1-man office and built it to 3 offices with over 60 people. His loan agents produced the highest per agent volume in the industry. Richard was responsible for a number of ground-breaking programs that are still in use today.

During the mid- to late 90s, Richard transitioned out of the mortgage business and into mediation and private consulting. At the time of this writing, he is one of the highest paid divorce mediators in California.

Richard has authored 4 books, 2 of which have won awards (one of which won a Grand Award) for Writing Excellence. He has developed a one-of-a-kind training program for entry-level real estate agents, an award-winning program on how to write a book, and has co-developed a children's study skills program, as well as an intensive corporate program teaching mediation and negotiation.

Richard is a speaker in the lecture and training circuits bringing his management, mediation, negotiation, sales and product development skills to the arena he has always loved most – Training. His lectures on these topics combine depth of understanding with a teaching style that is unique in its methodology, delivering to his audience an unparalleled learning experience.

Besides his business activities, Richard has also always been concerned with his social responsibilities. He was awarded an Outstanding Student Award for Community Service for his work in crime prevention and his time spent with Aid to Victims and Witnesses. He is also the author of ***Keep Your Daughter Safe: 171 Ways Young Women can Prevent Sexual Assault*** and ***Keep Your College Daughter Safe: 161 Ways College Women can Prevent Sexual Assault***, books that Tanya Brown, sister of Nicole Brown-Simpson, called “must reads for every young woman in America.” The title won the coveted Grand Writing Award for Writing Excellence in 2008. Richard frequently speaks to young women on Sexual Assault Avoidance Strategies. His program is found nowhere else and is intended to reduce the incidence of rape and sexual assault across America.

For speaking engagements,

Richard can be reached at

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