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## The More You Sweat, the Less You Sell

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**T**he most common forms of sales sabotage are stylistic. *How* we talk with customers can easily undermine our ability to position ourselves to succeed and win business. No one does this intentionally, but the fact remains, if you don't know *how* to effectively structure and conduct customer conversations, *what* you talk about doesn't make much difference. Customers aren't going to hear you. They won't care what you have to say. They may even work actively against you.

Many sales professionals hear the word *style* in the context of communication and think of personality style or style in the sense of something cosmetic or trendy. Style in the sense I'm using it here is an expression of our mind-set, our

stance, and our approach to our relationships with customers. It has a lot to do with the answer to the question, "How do you see your role as a sales professional?"

Our conversational style has a huge impact on building credibility and trust. For years, I've cited a study that revealed that the number-one reason that patients change doctors was not based upon the doctor's competence, but on the doctor's bedside manner, that is, how well the doctor appeared to understand and respond to the patient. This is further reinforced by recent studies of malpractice lawsuits described in Malcolm Gladwell's book, *Blink* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2005). Again, these studies found that the competence, or incompetence, of doctors had little to do with who got sued and who didn't. What do you think was the most significant difference between doctors who were sued at least twice for malpractice and those who were never sued? "Interestingly," writes Gladwell, "there was no difference in the amount or quality of information they gave their patients; they didn't provide more details about medication or the patient's condition. The difference was entirely in *how* they talked to their patients" (p. 42).

*How* you speak with your customers has an equally powerful impact on your career. Your ability to constructively attract and engage a customer in a relevant dialogue requires a conversation style as well as substantive content. Style is a critical key in the creation of engaging and compelling business relationships. When customers are engaged, they learn. When what they learn is compelling enough to make them want to change, to take action, they will buy.

I'm assuming that you are not all that surprised when I say your style of conversation has a tremendous impact on your performance and establishing credibility with prospects and customers. You know that. What you may not realize, however, is that the style you are using right

now may very well be setting you up for failure in your critical conversations. It might be difficult to accept that you may be sabotaging your own career, but here are three reasons that could be true:

1. Contrary to the popular image of salespeople as “born communicators,” most people, and that includes sales, service, and support professionals, are not naturally effective communicators. Further, they tend not to know that about themselves. For instance, I see well-meaning professionals get emotionally involved in their conversations with customers all the time. When they do, they unconsciously link the success or failure of those conversations to their self-image and emotional well-being. This raises their personal stake in conversations and they start feeling self-imposed pressure. As their stress levels shoot up, they fall back into old habits and thoughtless reactions that are not pretty and that they often come to regret. From the customer’s perspective, that’s strike one against a credible conversation.
2. The techniques promoted in the majority of sales training programs exaggerate our innate communication shortcomings. Salespeople have devoted countless hours to perfecting their presentation techniques and to understanding how to overcome objections and close sales. The problem is that much of this sales dogma was not designed for the collaborative effort required in sales today (Era 3 in Figure 1.1) and further alienates customers. That’s strike two against a credible conversation.
3. When salespeople get emotionally involved in the outcome of a customer engagement and start to try to drag the customer into compliance using outdated

	Era 1	Era 2	Era 3
<b>Skills</b>	Sales Scripts	Questioning Listening Analysis	Business
<b>Tools</b>	Presentation Closing	Needs Analysis	Business Acumen/Project Management
<b>Role</b>	Persuader	Problem Solver	Source of Business Advantage
<b>Value</b>	Obvious Value	Augmented Value	Complex Value Networks

**FIGURE 1.1** Three Eras of Selling

techniques, what they are really doing is confirming the customer’s negative assumptions and stereotypes about the sales profession. That’s when customers start to identify us with everything bad that a salesperson has ever done to them or that they have heard was done to others, and that can be strike three in an attempt at a credible conversation.

Salespeople frequently have no idea why they struck out. One moment they’re passionately pursuing the sale, using all of the techniques they have been taught, and the next moment the customer is treating them like annoying insects. A fundamental communication disconnect has occurred. When customers believe salespeople have lost their credibility, they begin taking action to distance themselves and quickly shut down. Usually, salespeople are baffled by the customer’s unexpected response. They begin to see their customers as irrational, unreasonable, and sometimes, rude. They think the customer just doesn’t get it! They don’t understand what really happened.

The last thing we want to be saying about our customers is, “I just don’t understand why they did that.”

One of our goals here is to help you understand the behaviors and words that drive customers to cut off communication and what we can do to prevent that behavior. We also need to look at what customers do and say that can trigger counterproductive behaviors in us and what are the most productive ways we can respond and maintain our credibility.

## The Emotional Mind-Set— The Root of Miscommunication

Your emotional mind-set can either provide the foundation on which all successful communications are built, or it can be the primary instrument sabotaging your credibility. You embark on customer conversations with a pre-established view of the world or mind-set. Your mind-set derives from your personality and experiences and it manifests itself in the way you respond to others. It is also formed by the expectations and assumptions you have about the individual you are speaking with, the conversational flow, and the outcomes you hope to achieve. To be an exceptional salesperson, there is nothing more important, nor harder to master, than to get this mind-set right.

Your awareness of the emotional mind-set with which you are entering a customer engagement is going to vary widely. You will be very aware of some of its elements and others will be hidden deep in your mind, just waiting to leap out at the most inopportune time. It’s the elements that you aren’t aware of that can become emotional blocks to open and honest communication with your customers and really hinder your successful outcomes.

## Who's Talking Now?

One effective way to recognize the sources and effects of mind-set in conversation and relationships is by looking at patterns of adopted beliefs and observed behaviors, like that parent and child in all of us. The parent is composed of borrowed attitudes, opinions, and prejudices—all those things we accepted and stored away without question in the first five or so years of our lives. Sometimes the parent is a critical parent, that part of us that tends to tell, preach, and enforce—and sometimes the parent is nurturing, that part of us that is very supportive and empathetic. The adult is our objective, reality-based self. The child is our subjective, emotional self.

The adult is the ideal state for credible conversations, but the parent and the child pop up all the time and drive many suboptimal interactions. For instance, as you'll see in the dialogue that follows, salespeople often respond as the child to their customer-parents:

PROSPECT: Our company is planning to purchase an integrated CRM software package for our marketing, sales, and service staff. We understand you have one of the more flexible solutions, and we would like you to demonstrate your solution to our management team by the end of the month.

SALESPERSON: We'd be glad to demonstrate our solution, but first I need to get a better understanding of your company's needs and budget. I'd like to schedule some time to meet with several of the executives at your company.

PROSPECT: We'd rather not take the time for that. We'd like to start with an overview first and if things look good, we can progress from there.

SALESPERSON: It's very difficult to present such a complex solution without understanding more about your situation, your requirements, and your budget constraints.

PROSPECT: We have a reasonable budget in place, and we don't have time to waste on meetings. Do you want to work with us or not?

SALESPERSON: Certainly, when would be the most convenient time for the demo?

What happened here was driven by emotion. The customer calls in and says he wants a product demonstration, a normal and often costly part of the complex sales process. The salesperson responds as an adult and seeks to ensure that a demonstration of his product can be tailored and is appropriate for both the customer and his own company. The customer responds like a parent; it's going to be his way or the highway. The salesperson, overly anxious to please and scared to lose the sale, responds like a child by complying and, in doing so, commits to an expensive course of action that may very well have no chance of yielding a sale. If you read this and think that the salesperson had no alternative but to agree to the customer's demands, you may be responding from your child, too. As we'll see in later chapters, there are viable and effective alternatives that are less likely to trigger these parent-type reactions by customers and that will be more effective than compliance to customers who take the parent role.

The request for proposal (RFP), by the way, is an institutionalized version of a parent-child or superior-subordinate transaction. The customer sends out a parental command to bid a project, the "to-do" list, and many sellers automatically obey, often investing huge amounts of time, money, and other resources in the

proposal process without question and without any real sense of their odds, all in hopes of winning the sale. Again, the idea that you have no alternative but compliance is seriously flawed.

Another very common scenario occurs when salespeople unwittingly play the parent with customers and alienate them at the very beginning of the sale. I've often seen salespeople walk into a customer's office very early in the meeting and in the guise of an "initial benefit statement" say something like, "You probably don't realize how much defects in the silicon wafer fabrication process cost companies in your industry each year." This is how salespeople have been taught to start their call in order to gain the customer's attention. But what do customers hear? Many of them hear a parent or superior insinuating that they don't know their own business. If you lead a sales conversation with a similar statement and your customer sits back in his chair and disengages, you can guess what just happened.

Once the parent and the child manifest themselves in a business conversation, old patterns of reacting often kick in. These preprogrammed reactions can play out automatically and unconsciously, and what's left of your connection and credibility with the customer quickly deteriorates.

## **The Amazing Old Brain**

Another hidden element of an emotional mind-set that negatively impacts salespeople resides in what scientists define as the *Old Brain*. The Old Brain consists of two parts: the brain stem (or reptilian brain) and the limbic system. The reptilian brain is the most primitive part of the brain and controls our involuntary actions, such as breathing,



sleeping, and our reflexes, such as the jerk that results when a doctor taps your knee with that little rubber hammer. The limbic system generates basic emotions, such as fear and aggression. Both parts of the brain operate automatically and unconsciously.

The Old Brain is not big on interpretation and analysis. Scientists say that it reacts to situations and other people in just six ways: attack, submit, flee, reproduce, nurture, or be nurtured. It also decides how to react with lightning speed, faster than the more evolved cerebral cortex—the part of the brain that “thinks” in the more rational sense. So, while the cerebral cortex is thinking a situation through, the Old Brain is ready to act.

Recently, scientists have begun to believe that more and more of our behavior is created unconsciously. Timothy Wilson, University of Virginia psychology professor and author of *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Reed Business Information, 2002), finds that we are always switching between the conscious and unconscious brain. He says our “adaptive unconscious” develops early in life, learns patterns that become fixed and inviolable, and plays a much larger role in our day-to-day behavior than previously believed.

So how does this affect your conversations? Think about how quickly a customer’s gesture or tone of voice can trigger a negative perception, or worse, a negative reaction in you; how quickly a sale can get hung up on a trivial point in a contract; how quickly a customer can get upset and argumentative when you counter an objection by saying, “I’m sorry, but I think you misunderstood.” There is a good chance you are seeing the Old Brain and the adaptive unconscious at work in these situations. When people react negatively and things start heading downhill, conversations can quickly get out of control and they become ever harder to turn around.

In this case, the Old Brain is in the self-protection mode. Note that the words "I think you misunderstood" places the blame on the customer. The implication is "What I said was clear, you just didn't get it." A more thoughtful response that nurtures the customer could be, "I can see the language I used may not be clear enough [our fault]; what part of the wording do you think should be revised?"

Remember that the Old Brain and adaptive unconscious exist in all of us. They are emotion laden, they operate automatically, and many times we are not aware of the negative impact they can have on customer relationships and sales results.

### **Stress Kills Credibility**

One more thing: Stress is produced when the emotional mind-set problems described previously manifest themselves. Stress is emotional reactions running rampant and it can easily power a self-reinforcing, downward cycle that destroys credibility and trust in conversations. When you react without thought to stress, it drives you back into a reactive mode and dangerous old beliefs. Stress can drop you back into quickly reacting versus thoughtful patterns of response.

Stress can also close salespeople down. They start thinking about the consequences of not closing this sale, worrying about how they are going to salvage it, and what they are going to say next. They are so involved in their own problems that they aren't paying attention to the customer and they stop listening. When the customer says something relevant, the salesperson either misses it or reacts seemingly out of the blue with disconnected thoughts. The conversation becomes even clumsier and new communication problems are created.

Finally, higher stress levels cause salespeople to figuratively and perhaps even literally start sweating. The rule of thumb about sweating in sales is simple: The more you sweat, the less you sell. If you are feeling pressure, it probably means that you are working harder and, as we will see, when you're under pressure, it often does more harm than good.

### **Key Thought**

*When you're feeling pressure,  
you're doing something wrong.*

## **Presentation and Persuasion— Commoditize and Alienate**

When salespeople work under pressure, what do they unwittingly do? They reach back into their subconscious and more aggressively apply the tools and techniques that they assume or have been told will help them win sales. Unfortunately, instead of solving their problems and salvaging the sale, these tools and techniques are, at best, ineffective and, at worst, can irreparably damage their credibility and trust with a prospect or customer. This is because of a flawed emphasis on two elements of conventional sales training: presentation and persuasion.

Presentation and persuasion are not inherently flawed sales tools. When their aim is to convey information that the customer needs to reach a high-quality decision, they can be effective. To be effective, however, their timing, content, and intended audience must be perfectly aligned.

Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. A presentation is an answer to a question; the worst presentations are answers to questions that haven't been asked. This type of presentation confuses the customer.

### **Key Thought**

*Do not answer an unasked question.*

Take a look at your typical presentation. What questions are you answering? How sure are you that those questions are in your customer's minds? In other words, how ready are your customers for your answers? Can your customers connect that answer to something relevant to their success?

### **Presentations Commoditize Solutions**

How knowledgeable are your customers when you initiate your sales process? Roughly three-quarters of the sales professionals we have polled place their customers at 60 percent or less in terms of problem and solution knowledge. Only 3 percent of sales professionals think that their customers score at 80 percent or above on the knowledge scale.

This suggests that your prospects will almost always have a less-than-comprehensive grasp of their situation or the problem they should be solving. Ask yourself these questions: Do your customers know the true cost of the *absence* of the solutions you sell? Do they even know if they are experiencing the problems that your solutions are designed to resolve or the risks they are exposed to if they don't buy that solution? If you are selling commercial insur-

ance, for example, can your customers quantify the risks in their current coverage? Do they recognize the gaps in the coverage? Can they recognize excess coverage? Do they understand what they should self-insure? The answer to all of these questions is “probably not.”

The solutions we sell are often more confusing to customers than the problems we solve. Ask yourself these questions: How often, if ever, have your customers purchased such a product or service? Can customers connect the value inherent in your solution to their situation? If you are selling software, for example, have customers established the right decision criteria necessary to make a sound decision? Do they understand the difficulties of implementation? Again, the more complex the sale, the more likely the answer to all of these questions is “probably not.”

How do most salespeople address these issues? They standardize their approach and depend on presentations to educate their customers. But as we’ve begun to see, presentations have some major disadvantages in and of themselves.

First, they transform salespeople into professors giving lectures, one of the least effective ways to transfer knowledge. Learning experts tell us that people retain only about 30 percent of what they hear. Even using the best adult learning techniques, including a well-developed multimedia approach, the experts still say that an audience only retains half of what they see and hear. Our experience suggests that these figures are conservative. When a presentation answers questions that have not been asked, relevance suffers and comprehension drops dramatically. There is no incentive to retain information that appears irrelevant.

Second, consider the content of a typical sales presentation. Based on our research, all too many are devoted almost

entirely (80 percent or better) to describing the salesperson's exceptional company, the robust solution, and the positive future customers will enjoy once their companies buy it. Most often, presentations are loosely connected to the customer's current reality and the only quantification metrics they contain are the price and the standard, highly suspect, ROI figures.

Step back into the customer's shoes for a moment. You've heard a number of these presentations. You've only understood or cared about *a fragment* of what you heard in each one. (Between the customer's lack of experience and knowledge and the inefficiencies of the presentation format, that's all they will absorb.) The presentations all looked and sounded alike. They aren't specifically tied to your business; there is no reason to consider them credible. You're frustrated and likely confused. What do you do? The same thing you do when someone tries to sell you a generic value proposition that makes everything look and sound the same . . . you commoditize. You cut through the haze and compare the bottom lines. If the prices all seem too high, or you never felt any urgency in the first place, you won't buy. If you're convinced you must act, you send everyone home to sharpen their pencils, and then you buy based on what you do understand—which more often than not ends up being the price.

I constantly hear salespeople complain about "no-decision" customers and relentless price pressure. If they entered their customer's world for just a minute, they might see how valid those complaints really are.

It is hard to communicate how painful presentations can be to customers. A vice president of sales recently told me that he sat through a presentation from a vendor who hoped to sell a networking solution to his company. For 50 minutes of the 90-minute presentation, the sales team

went nonstop. The only reason they stopped there was that the vice president finally interrupted with a question.

### **Persuasion Alienates Customers**

The second flaw in conventional sales training is the concept of the salesperson as persuader. Ideas such as “Every prospect is a customer; they just don’t know it yet” and “Anybody can be sold” are classic articulations of the persuasion school. Words like *overcome*, *persuade*, *persist*, and *convince* are indicators of that school of selling.

The problem is that we rarely stop to think about how customers perceive the tactics of persuasion that salespeople are taught and encouraged to use. They are going to see you as the “lecturing professor.” You are acting as if they are ignorant, only you have the power to set them straight, and they must listen and learn.

Let’s step back into the customer’s world again. If someone is trying to push you into taking a certain course of action, even when you have misgivings about it, or if he is implying that he knows better than you, that he is smart and you are not, or that you just don’t get it, how would you react?

When someone pressures you to take a certain course, it’s only natural to question his motives. Why is he pushing me so hard? Whose interests is he actually looking out for? Justified or not, the answers to these questions seem obvious to customers and that is why this type of behavior doesn’t build credibility or engender trust. In fact, I’ve had customers tell me that they have been so irritated and insulted by overly persuasive salespeople that even though they decided to buy, they purposely went out of their way to buy a similar solution from another source.

Overzealous persuaders regularly trigger reactions like these that close down communications. They alienate customers. Here's a common example:

*A customer makes a simple statement, "Your price is too high."*

*The salesperson thinks, "Objection! Must overcome!" So, he quickly reacts: "Not really, when you consider the exceptional durability of the components and our excellent support. This equipment will outlast anything on the market. We're so convinced of this that we'll give you a 10-year, full service warranty—the best in the industry."*

*Now, the customer feels challenged. All he hears through his filter is, "You're wrong. The price is right. You just don't get it." His self-esteem has been attacked and his response is quick: "The length of the warranty is not that important. The price is still too high."*

*The salesperson hears, "Your stuff isn't worth it and you have some nerve asking for that much money." Now, he's wounded, his stress increases, his Old Brain kicks in, and out comes the critical parent, and possibly the lecturing professor, "The value we provide more than justifies our price. What you need to understand . . ."*

Suddenly, the meeting has turned into a debate or worse, an outright argument. The interesting thing about this is how the unconscious mind and our past sales training baggage start reinforcing each other in a negative downward spiral. They are conspiring to hijack the conversation and most of the time we have no idea what's happening.

## Customer Expectations— Snake Oil and the Hard Sell

Just as it takes two to tango, salespeople and customers enter conversations with preconceptions and expecta-



tions, that is, their own mind-set. Unfortunately, the customer's preexisting mind-set about buying, and especially about buying with a salesperson involved, is generally not optimistic.

Customers tend to paint all salespeople with the same brush. To them, salespeople, no matter whether they sell advanced avionics or used cars, all come out of the same mold. There's both good news and bad news in this.

### Key Thought

*Salespeople are guilty until proven innocent.*

First, the bad news: In 2004, when Gallup surveyed the U.S. public on the subject of trust in professionals, it found that the "least trusted" of all professions are automobile salespeople. The sales profession in general doesn't rank much higher in people's minds. In 2000, when Job-track.com surveyed students and recent graduates, it found that the second "least respected career" was sales. (Politicians were the least respected.)

The portrait of salespeople that has emerged in the arts and media reinforces this poor image. Classics such as Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922), Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) are typical representations. How often have you seen a salesperson cast as the respected hero in a movie, television program, or book?

It would be convenient to be able to blame others for the poor reputation of sales, but the hard fact is these unfavorable portraits didn't appear out the blue. Manipulative, dishonest people exist and often are allowed, and even subtly encouraged, to do whatever it takes, as long as they win business. Further, the sales function itself is often

treated like the Wild West of the business world. Until recent years, sales hasn't received much respect as a profession with a body of knowledge and a code of conduct. (That is starting to change. For instance, in 2004 I was invited to speak at an academic conference attended by professors from some 60 colleges and universities that had all established, or were in the process of establishing, curriculums and degree tracks for professional selling.)

Finally, our customers' negative perception of salespeople is based on direct experience. How often have you been pressured to buy a product that wasn't right for your needs, been sold a product or service that didn't live up to the hype, fallen prey to the bait-and-switch ploy, had to be rude to end a sales call, taken a survey that is just a come-on for a sales pitch? We've all had these experiences and over time, we've all built up defense systems designed to protect us from snake oil and the hard sell.

Understanding the preexisting mind-set of the customer as you begin your communications will help maintain your emotional control. Your behavior will either confirm the customer's mind-set or contradict the stereotype and set you apart. But the fact remains that your interaction with a customer is going to be affected by all the salespeople who came before you. If the customer hears you use the same line that the telemarketer or retail salesperson used on him last night or that the "persuader" used who called him the day before, he is going to associate you with them.

If your main competitor came in yesterday and unwittingly angered the customer by refusing to talk about the price before a lengthy presentation and you walk in today and do the same thing, you are in for twice the anger and are highly unlikely to succeed. You could be operating with

all good intentions; it doesn't matter. Salespeople are guilty until proven innocent.

### **Parents, Professors, Policemen**

Salespeople confirm customers' negative sales stereotypes when they tell them what to do, when they lecture at them, and when they imply customers are wrong...in other words, when they act like critical parents, lecturing professors, or accusatory policemen. Remember, I am talking about *negative* stereotypes here. There are nurturing parents, inspiring professors, and heroic police officers, but adopting the negative behaviors of these roles in a selling environment is common and can have serious consequences.

Even the positive aspects of these role models can create tension and conflict. Think about it. Who do parents, professors, and policemen deal with? Children, students, and criminals. Is that how you see your customers? Probably not. But, that may well be exactly how you are unintentionally treating them.

How do customers react to these roles? It depends on how sensitive they are and what kinds of messages are running in their adaptive unconscious minds. Often, it's a sequential reaction. When first confronted by a salesperson who is acting like a critical parent, a lecturing professor, or an accusing policeman, the customer may go into a compliant, subservient mode. But they won't open up, won't contribute to the conversation, and are a long way from trusting you. On the surface, they will seem to be listening. In fact, they may listen and nod along, accept your brochure, politely thank you, and promise to be in touch. As you have perhaps noticed, the odds are they won't.

Of course, it may not end that civilly. Things can easily get worse if you continue to be perceived as one of the

negative versions of the parent, professor, or policeman, and the customer takes offense. An offended customer will often decide enough is enough and push back and now you've got an openly adversarial relationship. At that point, unless you know how to recover, you might as well show yourself to the door before the customer does it for you.

## Solving the Style Challenge

All right, you've heard all the reasons why the traditional conversational style in sales is *miscommunication* and hopefully, you've got a new perspective on why customers often act and react in seemingly irrational and counterproductive ways (Figure 1.2). It sounds depressingly bad, but I promised good news, too.

The good news is that with that strong, negative image, it is very easy to differentiate ourselves by acting against type, by not exhibiting the behaviors that customers expect, or literally by doing the opposite of those expected behaviors.

After all, when customers begin a conversation with negative expectations and then realize that those thoughts were not justified in your case, it accelerates the credibility-building process and engenders trust.

### Key Thought

*When in doubt, do the opposite of what a salesperson would do!*

Conventional Thinking	Diagnostic Thinking
All prospects will buy.	Only certain customers will and should buy.
Never take “no” for an answer.	Always be leaving. Give the customer room to breathe.
Persistence pays.	Persistence in pursuing bad business wastes valuable resources.
A good salesperson can sell anything to anybody.	A good salesperson weeds out poor prospects and focuses on high-gain opportunities.
Customers know what they need; it’s my job to deliver it.	Customers can be unclear and even wrong about their needs; my job is to do a good diagnosis.
Never walk away when money is on the table.	Always walk away unless you know you can improve your customer’s business.
If at first you don’t succeed, try again and again.	If you don’t succeed in finding pain you can address, try again—with a different customer.
The customer is always right.	The customer requires professional guidance to complete a quality decision.

**FIGURE 1.2** Conventional Thinking versus Diagnostic Thinking

To break these patterns and establish credibility and trust with customers:

- We need to be professionally involved and emotionally detached in our conversations with customers. Sometimes salespeople and their managers push back when I tell them this. They believe they need to be enthusiastic and passionate about their solutions to win sales. That is simply not true. Look passionate up in your dictionary. Passionate means being dominated by and displaying strong emotion. More often than not, strong

emotions interfere with honest, respectful, and professional communication. When you get too passionate, it is easy to cross the line and become emotionally involved. Think *confident* instead of passionate; think of the doctor role model. Doctors who are confident about their diagnoses, confident about their recommendations, and confident about their ability to treat you are professionally involved. You wouldn't want a doctor getting excited about your affliction—that would be scary.

- To be effective communicators, it is critical that we retrain ourselves and learn new conversational processes and skills. We have to stop presenting and start connecting. We need to change the content of our presentations, make them inclusive and interactive, and put them in their proper place in the sales process. We need to banish the alienating tactics of persuasion. We have to stop persuading and start collaborating in a process of mutual diagnosis and confirmation.
- We have to confront our conditioning and break the stereotypes, distance ourselves from stereotypical sales images, and establish ourselves as valued business advisors. When in doubt, we want to do the opposite of what the stereotypical salesperson would do, and I will show you how.

Before we start exploring the qualities that will enable us to structure and engage in credible conversations that can consistently meet the above goals, we also need to consider the substance of our conversations. Substance and style go hand in hand.