

1

STEP ONE: BE PREPARED OR BE THE IDIOT

A professional salesperson is always prospecting. Prospecting is being alert for clues. The first clue you need to uncover is, “Am I dealing with a prospect or a suspect?” If you merely suspect a customer might buy, you’re leaving too much to chance. Start every day right by visualizing everyone you encounter as a prospective or potential customer. Even your current customers have the potential to buy more. Some customers will have more buying potential than others: desire, need, or appropriateness for the goods and/or services you’re selling, ability to pay, and awareness of how much he or she will benefit from the purchase.

All of the preceding notwithstanding, any potential or current customer might be an idiot or not. In the end, it doesn’t matter. Idiot or genius, their money is worth the same amount once it hits the bank. It’s up to you to be pro-intentional enough to make sure someone else doesn’t sell them what you’re selling and take their money to another bank—which would make you the idiot.

Sales professionals who set out each day to find suckers are starting on the wrong foot, and will probably trip over or stick it in their

mouth before the day is through. Your prospecting and potential-finding will ultimately pay off in direct proportion to how skilled you are and how honestly you go about it. Prospecting is a state of mind. You need to believe from your head to your toes that what you have to offer others is so helpful, valuable, and beneficial that your current and prospective customers would be fools not to buy. If you don't believe that, chances are that you'll wind up making those who do buy from you look and feel like fools for becoming your customers.

NEED AND INTENT

You don't need Coach Bill or Dr. John to tuck you in and read you to sleep from the volumes that have been written about sales prospecting. What we will do is hit some prospecting highlights, as we reframe the concept enough to keep you from looking Looney Tunes in front of your prospects and peers. Authentic prospecting is a process of establishing need and intent. You and your prospects have needs and intentions. The intersection of those needs and intentions are where you make the big bucks.

To make sure you don't stand alone in that intersection, like a bride or groom abandoned at the altar, you must first understand why you're there. Is it to feed your family, buy that bass boat or Dodge Viper, take a cruise around the world, move into the Elvis suite at the Las Vegas Hilton—or all of the above? Those sound like wants more than needs—except for the feeding your family part. Orthodonture and college tuitions are getting more expensive, so we'll wager you're out there pounding the pavement for some combination of wants and needs, and it's your intention to fulfill those wants and needs for yourself and those who depend on you.

What makes you think anyone else is different? Your current and prospective customers are flapping their wings in the same airspace in which you're trying to fly. If they're not in the same intersection of needs and intentions that you occupy, you have two choices: (1) move to their intersection or (2) convince them to move to yours. If you truly believe from the top of your head to the tips of your toes that what you have to offer is so helpful, valuable, and beneficial that they would be fools not to buy, you'll do one or the other.

Other people's wants and needs might not exactly reflect or reso-

nate with yours, but that doesn't mean they don't have equally powerful intentions to fulfill them. Being pro-intentional means finding the frequency they're tuned in to and transmitting your program on that same frequency. Understanding that there are wants, needs, and intentions as powerful as yours all around you is like being a radio station during drive time. There are lots of receivers out there for what you're broadcasting.

Nobody's an idiot merely because they aren't listening to you. You have other stations to compete with. The last thing you need to do is turn potential listeners off to radio altogether. You have enough forces in the universe working against you. No need to complicate your effort with lack of preparation and awareness. The hill you climb every day is steep enough. Why wear roller skates? The operative word in the phrase "The Right Stuff" is "Right." Being right in the sales business is usually synonymous with being ready.

MENTAL PREPARATION MADE SIMPLE (OR MENTAL PREP FOR THE SIMPLE)

Translate need and intent into planning and preparation. Planning and preparation are important, but not so important that they become procrastination in disguise. Idiots are differentiated from nonidiots in the sales force by the way nonidiots make their plans pay off, while idiots use their planning and preparation to avoid selling. Idiots overplan, consciously or unconsciously giving themselves an excuse to accomplish nothing. Other idiots don't plan at all, thereby giving themselves an excuse to fail without guilt. They set no target to not hit.

As far as the idiot customer goes, lack of planning on his or her part can be your friend. You know what chaos feels like. You know how comforting it can be to hide inside the eye of the hurricane. Remember, intention is intention is intention—yours and your customers'. It's up to you to make your *i*-customers feel like you're a safe harbor in the storm, and to feel like what you're selling is the answer to their problems, the anchor to their happiness, the secret of the ages, the fountain of youth, the meaning of life, whatever.

As long as you believe in your solution with every molecule in your body, find someone being blown about by the storm and offer to pull them into the boat. When a potential customer is feeling

disorganized, *carpe* the opportunity. By doing idiots' planning and preparation for them you can control the purpose and urgency of the sales encounter. If the customer is more organized than you are you'll look like an atmospheric disturbance to them—and they'll avoid you. That generates little confidence and few sales.

Don't get hung up on thinking we're being judgmental with the idiot thing. Good, well-intentioned people can be nonetheless clueless. We'll volunteer to top the list. The good news is that, as a sales professional, it's possible to work with mostly nice people who need your help filling in their blanks. Your goal is to help your prospective customer sense his or her wants and needs and develop the ongoing intention to seek you out for relief. You must learn to clue in on the clueless equivalent of a low-pressure system on The Weather Channel. Where there is a distinct absence of information, the opportunity is ripe to fill in the trough. When you're tempted to label someone an idiot, think of them instead as a new student, ready if not eager to learn something new . . . something you have to teach.

CHOOSING IN: THE CURE FOR CLUELESSNESS

Whether you're employed by a small, medium, or large firm—or you're completely self-employed—you're essentially in business for yourself. The talent, skill, and effectiveness you bring to your work every day determines the amount of reward and satisfaction you receive for your effort. Having said that, you have at least two choices you can make every day about your business. The first choice is to work less, think less, earn less, be less successful, and generally be happy less often. Choice number one also leads to diminished fulfillment, less rewarding results, and more stress. It's amazing how popular this choice is.

Behind door number two is the choice to have it all, do it all, be generally happy, and to earn as much as you possibly can. The people society calls winners—those who accomplish great things—virtually always choose door number two. The greatest rewards are reserved for those who accomplish great things. There's nothing idiotic about that. The idiotic thing is to try and shortcut and/or subvert time-proven formulas for success and expect somehow to experience success anyway.

The greatest rewards are reserved for those who consistently make the right choices. The key word here is “consistently.” The right choice once in a while won’t get it done. So, choose *in* every day. Let somebody else be the idiot. Your customers aren’t idiots when it comes to feeling respected and cared for. In other words, as clueless as they might seem from time to time (for some all the time), they’re always conscious at some level about the choices you make regarding your own success.

SIMPLE VERSUS EASY: THE INNER IDIOT REARS ITS UGLY HEAD

We wouldn’t subject you to tired old rah-rah rhetoric about making the right choices, the big effort, or taking the high road if we didn’t have a twist on the theme. The big mistake people make when attempting to increase sales performance is in equating “simple” with “easy.” Everybody knows that successful selling is largely a numbers game. Your closing ratio is determined by a number of things. Perhaps the most significant of those is the number of times every day that you pick up the telephone or knock on a door to contact a potential customer or take care of an existing one.

If your closing ratio is 10 percent, every 10th call or knock, on average, will result in a sale. If your commission is 10 dollars for every sale, 10 percent might be a realistic ratio of cold calls to closings. If your commission is 100,000 dollars per sale, your ratio might be something more like 500 to 1, or more. You’ve no doubt determined how many closings it will take to live the lifestyle of your dreams. The math is simple, but the execution is not easy. “It’s numbers, nothing more,” you reason with yourself over and over. “What is so hard about this?”

If simple translates to easy, only the complicated will be hard. “Okay,” you continue to negotiate with your inner idiot. (We all have one. Get used to it.) “If I want to improve my closing ratio by decreasing the numbers, I need to improve the precision of my prospecting.” That sounds good. But sharpening your selling scalpel is just as hard as making the steep numbers.

Companies and individuals invest enormous amounts of time and money in sales training, only to be frustrated when core habits

and behaviors don't improve. That's because we all have settled into a comfort zone we don't want to leave, thank you very much. Our inner idiots stand guard at the door. Before we feign anger or disappointment with our inner idiots, we need to confess how much we enable them.

One of our inner idiots' favorite excuses is, "I didn't know what to do." Pleading ignorance is great—except that we know damn good and well that we do know what to do. We just resist doing it, at all costs. The idiot inside all of us sits through sales seminar after sales seminar: arms folded, chin dropping to chest, dozing off, bored to sleep. If our inner idiots were honest with us, they would come right out and say, "Wake me up when they get to the secret of making the simple easy." Sleep on, idiot. It's not going to happen.

In case you're wondering how powerful your inner idiot is, how often do you fail to follow what you know to be the best course of action? How often do you embark on the best course of action only to wander off course, never to return? If it's that difficult for you to act in your own best interest, what makes you think your customers are any more skilled at it? *By recognizing, accepting, and getting better acquainted with your inner idiot, you will better understand and appreciate the inner idiot that's blocking your customer from buying.*

We added the emphasis to that last point because it's that important. As a sales professional, you have far more in common with your prospective and existing customers than you realize. Everyone has an inner idiot acting to sabotage the right choices. The more skilled you can become at managing your inner idiot, the better equipped you'll be to disarm the inner idiot that's blocking your customer from buying.

There is no end to the clever ways inner idiots (ours or our customers') devise to derail our best intentions. Sitting by the pool or playing golf until our inner idiots run out of ammunition won't work. We try, nonetheless, because waiting for things to improve on their own is a great excuse for personal inertia. It's not a great excuse, actually. But it's a common excuse. Do you want to be common or uncommon? Your inner idiot is perfectly happy with common. Here's a question to keep you awake at night: "When you allow your inner idiot to determine your behavior, what does that make the outside you?"

News flash from a successful person to his or her inner idiot: “Buckle your seatbelt, we’re choosing in. Get over it. Simple is only easy in the small stuff that doesn’t amount to much. We’re going to amount to a lot. Trust me. You’ll love it once we get there.”

PREPARATION AND PASSION

Everybody claims that he or she wants to win. Ergo, we never ask people if they *want* to win, have more, earn more, or live more fulfilling and rewarding lives. Here’s a list of more appropriate questions:

- Can you live with losing—not having what you want?
- Can you live your life achieving less than you deserve—living less?
- Can you tolerate mediocrity?

If you don’t have all that you want, the answer to these questions is, “Yes.” Truthfully, how many people really have everything they want? Let’s not get silly here. Having what you want is relative. Do you want to live in reality or in some mystical haze?

None of this is to say that we can’t, or shouldn’t, want more than we have. Unless you are the rare and exceptionally mature adult who has learned to fully appreciate all that you have, there are probably a few things you’d still like to get your hands on. Passion for more in life is a good thing, as long as it can be broken down into realistic, doable actions. The bottom line here is that each one of us is capable of thinking and doing bigger and better than we’re thinking and doing at present. So, passion and a desire for more should be on our radar screens.

Are you willing to admit that your willingness to accept less indicates a lack of the passion required to live a life of choice and win consistently? In other words, your inner idiot is winning more battles than he or she should be winning in an ideal world. You can always perform up to a low level of expectation. As you prepare for enthusiasm about success in selling, and in life, you will need to tolerate not having all that you truly desire. But don’t confuse tolerance with acceptance. Don’t be so impatient that you’re not willing to put up with the limitations that accompany personal and professional growth.

Neither should you be so patient that you allow the flame in your personal pilot light to flicker out.

You must pump yourself up before you'll ever be able to pump up your *i*-customers. Your *i*-customers will respond more to how you feel about yourself and your attitude than they will respond to your product, your price, or your pitch. In other words, you can't fake it. Even an idiot can pretend to be excited. Even if you *can* fake it and get away with it now and then, you can't fake it forever and hope to get where you want to go. If you try and operate under false enthusiasm, you'll always wind up starting over again, having to squirrel up new customers.

Start by showing more enthusiasm for what you do. Enthusiasm is like a magnet. Your infectious enthusiasm will infect more customers in your life when you're more enthusiastic yourself. Your enthusiasm is like an insurance policy to your customers, idiots or not. When they see and believe that you like what you do they'll have more confidence that you'll actually act in their best interest.

If you can't get excited about your job every day, or keep yourself motivated, you may be in the wrong line of work. Start getting more excited about what you do—or find something else you can get excited about and do that. If you're insincere or disingenuous you'll be fair game for your customer's inner idiot, and your pitch will be eaten alive. Enthusiasm is one of the little things that add up and give you the edge you'll need to win over your toughest customers. Don't be so eager to rush into battle before you put on your game face.

PREPARATION AND PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

In winning over your *i*-customers, product knowledge is paramount. Product knowledge creates credibility and confidence, and helps close deals. Your *i*-customers will not even begin to listen to someone who doesn't have a firm grasp, not only of their product or service, but of what it will do to solve their problems, make them feel 6 inches taller, 10 pounds lighter, and/or make them more attractive to the opposite sex without chemical enhancement. Part of the reputation and credibility you build for yourself comes from knowing your product inside and out; product knowledge increases your self-confidence and the confidence your customers have in you.

Certainty in solutions comes from product knowledge. The certainty in your sales presentation is also enhanced by product knowledge. Your *i*-customers will pay more attention when they sense that you know your stuff. The second they smell a rat, however, you don't know what you are talking about, your battleship is sunk. This isn't a call to fake it, although great salespeople have the ability to think on their feet. The ability to think quickly on your feet is enhanced by knowing every feature and benefit, in and out, and nut and bolt, about what you're selling.

You must look and sound like the expert. Heaven forbid if your prospective customers perceive that they know more about your product than you do. If so, "bye-bye." Game over. You lose. There is nothing more insufferable than an inner idiot who has the upper hand. Do your homework, but don't forget your finesse. In doing your homework, you might wind up knowing more about your customers' businesses than they do. Even if that's the case, don't come across that way. That would embarrass the person with the ink to sign your contract.

To earn more you must be willing to learn more—about your product, and about yourself. You can't afford to become complacent about your continuing education. Complacency about learning creates indifference, and indifference to learning opens a window of opportunity for your competition. Learning more about your product or complacent indifference are choices; your choices. Product knowledge is another little skill that, when perfected, will add to your ability to win over *i*-customers. Product knowledge is like doing slam dunks on six-foot basketball rims. If you miss, something else is seriously wrong.

PREPARATION AND THE WRITTEN PLAN

One reason that many salespeople are so successful at becoming average is that they don't have a written business plan. You can't expect great results unless you have a great plan, in writing. A written plan doesn't need to be perfect. But there is magic in writing your intentions down. The act of writing tends to ground your psychedelic hallucinations. It helps you order your thoughts. It helps you prepare your pitch.

Even idiot customers can sense when you don't have a plan and are just winging it. Without a plan, you make it easy for your customers' inner idiots to knock you off-balance. If you're not mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically prepared, *i*-customers are likely to knock your legs out from under you every chance they get. With a written plan you won't just get lucky more often, you'll deserve to get lucky. Sometimes you'll win over your *i*-customers only because you're well prepared; they simply needed to encounter someone with his or her ducks in a row.

Your pitch doesn't need to be perfect to win over your *i*-customers—or any other customers—as much as it needs to be honest and passionate. Having a written game plan laid out for yourself gives you solid footing and an organized agenda, which anchors your passion in confidence. Your plan should define what winning means to you. What is the perfect outcome for a sales call? (Hint to your inner idiot: it should end with your potential customers asking, “Where do I sign?”)

Don't be surprised when you get the order. Expect to get it. With a written plan it will be much easier to review what is and isn't working. You can make adjustments as you go. Too many salespeople keep doing what isn't working. If you're digging holes in the wrong place, digging them deeper won't help. Without a written plan, how can you track results and make adjustments? How can you determine a better spot to dig? Thinking that you're saving time by not writing down your plan can indefinitely postpone winning over your prospective customer.

PLANNING IS NOT PROCRASTINATION

For too many sales professionals planning becomes synonymous with procrastination. Spending weeks, months, or years working on your plan is called delay of game. As long as you're planning you have permission not to get out there and work, right? Wrong. No matter how brilliant your plan is, it won't produce sales. Selling produces sales, and there is only one place selling takes place—in front of a current or prospective customer. Oh sure, planning is safe. When planning, there are no rejections, no objections to overcome, and no sales. While you're busy planning, someone might dial your number

by mistake and buy something. Realistically, though, you might as well be singing about *running across the valley beneath the sacred mountain*.

The next 12-step program might be called Overplanners Anonymous. “I’m Bill. I’m an overplanner.” Are you always on the verge of action? Do you believe in the concept of “ready–fire–aim?” You’re much better off to get out there, find out what’s working and not working, then call a timeout and make quick adjustments. Don’t paralyze yourself by overplanning.

PREPARATION AND MOTIVATION

If you’re not motivated to sell, what makes you think your customers will be motivated to buy? Go back to the passion discussion and consider what motivates you. Money? Freedom? Independence? Acknowledgment and recognition? Be sure you’re clear about what keeps you going, and why. Remembering and understanding why you are doing anything can provide all the motivation you need to keep going. When you forget why, you begin to lose steam without realizing it. When the *why* is clear you will do whatever it takes to produce the results you want. It’s tough to remember why you’re doing something when you’re in the process of losing or being rejected.

If the customer is truly a clueless creature, yet has nevertheless managed to get your eyes off the prize, you weren’t sufficiently aware of your core motivations. Write these things down. Revisit them daily. Recite them periodically. Chant them like a mantra. Keep the things that motivate you fresh in your mind. Include your strong and wonderful qualities. Using positive reinforcement to pump yourself up is not the time to be modest. Don’t count on your *i*-customers or your boss to tell you these things. It’s not their job. (Well, it is your boss’s job.) But do you want to hitch your wagon to his or her success? Eventually the buck stops with you. You might as well take responsibility now.

The why you’re doing something is more important to a positive outcome than the what, the how, or the when. Make sure your why is big enough. Write down why you’re in sales. If what you wrote doesn’t get you excited, it won’t provide the motivation to get you through the tough days or win over your toughest customers. Keep

writing. Your truest motivations may not be among the first few things you write. When you hit it you'll know. Your palms may begin sweating. If nothing you write about why you are in sales excites you, write about what excites you and figure out if a sales career is the best way to get there. Your *i*-customers might not be able to see the why in your eyes, but they will be able to ascertain whether or not you have one.

PREPARATION AND PERSONALITY

Not every current or prospective customer is an idiot and not every idiot is a current or prospective customer. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a customer's desire, need, or the appropriateness for the goods and/or services you're selling, his or her ability to pay, and an awareness of how much he or she will benefit from the purchase are all factors in a customer's decision to buy or not to buy. However, treating customers like clueless creatures, even when they are, is risky business. There are many personalities you'll need to deal with in the course of your sales career. Some are more pleasant than others. Some are more difficult to deal with than others. Some you won't want to deal with at all. But as many successful sales professionals will tell you, the toughest customers are often the ones who buy the most and the most often.

Connecting the dots between your essential motivations and customers' buying habits will help you navigate these sometimes treacherous waters. Knowing a little about these personalities and what makes them tick will also help you get and keep their inner idiots between your crosshairs. Pay attention to what these people say and do. What magazines and books are in their offices? Are there pictures of their spouses and children around? Are there pictures of fish they've caught? In other words, do a little detective work so that you'll be able to know your best enemy. Prepare for these people.

Prepare for the Machiavellian

This character sees the world as a pyramid. There is one spot at the top and, in his or her mind, that spot belongs to the Machiavellian by divine right. The Machiavellian is no idiot in terms of cluelessness or

ignorance. He or she is probably very strategic, calculating, and potentially dangerous. If you get in his or her way, he or she can reach down your throat, pull out your heart, and slap it in the palm of your hand while it's still beating. Don't worry, it's nothing personal. You merely got between the Machiavellian and the top spot. It could have happened to anyone—and it will, if he or she wanders into the Machiavellian's path.

Your best approach to a Machiavellian personality is to recognize and accept his or her obsession with power. Your best message is, "What I'm selling will help you acquire the power you deserve and hold on to it." It's best to make friends with Machiavellians, especially if you're selling business-to-business. If the Machiavellian is any good at all he or she is likely to reach that top spot, become the big kahuna, and wipe out anyone who threatens his or her lofty domain. If your choice is to have a Machiavellian as a friend or an enemy, choose friend.

Prepare for the Sadist

Unlike the Machiavellian, who maims and destroys only as a means to an end, the sadist kills for sport. Sadists seek powerful positions because they can wreak more havoc and cause more suffering from positions of power. If you're selling business-to-business you'll notice the sadist getting off on the weeping and wailing coming from the cubicles. The gnashing of teeth and rending of garments is a sheer turn-on for a sadist in the workplace.

Never challenge the sadist's power. Your best behavior in the presence of a sadist is wincing. Whatever you do make it appear painful. Don't miss opportunities to compliment the sadist on how hard he or she is making his or her employees work. In your case, as you make it appear that the sadist is causing you immense discomfort, be sure to acknowledge how the sadist's cruel and unusual demands on you will make you a better person.

Prepare for the Masochist

Whereas sadists get off on causing pain to others, masochists bring pain upon themselves whenever possible. We should say: They bring

pain upon themselves like clockwork. Masochists visualize their lives as colossal disasters and want to enroll you and anyone else in those disasters at their earliest opportunity. If you work for one, you're not in a career-enhancing environment. Masochists are not bad people. They just want you to experience what they experience, which is right neighborly of them, if your neighbors hate you.

As a normal human being you want to rescue masochists from their pits of despair. It's difficult to accept and remain aware that they prefer it down there. Selling to them is, therefore, tricky. While you don't want to go over the top and promise them that the products and/or services you're offering will cause them pain and anguish, you can't exactly paint a picture of a bright and rosy future, either. With masochists, you need to play it by ear and make sure they understand that, while the goods and/or services you're selling will do what you claim they'll do, the results won't be so marvelous as to take away *all* of the masochist's problems.

Prepare for the Paranoid

To paranoid persons, especially in the workplace, everything anyone does is part of a grand conspiracy against them. If so accused, don't try to deny it. Don't claim to be leading the grand conspiracy. That's a little too over the top. Perhaps you can just admit that you've heard talk. But don't claim to be part of the underground. Whatever has caused the paranoid person to suspect you (or most anyone else for that matter) has nothing to do with you. At least we hope it doesn't. Your duty to maneuver around and/or through the paranoid's maze is a responsibility you have first and foremost to yourself.

If you feel up to it, you can promise your current or prospective paranoid customers the names, dates, and places involving their imaginary conspirators, should they come to your attention. We're not seriously suggesting you play mind games. But we do highly recommend against intimating that your potential or existing customers are crazy, even when they appear to be. Just remember that paranoids don't get much sleep, so maintain control in their presence. Don't make any loud noises or sudden moves if you can avoid it.

Prepare for the Greek God or Goddess

We use Greek gods and goddesses as our example because if an organization is large enough, there is room for polytheism. There can be as many gods as there are people who are anxious to self-deify. Zeus, Neptune, Apollo, Athena . . . these people usually just have a bad case of primary narcissism, but you need to play it right. “I don’t know anybody who plays god,” you say incredulously. Oh, yeah? What do you think Donald Trump is doing on *The Apprentice*? He sits on a throne of judgment with operatives seated at his right and left hand. People come before his throne of judgment and plead for their jobs as he sits serenely with the symbolic power of life or death to dispense as he wishes. Nice gig, if you can get it.

You probably sell to a few small-g gods. When you enter their holy of holies (offices or homes) do you bring tithes and offerings? Burn incense? Bow before them? It probably feels a bit sacrilegious to humor them in such a way. But the big-G God must roll with laughter at these clowns. The problem is, if you roll with laughter—no sale. Try and keep a straight face as you convince them that what you’re selling will glorify their majesty. Get their name on the contract and get out before they lose their temper and send a swarm of locusts over to your house. It could be worse. They could say, “You’re fired.”

Prepare for Your Best Buddy

There are people who are looking for companionship. Anybody will do. If you walk through the door at the wrong time, it will be you. Like any of the wacky personalities you’ll deal with from time to time, you need to be prepared for your best friend. If you’re not prepared you’ll be joined at the hip and it will require surgery to separate yourself. Your medical insurance provider will no doubt consider such surgery cosmetic and/or elective, so you’ll have to pay for it out of your pocket. It pays to pay attention when we tell you to prepare.

Knowing what you know and having had the experiences you’ve had with emotionally needy people, there are lots of clues available for how to close them. We’re not suggesting that you exploit their

neediness or anybody else's psychological eccentricities. Being prepared is a matter of not being blindsided as you present your case in a language that everyone will understand, based on their unique psychological eccentricities. Your new buddy will want to come to your house for Thanksgiving, to watch the Super Bowl, and even have a sleepover with your kids if you let him or her bring those jammies with the feet on them. Ignore uniqueness in others at your own peril.

Prepare for the Decent Soul

Thankfully, most people are decent and reasonable folks. They have a pretty well-balanced concept of what's right and wrong and can distinguish between needs and wants. At the end of the day they're a lot like you. Their inner idiots play the same games on them that your inner idiot plays on you. You have so much in common with regular people that understanding their wants, needs, and intentions should be a piece of cake.

Decent Souls are, of course, subject to blocking your sales in the same way you're capable of blocking someone's attempt to sell you. Your best move is to be your usual genuine, authentic self, and let your enthusiasm for your products and/or services shine through. People who are most like you will be the quickest to recognize and respond to your honesty and authenticity.

CHAPTER ONE SUMMARY

When we say be prepared or be the idiot, we're serious. As a sales professional, cluelessness will cost you big time. Your cluelessness will cause you to miss opportunities. Your customers' cluelessness will comfort them as they refuse what you're trying to sell them. Either way, cluelessness is your enemy. The inner idiots, yours and your customers', will derail your selling agenda faster than a speeding locomotive. Or is that a speeding bullet? Either way, you're screwed. Your best hedge against getting hit by a speeding locomotive and/or bullet is to be prepared to sell.

- Pro-intentionally sell to prospects, not suspects: it's about need and intent. More often than not, you swim in the same water as

your customers. You traverse the same (or very similar) intersections of needs and intentions. Your goal is to find a way for your needs to intersect with your potential customer's intentions or vice versa.

- Choose in: Being prepared and making career expansion and enhancement priorities in your life requires intentional and deliberate action on your part. Your success won't happen by accident. Wishing and wishing and wishing won't do it. You must decide to do the things you know need to be done. You must make that decision daily, or even more frequently if that's what it takes to stay on track.
- Don't confuse simple with easy: The road to riches appears simple and straightforward. Indeed it is. But actually following those steps, one after another, day in and day out, is hard. Knowing what to do is easy. Consistently doing those things is hard; especially the consistency part. Just look back over your life with 20/20 hindsight and ask yourself, "Which or how many ships would have come in if I had stuck with the program over time instead of getting impatient and moving on?" The time passed anyway, didn't it?
- Passion and product knowledge are the fuel that keeps the boiler hot: The written plan keeps your locomotive on track. You don't want your inner idiot driving when you get up a good head of steam. That's a recipe for a train wreck. Of course, if your inner idiot is too involved your planning process will turn to procrastination, and you'll never get a head of steam up at all—much less go anywhere. Knock your inner idiot out of the box by concentrating on what it is you want in life. As you focus on what motivates you your boiler should start heating up all on its own.
- The multiple personality issue: All kidding aside, different people march to different drummers. Sometimes, *very* different drummers. In sales you must deal with the Machiavellians, sadists, masochists, paranoids, buddies, and decent folks. The well-prepared sales professional will stand a much better chance of succeeding than someone who is taken by surprise

and off-guard by people who seem to lie awake at night figuring out how to take sales professionals by surprise and off-guard.

Be prepared. If you were a Boy or Girl Scout, you have that covered. We just helped you fill in the blanks and sand off the rough edges. There is so much at stake in your professional sales career that preparation has never been more critical to your success. In Chapter Two we'll build on preparation by learning more about communication skills—or as we prefer to say, “Connecting with the Clueless.”