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## TIMES HAVE CHANGED: WELCOME TO THE INFORMATION AGE

### **A BACKGROUND ON SELLING IN THE NEW ECONOMY**

The world of selling hasn't changed much in recent years, while the world of business in general has changed dramatically. I continue to see the same old advice, instructions, and clichés that were taught decades ago being used today. This is the primary reason why more salespeople than ever are struggling to survive, while the few who have learned to embrace new ideas are moving ahead by leaps and bounds.

Many historians use the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to mark the end of the Industrial Age and the beginning of the Information Age. In so many areas of business the shift has been dramatic, most notably in our global economy. Computers and technology have taken quantum leaps forward, and the Internet has forever changed the way we communicate and do business.

However, one area of business has been remarkably stagnant and continues to fiercely resist the change into the Information Age. That area is sales.

One recent example of what I'm talking about stands out in my mind. A friend of mine who worked alongside me in sales recently took a job with a large, well-known corporation. He was always a top producer—innovative, efficient, and consistently over 150 percent of quota. He understood the proper use of marketing and consequently attained his high results without cold calling.

He was stunned when he was told that he would be required to make an absolute minimum of 400 in-person cold calls each week, and to provide 400 new business cards each week as proof that he had made his calls. He was also required to carry a demonstration kit and to be pushy and try to perform demonstrations of the company's product as often as possible on that first—and usually unwelcome—visit.

Because this individual knows how to sell in ways that are far more efficient than this, he approached his manager to discuss various strategies that he'd effectively used in the past to achieve his high results. The manager's answer? "We've done it this way for 40 years, and we're not about to change."

In my opinion, that answer explains why so many salespeople are struggling to make a living. When you consider the massive changes we've experienced in this shift to the Information Age, common sense says that anything that was effective 40 years ago cannot possibly work today.

I honestly believe that this clinging to old, obsolete ideas is the main reason we're seeing record business bankruptcies today.

One of the keys to success in sales in today's economy is to keep an open mind to new ideas. It's obvious that the people I'm talking about here are not open-minded whatsoever, and in fact are very close-minded. They were taught all the right answers, but unfortunately, their once-right answers are now very wrong.

It reminds me of a true story I once heard about Albert Einstein when he was teaching as a professor. A student assistant was about to prepare a test for the next class. He asked, "Professor Einstein, which test are we giving them?" To which Einstein replied, "The same test as last week." The assistant, bewildered, asked, "But why give them the same test again?" To which Einstein replied, "Because the answers are different this week."

In our fast-moving, evolving new world, we may continue to face all the same challenges, but the answers are constantly changing. If you do

not continue your learning curve, always remaining open-minded to new ideas, you will be left behind. Those who continually adapt themselves to new ideas are quickly getting ahead, while those who insist on clinging to their old, right answers have become obsolete.

You'll need to keep an open mind as you learn the material in this book. Before you can accept, learn, and use the ideas and techniques put forth herein, your mind must be ready and willing to accept them. Remember that as you read and think about how you'll apply the material in your day-to-day selling.

