

## Chapter 1

# Boosting Sales with Advanced Selling

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining success on your own terms
  - ▶ Fueling success with people power
  - ▶ Believing in and then selling yourself
  - ▶ Generating ideas, leads, and opportunities
  - ▶ Building a culture of success
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**A**dvanced selling is the full-court press approach to achieving success. It requires clear vision, careful planning, shameless self-promotion, a discerning vigilance, the ability and willingness to take calculated risks, and a dogged determination that I like to refer to as *sticktoitism*.

Advanced selling is about more than boosting sales and profits, although that's certainly a part of it and is probably the biggest reason you're reading this book. The strategies and tips you master as an advanced seller can also be applied to other aspects of your life to achieve both your professional and personal goals.

In this chapter, I reveal what goes into making a top-producing salesperson and assist you in discovering what you need to accomplish to achieve your goals, whatever they may be.

## *Defining and Achieving Your Own Destiny*

Selling is like life itself — you're free to define “success” in your own terms and then plot your own course to get there. For one salesperson, success may be measured in status, and being the top salesperson in the company would be the ultimate achievement. For someone else, success may mean lots of money to afford a certain lifestyle. Others may want more time to spend with friends and family or an early retirement. You may have some other goal in mind.



Your destiny is yours to define and achieve. Don't let anyone else define what “happiness” should mean for you. Even if you were to achieve your goals, your happiness and satisfaction would always elude you, because you would be achieving someone else's dream.

In the following sections, I guide you through the process of establishing a positive mindset, setting goals, and plotting your course. For additional details, check out Chapters 2 and 3.



As motivational speaker Art Fetting told me, “It's hard to be healthy, wealthy, and happy at the same time.” However, striving to achieve a balanced life that leads to health, wealth, and happiness is certainly a noble pursuit.

### *Establishing a positive mindset*

Success stands at the end of many different journeys, but it always begins with the right attitude — a positive mindset. If you've been around negative people all your life, your mindset may be holding you back.

Just as buggy software can bog down a computer and cause it to crash, negative thoughts can slow you down and derail your efforts to succeed. You may have to reboot your mind and fill it with positive affirmations and a strong belief that you are perfectly capable of achieving your dreams. Here are some suggestions on how to give yourself a positive attitude adjustment:

- ✓ Find a sales hero — a role model to inspire you.
- ✓ Shadow a successful salesperson to find out how they achieve success.
- ✓ Read inspirational books or listen to motivational tapes.
- ✓ Fill your mind with positive affirmations.
- ✓ Hang out with positive people and avoid naysayers.

Surround yourself with positive thoughts, people, and experiences, so negativity has no space to take root and grow. If negative thoughts begin to creep in, visit my friend Mr. Positive, Dave Boufford, at [www.MrPositive.com](http://www.MrPositive.com). He can get you pumped up in a hurry.



You would be surprised at the number of top salespeople or speakers who would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, share a cultural event, or join you for dinner when they're passing through your town. If you know that one of your sales heroes is going to be in town, try to contact the person and arrange a meeting. This can be the perfect opportunity to meet your hero in person and begin a relationship that may develop into a mentoring situation.

## *Setting stimulating goals*

Most sales coaches stress that goals should be realistic, which is somewhat true, but realistic goals that don't make you stretch are of little use. I prefer to encourage the salespeople I coach to set stimulating goals. A goal should always make you reach outside your comfort zone. It should always include some level of risk. A good goal should include the following:

- ✓ Statement of the goal
- ✓ Starting date
- ✓ Completion date
- ✓ Statement of how success is going to be measured



Sales quotas can do more harm than good, particularly if they are pinned to a deadline. A sales quota can often make you so motivated to close a sale that you're powerless to negotiate with the buyer. Buyers are often well aware of sales quotas and can use them to negotiate a more attractive price and terms. Try to think of different goals, such as acquiring a certain number of new customers or increasing the number of cold calls you make by a certain percentage.

## *Plotting your course*

The best laid plans of mice and men may often fail, but trying to achieve a goal without having a solid plan in place is pure folly. Plot your course from point A to point B, so you know where you are, where you're going, and how you're going to get there before you even take that first step:

- 1. Determine where you are first.** By logging your point of departure you can more effectively measure your progress later.
- 2. Set your goal or destination, as described in the previous section.**

3. **Include a timeframe to keep yourself on track.**
4. **Identify your objectives.** Objectives are like milestone markers, rewarding you when you complete each leg of the journey.
5. **Plan an overall strategy for achieving success.** What sort of tactical plan can ensure success with the least amount of effort?
6. **Identify tasks.** Break the process down into individual tasks to make the plan feel less overwhelming and more manageable.
7. **Identify the resources you have on hand, including personnel and equipment.**



Don't get hung up thinking that you have to do everything yourself. Identify the tasks you are well-qualified to perform and then delegate the remaining tasks to more capable people who have more time. A good rule of thumb for hiring people is this: If you earn more than enough per hour to cover the cost of hiring someone else to do the work, hire someone. Also, if you can do more and sell more with an assistant than you can without one, hire the assistant. At least try it. See Chapter 13 for more about hiring the right people to fill the gaps.

## *Implementing your plan*

Sales and business consultants often discover that clients are more than willing to pay them \$300 or more per hour for advice and then rarely put that advice into practice. They know what they have to do to achieve success, but they're unwilling to take that essential next step — implementing the plan.



After setting your goal and drawing up a solid plan, put your plan into action. If it doesn't quite work, make the necessary adjustments and try again. Successful businesspeople rarely succeed on their first attempt. They fail, learn, make adjustments, and persist. Unsuccessful people fail and give up or never even get started. I've known salespeople who have stuck with a prospect for 14 months and then given up only to discover that the customer decided to buy in the 15th month. If it were easy, everyone would do it.

## *Weaving Advanced Selling into Your Life*

Watch the top performers in any profession and you observe a quality that they all share — almost every single one of them loves what they do. Even if they weren't getting paid to do what they do, they'd probably still be doing it.

My co-author, Joe, spent some time with the folks at Incredible Technologies, creators of the most popular coin-op video game on the planet — Golden Tee Golf. He interviewed the game testers — the quality control people who

tested the video games 8–12 hours a day. One of the questions he asked was, “What do you guys do when you get home at night?” Their answer, “We play video games.”

To become a top salesperson, you have to love selling, and then you have to live it, as I explain in the following sections.



Don't let success drive you to failure. If you're a top salesperson, you will eventually be asked to be the sales manager. I highly recommend that you pass on this “promotion.” Managing salespeople is no job for a top salesperson. It's downright toxic. Not only would you find it frustrating, but you would probably end up driving the other salespeople right out the door. If you own your own business, avoid promoting your top salesperson to manager for the same reasons.

## *Envisioning your success*

What does sales success look like to you? Are you sitting in an office all day making cold calls? Driving around from one disinterested client to another trying to drum up business? Or do you have people calling *you* to place orders? Do you have to hire an assistant to handle the extra business? Do you have more opportunities than you can possibly pursue?

Your first step in achieving success is to envision it. Most people can't get past this first step, because they don't even know what they would love to do. Dream, and then jot down a detailed description of that dream, so you can close your eyes and see it playing out in your mind.



Prior to May 6, 1954, the date on which Roger Bannister ran a mile in under 4 minutes, people thought that running a 4-minute mile was physically impossible. As soon as Bannister did it, other runners were miraculously able to run 4-minute miles. Why could they do it now when they couldn't before? Because now they could see themselves doing it.

## *Walking the walk*

You can talk the talk. You know what you should be doing to achieve the success you desire. The next step is to walk the walk. For salespeople, walking the walk consists of doing the following:

- ✓ **Practicing your craft.** Practice selling at work, at home, at the airport, in the taxi, at the grocery store, and wherever else you happen to be in contact with other people. The key to selling is being able to establish personal relationships with your clients. Practice by making meaningful connections with everyone you meet.

- ✔ **Taking risks to stretch your limits.** The people who make the most money take the biggest risks, and that applies to sales as much as it applies to anything in the world of business. You have to be willing to invest money and take some chances. Otherwise, you're little more than an hourly employee hired to take orders.
- ✔ **Embracing change as a growth strategy.** The Internet, new technologies, and the global economy have combined forces to accelerate change to a dizzying pace. The only way to survive and thrive in this environment is to embrace rather than resist change.
- ✔ **Investing in your own success.** As an entrepreneurial salesperson, you have to act like a business, and that means investing in your own growth and development, the latest gadgets to boost sales and productivity, and support personnel, so you have more time to spend on what you do best and what earns your company the biggest profits. Besides, walking around with the latest gadgets is cool. Sometimes, I forget to pack one of my gadgets just so I have an excuse to buy the latest version.
- ✔ **Playing with new technologies.** Tech savvy customers are relying more on the Internet for their information and are using a variety of communications technologies to keep in touch, including cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol or Internet phones), and blogs. To stay in touch with the latest generation of shoppers, you'd better be tech savvy, too.
- ✔ **Hiring an assistant.** Hire or be hired is what I say. Hire people to take on tasks that they can perform better, faster, and cheaper than you can, and then treat them well. The more work you can outsource to others, the more time and energy you can spend on dollar-intensive activities. See the following section, "Recruiting People Power to Fuel Your Success," for details.
- ✔ **Achieving a balanced lifestyle.** Being a successful human being means much more than achieving career success. It means remaining healthy, building rewarding relationships, supporting your community, and perhaps even raising children. Failing in one area of your life can lead to failures in other areas.
- ✔ **Giving without expectations.** Sales coaches often recommend that you "give to get." I'm telling you to "give to give." If you're expecting something in return, you're not really giving — you're bartering. Give for the sheer pleasure of giving.



Work on being successful in all areas of your life. Without the strong relationship I have with my wife and children, I would not have achieved the same level of success in my career. Success feeds on success, and, unfortunately, failure feeds on failure. Encourage everyone around you to set goals and pursue their dreams.

## Stay the course

During my recent stay at the Hilton Hotel in Glendale, I met a young man, a bartender who seemed a little down in the dumps. I had to ask—the best salespeople always ask questions, the right questions. I asked what was going on in his life, and he started talking right away—the best bartenders always do.

He had been engaged, and his fiancé had recently called off the engagement. He wanted to be a full-time fireman, and she wasn't so sure she wanted to be included in the pursuit of that dream. Now he was deep in debt, having borrowed to pay for a fancy engagement ring.

I advised him to continue to work, live at home, pay off his jewelry debt, and do everything

possible to keep moving forward toward his goal of joining the fire department. People in these situations often give up and settle for something short of their dreams, and I hate to see young people snuff out their dreams in the prime of their lives.

Fortunately, he loves peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which will certainly help him meet his budget, conserving funds to pay off debt and stay focused on providing a great service to his community. I wish him well.

If the path to your dreams seems a little rocky, don't give up and settle for less. Stay the course.

## *Recruiting People Power to Fuel Your Success*

Overachievers are often self-reliant types who refuse to ask for any assistance. They like to achieve everything on their own, so they can take full credit. When you're in sales, that approach is nonsense. The fact is that you can do more and do it better by harnessing the power of people.

If you need proof, just look around at the major corporations. Do you think they could be major corporations without hiring people? Think of yourself as a mini-corporation, You, Inc. When you want to grow your business, you'd better hang out the Help Wanted sign and start interviewing some qualified candidates. Here are some tips for harnessing people power to fuel your success:

- ✔ **Identify the missing links to your success.** What do you want to do that you can't do because you are lacking the time or expertise? As soon as you know what you need and don't have in terms of talent, skill, and time, you have a pretty good idea of the people you need to hire or partner with — people who have what you need.

- ✔ **Outsource time-consuming chores.** Figure out how much you earn per hour. If you earn \$50 an hour selling and you're cleaning your house over the weekend when you can hire someone for \$10 an hour to do it, that's borderline insane . . . unless, of course, cleaning your house is therapeutic or something you enjoy doing. Hire someone so you have more time to implement the strategies I present throughout this book.
- ✔ **Get yourself an intern.** Colleges and even some high schools have internships or coop programs in which students are willing to work for free or for a pittance in exchange for job experience. Look into these programs for some cheap and often highly qualified workers.
- ✔ **Hire the talent you're missing.** Salespeople rarely hesitate to invest in a gadget or service they think they need, but when I recommend that they hire an assistant, they immediately find all sorts of excuses. The fact is that hiring an assistant has never been easier. You can even hire a virtual assistant, as explained in Chapter 13, so you don't have to deal with messy payroll issues and benefits. A virtual assistant works as a freelancer for however long you need the assistant's skills.
- ✔ **Cash in on R-Commerce (Relationship-Commerce).** On its surface, the economy is driven by the exchange of goods and services, but beneath this surface economy is the real economy, driven by relationships. By focusing on your relationships with customers, colleagues, and even your competitors, you can grow your sales infinitely more than by focusing simply on the exchange of goods and services. See Chapter 14 for details.
- ✔ **Team up with a personal partner.** It's far too easy to skip out on your responsibilities when you're accountable only to yourself. By teaming up with a personal partner to set goals and keep one another on track, you can achieve much higher levels of success than by acting alone. In Chapter 7, I show you how to choose a personal partner and work together to ensure mutual success.
- ✔ **Pick the brain of a mentor or coach.** Success leaves big footprints, so follow those footprints by taking on a mentor or hiring a sales coach to advise you. A mentor or coach can often point out shortcuts you may have missed, expose you to incredible opportunities, and make sure you're doing everything you need to do to stay on plan.
- ✔ **Become a mentor.** You may think that mentoring a student or a salesperson who's less qualified, less experienced, or less successful than you would be a huge expenditure of time, and perhaps it is, but what you get in return usually makes up for it. A younger student can often teach you a thing or two about using the latest technologies or expose you to new marketing and sales techniques. In addition, if you establish a solid relationship, your student promises to become a major networking asset later in his career.



## *Selling Yourself: Self-Promotion*

Sure, you're selling products and services, but when your customers choose to buy from you rather than from one of your competitors, they're buying into you. Although you may market and sell a host of products, remember that your major marketing campaign should center mainly on you. You are your own company, and by promoting yourself properly and persistently, you ensure a long and successful future in sales.



People generally buy from people they know and trust. That's why even though shoppers may be able to go on the Internet and buy something for considerably less than the street price, they often choose to shop at the local store — a brick-and-mortar establishment. Your reputation should be so solid that you essentially become a brick-and-mortar establishment unto yourself.

By shamelessly promoting yourself, you create the image — the impression — you want people to have of you. Cold calls become warm calls, because people already feel as though they know you. Do it right, and you won't even have to call . . . people who want what you're selling are going to call you.

To engage in effective shameless self promotion, you first have to find something in yourself to promote, and then promote it, as explained in the following sections.

### *Identifying your unique selling point*

In the good old days, you knew who you were doing business with. Maybe it was Ted the TV guy, Melvin the milkman, Beatrice the beautician, Clare the cleaning lady, Fran the financial planner, or Ralph the Realtor (always thinking of Me, Incorporated). In a small town there was usually one person known as the go-to guy or gal for each product or service. Nowadays, particularly in big cities, you may find dozens or even thousands of suppliers from which to choose. To stick out (in a good way, of course), you want to pick something about you that's unique or create some memorable persona, so when prospective customers think of the product or service you're selling, they immediately think of you.

Several years ago, I decided to make an 11-foot-tall, 500-pound nail my unique thing. You can skip to Chapter 9 to find out more about it or visit [www.BigNail.com](http://www.BigNail.com). I purchased the Big Nail on eBay, stuck it on a trailer, and pulled it around town to various fundraising events for special causes. I also placed the Big Nail logo on all my marketing materials. Needless to say, it created a lot of positive buzz.



Discover your Big Nail and make it the center of your self-promotional campaign. A clear, central focus on something that can really get you pumped up can generate a lot of energy and, more importantly, draw a lot of attention.

## Branding yourself

Think of Martha Stewart, The Donald, Oprah, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton. As soon as you see or hear the name, that person's face probably pops into your mind. And you probably can describe what each person does. That's because these people have brand presence. Through their own self promotion and a lot of help from the media, these folks have achieved celebrity status.

While you may not crave celebrity status or want the paparazzi photographing you while you're on vacation, you can achieve a certain level of brand presence on your own by creating your own buzz-marketing blitz:

- ✓ **Market yourself on paper.** Start slow with your own business cards and brochures. Hand them out to everyone you know and everyone you meet.
- ✓ **Market yourself in the media.** Are you an expert on what you sell? You should be. Leverage your expertise in your marketing efforts. Offer to write articles for local newspapers and magazines. Call the local TV and radio stations and offer your services as a local expert for news stories related to your area of expertise. Offer to speak to local groups for free. I gave more than 1,000 free speeches before I ever was able to charge a fee.
- ✓ **Market yourself on the Internet.** Every salesperson should have at least one Web site or blog. I have over 200, including [AboutRalph.com](#) (professional services site), [BigNail.com](#) (about branding), [GetFlipping.com](#) (to promote *Flipping Houses For Dummies*), [FlippingFrenzy.com](#) (about real estate and mortgage fraud), [RalphRoberts.com](#) (a real estate site), and [KolleenRoberts.com](#) (a tribute to my older daughter). The Internet is an entirely separate world, a virtual world, where more and more people are spending more and more of their time. You have to be there to meet and greet these tech savvy customers.
- ✓ **Advertise everywhere.** Wherever people who buy the products and services you sell happen to hang out or obtain their information, you should be there. If your customers watch TV, you should be on TV. If they tune into the radio, they should be able to hear your voice occasionally. If they read the papers, you should have an ad in the paper.



I put my phone number and e-mail address on *everything*. That makes some salespeople a little nervous, because they don't want everyone calling them at all hours of the day and night. I have assistants who handle much of the added work, and I strongly recommend that you do the same. Yes, having to field calls, answer questions, talk with reporters, write articles, and do all that other self-promotional stuff requires more time, energy, and effort, but if you want to be the top salesperson in your industry, that's what it takes.

## *Prospecting for Ideas and Leads*

The paradox of giving is that the more you give, the more you receive, especially when you're not trying to receive. It just snowballs. One opportunity leads to another. I post an article on one of my blogs, and a reporter calls to interview me. That interview gets posted, a publisher notices it and calls me to write a book. The book is published, and I get more reporters calling.

Sometimes, I attend a conference for the sole purpose of attending a few workshops and honing my sales skills. The workshops can all be terrible, but I always manage to bump into someone, start conversing, and we come up with an idea for a new business venture or product.

These opportunities arise through no real conscious effort to pursue a particular opportunity. However, they wouldn't happen if I wasn't proactive in marketing myself and maintaining productive relationships. To open yourself to more leads and opportunities, I recommend you do the following:

- ✔ Hand out your business card to everyone you know and meet.
- ✔ Post an article at least once a week on your Web site or blog.
- ✔ Contribute to online discussions on message boards and blogs that pertain to your products and services — get involved in these online communities.
- ✔ Remain positive and upbeat. Nobody likes a wet blanket. You should also consider steering clear of discussions about politics, religion, sex, and schools.
- ✔ Become a member, preferably a leader, in your trade association.
- ✔ Attend conferences regularly, and offer to speak or deliver workshops on your areas of expertise.
- ✔ Keep in touch with everyone in your address book, preferably by way of personal phone calls.
- ✔ Talk to reporters — they can get the word out for you.
- ✔ Volunteer for an organization you trust, but avoid committees. Most salespeople are very civic minded, but a committee can really sap your enthusiasm.

## *Unlocking the Secret of Mutual Success*

Selling is all about establishing mutually beneficial relationships, and when you think about it, that's the type of relationship we strive for in every aspect of our lives. The most productive relationships are those in which each person involved thrives independently and can bring something of value to the relationship.

In business, particularly in sales, making everyone around you successful delivers several things of value:

- ✔ **Return business:** Satisfied customers are more likely to come back to you the next time they're in the market for your product or service . . . assuming they think of you, which is why it is so important to keep in touch with customers.
- ✔ **Increased sales volume:** A successful business customer is more profitable and has the money to purchase more products and services from you.
- ✔ **Positive referrals:** When customers are happy, particularly if you had something to do with it, they're more likely to refer you to other people they know.
- ✔ **Positive testimonials:** Testimonials are great to include in sales letters, brochures, and other marketing materials. If future prospects know that you've helped others, they have more trust that you can help them.
- ✔ **Increased opportunities:** Focusing on your customer's success often opens your mind to new ideas for additional products and services and perhaps even new divisions or businesses you can start.

In the following sections, I offer some suggestions on how to ensure your own success by making everyone around you more successful.

## *Making your customers successful*

Your customer's success is your success, so it is in your best interest to make your customer as successful as possible. That doesn't mean giving away your products and services. It does mean enabling your customer to tap the full potential of what you're selling and to assist your customer even when that assistance doesn't directly boost sales.

You may be called on to offer your customer some free advice, refer them to other companies for products and services you don't sell, or even do a little head-hunting for them to steer them in the direction of the most qualified personnel in your area.



Become your own customer, as much as possible. Try to buy the same product or one that's similar to what you sell from another salesperson to discover insights from your customer's point of view. (You don't actually have to buy it.) See Chapter 18 for additional strategies and tips for establishing mutually beneficial relationships with your customers.

## *Making your customers' customers successful*

As an entrepreneurial salesperson, always think one step ahead — that means considering your customer's customer. The single most important contribution you can make to your customer's success is contributing to the success of your customer's customer.

In many cases, this is primarily the responsibility of your company's CEO or product development division, but because you probably have more direct contact with customers, you may need to carry the message back to your company. If you're selling to a business that sells your product to consumers, keep that consumer, the end user, in mind.

## *Focusing your efforts on underserved clientele*

Your market is likely populated with a portion of un-served or underserved clientele, particularly minority customers that you and your competitors have ignored. Ensuring customer success often calls for paying some attention to this market sector.



Chapter 19 offers specific suggestions for appealing to minority, multicultural clientele. Salespeople who are able to implement some of the strategies discussed in this chapter often reap incredible rewards because they find that they have no competition for these customers. By making a few adjustments, you can corner the market and expand your world view at the same time.

## *Declaring peace with your competitors*

Establish relationships with your competitors like the relationships you have when you compete against friends in a friendly game of tennis. Try your best to pummel the competition, but don't take it personally. You never know when you may need to ask one of your sworn enemies for a favor or when an opportunity to work together may present itself.

In Chapter 20, I point out several potential benefits of playing nice with the competition and show you how to collaborate effectively when given the opportunity. I also show you ways in which you can cut in on your competitor's profits . . . nicely, of course.

## Why share your secrets?

Whenever I speak, coach, or publish a book revealing my “secrets” of success, people often wonder why I would share these secrets. Why not just keep all of this to myself? Why risk revealing anything of value to the competition?

Someone asked Ira Hayes, the top salesperson at NCR (National Cash Register) many years ago, these same questions. At the time, Hayes was touring the country, telling everyone his secrets to achieving phenomenal sales. When

someone asked why he would come and speak to the sales people at a company that was one of NCR's major competitors, Hayes said something like, “Well, nobody at my company is following my advice, so I don't expect that any of you will follow it either.”

I carefully screen candidates before I agree to coach or mentor them for this very reason — I can't teach someone who won't put my advice into practice.



Declaring peace with your competitors doesn't mean waving the white flag. It's about playing fair, and I don't mean county-fair nice. You're still a gladiator fighting for your life in the great arena of life, so don't go soft. Just keep in mind that your competitors can come in handy at times.

## *Tapping the power of professional associations*

As you're making the rounds to boost the performance and productivity of everyone around you, don't overlook your colleagues. Join and lead your trade association, and give back to the industry that toasts and butters your bread.



Honor your duty to give back to your industry. Once a year, you should offer to speak at an industry event or at least act as a member of a discussion panel. Find a way to give back and pass along the wisdom you've acquired.

In Chapter 14, I point out the many benefits of being a member of your trade association and the bigger benefits of taking on a leadership position. By making your colleagues more successful, you do your part to create a healthy, thriving industry that's good for everyone — suppliers, salespeople, clients, consumers, and yourself. In addition, you gain professional contacts, many of whom are leaders in the industry.