



What's So Funny about Sales?

I asked several friends, clients, and colleagues this question as I prepared the original outline for *How to Sell without Being a JERK!*, and I received a variety of answers. Many turned out to be some of the funniest first-person accounts of mistakes, malaprops, goofs, and misstatements I had ever heard. Then, while I was on the phone listening to someone recount his story, through my laughter, I said: "Oh, no! That's painful!" "Painfully *true*," was his immediate response.

This gave me an idea. As in life, there are so many painful lessons to be learned in sales, I thought, why not teach these lessons more effectively by doing what society has done for centuries: tell a story.

That is why, in this book, I have assembled for your reading pleasure and learning enjoyment, eight Painfully True Selling Stories that are both instructive and humorous.

I wonder if anything like what you will read here has ever happened to you?

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT EXACTLY IS WRONG WITH SALESPEOPLE?

Before we can instruct, correct, heal, and discharge the patient, we must diagnose the problem. The problem I take on in this book is that some (not ALL) salespeople sell like jerks!

Do they act that way on purpose? Is their behavior constant, unending, and unavoidable? Does selling automatically make someone a jerk?

I do not think so.

I have come to the conclusion that I regard selling, and hear the conversations around selling, a bit differently than most people, for a couple of reasons. First, I am proud of the fact that I have been earning a living for 23 years as a salesperson. Second, I have a romantic view of what sales is

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all about. Sales affords those of us who sell an opportunity to plug into the grand symphony of life. It is the engine of every economy—micro to macro. As Joe Harbert mentioned in his foreword, every time you interact with someone and move that person (or are moved) to a common goal, you are having a sales conversation. So, assuming that is the case, let's do it right! Let's act like professionals, and make sure that when we sell, we are not selling like jerks.

WHERE YOU AND I WILL GO TOGETHER

Let's begin with what compelled you to pick up this book. It might have been a recommendation from a friend or colleague. It might have been happenstance. Maybe the cover caught your eye in a bookstore. Whatever the reason, there was something in the title of this book that on some level resonated with you.

Throughout the book, you can expect the following:

- Real-life, sometimes funny, absolutely true stories about the selling life. I call them "painfully true selling stories."
- Short, to-the-point aphorisms I call "Painful Selling Truths™."
- A defense of the profession—not an apology or an explanation, but a passionate presentation of the case *for* the selling profession, along with an explanation of why there would be no industry or commerce without sales.
- Great ideas, techniques, and strategies you can adopt and adapt immediately, that will help you:

- Not be a jerk
- Have more fun selling
- Make more money

If you like to think, listen, solve problems, connect with people, and have a few laughs while earning a living, then a bent toward selling may be more a part of your personality than you realize.

Wanting to be successful in your career does not make you a jerk. Wanting to close more sales does not make you a jerk. Wanting to earn more money this year than last does not make you a jerk. Thinking that you must be rude, curt, short, brusque, pushy, overbearing, combative, or argumentative, or employ any other mildly annoying way of communicating with people is anathema to what we will discuss in this book. Those behaviors are unequivocal traits of people who sell like jerks.

You and I have the opportunity today to turn the perception of selling on its ear, simply by how we choose to respond and react to the world around us. We can sell like human beings, interested in the overall welfare and success of the people we call on, or we can sell like jerks.

Begin by looking at the methods you use to sell through the lens of someone to whom you sell. Share ideas with your colleagues and friends. Use this book as a springboard for a revolution in selling that improves the perceptions of the profession. Let's make a real difference in the lives of the people we work with and for. Let's have people we sell to (even if they decide *not* to buy from us) speak of us in a positive manner after their interactions with us.

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WHY YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME

I, your humble servant, have sold to professionals and decision makers in just about every city in the United States. I have also sold to (by which I mean, closed deals with) people in Ireland, England, Holland, and Mexico.

I have sat with people in high-level positions at major corporations. In all of my experience, I have yet to see someone make more money than others simply because he or she was a jerk. Conversely, I have yet to see someone go hungry because he or she chose not to be a jerk.

You and I are familiar with the stereotypical salesperson personality. Salespeople who fit this stereotype are so oblivious to how their attitudes and presentations are perceived that it's clear they do not hear what is coming out of their own mouths. They appear to be in their own world. It's kind of humorous, if you think about it. The fact that they offend, insult, or irritate their clients at any level seems to fly under the scope of their own radar.

I have seen and experienced presentations by salespeople (perhaps you have, as well) that make everyone in the room look around as if to say, "Does anyone else hear what this person is saying? Am I the only one who's thinking, 'What a jerk?'" If you have been in a meeting like this (and cringe at the memory), then the ability to sell without being a jerk holds some attraction to you.

I am not going to make many promises to you in this book, but here is one I will make: If you truly want to sell without being a jerk, you are going to find ideas, tips, and techniques in this book that will:

- Change your thinking.
- Impact your actions.
- Invariably change your results.

Maybe you're protesting, "I don't sell like a jerk, but I know people who do." If this is the case, then use the book to become aware of the mistakes other people make every day so you can avoid them.

TWO VIEWS, ONE GOAL

Selling is a thought-based profession, the intricacies of which are ruled by emotion. This may seem contradictory, but stay with me: I will connect the two lines of thought.

Selling is thought-based; buying is feeling-based. This is one of the few professions where the two parties involved in every interaction act on opposing motivations: salespeople are looking to sell more and more expensive items to customers, who are looking to buy more affordable items. This dichotomy introduces a variable into the dynamic that must be addressed for the relationship to be successful. If the people you sell to do not feel comfortable with you, you will not sell them as much as you might.

Unending debates take place in the theater of American commerce regarding whether buyers need to like you as a person in order for them to buy from you.

I subscribe to the following train of thought:

- People buy based on emotion.
- Salespeople must control the conversation, and be persuasive (yet nonthreatening), to successfully fulfill their job responsibility and serve their customers well.

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- Wanting to, deciding to, or continuing to be a salesperson does not automatically make you a jerk.
- You can, with thought and reasonable emotional control, sell without being a jerk.

I, like many in my field, have been insulted and have had my feelings hurt by people who, without any sensitivity, insult the sales profession by saying that it is a nonprofession, or that it does not take much intellect to master. Or they deliver the classic “salespeople are jerks” lines: “I could never sell something to someone. I don’t want to give people something they don’t want.”

Those are just opinions, however, which I consider misinformed, and a bit pedantic.

Don’t get me wrong: I do acknowledge that there are ruthless, inconsiderate, unnerving personalities operating as salespeople in the world. Of course I do! Why else would I write this book? But acknowledging the existence of something is not the equivalent of endorsing it.

So, the quintessential, revealing, and probing question is, “Why do some people sell like jerks?”

Without acting or sounding as if I am defending anyone, I will say that based on my extensive research (23 years’ worth, across 3 countries and 65 cities, addressing more than 25,000 people), I have found incontrovertible evidence that the twofold reason people most often sell like jerks is:

1. They are in the sales profession because they have run out of jobs that would tolerate poor performance (or have difficulty living up to expectations) and they have

landed in a sales position where their employers figured having *someone* call on prospects was better than not having *anyone* do it (not exactly the highest standards there).

2. The person selling like a jerk has a chip on his or her shoulder.

Like any career, sales is not for everyone. It is for people who, like me, have a deep need to challenge and prove themselves, over and again, over long periods of time, to new and unrelenting, and constantly changing audiences.

Think about that and really examine whether it applies to you: “prove yourself over and again, to unrelenting, and constantly changing audiences.” There is no “arrival” in sales. We sales lunatics are constantly looking for the next challenge, the next more complicated deal, the larger prospect (or “fish”) to land.

These characteristics may sound similar to those required of someone who has aspirations to be a successful actor or other type of performer, and there certainly is a good deal of common ground between the two careers. But the most relevant analogy I can come up with is that a salesperson who operates without being a jerk—someone who embraces the ups and downs of the career, thrives in a competitive environment, and maintains a cordial, professional approach even when dealing with the most difficult of clients—is most like an architect.

Architects by nature approach thought and application in similar ways to professional sellers—salespeople who sell without being a jerk! Both understand the importance

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of planning, setting strong foundations, and incorporating creativity into their daily work. The most significant and distinctive similarity, however, is that both salespeople and architects are focused on designing and building something that is made to last.

A LASTING IMPACT

If you are looking for the quick buck, and don't care to develop a relationship, or even sell to the current prospect again, then you are at risk (whether you mean to or not) of selling like a jerk.

When done right—meaning done well, like a professional who cares about the impression he or she makes on people, and the lasting impact he or she has—there is romance involved in the selling process. It is a dance of decisions and motivations. Salespeople are motivated by quotas, bonuses, and accolades. We earn those by bringing in profitable business. Buyers are motivated by myriad factors. The romance I refer to points to the rarity of two people (or two groups) finding each other, fulfilling each other's needs, and enjoying a healthy relationship for an extended period of time.

The decisions made are based largely on emotional issues, ranging from "I want to look good to my boss, so I have to get this deal" to "I need to make bonus this month in order to have a good vacation, so I am going to jack the profit margin *just a little*" to myriad others.

If you think that no one with scruples or ethics would even think about doing any of the above, you would be wrong. I point these out because I want you to believe you

can take my honesty to the bank (and if they give you any money for that, call me right away!).

Walk a Mile toward My Quota before You Criticize

The sales profession has some detractors, as we all know and have experienced. There are countless examples in the mainstream media where salespeople are depicted as “snakes,” who live to manipulate people out of their hard-earned money. While a recognized stereotype, it is not the majority rule.

I wrote this book to lend a voice to that larger percentage of salespeople I have coached or taught over the years, to give them a forum from which to demonstrate their love for the profession. In addition to the exhortations I include here, I will indict anyone who is currently selling like a jerk. Please cease and desist immediately! Join my friends, colleagues, students, and clients in setting the profession of sales on a high and sturdy pedestal—not to be worshiped or revered, but to be respected and held in high-enough esteem so that sharp, funny, hard-working people are attracted to, and stay in, the profession for a good long time.

Define Your Dreams

Freedom, wealth, income, prosperity: These add up to the dream for me.

I do not refer to this as the American dream, for several reasons, not the least of which is that other groups (media, social commentators) have appointed themselves the arbiters of that state of mind.

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Freedom works for me, because I like work but I *love* play. If I want to build a life for myself, I have to do so in small, incremental, consistent, and disciplined steps.

Selling without being a jerk is as much a discipline as being able to play a musical instrument; both require practice, study, patience, as well as a willingness and open-mindedness to be corrected.

Notice that I did not say “taught” at the end of the previous sentence. I chose the word “corrected” because the personalities most often attracted to sales are often gregarious, extroverted, and highly intelligent. (No, that is not a stroke of people’s egos.) Selling requires a high ability to function, think, respond, and modify one’s reactions. People who are attracted to repetitive tasks, which do not require creativity in the performance and completion of their standardized tasks, will not be comfortable in sales.

Selling without being a jerk means that although the salesperson is under pressure to perform, he or she never makes reaching quota anyone else’s problem.

When you sell without being a jerk, reaching one’s quota is rarely a problem. It is a measurement tool—a benchmark—and nothing more.

Do It Well, or Don’t Do It at All

Bryon Carney is the managing director of a commercial real estate firm in Phoenix Arizona. He is an excellent salesperson, and a stunningly talented manager. He has a great, simple saying: “If you’re going to do something, why not be great at it?”

Bryon and I are big believers in personal responsibility for production in sales.

Whether someone sells like a jerk or not, we must face how difficult this work (selling) is. It can test your mettle—your emotional strength. My simple admonition and warning to people who do not love selling is, “If you don’t love it, don’t do it!”

No one is going to come to your home and force you to go out into the world and cold-call. You almost have to have a need to do it.

I have talked with, counseled, sat with, and listened to many people who explain the unique challenges and distractions they face, all with the hope that these excuse them from measurable accomplishment. After a while, “the dog ate my lead sheet” just does not justify low performance.

If you are not predisposed to searching out and meeting challenges, if you do not like having your level of performance measured and compared to others with whom you work, or you are not accustomed to having to create opportunities for yourself, you would be best advised to pursue an alternative profession.

Have Fun

Whenever most people encounter others having fun, they respond with a smile. When people hear others laughing, they eagerly anticipate being let in on the joke.

It has been scientifically proven that laughter is good for the body, mind, and soul. Selling affords the luxury of these scenarios being a part of every workday.

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If this sounds attractive to you, then the selling profession can offer you a lifetime of income, freedom, and laughter—if you sell without being a jerk.

HOW SELLING WORKS

Every sale is based on a variety of factors, from the marketing offered to the salesperson as support material to the salesperson's passion for what he or she is selling to the determination needed to find the right person, at the right company, at the right time for it all to make sense, and to be valuable to the person (suspect, prospect, or client) choosing to buy.

Note

I will refer to three types of people throughout this book: *suspects*, *prospects*, and *clients*. A suspect is anyone who has a phone; a prospect is anyone who has a phone and who meets some of your criteria as someone to sell to; and a client is someone who has caused you to earn income.

All of the phrases and thought processes here can be represented in terms commonly used in the field of architecture. Laying foundation, building solid frames, designing an appearance that is pleasing to others, creating an experience that people will want to visit over and over again: these are the common tasks set before both architects and salespeople.

Over the course of the book I will identify, explain, and demonstrate how important the conversation is to building relationships, and how multiple relationships, when built

properly, will provide you with laughs, opportunities to grow, and a very comfortable income. Are you willing to gamble? Do you feel comfortable risking your future on your own determination and sweat?

Don't kid yourself. People (like me and many others referred to or quoted here) like to make money. I personally want to make more money this year than I did last year. As of this writing, I have the most aggressive (yet realistic) financial income goal I have ever worked toward in all of my years of selling.

Money means different things to different people. To me, it means one thing: freedom. When I am free to do as I please, I tend to be more creative, I tend to make more money, and I have more fun.

Now, before you read and reread the phrase "do as I please" and interpret it as an endorsement of a salesperson creating his or her own work schedule and quota, please understand that this freedom can only be achieved and enjoyed by working very hard for a long, long time.

You may have heard the phrase "freedom is not free." This is entirely applicable to the selling life.

The price for freedom is often paid without an audience. However someone amasses wealth is only of import to you and me as a learning opportunity—nothing more that could be labeled productive.

Throughout this book, I'll survey the mental half-acre our conversation will cover by asking you some questions. I do not expect you to pull out a pen or pencil and mark up the book with your answers (if you did, how could you ever resell it on eBay?).

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This book is about getting to the point. As they say in Hollywood, “Cut to the chase!” With that in mind, you can expect at the end of several chapters a brief list of questions (usually five) that will help you remember, work out, or apply the ideas discussed in that chapter or section.

I’ll start here with the first five questions:

1. Why am I in sales, anyway?
2. What is my driving motivator?
3. Which is more important to me (you must choose one or the other):
 - Money
 - Doing the right thing
4. How do I want people I sell to, to remember me?
5. Would I want my spouse, children, parent, or best friend to be in the room when I close a deal?

I am not interested in engaging in a moral debate about sales or sales tactics. This book is my opportunity to hurl hope at the stars, to find out whether what I have learned and taught to many other people over the years can be expanded and applied to you, the readers of this book. It is not a manifesto; this book is about *you, and how you can sell professionally without being a jerk*. It proceeds from one assumption and two goals.

- The assumption is that you want to sell without being a jerk.
- The goals are:

- To laugh about the realities, pitfalls, frustrations, and brain cramps that occur in the selling life.
- To offer you some reliable, proven, and easy-to-apply techniques for selling now, and for a long time to come.

THE BOUNDARIES

As a salesperson, I am required to be flexible in order to succeed. As a parent, I have a few nonnegotiable standards. One specific example is that I want my children to be productive people of character. This simple phrase has manifested itself in my life as a constant effort; nothing makes parents more proud than hearing from someone else how much their son or daughter is respected by his or her peers.

I am not so naïve to think that either of my children is perfect, or that everyone will like them. Not everyone likes me. I am sure you are holding the book in stunned silence right now! How could anyone *not* like this author, parent, salesperson, entrepreneur, and all-around great guy?

This book is not my own private therapy session; it is the culmination of experience, pain, frustration, wisdom, and great achievements.

If my edict for my son and daughter is that they be productive people of character, then I am overwhelmingly responsible for holding this standard before them, encouraging them when they have erred, and rewarding them when they demonstrate decisions and actions consistent with the edict.

This is how you and I will build a solid selling foundation. This is how you and I will prepare ourselves for

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handling and dealing with the occasional emotional earthquake, which comes with the territory.

You and I must, right now, commit to selling without being a jerk.

So, why do people sell like jerks?

As my wife would say when asked why someone has done something irritating, “Who *knows?*”

This book may not be able to answer that question, but it will answer these:

- Can I sell without being a jerk and still make a lot of money?
- Can I have fun and still win regular, reliable, profitable business?
- Does the author have any idea what I go through as a salesperson?
- What will this book give me, that I can walk away with and *use*?

Construction on your half-acre of mental space has been approved. The blueprint for the development and construction of solid relationships has been submitted and approved according to standards and conventions, which we will explore throughout this book.

Let’s get to work!