

Chapter 1

You Don't Need a Uniform or a Fancy Suit

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining selling
 - ▶ Recognising some common methods salespeople use to get their message across
 - ▶ Using the latest technology to your advantage
 - ▶ Improving your life by improving your selling skills
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Selling is everywhere around you, and nearly everybody (even those who aren't in a professional sales role) do it every day, in one form or another. In fact, selling affects every waking moment of your day. So in this chapter, we let you know what exactly this thing called *selling* is, how it's done, and how you can use selling skills to make your life and your career better.

What Selling Is

According to one dictionary definition, *selling* is the 'exchange of goods or services for money' or 'to persuade into accepting an idea'. Selling is the process of reaching an agreement to move goods and services from the hands of those who produce them into the hands of those who will benefit from them. Selling involves persuasive skills on the part of the person doing the talking. The talking's supported by print, audio, and video messages that sell either the particular item or the brand name as being something the customer would want to have.

Nothing ever happens unless someone sells something to someone else. Without selling, manufactured products would sit in warehouses for eternity, people working for those manufacturers would become unemployed, transportation and shipping services wouldn't be needed, and everyone would be

The selling triangle

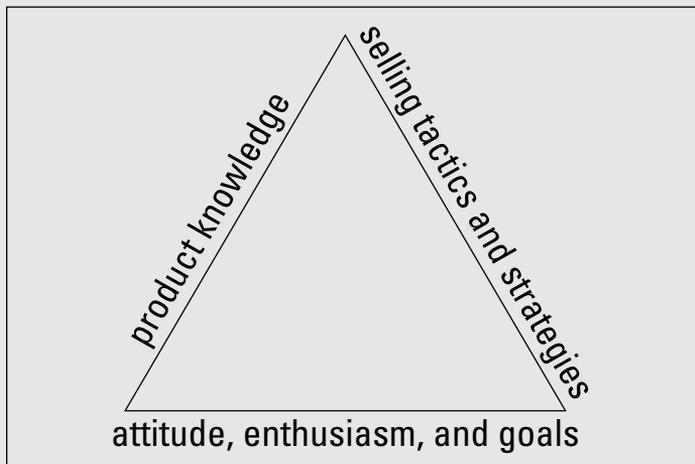
Whenever we're giving seminars to help people master the fundamentals of selling, we use a triangle with equal sides, like the one here, to illustrate the three main elements of selling. On one side is product knowledge, covered in Chapter 5. On the other side are selling tactics and strategies, covered in Part III, and on the base of the triangle are attitude, enthusiasm, and goals, covered in Part V.

The three sides of the selling triangle are equally important. If product knowledge were all that mattered, then technical designers, manufacturers, or assemblers of products would make the best salespeople – but they don't. Of course, these people often know the product quite literally from the inside out, but until they're trained in selling skills and understand how much of a role attitude plays in sales, their approach is often 99 per cent description of product and 1 per cent relation of the product to the needs of the individual clients – and that doesn't usually result in a sale.

Likewise, great selling skills without product knowledge and enthusiasm won't get you far either. Even if you're comfortable talking with practically anyone, and you've invested a tremendous amount of time mastering language skills in order to create pictures in the minds of your prospects, if you don't have a clear picture in your *own* mind of what your product, service, or idea can do for your customers, how can you paint the right pictures?

Or if your attitude and enthusiasm towards selling is high, but you have little knowledge or experience of selling tactics and strategies, your enthusiasm can open the doors but your lack of knowledge or specific sales skills may amount to no real results.

Remember: A professional who fails to develop any one side of the triangle is failing to reach his full potential and letting down clients who expect to work with a competent person. Do your best to develop all three areas of your selling life, and you'll reap the rewards.



living a simple life, trying to sustain a living from whatever bit of land they owned. Or would they even own the land if no one were there to sell it to them? Think about this scenario.

Look around you right now. You can probably spot hundreds, if not thousands, of things that were sold in order to get where they are right now. Even if you're totally naked, sitting in the woods, you had to be involved in some sort of selling process to have this book with you. If you choose to ignore material possessions, take stock of yourself internally. What do you believe? Why do you believe what you do? Did someone, for example your parents or your peers, sell you a set of values as you were growing up? Odds are, whether you're living in a material world or you've forsaken nearly all possessions, you've been involved in selling, one way or another.



The preceding paragraph should persuade you to at least look at selling a bit differently from how you have in the past. And we did it without pushing facts and figures on you. Good selling isn't pushing; the process involves gently pulling with questions and getting people to revise their opinions.

How Selling Is Done

Although the definition of selling may be fairly straightforward, the approaches to selling are virtually endless. In this section, we cover some of the main ways that products and services are sold today and give you some important tips for using them.

Telemarketing

With a telephone, a salesperson has the potential to reach nearly any other person on the planet; however, what you say when your prospective client answers the phone, if he answers at all, is critical. In some industries, you might actually try to sell the product on the first call (referred to as a *one-call sale*) whilst in others, you're initially only trying to stimulate interest in your offer – enough interest, perhaps, so that the person you're speaking to leaves his home and comes down to your shop, or allows you to visit him in his home or place of business so that you may discuss your offer further. Either way, you're selling what your business is all about, leaving the person on the other end with a very distinct impression of you and your company – whether that be good or bad.



Although telemarketing is still a thriving method for reaching potential clients, many telemarketers are finding reaching a real person when they place their calls increasingly difficult. If you plan to use this method of approach, be prepared to leave curiosity-building messages on voice mail or answering machines in order to make a connection with potential clients. More people are screening their calls with caller ID features and voice mail than ever before. Indeed, especially when calling in a business-to-business sales environment, you're going to come up against the 'gatekeeper' or secretary who may or may not put you through to the person you need to speak with. So your message or introduction must be enticing and skilfully delivered. Whatever the outcome you experience when calling, you need to be properly prepared. (Find more detailed ideas on how best to work with a 'gatekeeper' in Chapter 8.)

Despite the difficulty telemarketers often have in getting through to people willing to listen to them, telemarketing has become widely accepted and recognised as a true sales profession. This approach requires tact, training, and the ability to articulate a message in a very brief amount of time, as well as the skill of helping others recognise you as a warm, caring individual who has their needs at heart. Many companies across many industries are quickly realising that gifted telemarketers can help bring a product or service to market in a much more efficient and cost-effective manner than ever before.

Direct mail

Every piece of direct mail you receive, whether in the form of a letter introducing a company's offer, a money-off voucher, or a catalogue, is devised for the single purpose of selling you something. Companies that do this play the numbers game and hope that enough people will look at or read the offer and actually order their products before the mailing is re-filed in the waste bin.

In recent years the response rate for direct mailing has fallen below 1 per cent, which was considered average for a long time. Even so, direct mail can still be a viable exercise if properly executed. Even though each of those catalogues or mail pieces may cost thousands of pounds to produce and distribute, especially if they contain a lot of full-colour photographs, the justification is simple: when you order from a company, you'll probably re-order something else from that company several more times in the future. You have become a regular customer or client, and good companies work very hard to keep you coming back for more.

E-mail

Many companies are doing less telemarketing and direct-mail selling and are instead sending more e-mail solicitations. Why? Because even though direct mail enables you to get your message to the proper address, that doesn't necessarily mean it will make it into the appropriate hands. Well-intentioned secretaries, receptionists, spouses, or children often throw away what they deem to be 'junk mail' addressed to the recipient before it reaches him. If you send your message via e-mail, however, you're more likely to get it directly to the person you want to reach.

In most cases, business e-mail, when addressed to the correct recipient, appears to be deemed personal territory and is not automatically deleted. Secretaries and receptionists may receive copies of e-mails, but they aren't likely to delete e-mail messages from their bosses' computers. Home e-mail, on the other hand, may not be thought of as so sacred, but it still has a good chance of being seen by the person you want to reach.



In a world in which e-mail inboxes are constantly bombarded with *spam* (unsolicited e-mail), you face ever-increasing barriers of filters and mail-server restrictions, so often the only way to ensure the recipient receives your mailing is if you deliberately ask for permission to send beforehand.



To make sure that your intended recipient receives the message you're sending, put the recipient's name in the subject line (for example, 'Personal Message for John Smith').

If you use e-mail as a way of connecting with prospective clients, you can include your message in the body of the e-mail itself or you can send it in the form of an attachment that looks like one of your ads or printed pieces or that contains a link to your Web site. Another alternative is to include an attached Microsoft PowerPoint slide presentation, customised especially for the potential client you're targeting.

However, in a world so painfully aware of computer virus attacks, not only is it difficult to get mail through but it can also sometimes be impossible to send attachments or mail containing graphic images. The recipient may think these attachments contain viruses or they may clog e-mail boxes, because graphic files are large, so seek advice and permission from the recipient before sending.



E-mail, when used properly, is an extraordinary vehicle for getting your message to the ears or eyes of those you want to reach. However, you need to be aware of the laws governing the use of e-mail. Sending follow-up e-mails or proposals and presentation materials is fine, but if you're planning to use

The computer revolution and your role in it

If you plan to have a successful career in sales, you need to have at least a limited understanding of computers. Even if you're still selling something as simple as Wellington boots or woollen socks, you need to track your client contacts in the most efficient manner possible in order to maximise your sales. You also need to have access to the phenomenal volume and quality of information available on the Internet. Not becoming familiar with the basics of computers and what they can do for you is like locking yourself outside your place of business with nothing more than a business card.

Understanding the basics of today's technology is also crucial when conversing with your clients who are also in tune with it. Nothing ruins your credibility faster than pulling out bits of crumpled paper or an obviously old, barely used notebook to jot down a client's contact information when he's using the latest handheld device or Internet-connected phone.

Take advantage of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software or contact management software, which allows you to maintain

customer lists, prospect information, diaries, contact information, and a variety of other sales-related tasks that salespeople used to organise with efficient secretaries and desk diaries. Two superb systems that can help you organise your business are ACT! and Goldmine. They are both excellent programs, operate on recognisable Microsoft Outlook-type systems so that they feel familiar, and are very easy to learn and use. Our personal favourite is Goldmine, which is slightly more expensive than Act!. Both programs only cost about £120 to £160, though – a trifle considering their payback in terms of the relationships they help you develop with clients.

Many companies, such as SalesForce, are also offering online contact management software on a subscription basis. Talk with others in your particular field to determine which software has the features you can benefit from the most. Or see if your company has made arrangements to use a certain program in-house, across the board for everyone.

e-mail as part of a larger sales campaign (similar to the way you would use direct mail), you must first get the permission of the recipient of the message. (You create an *opt-in e-mail list*; we discuss e-mail lists in more depth in Chapter 7.) Failure to get permission before sending repetitive follow-up mail is referred to as *spamming*, which not only creates hugely negative feelings in the recipient but can actually cause your mail service to be terminated by your Internet Service Provider, which of course would not help your business!

The Internet

Imagine that you're a customer, and you really, really want a new jumper to match an outfit you already have. If you want to see it immediately, to be sure the colour matches or complements your other clothes, what's the best

solution? You can telephone a clothes shop, hunt all around the town, or wait for a salesperson to contact you and then send you a brochure or catalogue. Or you can visit the manufacturer's Web site and, within a few minutes, see the actual garment accurately portrayed, complete with all relevant information as to size options and so on. As a busy customer, what's the best use of your time? To go online and visit the Web site, of course. This way, you don't waste your time or petrol or get frustrated that what you're looking for isn't there when you want to see it.

Wouldn't your customers want to take advantage of the same opportunity? Yes, and if you don't offer your customers that opportunity, your competitors probably will.



Efficiency is the name of the game when it comes to technology. You need to make it work *for* you; ultimately the technology should make achieving the task easier than it is without the technology. You have to take advantage of every method possible to increase your efficiency while remaining easily accessible to your clients. The focus must remain on the task of selling, not on the technology that assists, so be careful not to invest so much time in mastering the technology that you have no time left to do what you're paid for – sell your products and services.

The Internet resembles a vast library. You can find just about any piece of information you want and so can your potential customers. These days not too many people invest the time required to walk down to their local library to look up information. They do, however, click to the Internet and search for information on your product or service when they want it – and they'll find information on your competition, too.



The people you approach in the course of your business probably have much more knowledge about your product or service and are much better informed in general than they have been at any other time in history, so you'd better know your product or service better than they do (see Chapter 5 for more on this important topic). Look at the same Web sites or brochures that your customers see and if you aren't sure exactly where they might look, add to your fact-finding process a question about where your clients do their research on your product. Find out where your customers are going for information, and if you have any influence on the content, make sure it's positive.

Person-to-person selling

On an average day, most sales are concluded in a face-to-face environment. Meals are purchased in person at restaurants, people physically walk into hotels or check in at airports, a proliferation of goods are purchased in retail

I'd like to buy the world a drink . . .

You know that radio and TV adverts sell to you, but you may not realise how deeply their advertising campaigns register in your mind. For example, you may not drink Coca-Cola, but I bet if you hear the music from one of its current adverts you'll recognise it immediately. Indeed, the impact is even better than that. . . you can probably picture the image that a television ad left in your mind after watching it last night. The product manufacturers spent hundreds of thousands of pounds but it was effective. Even if you don't buy Coca-Cola, if someone else asked you to buy some for him on your way home, how long would it take you to find it on the shelf? Not very long. And why is that? Partly because

Coca-Cola has premium shelf space in most supermarkets, but mainly because you know exactly what Coca-Cola's product packaging looks like.

With the use of phenomenal technology and extremely creative art directors, some of today's TV and radio commercials are more fun to watch and listen to than the actual programmes. You may not be interested in the product, but you can probably describe a company's latest commercial, if it caught your attention. Advertising is an important part of selling products and services. For more information, turn to *Advertising For Dummies*, by Gary Dahl (Wiley).

stores, and millions of salespeople sit across a desk, conference table, or kitchen table turning prospects into clients. Person-to-person selling is the single largest type of selling conducted worldwide. As a result, much of the content in the balance of this book is aimed at person-to-person selling.

The fun part about person-to-person selling is that you can watch the prospect's body language *and* speak with yours. You can physically pass him information and allow him to handle your product or experience the service first-hand. You can involve all of his senses – entice him to taste, touch, smell, hear, and see just how good your offering is – and generally exercise much greater influence on the prospect's state of mind. (We cover specific methods of influence in Chapter 10.) Selling in the face-to-face environment is fun and a great arena in which to refine your skills.

What Selling Skills Can Do for You

Selling skills can do for you what a way with words did for Casanova and William Shakespeare. They can do for you what sex appeal did for Marilyn Monroe. They can do for you what powerful communication skills did for historical greats such as Sir Winston Churchill, Mahatma Ghandi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Selling skills can make or break you in whatever endeavour you choose. They can mean the difference between getting the sale, the promotion, the job, the person of your dreams, or having to settle for less.

If you're good at selling, you probably earn an above-average income and have rewarding personal relationships. If you're not completely satisfied with your income level or with the quality of your personal relationships, make the development of selling skills a priority and you'll reap the rewards.

Possessing selling skills is like being given a certain tip from someone on the inside as to the likely winner of the Grand National. All you have to do is invest a bit of your time and effort to understand and apply these tried-and-tested, proven-effective skills to your everyday life. Before you know it, they become such a natural part of your manner that no one, including yourself, even recognises them as selling skills. People around you just see you as a really nice, competent person instead of the stereotypical, cigar-chomping, back-slapping, used-car salesman that most people associate with selling. If you can utilise these skills in all the things that you do, you'll then be in the class of people who make the world go round.

Selling is a profession and can be a rewarding career. Selling is the only career role in which you have such direct influence over your success and can almost write your own pay cheque.

Salespeople are everywhere – even where you least expect them

The person who isn't selling isn't living. Think about that: At some point nearly every day, you're involved in a selling situation of some sort. You may call it by a different name or not even recognise it as an act of selling but selling it is. Whilst we usually only associate 'selling' with a more deliberate situation focused on a business issue, hundreds of 'selling' situations are less blatant. Here's just a short list of the people who sell things, and whose 'products' you buy:

- ✔ **Actors:** If you've ever watched a TV programme, film, or play and become totally engrossed in the story, you've been part of a selling situation. When the actor gives a wonderful, believable performance, he's 'sold you' on his portrayal of the character.
- ✔ **Waiters and waitresses:** The experienced waiter offers you cheerful greetings and exchanges pleasantries with a smile whilst

he gives you choices of drinks, starters, meals, and desserts. He doesn't just ask to take your order. Why? Because when he employs a bit of salesmanship, he's almost guaranteed to encourage you to purchase perhaps a little more and to leave a bigger tip.

- ✔ **Doctors:** Doctors get tremendous rewards when they know and use selling skills. Not only is your doctor then better prepared to convince you to follow his professional advice, he's also building his reputation as an efficient and friendly practitioner and very possibly helping you heal better by framing your complaint in a more palatable and less frightening way.
- ✔ **Solicitors and barristers:** Solicitors need selling skills in every aspect of their profession. When you need to choose legal help they encourage you to choose them over a

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rival. Barristers have to employ effective selling skills to persuade judges and juries that their clients are in the right.

- ✔ **Politicians:** Everything about the role of a politician is a selling role! How do you as a voting member of the public form opinions and expectations about political candidates? How do politicians get elected? They persuade the most people that, if they're elected, they can and will do the job the voters want done. Indeed they then sell other members of Parliament the idea that their amendment or bill should be progressed through the system.
- ✔ **Parents:** Whether by words or by example, parents constantly sell their children values and beliefs. They convince or persuade their kids regarding what to wear or eat, how to act, who to have as friends, how to be a friend, and thousands of other things children need to learn in order to grow into happy, well-adjusted adults.
- ✔ **Children:** Few children can go into a shop and resist the things shopkeepers purposefully place on the lower shelves to tempt the young. (Considerate of those shopkeepers, isn't it?) Get ready, though. You're about to observe master sellers at work. Simply notice what children say and how they act when they try to persuade their parents to get them what they want. They practise selling at its best!

✔ **Spouses-to-be:** If you're planning to get married one day, you'll probably rehearse and deliver one of the most important sales presentations of your life in persuading your significant other of the value of spending the rest of his or her life with you. If you're already married, then you'll be using these skills almost daily, possibly persuading your partner to partake in activities that you wish to do and of course possibly persuading them with your actions and words to stay with you.

✔ **Friends:** If your friends like a film, they'll probably want to tell you about it – and sell you the idea of going to see it yourself. Your friends may also recommend a place to eat or persuade you to go to concerts or sporting events with them. All of these are examples of selling skills in action. As you share experiences, you build a relationship and become closer and this selling is similar to the process of developing relationships in a business selling environment.

You're not immune from selling situations in your daily life, even if you don't come into contact with professional salespeople, and you may not even be aware that selling has occurred. Whether you're watching the process or actively being involved, the truth is that the art of selling is inherent in everything you do. All of life is a sales pitch, so the better you become at selling, the better your life turns out.