

PART ONE

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GETTING READY TO  
MAKE RAIN

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# 1

## Introduction

*Ideal conversation must be an exchange of thought, and not, as many of those who worry most about their shortcomings believe, an eloquent exhibition of wit or oratory.*

—Emily Post

It's 4 PM on a Thursday and you're about to meet the CEO of a major company you'd like to win as a client. The conversation starts as you walk into the office, approach the CEO, stretch out your hand, and say, "Nice to meet you, Jill. I'm Steve Webb."

Fast forward to a meeting about four months later—3 PM on a Wednesday this time. You head into the office. Jill gets out from behind her desk and says, "Good to see you again, Steve. Here's the check for \$1.2 million that you need to get the process underway. Let's schedule the kickoff for next Friday."

Suffice it to say, a lot has to happen between "nice to meet you" and "here's a check for \$1.2 million." Yet two things are true:

1. This *is* how it happens.
2. Conversations form the bridge between "hello" and "let's go."

As sales trainers, sales managers, and sellers ourselves, we've had the privilege of observing and analyzing thousands of telephone and face-to-face sales conversations. All too often we see salespeople say "hello," but never get to "let's go," because of mistakes they make in

their conversations. We also regularly see salespeople unable to generate the conversations they need. Limited sales conversations = limited sales opportunities.

We wrote *Rainmaking Conversations: Influence, Persuade, and Sell in Any Situation* for salespeople, business leaders, professionals, and anyone who wants to create and lead masterful sales conversations—conversations that fill the pipeline, win new deals, and create the greatest opportunities for the largest, most secure, and most profitable accounts.

If this is what you want to do, *Rainmaking Conversations* is for you.

## **RAIN, RASP, and 10 Rainmaker Principles**

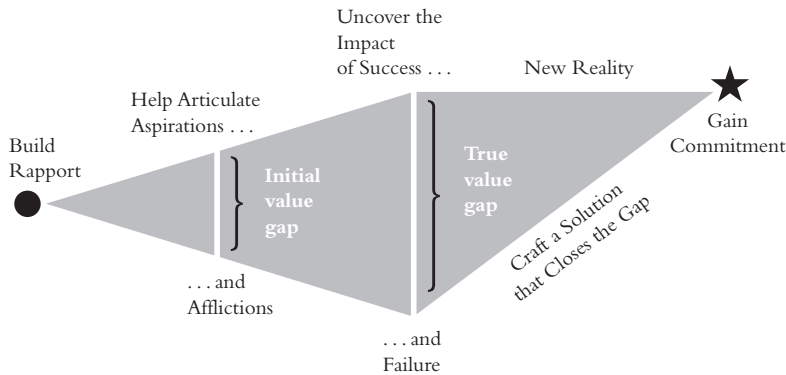
RAIN, RASP, and the 10 Rainmaker Principles form the core of the RAIN Selling method—the training and development program we at RAIN Group employ to help companies create dramatic improvements in sales performance and to help individuals become top-performing rainmakers. We cover a number of topics throughout the book, all to help you have the most and best sales conversations, and all connected to RAIN, RASP, and the 10 Rainmaker Principles.

## **RAIN—Your Guide to Rainmaking Conversations**

RAIN is an acronym for Rapport, Aspirations and Afflictions, Impact, and New Reality. These concepts are the core concepts you need to remember to lead a rainmaking conversation. In addition, the “A” and the “I” perform double duty, standing for *Advocacy* and *Inquiry*, and the “IN” will help you to remember to maximize your *Influence*. The RAIN acronym is also a nod to the fact that this process is focused on *rainmakers*—a common name for people who bring the most new clients and revenue into an organization. RAIN is the central theme of the book and is your guide to leading successful sales conversations.

Graphically, RAIN looks like Figure 1.1.

*R is Rapport*—Chapter 5: The ability to build rapport in sales conversations is an old concept that is more relevant and more important than ever. At the same time, rapport is talked about less and less in the sales training



**Figure 1.1 RAIN Selling**

community, often dismissed as a ploy to make a superficial connection with a potential customer. We agree—you shouldn’t make superficial connections, you should make *genuine* connections. Genuine rapport sets the foundation for the rest of the conversation, and creates the opportunity for trust and a strong relationship.

A genuine connection with a potential client is so important in selling because, all things being equal, buyers tend to buy from—and allow themselves to be influenced by—people they like. Rapport is an often-overlooked factor that can tip the scales in favor of one seller over another throughout the buying process: from who gets in the game at the beginning, to who is allowed to move along in the process, and even to who eventually wins.

I have always really liked this adage: “Nobody really cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” We try to drill people as much as possible to the idea of listening, absorbing, and really understanding so you, as a salesperson, can make the deepest connection and learn how you can help them the most.

—Mike Treske, President, John Hancock Annuities Distribution, John Hancock Wood Logan

*A is Aspirations and Afflictions*—Chapter 6: The “A” in RAIN Selling stands for Aspirations and Afflictions. Many sales methodologies suggest

that to sell products and services as solutions to needs, you must first uncover the problems or pain of the potential client. Focusing only on problems and pain (afflictions) can do sellers a disservice because problems and pain are only half of the story.

When customers buy, they are typically thinking as much about Aspirations (the future they are seeking) as they are about Afflictions (problems they'd like to fix). If you think about asking questions only in the negative, you will tend to probe for needs that way. You'll tend to ask questions such as, "Where are you unhappy with performance?," "What keeps you up at night?,"<sup>1</sup> and "What are your problems?" Think of Aspirations as much as Afflictions, and you will remember to ask future-seeking as well as problem-solving questions—questions with themes like "Where do you want to go?" and "What are the possibilities?" If you ask questions that look to the future, you will find that—instead of just bringing some Advil for the pain—you will be able to paint the most compelling, impactful, and comprehensive vision of a new and better reality for your clients.

### **Free RAIN Selling Resources Online**

There's only so much space in any book, but there's so much to share with you to help you master the art of rainmaking conversations.

Thus, we've made numerous tools, resources, and additional learning content available to you on [www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools](http://www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools).

Also, on the book-tools page, we've made lessons of our popular RAIN Selling training online free to you as a buyer of this book. We hope you find these additional resources helpful to your quest to succeed with your sales conversations and overall.

**Free RAIN Selling resources: [www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools](http://www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools)**

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<sup>1</sup>You'll find advice to ask the question "What keeps you up at night?" here and there scattered about sales books and sales advice materials. The concept is good to keep in mind, but don't ask the question verbatim like this. It's a cliché, and it usually comes across as contrived.

*I is Impact*—Chapter 7: After you uncover a prospect's aspirations and afflictions, the question then becomes, "So what?" If your afflictions don't get solved, then so what? What won't happen? Will they get worse? How will they affect the bottom line of your company, division, or department? How will they affect your life?

If your aspirations don't become reality, so what? In a business-to-business scenario, the questions that follow might sound like, "Will your competition get ahead of you if you don't innovate?," "Will you lose market share if you aren't aggressive in your strategy?," "Will you never be able to grow your business to a point where you can sell it and reach your personal financial goals?," and "Will the promotion you so desire continue to elude you?"

The exact "so what" questions will vary depending on the situation, but your ability to quantify and paint the "so what" picture is the foundation for how important it is for the decision maker to buy from you. This is of paramount importance to you, because although your competition is often another provider, about 23.6 percent of sales that are forecasted by companies to close end in no decision at all.<sup>2</sup> Lack of impact leads to lack of urgency to make a decision. This leads to delays. Time kills sales.<sup>3</sup>

Creating urgency for buying hinges on how well you help your client answer the "so what" questions, and how well you demonstrate the impact of buying from you.

*N is New Reality*—Chapter 8: One of the greatest difficulties in sales is helping prospects to understand exactly what they get when they work with you. Clients need an argument to justify the benefit to themselves and to other people involved in the buying decision. At the end of a well-managed sales process, your job is to create a vision of a New Reality that will be the best for your client, given their specific Aspirations and Afflictions and the Impact of doing (or not doing) something about them.

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<sup>2</sup>J. Dickie and B. Trailer, "2010 Sales Performance Optimization: Sell Cycle Review Analysis," p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Time kills sales because of the Law of Diminishing Intent. This states that the longer a person waits to make a decision, the less enthusiasm they will have for the idea, and the less likely the decision will be a yes.

It's not selling someone something they don't want. It's about talking about their needs and positioning what you have to fulfill their needs.

—Nicole Giantonio, Vice President, Sales, Buck Consultants, a Xerox Company

*A and I is Advocacy and Inquiry*—Chapter 9: In RAIN, the “A” stands for Aspirations and Afflictions, and the “I” stands for Impact. The “A” and the “I” also help us to remember to balance Advocacy and Inquiry.

Many inexperienced salespeople believe their job is show and tell. And tell. And tell. Incessant pitching and presenting feels to buyers like they're being pushed. This can bore buyers, make them less likely to feel affection toward you, shut them down, and put them on the defensive. If you're doing all the talking, they'll feel like you are self-centered, don't care about them, and don't understand their situations and needs (even if you do). Worst of all, savvy buyers will peg you as an amateur and dismiss you.

Salespeople are often told, at some point in their careers, “The salespeople who succeed the most always ask great questions.” This is true to a point; asking incisive questions is critical to sales success, but some salespeople take the advice too literally. They always ask questions, don't share a point of view or an opinion, don't tell stories, and don't help set the agenda for success. Buyers get bored with this quickly as well, and feel like they're getting the third degree. Although questions can be quite valuable, buyers can feel they are missing out on the full value they should get from you if you just ask question after question. The key is to balance advocacy and inquiry and to learn when to use one or the other.

*IN is Influence*: In Chapter 11 we discuss the 16 Principles of Influence, which you can apply throughout your sales conversations. Master these principles and you'll become more effective in each stage of your rainmaking conversations.

Robust as it is, the power of the RAIN model is that while, like anything, the more you practice the better you'll become, you can apply it right away and have it make a difference. Just remember what RAIN stands for, and you'll be well on your way. Although elegant models have deep intrinsic value, they are also easy to understand and apply.

In *Rainmaking Conversations*, we outline concepts and give examples of each component of RAIN. Once you are comfortable with what happens



at each stage, you will be ready to lead masterful rainmaking conversations. Although these conversations come in many shapes and sizes, there are essentially six types of rainmaking conversations you'll need to be able to lead:

1. *Conversations with anybody* . . . where you begin new relationships, enhance current ones, and answer questions like, "What do you do?" Do this well at business events like conferences, seminars, and at personal events like the kids' soccer matches and family reunions, and you'll be able to turn these conversations into opportunities. Also, you'll help people know in what situations and to whom they should refer you. Succeeding here is the core subject of Chapter 4. Understanding and communicating your value proposition is essential for these initial introduction conversations, and it will serve you well in all types of rainmaking conversations.
2. *Prospecting conversations* . . . where you create a conversation that will eventually lead to a sale. Prospecting by telephone is the subject of Chapter 13.
3. *Core sales conversations* . . . where you lead each sales call, from the first sale to the close, with skill and confidence. You learn how to lead rainmaking conversations with RAIN Selling through the book, and you also get tips and examples of how to shepherd a great sales meeting in Chapter 16.
4. *Presentations and product demonstrations* . . . where you deliver key messages and content, share specifics about product and service capabilities, and deliver custom-crafted solutions to solve the needs of particular prospects. Entire books are dedicated to the art of presenting compelling presentations and delivering excellent product demonstrations. The concepts and frameworks you learn in the book will help tremendously with presentations and demos, and we provide tips and examples along the way.
5. *Winning the deal* . . . where you close the sale stage of the process, and open the customer stage. Closing is a much misunderstood and maligned concept in selling. In fact, some of the most recent consultative sales theories and popular books about closing have done sellers a great disservice, one that we aim to correct. We cover what you really need to know about closing in Chapter 15. And,

before you get to the top of the mountain, the last few steps often include difficult obstacles. Overcoming objections is the subject of Chapter 14.

6. *Account management and expansion* . . . where you work to service, resell, cross-sell, and up-sell your current clients. Although, as you can imagine, the dynamics of leading a conversation with a current customer is a little different and usually much easier than a sales call with a new prospect, the principles of RAIN will help you excel in account management and expansion.

**Rainmaker:** Top performing salesperson. Rainmakers often outperform average sales reps by 300 percent to 500 percent.<sup>4</sup>

## RASP—Four Keys to Rainmaking Success

Companies and individuals that achieve significantly higher sales results than the rest focus (whether they realize it or not) on four areas: Role Readiness, Action, Skills and Knowledge, and Process (RASP). This is what the best do. Unfortunately for those who seek to become top performers, too many well-known sales methods focus heavily on sales process and skills, but rarely on readiness, action, or knowledge.

This is both sad and unfortunate (well, sad and unfortunate to everyone else, not you, because you're about to learn a better way), and it's also backward. Here's why:

**Role Readiness:** The degree to which a person is *fundamentally* prepared to succeed in sales.

**Action:** The execution of activities that will lead to sales.

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<sup>4</sup>According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2009, the top 10 percent of wage earners in sales made 295 percent more than the median, [www.bls.gov/oes/2009/may/oes410000.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/2009/may/oes410000.htm). Having analyzed the numbers ourselves from many organizations across industries, we've seen this to be largely accurate (depending on obvious factors like compensation structure), with the top sales reps earning much more.

**Skills and Knowledge:** Skills—the various abilities needed to sell, and the degree to which a person can perform them well. Knowledge—the grasp of information needed for selling, and the ability to discuss relevant information and topics fluently.

**Process:** A system or framework in which to perform actions to achieve the best possible sales results.

### *Role Readiness*

We once had the “pleasure” of working regularly with a middle manager who had a bad attitude. How bad? Let’s call him Darth. He was defensive, purposefully vague, withheld information, tore people down to build himself up, spent more time sneering at colleagues than collaborating with them, and wielded a red light saber. Every once in a while, however, the Emperor, Darth’s boss, whom Darth respected deeply, would coach him to drop the bad attitude and actually help his colleagues.

For two weeks at a time, he would! He’d make his intentions clear, smile, build rapport in meetings, throw no one under the TIE fighter, and fulfill the commitments he made to others.

After two weeks . . . good-bye Anakin and welcome back Darth.

The moral of the story: Just because someone has the skills and knowledge to be able to do something doesn’t mean that that person will do it. Attitude and intent trump skills every day. This happens in sales perhaps more than any other area we’ve ever encountered.

Watch your thoughts, for they become words.  
Watch your words, for they become actions.  
Watch your actions, for they become habits.  
Watch your habits, for they become character.  
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

—Anonymous

Many sales-training programs focus on sales process and sales skills, but they rarely focus on assessing and enhancing the drivers of sales

success, or minimizing defractors that prevent success. These crucial elements and hidden weaknesses tremendously affect salespeople's abilities to have success in their conversations. If you want to succeed, you have to be ready.

- Chapter 2 helps you understand and adopt the mind-set that propels rainmakers to success.
- Chapter 11 helps you understand the principles of influence so you can apply them in your rainmaking conversations.
- Chapter 16 helps you succeed by sharing with you the knowledge that rainmakers employ in their sales conversations; the more of this knowledge you have, the more confident you'll be when speaking with customers and prospects.
- Chapter 17 helps you be ready and prepared to succeed in every call.
- Chapter 18 helps you see how common mistakes and hidden weaknesses derail sales conversations, and helps you avoid making them yourself.

### ***Action***

We've seen more people *intend* to become top performers in sales than those that actually do it.

Assume for a minute that someone is ready to succeed in sales, has the skills and knowledge, and has a great selling process . . . and then she goes on vacation for six months. Not much selling happens.

Action in sales is a simple concept: You succeed if you do the right amount of the right things effectively.

- *The right amount.* Most salespeople can get more done every day by setting overall goals, setting activity targets, and pushing themselves to find ways to get more done. Rigorous action planning and strong processes help immensely here.
- *The right things.* Always ask yourself, "Am I doing the things right now that will help me achieve my goals fastest?" If you're not, then you're probably not doing the right things. At a recent RAIN Group webinar, we polled the attendees, asking, "Do the people in your

company in selling roles know what they should be doing to achieve what they could achieve in sales?” Ninety-seven percent of the respondents said no.

Imagine what would happen if you had 100 sellers at your company and 97 percent of their colleagues said yes to the same question. Chapter 3 provides a framework and guidelines for you to set goals, put action plans in place, and execute the right amount of the right actions.

- *Effectively.* It’s common to find that prospecting—filling the front end of the pipeline—is the most important action for a salesperson. Let’s say you’re making a huge amount (right amount) of calls to the right people (right things), and getting nowhere. If you don’t have the skills and knowledge to get the outputs you need from the actions you take, then your actions are worthless.

Creating a rainmaking conversation takes action. Leading a rainmaking conversation takes action. Converting a conversation into a sale . . . you get the idea. We wrote *Rainmaking Conversations* with action always in mind. Each chapter will offer you ideas for what you can do to succeed. In particular, Chapter 3 and the accompanying resources available to you on [www.raingroup.com/booktools](http://www.raingroup.com/booktools) will help you set the right goals to build the right road map for taking action.

### On Titles, Roles, and Gender

Throughout this book we use the term *salespeople* to refer to people who are expected to bring in new business or increase business from existing accounts. Salesperson, business developer, consultant, accountant, engineer, lawyer, technologist, solution provider, practice leader, vice president, entrepreneur . . . whatever your title or function, if you want to learn how to create and lead masterful sales conversations, this book is for you. And, in it, we refer to you as *salesperson*. We know that’s probably not your title.

We use the terms *client* and *customer* interchangeably because the concepts in the book apply universally. *Client* is often a term used in large account sales and in service organizations. The term *customer* is  
(continued)

used as well in these situations and is universally understood. Some organizations prefer to use one term or the other. There's no change in meaning or connotation when we use one or the other.

Last, as readers, none of us is a fan of the construct “he or she” and its various permutations. Thus, we don't use it, but we don't want to come off as chauvinists either. Sometimes buyers and sellers are “she” and sometimes “he.” We didn't even count which one we used more often.

### ***Skills and Knowledge***

You can't take action effectively if you don't have the skills and knowledge to do so. Throughout the course of this book we help you develop the skills, and understand the knowledge you need, so you can lead masterful rain-making conversations and succeed in sales overall.

### ***Process***

A process is a systematic approach to something. Systematic approaches have a number of benefits. They:

- Help you know where to start, where you are, and where you're heading next.
- Allow you to ask (and answer) questions like, “Am I doing the right things to get to the next step? Am I doing something that helps me get to the next step at all?” and, “How can I get to the next step more quickly and easily?”
- Provide a framework for a large number of people to undertake similar actions toward similar goals.
- Allow for measurement and continuous improvement.

This book focuses on the sales conversations, so we concern ourselves mostly with the processes of creating and leading them. For this, the RAIN model is our guide.

But, like baseball, it wouldn't make sense for us to throw you on the field without any preparation and expect you to play like a pro when you get there. There are things you need to attend to *before* you get there so you can knock it out of the park when you do.

*Rainmaking Conversations* follows a process, beginning with helping you take stock of your Readiness to succeed in a sales role, planning your Actions, helping you build Skills and Knowledge, and (of course, with RAIN) providing a Process for your rainmaking conversations.

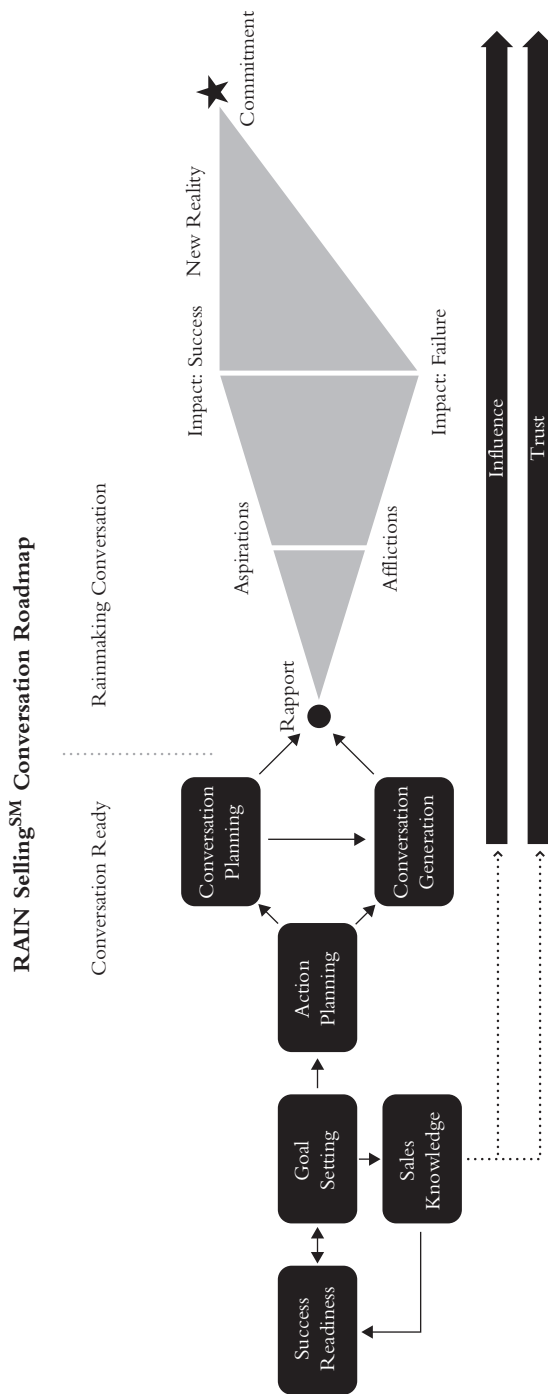
The *Rainmaking Conversations* road map is outlined in Figure 1.2. As we cover the various topics in the book we'll let you know where we are on the road map.

## 10 Rainmaker Principles

We developed the RAIN Selling method to provide a framework, road map, and learning process for those who want to become rainmakers. Follow the *Rainmaking Conversations* road map and it will help you to sell effectively. But if you really want to achieve and join the ranks of the rainmaker elite, you should take the 10 Rainmaker Principles to heart.

After years of primary research in selling, in analyzing the body of research available in the field of sales, in observing the best sales professionals in action, in studying what the best companies do to create cultures of rainmaking success, and in working with salespeople to dramatically increase their production, we've found that the top rainmakers share 10 common principles.

1. *Play to win-win.* Rainmakers respect, and always try to satisfy, the best interests of prospects and clients as well as their own (the win-win part). They are also extremely dedicated to becoming top performers (the play-to-win part), exhibiting the hustle, passion, and intensity it takes to achieve what only the elite achieve.
2. *Live by goals.* Rainmakers are goal-setting and goal-following fanatics. Goals are a part of their daily rituals.
3. *Take action.* Rainmakers realize that goals without actions don't get you very far. While other people intend to take action and do more, rainmakers do it.



**Figure 1.2 Rainmaking Conversations Road Map**



4. *Think buying first, selling second.* Rainmakers map their selling processes to the processes and psychology of buying.
5. *Be a fluent expert.* Rainmakers are masters of market knowledge, customer needs, their products and services, their value, their competition, and everything else they need to know to succeed at selling. Rainmakers might not be technical experts in every area, but they know what they need to know to sell.
6. *Create new conversations every day.* Rainmakers always feed the front of their pipelines and improve their pipeline quality. They never coast, and rarely a day goes by when they don't speak to customers, prospects, and referral sources with the intent to source new business.
7. *Lead masterful rainmaking conversations.* Rainmakers lead masterful sales conversations, from prospecting to needs discovery to closing to account management.
8. *Set the agenda; be a change agent.* Rainmakers recommend, advise, and assist. They are change agents who are not afraid to push when it's in the best interest of the customer.
9. *Be brave.* It takes courage to rise to the occasion in sales. Rainmakers not only conquer their fears, they seek actively to win the most fruitful sales opportunities no matter how difficult the challenges may be.
10. *Assess yourself, get feedback, and improve continuously.* Rainmakers are never afraid to learn the cold, hard truth about themselves. They take what they discover—the good and the bad—to learn, grow, and change for the better. They never stop this cycle.

These 10 Rainmaker Principles form the core of the rainmaker's *modus operandi*. As you can see, they dovetail well with RASP and RAIN.

We point out regularly where specific content in *Rainmaking Conversations* relates to the 10 Rainmaker Principles. We also suggest that you take the 10 Rainmaker Principles<sup>5</sup> and post them on the wall in your workspace in an area where you can see them and read them once each day. Read them every day and they'll affect how you think. How you think will affect how you act. And how you act . . . well, that's the key to reaching your rainmaking destiny. Here's to the beginning of your long and fruitful journey down that path.

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<sup>5</sup>Visit [www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools](http://www.rainsalestraining.com/booktools) to download a printable copy of the 10 Rainmaker Principles or to get a laminated copy of them sent to you.

They say the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Indeed, the path to mastering rainmaking conversations begins with the first one, and it's the most important rainmaking conversation you'll ever have.

Let's start that conversation and see where it goes.