

Chapter 1

Selling Makes the World Go Around

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining selling
 - ▶ Understanding common methods salespeople use to get their messages across
 - ▶ Improving your life and your career by improving your selling skills
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Selling is happening every time two human beings communicate. It's everywhere around you. In fact, selling affects nearly every waking moment of your day. So in this chapter, I help you understand 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.

Understanding What Selling Is



In the strictest sense of the word, *selling* is a process of communication in which one party imparts knowledge and information to the other party in order to win the first party over to the other's ideas, concepts, products, or services. In the traditional sense of the word, *selling* is the process of moving goods and services from the hands of those who produce them into the hands of those who can benefit from their use.

Selling involves both educational and persuasive skills on the part of the person doing the selling. It's supported by print, audio, video, and online messages that sell either the particular item or the brand name as being something the buyer would want to have.

In the 1800s Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Everyone lives by selling something." Without selling, products that have been manufactured would sit

in warehouses for eternity, people working for those manufacturers would become unemployed, transportation and freight services wouldn't be needed, and all of us would be living isolated lives, enjoying only the fruits of our own labors.

Look around you right now. You can probably spot hundreds, if not thousands, of items that were sold 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 — like your parents or your peers — sell you a set of values as you were growing up? Did your teachers persuade you to believe, through demonstration, that $2 + 2 = 4$? Or did you figure that one out on your own? Odds are that whether you're living in a material world or you've forsaken all earthly possessions, you've been involved in selling one way or another.



The preceding paragraph should have persuaded you to at least look at selling a bit differently than you have in the past. It was done, too, without pushing facts and figures on you. Good selling isn't pushing; it's gently pulling with questions and getting people to think a bit differently than they have before.

The selling triangle

When I give seminars about mastering the fundamentals of selling, I use a triangle with equal sides, like the one here, to illustrate the three main elements of selling:

- ✓ On one side is product knowledge, which I cover in Chapter 5.
- ✓ On the other side are selling tactics and strategies — the people skills — that I cover in Part III.
- ✓ And on the base of the triangle are the words *attitude*, *enthusiasm*, and *goals*, which I cover in Part V.



The three sides of the selling triangle are equally important. If product knowledge was all that mattered, then technical designers, manufacturers, or assemblers of products would be the best salespeople. Of course, these folks often know the products quite literally from the inside out. But until they are trained in selling skills and understand how much of a role attitude plays in sales, their sales approach is often 99 percent description of product and 1 percent relation of the product to the needs of the individual clients — and that rarely results in a sale.

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 the best words for creating positive 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 *will do for your buyers*, how can you paint the right pictures in someone else's mind?

And if you're excited about selling, but you have little knowledge or experience with selling tactics and strategies, your enthusiasm will open the doors a crack. But you'll get your fingers slammed when you start pushing product (because *pushing product* isn't how you sell anything).

Remember: A professional who hasn't developed all three sides of the triangle is failing to reach his full potential and letting down his clients, who expect to work with a competent person. Do your best to develop all three areas of your selling life in order to reap the highest rewards.

Getting a Grip on How Selling Is Done

Although the definition of selling is fairly straightforward, the approaches to selling are virtually endless. In this section, I cover the primary ways that products and services are sold (in order from most direct contact to least amount of contact), and I give you some important tips for using each method.

Face-to-face

On an average day, many sales are concluded in a face-to-face fashion. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are purchased in person at favorite restaurants. People physically register in hotels or check in at airport counters. Retail stores abound with sales opportunities, and millions of salespeople sit across desks, conference tables, or kitchen tables turning prospects into clients. The only retail establishment I can think of where you can make a purchase without speaking with someone is the self-checkout line at the grocery store.



The fun part about person-to-person selling is that you can read prospects' body language and speak with yours. You can hand them information. Have them handle your product or experience the service firsthand. Involve all their senses. Have them taste, touch, smell, hear, and see just how cool your widget is. (I cover methods for doing this in Chapter 10.)

Phone

With a telephone, salespeople have the potential to reach nearly any other person on the planet. And what you say when your prospective client answers the phone, if he answers at all, is critical. In some industries, you actually try to sell the product on the first call (referred to as a *one-time close*). In other industries, you're selling interest — enough interest that the person to whom you speak gets out of his home and down to your store or lets you visit him in his home or place of business. 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 — good or bad. And you only have a few seconds to make that connection before he reacts with a brush off or hang up.



Although telemarketing is a thriving method for reaching potential clients, many telemarketers who sell to consumers are finding it more and more challenging to reach a live person when they place their calls. If you plan to use this method of approach, be prepared to leave curiosity-building voice messages in order to make connections with potential clients. More and more people are screening their calls with caller ID features and voice mail than ever before. So unless you have your number listed in the phone book as “Sweepstakes Winner Announcement,” plan on reaching a lot of answering devices. (I cover telephone strategies in more detail in Chapter 7.)

If you hear a live person say “Hello” on the other end of the line, you almost have cause for rejoicing — and you have to be prepared for that happening. Be clear about what you're selling, whether it's a product, a meeting, or simply getting permission to send the person information.

Despite the difficulty telemarketers often have in getting through to people who are willing to listen to them, selling by phone is widely accepted and recognized as a true sales profession. It requires tact, training, and the ability to articulate a compelling message in a very brief amount of time, as well as the skill of helping others recognize you as a warm, caring individual who has their needs at heart. Companies across many industries realize that gifted

phone sales professionals can help bring a product or service to market in a much more efficient and cost-effective manner than face-to-face selling and reward good ones accordingly.

Email

Many companies rely primarily on email solicitations. In fact, an entire industry revolves around writing copy specific to email marketing and strategies to get your messages through the many spam filters employed by individuals and companies alike.



Even though email allows to you get your message to the person who owns the email address, it doesn't mean you're actually reaching him. Many people set up multiple email addresses. People may use one email account for personal communication, another for providing contact information on websites, and one for commercial use. Thousands of email addresses lie abandoned in cyberspace — with completely full inboxes.

Although the cost of sending email messages is minimal compared to the cost of printing a mail piece and adding the postage to it, getting through to the person you're trying to reach is getting tougher — unless you sell business-to-business (B2B) and have a business email address. Most businesses are in the habit of forwarding emails of employees who have left the company to the person who becomes responsible for their work. So, there's an advantage of email in that if a buyer or purchasing agent moves on, you don't have to look too far to connect with his replacement.

So far, business email appears to be deemed hands-off. Secretaries and receptionists may receive copies of emails, but they aren't likely to delete email messages from their bosses' computers. Home email, on the other hand, may not be thought of as quite so sacred. In fact, some couples share an email address. In that case, your message may be seen and deleted by one party when it was intended for the other, but it still has a decent chance of being seen by the person you want to reach.



To make sure that your intended recipient receives the message you're sending, I suggest putting the recipient's name in the subject line (for example, "Here's the information you asked for, Mike").

If you use email to connect with prospective clients, you can include your message in the body of the email itself, or you can send it in an attachment that looks like one of your ads or printed pieces or that contains a link to

your website. Be aware that many companies set spam filters to not allow emails through that have attachments of a certain size. Some go so far as to not allow emails with any type of attachment. Some companies even ban emails that include hyperlinks to web pages. The rules keep changing and you must be ready and willing to adapt to them.



Email, when used properly, is an extraordinary vehicle for getting your message out. However, you need to be aware of the laws governing the use of email. Sending follow-up emails or proposals and presentation materials is fine, but if you're planning to use email 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, or what is commonly referred to as an *opt-in email list*. I discuss email lists in more depth in Chapter 7.

Social media

At the time of this writing there are no fewer than 6 types of social media and well over 50 social media platforms available for your use. It's not feasible to expect you or anyone else to be expert in all of them. What I recommend is to determine which two or maybe three platforms would be of best use to you. By that I mean, find out where the people in your client demographic participate in social media and use those platforms. Many of my students find LinkedIn to be extremely beneficial as a prospecting tool. They can find out a lot about prospective clients before ever contacting them — turning cold calls into slightly warmer calls by searching out common ground in advance of making contact.

Other students make great connections on Twitter by following and reading the Tweets posted by potential business partners or clients. Then, they can reach out to those people with a bit of knowledge of what their hot buttons are.

Some small business clients find great success by promoting their products via Instagram, Pinterest, or Facebook, all of which offer the opportunity to use visual images to sell concepts or products.

I can't tell you which social media platform is best for your particular field of sales. Speak with other successful sales pros in your company or your industry to learn how they're benefiting from social media. Then, do yourself a favor and attend a webinar, read a book, or take a class on the platform you select. Knowing the basics saves you a lot of frustration, time, and effort.

The technological revolution — and your role in it

If you plan to have a successful career in sales, you need to become somewhat computer savvy. Even if you're still selling something as simple as buggy whips, you need to track your client contacts in the most efficient manner possible to maximize 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 so you can converse with clients who are in tune with it. Nothing ruins

your credibility faster than pulling out your 3-x-5-inch index cards to jot down a client's contact information when he's using the latest tablet or smartphone.

Take advantage of contact management software (CMS), contact relationship management software (CRM), or sales force automation (SFA), all of which allow you to maintain customer lists, prospect information, schedules, contact information, follow-up notes, and a variety of other sales-related tasks. Talk with others in your particular field to determine which software has the features you'll benefit from the most, or see whether your company has made arrangements to use a specific program.

Online

Imagine that you're a customer, and you really, really want a new widget in a razzle-dazzle raspberry color. If you want to see it right away to be sure the color matches or complements your other widgets, what's the best solution? You can place a call to a widget manufacturer and wait for a salesperson to contact you and then send you a brochure or catalog. Or you can visit the manufacturer's website and, within a few minutes, see the actual widget in all its razzle-dazzleness. As a busy customer, what's the best use of your time? To go online and visit the website, of course. This way, you haven't wasted your time or the time of the salesperson if it turns out that the color wasn't what you had in mind.

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 will.



Efficiency is the name of the game when it comes to technology. And you have to take advantage of every method possible to increase your efficiency while remaining easily accessible to your client base. The key is not to invest so much time in mastering the technology that you have no time remaining to do what you're paid for — and that is to sell products and services.

The Internet is like the library. You can find just about any piece of information you want there — and so can your potential clients. Not too many people invest a lot of time trotting down to their local library to look up information. They do, however, click on over to the Internet and search for information on your product or service and that of your competition. The key is to provide enough information and build enough curiosity about your product that buyers *want* to speak with you, the salesperson, in order to confirm you have what they need at a price they're willing to pay.



The people you approach to do business will likely have a great deal of knowledge about your product or service, so you better know those products and services better than they do (see Chapter 5 for more on this important topic). Look at the same resource information that your customers see. In fact, add to your repertoire a question about where they did their research on your product. Find out where your customers are going for information. If you have any impact on what's put there, make sure it's positive. If the information is incorrect, be prepared with facts, figures, and testimonials to correct it in the minds of your buyers.

Direct mail

Every piece of mail you receive, whether it's a letter of solicitation, a coupon, or a catalog, is devised for a single purpose — to build your curiosity and get you to take some type of action so that someone can sell you something. Companies play the odds that enough people will stop long enough to look at and consider their products before the direct mail hits the trash.

Believe it or not, a one-percent response rate for direct mail is considered average. That means only 1 out of 100 mail pieces generate an actual order. Ninety-nine of those mail pieces are tossed into the trash without ever generating a penny for the company that sent them. Plus, each of those mail pieces may cost a good bit to produce and distribute, especially if they contain a lot of full-color photos. So if that's the case, why is direct mail still so prevalent? The reason is simple: When you order from a company, you'll probably order something else from that company in the future. You become a customer, and good companies work very hard to keep you coming back for more. Over the long haul, a company recoups the dollars lost on tossed mail pieces with orders from the one percent who place repeat orders.

Recognizing What Selling Skills Can Do for You

Selling skills can do for you what a way with words did for William Shakespeare. They can do for you what powerful communication skills did for Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Selling skills can make or break you in whatever endeavor you choose. They can mean the difference between getting the promotion or job, landing the girl or guy of your dreams, or having to settle for less in life than you deserve.

If you're good at selling, you probably earn a satisfactory 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.

Having a strong set of selling skills is like having an inside track on what the next batch of winning lottery numbers will be. All you have to do is invest a bit of your time and effort to understand and apply this book's tried-and-true, proven-effective skills to your everyday life. Before you know it, they'll be such a natural part of you that no one, including yourself, will even recognize them as selling skills. People around you will just see you as a really nice, competent person instead of the stereotypical, cigar-chomping, back-slapping, plaid-coated, hand-mashing, used-car salesman that most people associate with selling. And, believe me, you'll then be in the class of people who make the world go 'round.

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 recognize it as an act of selling, but, all the same, selling it is. Here's just a short list of the people who sell things and whose "products" you buy:

✔ **Actors and actresses:** If you've ever watched a television show, movie, or play

and been caught up in the story, you've been a part of a selling situation. The actor has given a believable performance — he's sold you on his portrayal of a character.

✔ **Food servers:** The wise server gives you choices of drinks, appetizers, 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 receive a bigger tip.

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- ✔ **Doctors:** Doctors get tremendous rewards when they know — and use — selling skills. Not only is your doctor better prepared to convince you to follow his professional advice, but he's also building his practice because you're so happy with his advice that you tell your friends and family how great your doctor is, thus sending him referral business.
 - ✔ **Lawyers:** Lawyers need selling skills in every aspect of their profession. Lawyers have to sell not only to get business but also to persuade judges and juries that their clients are in the right.
 - ✔ **Politicians:** How does the public develop its 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.
 - ✔ **Parents:** Whether by words or example, parents constantly sell their children values and beliefs. They convince or persuade their kids on 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 to grow into happy, well-adjusted adults.
 - ✔ **Kids:** Few children can go into a store and resist the things shopkeepers purposefully place on the lower shelves to tempt the young. (Considerate of those shopkeepers, isn't it?) Get ready: You're about to observe master sellers at work. Notice what kids say and how they act when they try to persuade Mom or Dad to get them what they want. It's selling at its best.
 - ✔ **Spouses-to-be:** If you get married someday, you'll put forth 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. And if you're already married, the trick is to keep persuading your significant other that he made the right choice.
 - ✔ **Friends:** If your friends enjoy a movie, they'll probably want to tell you about it — and sell you on going to see it yourself. Your friends may recommend a place to eat or persuade you to go to concerts or sporting events with them. All of these are examples of selling — but they're also examples of ways your friends build relationships with you. The more memories you share, the closer you'll continue to be — and so it is with the art of selling.
- 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. We had a saying in our household when my children were young: "You've got to sell to survive." If this list hasn't convinced you of that, nothing will. (And if it has, then I've sold you on my ideas.)