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The Single Greatest Killer of Sales

Want to grow sales? Here is an executive summary of this book in two sentences and two steps:

The first step is to know how good you are so that you gain confidence, positivity, and boldness.

The second step is to communicate with customers and prospects more, because the more we communicate, the more we sell. (The less we communicate, the less we sell. It never works the other way. We can never communicate less, and sell more.)

That's the book in a nutshell. If you keep reading, you'll learn in deep detail how to dramatically increase your positivity, confidence, and joy by listening to your happy customers—and then, simply, offering to help them more.

That's how easy it is to grow sales.

We begin with three stories that lay out the single greatest killer of sales growth.

The Coffee Shop

I was at the airport in Minneapolis, ordering an iced coffee, and the young woman behind the counter asked me if I would like a bottle of water with that.

This stopped me in my tracks because I teach all of my clients this technique—I call it the did you know question—and although it’s an incredibly simple question that requires only a few seconds, almost nobody ever asks a question like this. Anywhere, ever.

I asked her, “Do they teach you to ask this question?”

“Yes, they do,” she said. “It’s a part of our training.”

“How many people buy a bottle of water?”

You know what she said?

“Almost everybody.”

Guess how much the water cost? Five dollars!

The coffee?

It cost \$3.

It’s amazing.

With this simple question, this coffee shop nearly *triples* its sales, from \$3 to \$8.

With water!

Was I mad at her for trying to sell me a \$5 bottle of water?

Of course not. She was trying to help me. And like everybody else she asks, I know that a \$5 bottle of water is absurd.

So how was she being helpful?

I was getting on an airplane. I needed water, anyway.

If I didn’t buy it from her, in a single transaction, I would have to take my coffee, and my rolling luggage down the terminal to a gift shop and procure my bottle of water. I’d have to set down my luggage, and my coffee, take a water out of the cooler, risk *dropping* my coffee on the floor because I’m now holding both the water and the coffee in one hand, as I try to get to the other, new, checkout line. Once I would get to the front of the line, I would have to set everything down again—luggage, coffee, and water—and pay. Again. And how much money have I saved? A dollar or two? Maybe? I could use that time to relax, or make a proactive phone call to a customer to check in (*much* more on this to come throughout the book).

The young checkout person at the coffee shop offered me water, which (1) saved me time, and (2) allowed me to complete my beverage

acquisitions in one transaction. I valued that. I appreciated it. So, apparently, did nearly everybody else she asked. Remember, she asks everybody, and *almost everybody* buys the water.

And so, I ask you: *What is your bottle of water?*

What can you sell to your customers, who have been buying the same products and services from you for years, decades maybe, without considering what else they can buy from you? Right now, today, your customers are buying from the competition products or services they could be buying from you. These are products and services they *should* be buying from you. In fact, your customers *would like to* buy these things from you. After all, they've been with you for all these years for a reason. They're very happy doing business with you. And everybody knows one purchase order is better than two or three or four. They *want* to buy more from you and, of course, you would like to sell them additional products.

But none of that is possible, because they don't know.

We don't tell them what else they can buy.

And they're too busy to know. Or ask. They simply assume they can only buy from us that which they have bought for years. And *we* assume that that is all they need! They niche us, and we niche them.

They would buy, if we would ask. But we do not, so they do not.

In this book, in Chapter 27, I will teach you exactly how to ask your customers to buy *your* bottles of water.

The Insulation Contractor

Several years ago, my family moved into a new home.

We had a room over the garage, and it was colder than the rest of the house.

So I called three insulation companies. I'd never bought insulation services before.

They all came out, did some testing, and sent me their quotes.

I received quotes from all three of them.

But only one of the guys followed up with me *after* he sent the quote.

Guess who got the business?

That's right, the guy who followed up.

Guess who was the most expensive?

Right again, the guy who followed up.

So why did he get the business?

By following up with me, was he bothering me?

Was he annoying me?

Was he taking up my time when he called?

No, none of those things.

When he followed up, he was showing me he cared.

The other guys did the opposite.

When they did not follow up, they were showing me they *did not care*.

But their expensive competitor called me, and emailed me.

He even said to me, “Why don’t you send me the other two quotes, and I’ll see if I missed anything.”

I know this wasn’t really fair to the other guys, but they weren’t talking to me. In fact, they were nowhere to be found.

I teach my clients a three-step follow-up process that closes 20 percent of all outstanding quotes and proposals! Each follow-up is a one-line email that takes about five seconds to copy and paste. If you replace one of the emails with a phone call, we find that a whopping 30 percent of all outstanding proposals and quotes close. Can you imagine?

The customer asked you for a quote or proposal, and you sent it. *You’ve done the work!* But when the customer doesn’t reply with a quick “yes,” we very rarely follow up. By the way, customers will rarely call to say “no,” they are not accepting your quote. They feel badly about saying no, and nobody really enjoys rejecting an offer.

When my clients follow up on quotes and proposals, they find that customers love it.

They appreciate it.

And best of all: as I experienced with the contractors, *the competition isn’t doing it.*

Customers value our follow-up, but we do not do it.

Much more on following up on quotes and proposals in Chapter 29.

Asking for a Referral

Have you ever stood with a group of people in a social setting, perhaps with a drink in your hand where somebody asks for a recommendation for a service provider?

Perhaps they ask for a chiropractor who can help their ailing back, without making them sign up for a multi-week plan that forces them to visit three times a week.

Or maybe they ask for a dentist who can clean their teeth without poking them and causing pain.

Or, possibly, they request a lawn service that knows not to cut the grass when it's raining.

What do other people in the group do when such a request is made? How do they react?

They almost *trip over each other*, in their haste to recommend *their* person.

“You need to use my chiropractor. He’s fabulous.”

“No, listen, my chiropractor is different from everybody else. He needs only one visit to fix you up.”

“Wait, let me tell you about my guy. He’s fabulous!”

Right?!

People are literally arguing with one another, making the case for *their* provider.

They want you to use their person.

People love giving referrals, but we do not ask for them.

Your customers are very happy with your work. Again, I know this because they’ve been with you for years, and they keep coming back.

Of course, they’d like to connect their friends and colleagues with a trusted, excellent provider of a product or service.

There are many reasons why people love giving referrals, which we will explore later in this book, but the big picture is that your happy customers would be more than pleased to refer you to people they know.

If only you asked.

But you rarely do.

And, in turn, they rarely do.

Much more on referrals in Chapter 32.

Why Don’t We Ask?

So, if we *know* our customers would like to buy more from us . . .

If we know they’re buying products and services from our competition *right now* that they could buy from us, and we would like to sell to them . . .

If we know we should ask our customers about buying our other products and services . . .

If we know we should follow up on quotes and proposals more . . .

And if we know customers love giving referrals . . .

Why don't we ask the did you know question?

Why don't we follow up?

Why don't we ask for referrals?

Why don't we ask?

Come to think of it, why don't we ask for the business *every* time we talk to a customer? (See Chapter 26.)

And why don't we use the phone more? Most salespeople actually go out of their way to *avoid* the phone. (See Chapter 25.)

We would only benefit from making these communications.

And our customers would benefit a great deal!

So why don't we ask?

The Reason Is the Greatest Single Problem in All of Sales

We don't ask because we are afraid.

We don't ask because of fear.

Fear of what?

- Fear of rejection. What if they say "No"?
- Fear of failure. What if I won't succeed?
- Fear of upsetting the customer. What if they yell at me?
- Fear of losing the customer. What if this customer leaves me forever (because I let them know about another product I can provide)?
- Fear of shame or embarrassment. What would I tell my colleagues? What would I say to my family?

A few chapters from now, we will go through these fears, one at a time.

Then we will *reject* them, one at a time.

But for now, understand that fear has cost you an awful lot of money.

And it has cost your customers some amazing opportunities to do more business with you. They've missed out on benefiting more from the wonderful value you can provide them.

Fear is the single greatest killer of sales growth, for individuals and companies alike.

And this book is about how to overcome it. *Selling Boldly* teaches you how to quickly and easily identify fear; how to develop the critical positive mindset shifts and attitudes, put forth by the incredibly valuable field of positive psychology, that will inoculate you against fear—these attitudes are the enemy of fear; and how to easily train yourself to think in a way that leaves no room for the insidiousness of fear, by immersing yourself in the glowing feedback, emotion, and experiences of your happy customers. Then we discuss the fast, simple, no-cost sales techniques that have been proven, again and again, to quickly and significantly grow sales. And finally, we talk about rolling out this powerful *Selling Boldly* system for yourself, personally, and also what it looks like if done systematically at your organization.

Here's a more detailed overview:

- In the first few chapters, I introduce the major problem in sales: fear. It has cost you so much money and it keeps you from doing what you *know* you should do.
- Then, Part II digs into 10 critical mindset shifts for dramatic sales growth. Are you selling proactively or reactively? Confidently or fearfully? Boldly or meekly? I lay out the differences between opposing sets of approaches, and explain why the positive one will lead you to dramatically more sales success. This part of the book is about how to *think*, because we can't outsell our thinking. If you are fearful and meek, that is how you sell. If you are confident and bold, you sell this way. The latter makes a lot more money, and in this section I will teach you how to get there.
- Part III examines *how* to obtain these positive mindsets. There is one very simple thing you can do to shift how you *think* about what you do so that you can shift to much higher sales. That very simple thing is to systematically talk to your happy (not complaining) customers, and seek to understand what they like best about working with you. If you ask them, they will tell you.
- Next, Part IV lays out more than ten simple sales-growth communications techniques for you customers and prospects. These have been carefully designed and fine-tuned over many years of implementation with my clients, and most of them take just a few seconds to put into practice. Example: *What else are you buying elsewhere that I may be able to help you with?* That's a three-second question, but it has made my clients

hundreds of millions of dollars over the years! Sales growth comes from taking action, so if you'd like to jump straight to what to *do*, read this first. But then go back to read the earlier parts of this book on how to develop the appropriate mindset to execute these communications confidently, boldly, optimistically, and joyfully.

- Finally, Chapter 36 examines how salespeople *and* managers and executives can implement these systems at your firm. If you're an owner, CEO, president, GM, or head of sales, I will teach you how to install this *thinking* and *action* in your organization. For the mechanics on implementing and enjoying the benefits of Selling Boldly at your company, read this.

Throughout the book, you will find planning forms and tools to help you implement the Selling Boldly system. To create strategic, dependable sales growth, we need to infuse some proactive sales actions (the ones detailed in Part IV) into our otherwise generally reactive day. Use the tools to organize and plan your thoughts and actions and also make them a launch point for implementing our simple but powerful revenue-growing communications techniques.