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## The New Science of Selling and Persuasion

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**T**he twentieth century saw a whole host of changes for sales organizations and salespeople alike. Some changes were good and some were bad. The post-World War II boom spawned a huge influx of dollars, customers, salespeople, and promise. And that boom was especially strong, long, and lasting. The 1950s were a time of marketing innovation, product explosion, and the growth of sales as a profession. It also saw the first significant influx of meaningful sales research, the first broad-based teaching of selling skills, audio recordings outlining sales techniques, motivational rallies, speakers, and sales gurus. It was a veritable free-for-all of capitalistic opportunism and sales education.

The 1960s spawned a whole generation of people who sought their own, unique opportunities for change. Unfortunately, for most of the 1960s generation, aggressive salespeople trained in the 1950s way of selling weren't viewed as kinder, gentler emissaries that change. As a consequence, when the 1960s generation became consumers, they demanded a fresh

way of selling that presented a softer approach that was more consistent with their view of the world. The subsequent philosophies and methods of selling were more consultative, less direct, and more customer-focused in orientation than anything that the 1950s sales generation had ever learned or even thought about.

The balance of the century subsequently produced varied and sundry offshoots and mutations of the 1970s versions. For the most part, however, they were all nothing more than derivatives of this original “kinder, gentler” method of selling. And that philosophy continued for another 30 years, well into the end of the twentieth century. Whether it was called consultative, customer-focused, solutions-based, problem-solving needs centered, or whatever title was the brand of the year, they were essentially all the same. And now, into the twenty-first century, there are newer, more complex demands required for superior selling than those approaches could hope to solve. For example, salespeople now need to call on the right level of buyer, cut a wider path and penetrate accounts more deeply than ever before. They need to interact with customers more strategically and to position themselves as business professionals who provide effective, long-term, beneficial solutions. The process has extended far beyond the face-to-face phase of the sale and into all that occurs before and following the sale.

However, even in spite of these new and encompassing demands, there remains a hardcore group of salespeople, sales organizations, and even trainers of selling skills that are throwbacks to the early part of the second half of the last century.

The shocking result is that many of these overly simplistic and misguided practices are still woven into the fabric of some of the world’s most sophisticated sales organizations in spite of their best efforts to update and professionalize their salesforces. Unfortunately, a host of these misguided tactics are simple to memorize and recall, roll off of our tongue easily, can lead to quick sales, or are simply so easy to use that they have continued to clutter the landscape of sales even today.

Even though there has been over 50 years of concentrated effort to professionalize sales, the true growth of sales as a profession has stalled because of the stagnating presence of many of these practices. Now, into the twenty-first century, these practices have actually become counterproductive to meaningful selling. In fact, they are so out-of-step with the massive changes that have occurred in the marketplace since the target rich 1990s that they have become the business equal of urban myths . . . outdated, counterproductive practices and beliefs that must be eradicated for the good of salespeople, their profession, and their organizations.

In fact, the massive changes that have occurred over the past few years are so all encompassing and pervasive that to knowingly implement these outdated practices is a sure road to bankruptcy, both personally and organizationally. Smart companies and smart salespeople know that such outmoded practices need to be eradicated quickly. Marketplace changes that have occurred in the past three to five years have clearly mandated it. And mandated it fast.

Let's take a look at six significant changes that have rendered these practices not only worthless but counterproductive:

1. Trust is more essential than ever to the sale.
2. The marketplace has become more crowded, mature, and competitive.
3. Purchasing has become consensus-oriented and based far less on relationships than ever before.
4. The capacity to sell value rather than price has become increasingly more critical in pursuit of organizational sales success.
5. Buyers are looking for advisors and business experts who deliver results that exceed basic expectations. They're not interested in salespeople who are positioned as salespeople.
6. Buying decisions are being made at higher and higher levels due to the strategic ramification of purchases.

There is another group of more sophisticated myths that grew up in the latter part of the twentieth century as well. They were the result of the proliferation of digital technology. These myths sprang from the false logic that through the application of sophisticated digital technology, the fundamental world of sales would be changed forever. And that every sales organization, in order to survive, needed to invest immediately and heavily into that technology. The problem with that logic was that many of the most successful salespeople weren't ready for all of that to happen. The real truth is that technology has proven itself to be a media for generating leads, delivering information, or speeding up transactions—nothing more and nothing less. It was not a whole new way to sell or manage the sales process. It never fully replaced salespeople. And probably never will. It is just faster.

## The 21 Biggest Myths of Twentieth-Century Selling

### **Myth 1: Closing Is the Key to Selling**

**Fact:** Closing sales or finalizing transactions is much more a function of what happens early in the sale than what happens when it is time for a prospect to buy. Great salespeople know that.

Our research clearly indicates that prospects are far more concerned about how a salesperson opens a sale than how he closes it. In fact, prospects are far more concerned about the opening of the process than they are about the actual presentation of the salesperson's product or service itself.

What makes a successful opening? Salespeople correctly practice precall planning, creating the right positioning at the right buying level, building and sustaining trust, asking the right questions, selling value, and handling problems or questions. If salespeople do all of these things properly, prospects will "close themselves" no matter what the size of the sale may be, large or small.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Closing sales is merely a consequence of a series of correctly orchestrated events that precede it. The key to a successful sale is how you open it. Not how you close it. That dictates how and whether you will even close the sale at all.

### **Myth 2: People Buy from People They Like**

Fact: The real truth is that people buy from those they trust. For salespeople, being trusted is far more essential than being liked. We polled several thousand buyers asking them to what degree they most trusted the salesperson they had bought anything from in the previous 24 months.

The results were startling. Over 60 percent said they didn't trust them at all. But here's the real shocker. Over 90 percent of that 60 percent said they would never buy from that person again.<sup>1</sup>

So here's the secret: *Trust supersedes like*. That is particularly true if a salesperson expects to have a long-term sales career based on vertically integrating accounts and working in an environment that demands relationships versus transactions, where long-term customer or client retention rather than a deal a day is essential to career success, where a career as a business professional is preferred to an amateur who plays at selling.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

People buy, long term, from people they trust. Trust will then transform to like. Not vice versa.

### **Myth 3: Warm Them Up with Small Talk**

Talk to even the most sophisticated salesperson and they will tell you that they have been taught to “warm their prospects up

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<sup>1</sup> *Superior Selling Master Guide*, 1998 by North American Sales Research Institute.

with small talk.” Our research? Exactly 74 percent of prospects find *unsolicited* small talk to be negative. Another 21 percent claimed that it was neutral (ineffective, but not effective). What does that mean? That it either makes no difference or offends 95 percent of the buyers. This research was conducted with 3,312 buyers of a full range of products and services.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, is a salesperson to do that is the least offensive? It’s certainly not what most salespeople have been taught to do for the last 50 years! The safest thing? A simple statement of intention. That only offends 38 percent of the buyers!<sup>3</sup>

The universally safest thing to say is something related to helping prospects get what they “want.” Unfortunately, most salespeople still believe they are helping people buy what they need. The truth is that people will buy what they need from people who understand what they want. You can bet your last nickel on it. Needs-only selling is just not enough. And it is also twentieth century, not twenty-first century selling.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——  
Prospects don’t like unsolicited small talk. If they want to engage in small talk they will. If they don’t they won’t. It’s that simple.

#### **Myth 4: Persistence Is the Key to Sales Success**

What good is persistence if a salesperson has no intuitive insight? Again, our proprietary research shows that if a salesperson has the clear and focused intuitive insight to develop a quick perception of whether they’re dealing with a qualified buyer, they don’t need to be overly persistent. Or, at the very least, they know exactly who to be persistent with in pursuing the sale.

<sup>2</sup> *Superior Selling Master Guide*, 1998 by North American Sales Research Institute.

<sup>3</sup> *Superior Selling Master Guide*, 1998 by North American Sales Research Institute.

There is nothing more frustrating for a prospect who has no need, no want, no interest, no desire, no budget, or no inclination to buy a product or service than to be pursued relentlessly by a salesperson who won't take no for an answer.

Our capacity to measure these predispositions has been a major breakthrough for thousands of our clients who now know which of their salespeople are most likely to be correct and intuitive in determining which prospects to pursue and which ones to back away from.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——  
Intuitive insight is far more essential than persistence because being even marginally persistent with a qualified prospect is far more valuable than being aggressively persistent with an unqualified one.

### **Myth 5: Create a Need and People Will Buy**

Twentieth-century salespeople were taught that if they could get in front of enough people, were persuasive enough, and could then convince the prospect that they (1) had a need for the salesperson's product or service and that (2) the salesperson could fill it, sales would flow.

The real truth is that the more a salesperson is in front of people who share the common traits of qualified buyers the more successful that salesperson will be. What are these characteristics? Here they are:

- A perceived or recognized need and a legitimate want for what your product or service represents as a solution they are seeking.
- The level of authority and financial ability to pay for that solution.
- A legitimate sense of urgency to resolve their current situation.

- A strong sense of trust on the part of the prospect toward the salesperson, their organization, and their product or service.
- A clear and open willingness to listen to the salesperson.

You'll note that the first characteristic of a qualified prospect is the "perceived or recognized a need and a legitimate want." Unfortunately, in the competitive marketplace of the twenty-first century, buyers have a multitude of choices and there is such a vast array of options that simply running up and down the street begging for business is a quick way to fail in selling anything.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

People are far more likely to buy a product, solution, or service if they know they need it than if a salesperson tries to convince them that they should buy it.

### **Myth 6: Our Product Is Unique**

The facts are very clear here, too. No selling organization, company, manufacturer, association, or entity will ever again have a long-standing differential advantage in terms of quality product or service.

Whether that is caused by the elimination of trade barriers, an absence of international pollution laws, digital piracy, corporate espionage, ease of product duplication or relaxed copyright infringements, the result is the same. It will be impossible for any organization to have a corner on any market, anywhere, or for any extended period of time ever again. The world is just too small and technology too available for that to occur.

The result is that sales organizations need to position, bundle, package, and sell their product or service in unique ways. And that is very different from simply selling a unique product. The former is dynamic and evolutionary. The latter is both naïve and foolhardy.



—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

No one's quality, product, or service will remain unique in any marketplace very long.

### **Myth 7: Experienced Salespeople Don't Need to Prospect**

Great salespeople never stop prospecting for business no matter how long they have been selling. Whether it is vertically integrating existing accounts, discovering new applications for existing products with new or current accounts, extensive networking, gaining more breadth or depth in existing accounts, or expanding their network in new, different ways, great salespeople understand something that is very basic.

That twenty-first century selling requires staying on top of every facet of the market. That prospects and customers are downsizing, being bought, sold, or reorganizing constantly. That they need to have extensive depth in every account they have and that when buyers leave, salespeople need to know where they go and with whom they can sustain the old account while pursuing their old customer when they acquire a new position. They also understand that loyalty is not nearly as key a factor as it used to be and that their most loyal, profitable customer is someone else's #1 prospect. They understand that prospecting is the fuel that drives the sales engine whether they have been selling for one year or twenty-one years.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

The secret to selling is never only in the act of face-to-face selling. Instead, it is in the constant, consistent art and science of prospecting and positioning. Most salespeople ultimately fail due to a lack of qualified prospects.

### **Myth 8: Hungry Salespeople Sell Better**

This myth goes all the way back to the mid-twentieth century. In those days, you could ask a sales manager to describe the ideal

salesperson and they would say, “One with lots of bills.” The rationale? They would work hard to get out of debt.

The real truth is that “hungry” salespeople fall prey to the classic, age-old advice that tells us, “A hungry stomach cannot hear.” And it is still true that the most essential selling skill of all is the capacity to listen. Smart companies hire and retain salespeople who aren’t hungry and inner-focused. Instead, they have salespeople who are totally customer-focused and able to operate from the perspective of satisfying customers rather than satisfying their own desperate need for survival.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——  
Smart companies have salespeople who focus on their customers rather than on themselves.

### **Myth 9: An Extroverted, Outgoing, Glittering Personality Guarantees Sales Success**

This false belief finds itself centered around the cult of personality. That your personality (*how* you sell) is the centerpiece of sales success. It has also been perpetuated by the proliferation of so-called personality tests that are purported to be able to predict who will and who won’t sell successfully.

Our research points out in no uncertain terms that salespeople with flexible personalities do, indeed, sell better. However, flexible does not mean “extroverted, outgoing, or glittering.” We have also discovered that among thousands of clients, there are factors that are much deeper and more predictive of sales success than the shallow, outward display of your style, known as *personality*. These issues are the successful application of selling skills and product knowledge and the unique combination of values, interests, and personal attributes that yield success on a job-by-job basis. And these measurable and scientifically predictable values, attitudes, attributes, and talents really do supersede the overly simplistic and surface view of “personality.”

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

A flexible personality supported with the right selling skills and correctly applied product knowledge, coupled with the right combination of values, attributes, and talents that the job requires guarantee sales success.

### **Myth 10: Provocative Questions Still Work**

If I could show you a way to save money, you'd be interested, wouldn't you? Whether it is a leading question about saving money, improving productivity, reducing quality problems, or gaining greater yield, these questions have been around for over 60 years. The sad truth? They are still being taught and used today.

The real truth? They are being met with more and more resentment by sophisticated twenty-first century prospects. They have heard them all before. And the more sophisticated the prospect, the more likely that using them will get a salesperson invited to leave or, at least, never invited back.

What is the prospect supposed to say? "No, I don't want to save money?" Of course not. And that is precisely the problem. It is an outdated, old-fashioned ploy. But here is the bigger problem. Words, phrases, and comments like that flow off of people's tongues with great ease. For example, "If I could show you a way to get exactly what you need at half the price, you'd be interested, wouldn't you?" That's not selling. It's manipulation.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Provocative questions, although easy to learn and ask, are manipulative, leading, and deceptive.

People want to see and experience the result you promise, but don't want to be manipulated into doing so. And, if they are manipulated, they resent it and will seek future purchases elsewhere.

### **Myth 11: Motivation Is the Key to Sales Success**

Here is an interesting question to ponder: Does motivation drive performance or does superior performance cause someone to be motivated? It could be argued that everyone is motivated. Some more than others. There are some that are motivated to sell. Others are motivated to be social workers. Others want to be entrepreneurs. Some people want to become managers. Others want to be artists. Clearly, different people are motivated by different things.

Smart companies only employ as salespeople those employees who are motivated to sell within the unique culture of that specific organization. Much more about that later, because, again, all of that is a science that is both measurable and predictable.

The real truth is contained in this simple statement: *There is nothing worse than energizing incompetence.* Great salespeople know how to sell, can sell well, want to sell, can build a productive sales territory, and are then catapulted from that platform into a realm of heightened and sustained motivation based on the successful attainment of the expectations that are held for them. Sound like a mouthful? Here are the facts.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Properly applied product knowledge, selling skills, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal mastery, intelligence, clarity, and focus lead to sales success. That success then creates sustained motivation.

### **Myth 12: Cold Calling Is a Good Idea**

Serious and successful sales organizations that will prosper in the twenty-first century will move past this archaic and self-defeating strategy. Instead, they will understand that there are a whole host of far more productive and powerful ways to prospect for business.

The seriously crowded marketplace of the twenty-first century demands a series of “pull” strategies rather than one, simplistic approach based on “push.” For example, aggressive, cold calling totally mispositions a salesperson as a peddler. Networking, authorship, sponsorship, and other more sophisticated strategies position salespeople as advocates, business experts, industry supporters, or niched industry gurus to whom interested prospects turn for solutions and sources. There is little doubt that running up and down the street or banging the telephone hoping to find someone who will listen to your message falls far short of having salespeople invest valuable face-to-face selling time with people who are eager to see them and are truly qualified prospects. These are the ones who have all of the five qualities we have identified as being necessary in defining a truly qualified buyer.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

A full battery of pull-prospecting strategies is necessary to ensure that salespeople are investing valuable face-to-face selling time with the right people. Of all the options available, cold calling is, by far, the least effective for accomplishing this.

### **Myth 13: Great Salespeople Make Superior Sales Managers**

This gigantic myth will be explored in much greater detail later. However, at this point, it is sufficient simply to dismiss this logic as being flawed from the beginning.

Sales and sales management require different skills, behaviors, talents, and competencies. It is not unusual to see a top-performing salesperson fail miserably when moved into a sales management position. There are many reasons for this that will be discussed more thoroughly later.

A strong argument could be made that sales managers must have a totally different way of thinking from that required of

salespeople. Their job is far more strategic and often more systematic. Sales management positions require a great deal more coordination between constituencies; a certain amount of political know-how; and the patience to deal with issues, policies, bureaucracy, and internal politics. Those positions also demand interaction with a multitude of internal constituencies coupled with the capacity to engineer sophisticated, multifaceted outcomes that most sales positions rarely require.

The real facts are these: Highly productive salespeople become successful because of their abilities to do far different things. What, therefore, makes an organization automatically believe that the same person should be able to (or even want to) completely change identities and meet a totally different set of job demands?

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Great salespeople often make mediocre or poor sales managers. The skills and mind-set required for success as a sales manager are far different and require a very different set of capacities than sales.

### **Myth 14: Prior Industry Experience Is a Guarantor of Sales Success**

This myth leads to the corporate bondage scenario. We have had untold clients over the years who have insisted that they only hire salespeople who have had extensive industry experience. When replacing salespeople they were, therefore, limited to the ever-shrinking pool of top talent that came only from within their industry.

The result? Employing retreads, hiring a competitor's disgruntled employee, discovering that the people they thought were great performers really had little talent but had been selling in a target-rich environment, hiring people who had strong product knowledge but no sales skills, and disappointment after disappointment.

Prior industry experience can actually be a detriment when it comes to learning a competitive line, learning about new applications, giving up old loyalties, or even having the energy to start something all over again. By the same token, if you believe that the salespeople will bring business with them, think again. Customers have, ultimately, been buying from the organization, not from the salesperson unless churning customers is common in the industry in which they sell. Switching their customer to a new product or employer may require nothing more complex or sophisticated than a simple signature change.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Previous industry experience could mean leaving failed relationships, inadequate training, and running from one job, or bad situation, to another. Be cautious. Be sure you don't hire your competitor's problem.

### **Myth 15: New Products Will Automatically Improve Sales**

You need to look no further than your ratio of successful versus failed new products to see the fallacy in this belief. Sometimes even great products hitting the market at the right time with the right solutions can fail with little of the failure landing at the feet of the product itself.

Smart organizations understand precisely why they are releasing new products or introducing new services. They also know the exact way to train salespeople to understand, develop belief in, and sell new product releases. As many new products fail because of inadequate preparation and training of the salespeople to sell them as fail because of being a flawed product.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Better professional selling will improve the chance of success for any new product. It takes even great salespeople time to learn how to sell *any* new product or service.

**Myth 16: Sales Automation Will Solve All of Our Problems**

According to *BusinessWeek* (June 23, 2003), the problem behind this myth is simple. Their headline? “It’s too complicated. It’s too expensive . . .” They were talking about business software in general. However, our experience could echo the same sentiment as related to a vast percentage of enterprise-wide salesforce automation initiatives.

For most salespeople, simple is better. Particularly when it comes to digital tools. The problem? Salespeople don’t usually purchase the software. Someone else somewhere in the organization makes the purchase decision and then salespeople are told to use it. According to the same article, “analysts estimate business-software customers spend \$5.00 installing and fixing their software for every \$1.00 they spend on software.” And this ratio could be worse when you look at the sales arena where you must factor in lost sales time, decreased morale, and the confusion that salespeople have when they are attempting to make the latest software initiative work while they are simultaneously trying to prospect, sell, and service accounts.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Salespeople should spend their time at what they do best: Selling. Becoming a data entry clerk simply for the sake of data gathering is not the primary job of a sales professional.

**Myth 17: Most Salespeople Fail because They Can’t Handle Rejection**

We have assessed literally tens of thousands of salespeople over the past two decades in very sophisticated ways. That experience has shown us that well over 85 percent of the salespeople we have evaluated have no problem whatsoever with rejection. In fact, the data shows that for the vast majority of salespeople it is not even an issue.



The real issues are generally a lack of self-starting ability, lack of enjoyment of the sales role, poor commitment to the job, fear of embarrassment, or poor goal direction. Whether veiled as call reluctance or the classic inability to handle rejection, this overly simplistic view is a clear case of mislabeling the cause of something that leads to specific outcome. The outcome? Salespeople making too few calls.

We need straightforward answers to complex problems. However, to get to those usable answers, it is necessary to have the right data relative to what drives the outcome in the first place. And, sometimes, these are complicated factors that are not as simplistic as we would like them to be.

— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* —

Rejection is not a problem for most salespeople. Instead, a combination of other factors lead to salespeople making too few calls.

### **Myth 18: Sales Is a Volume Game**

Let there be little doubt about it. Any organization could easily go bankrupt selling nothing but volume. In fact, you could be selling so much that you don't even know how much money you are losing. Successful selling is more often a function of margin than it is of volume.

The most effective sales organizations are the ones that have most of their salespeople consistently selling high volume at high margin. In fact, we have literally hundreds of clients with whom we have worked to convince that this should be their major, single sales goal.

Here's how it works. Salespeople can give products or services away simply to make a sale. There are others who will stick by their guns in terms of margin, but, unfortunately, won't necessarily sell products or services at a volume that even substantiates their continued employment. However, there are those

select few who, with the right set of tools, skills, support, and coaching, can sell high volume at high margin and tend to do so on a consistent and regular basis. The smart selling company will do all in its power to populate its salesforce with those who can sell that way.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

In the final analysis, sales is all about margin. Great salespeople, however, sell high volume at that high margin. And they do it with great consistency.

### **Myth 19: Good Salespeople Can Sell Anything**

Wrong! There is a significant difference between selling different types of things. Products versus services. Tangible versus intangible. Big ticket versus smaller ticket. Business-to-business versus business-to-consumer. Demand versus nondemand. Complex versus simple. Senior level selling versus staff level selling. Frequent versus infrequent. Technical versus nontechnical. Put the combinations together and it is mind boggling.

This, however, creates a problem that we have discussed and will discuss again elsewhere. The same old problem comes up again and again. Employers tend to gravitate toward hiring only salespeople who have had previous industry experience. However, this does not have to be the case. The solution is fairly simple.

Salespeople tend to do well if they stay within a general category. For example, if someone has had experience selling a non-demand, high-ticket, complex product to senior-level executives, there is great carryover from selling in one environment like that to another. However, to hire someone who has had previous experience selling purely demand, smaller ticket, simple offerings to lower level buyers for that job would not make much sense.

And remember, it doesn't have to be industry specific. But it should be category specific. For example, if an organization needs to hire someone to sell earth-moving equipment, it would not be

too radical a departure to hire someone with a background in selling other types of industrial equipment (trucks, compressors, batteries, high-end pumps, etc.). But to go into that sales situation directly from the retail selling of lower priced products where customers come to you and buy spontaneously is a sales disaster waiting to happen.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

The critical question to ponder is how well a salesperson will perform in your unique, one-of-a-kind job environment and within the cultural demands of your organization.

### **Myth 20: Motivation Is the Key to Sales Success**

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES: Can you come in next month and fire up our sales team at our annual sales meeting?

ME: How well have they been performing?

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES: Not good. That's why we need a motivational speaker.

ME: Have you thought about supplying them with better insight and skills and then determine what is causing them problems?

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES: Why?

This short, but real-world dialogue makes the whole point. But first, let me ask you a question similar to the one asked earlier in this chapter: Does motivation drive successful sales performance or does experiencing sales success spur a higher level of motivation?

On one hand, a person needs to be motivated to perform. On the other, success does breed success. Here's the answer: All people are motivated by something. Unfortunately, not all are motivated by the things that drive superior sales

performance. Some people are in jobs that don't reward the things that they want to be rewarded for, that is, delivering superior performance. And the real truth is that short-term, hype-'em-up speeches just don't work. In fact, as a college football coach for 14 years, I can tell you that pregame or half-time speeches don't have much of an effect. Belief in the game plan and coaches, a series of back-to-back wins, a successful 14-play drive—these are the things that contribute to sustained motivation.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Motivation is only a portion of the sales success formula. Properly applied product knowledge, selling skills, strong interpersonal skills, and enjoying the success sales can bring are just as important and lead to sustained motivation.

### **Myth 21: Good Salespeople Get More Objections**

Objections are nothing more than a sign that a salesperson is showing the wrong thing in the wrong way. What it means is that the prospect is simply saying, "Stop, I've heard enough!" Wouldn't it make more sense to determine precisely what the prospect wants, the conditions under which they will pay to get it, the time frame in which they will buy it, how much they are willing to pay for it, and the process by which they will buy it *before* making a presentation? Then show your product in precisely that way.

The real truth is that great sellers deal with far fewer objections than average or poor ones do. The reasons for that are that they are confident, have positioned themselves well, do intensive precall planning, develop strong internal advocacy, build trust, ask the right questions, propose the right solutions, solicit feedback, and create value. The result? Very few, if any, objections ever arise.

A misguided corollary to this myth is the mistaken belief that objections are a sign of interest. The failed theory behind this myth is that the salesperson is moving closer to the sale and that through a series of rehearsed maneuvers will be able to handle each objection, squash each one verbally, and then move on to make the sale.

The truth is that in the twenty-first century, poorer salespeople get most of the objections. The reason is that the great salespeople painstakingly uncover each issue through careful research, accurate questioning, and a finely honed presentation that addresses each prospect's unique concerns. As a result, fewer objections ever arise. The poor ones? They do none of that. They just deliver one canned presentation after another.

—— *Twenty-First Century Smart Selling Fact* ——

Great salespeople get fewer objections because they develop serious prospect interest in their product or service through a perfectly crafted presentation based on research, trust, and meaningful questioning.

Some of these myths will be revisited in upcoming chapters. However, it was essential to present them as a precursor to everything that this book is all about. Why?

Because the twenty-first century has demanded a new science of selling and persuasion. This is a time characterized by a broad array of complex demands that will grow more intense daily for salespeople and their organizations. Intensified competition, reverse Internet auctions, spreadsheet buying, and price-driven decisions are just the beginning.

As we move forward, it will be essential that great salespeople, enlightened sales management, and smart companies unshackle themselves from the myths of the past. To continue going forward with these same outdated and inaccurate strategies will be tantamount to performing sales suicide. And great salespeople and smart companies don't want to do that.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SUPERIOR SELLING CHAPTER REVIEW

- The twentieth century launched sales as a profession.
- There were significant changes that occurred in the latter half of the century.
- A softer, gentler approach to sales blossomed after the 1960s.
- Most selling philosophies in the latter half of the century centered around consultative selling.
- Many old-school selling techniques are for the most part, manipulative and deceiving.
- Some of these old-school techniques are, unfortunately, still in use today.
- They have led to some myths that have continued today.
- These myths have been replaced by smart selling facts. These myths and facts are:

*Myth 1: Closing is the key to selling.*

**Fact 1:** Closing sales is merely a consequence of a series of correctly orchestrated events that precede it.

*Myth 2: People buy from people they like.*

**Fact 2:** People buy, long term, from people they trust.

*Myth 3: Warm them up with small talk.*

**Fact 3:** Prospects don't like unsolicited small talk.

*Myth 4: Persistence is the key to sales success.*

**Fact 4:** Intuitive insight is far more essential than persistence because being even marginally persistent with a qualified prospect is far more valuable than being aggressively persistent with an unqualified one.

*Myth 5: Create a need and people will buy.*

**Fact 5:** People are far more likely to buy a product or service if they know they need it than if a salesperson tries to convince them that they should buy it.

***Myth 6:** Our product is unique.*

**Fact 6:** No product will remain unique in any marketplace very long.

***Myth 7:** Experienced salespeople don't need to prospect.*

**Fact 7:** The secret to selling is not in face-to-face selling.

***Myth 8:** Hungry salespeople sell better.*

**Fact 8:** Smart companies have salespeople who focus on customers' needs and concerns rather than on their own.

***Myth 9:** An extroverted, outgoing, glittering personality guarantees sales success.*

**Fact 9:** A flexible personality supported with the right selling skills, applied product knowledge, values, attributes, and talents that the job requires guarantee sales success.

***Myth 10:** Provocative questions still work.*

**Fact 10:** Provocative questions, although easy to learn and ask, are manipulative, leading, and deceptive.

***Myth 11:** Motivation is the key to sales success.*

**Fact 11:** Properly applied product knowledge, selling skills, interpersonal aptitude, intrapersonal understanding, intelligence, and focus lead to sales success.

***Myth 12:** Cold calling is a good idea.*

**Fact 12:** A full battery of pull-oriented prospecting strategies is necessary to ensure that salespeople are investing valuable face-to-face selling time with the right prospects.

***Myth 13:** Great salespeople make superior sales managers.*

**Fact 13:** Great salespeople often make mediocre or poor sales managers.

***Myth 14:** Prior industry experience is a guarantor of sales success.*

**Fact 14:** Previous industry experience could mean poorly defined relationships, inadequate training, and running from one job, or bad situation, to another. Be careful.

***Myth 15:** New products will automatically improve sales.*

**Fact 15:** Learning how to sell a new product will improve the chance of success for any new product.

*Myth 16: Sales automation will solve all of our problems.*

**Fact 16:** Salespeople should spend their time at what they do best.

*Myth 17: Most salespeople fail because they can't handle rejection.*

**Fact 17:** Rejection is not a problem for most salespeople.

*Myth 18: Sales is a volume game.*

**Fact 18:** In the final analysis, sales is all about margin. Great salespeople sell high volume and high margin and they do it consistently.

*Myth 19: Good salespeople can sell anything.*

**Fact 19:** The critical question to ponder is how well will a salesperson perform in your unique, one-of-a-kind job environment and within the cultural demands of your organization.

*Myth 20: Motivation is the key to sales success.*

**Fact 20:** Motivation is only a portion of the sales success formula. The truth is that success fuels motivation.

*Myth 21: Good salespeople get more objections.*

**Fact 21:** Great salespeople get no objections because they develop serious prospect interest in their product or service through a perfectly designed presentation based on research, trust, and meaningful questioning.

The twenty-first century is more competitive, demanding, and less forgiving. A new, more scientific approach is needed. This book will tell you, your organization, and salespeople how to implement that new approach.