

Part 1

The "Why?" behind Inbound Sales

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Chapter 1

I Was Never Supposed to Be in Sales

There is simply not enough written on the topic of sales from the front-line reps' or front-line sales managers' perspective—the ones bringing billions in revenue into millions of businesses, day in and day out. They are the ones that truly understand the nature of today's buying and selling environment, and it's my opinion that theirs are the voices that matter most. And that their voices should be heard. My goal here is to give them that voice.

Of course, there are volumes upon volumes of literature written about sales management, sales leadership, sales tactics, and more. Yet, these front-line stories are being told too infrequently, mostly because the ones who write anything about sales haven't sold anything in the past decade. Beyond the obvious, that's a problem because by the time those individuals—the academic, retired professional, consultant, or sales executive—writes his or her book, the landscape has inevitably changed. They also won't tell you the truth about what really happens on the front lines of sales because they do not know anymore.

Beyond that, I'm writing my story because the world of sales has changed! *Drastically!* The same way that the marketing world has experienced dramatic change over the past

decade, so, too, has the sales world. Many times, for example, we hear from marketers that over 60% of a buying decision is complete before a prospect ever connects with a sales rep,¹ though I'm not quite convinced that sales reps and sales professionals fully understand the magnitude and impact of that reality. They almost seem to be in denial of the fact that buyers are—unequivocally—in complete control.

Before a buyer ever speaks to a sales rep today, they have already done an immense amount of research in private or, at the very least, in the absence of a sales rep. They know your business. They know your competitors. They likely know your products' or services' strengths and weaknesses, as seen through the eyes of your customers. They may even know you. How?

The modern buyer uses a myriad of tools at their disposal, such as Google and third-party customer review sites, like G2Crowd and TrustRadius. They have already figured out where your product stands relative to those of other leaders, and they already have a sense of who your executive leadership team is. If they want to learn about anyone at your company, all they need to do is search LinkedIn.

What led to the rise of the empowered buyer? Here is an *extremely* abbreviated history: Internet magnates like Sergey Brin, Larry Page, Mark Zuckerberg, Biz Stone, Reid Hoffman, and countless others transformed the way in which we all access and synthesize information—through search and connectivity. With this newfound access to seemingly perfect, limitless, and integrated information, came a shift in how we all make buying decisions. Simultaneously, technologies also arose that enable anyone to completely block out unwanted messaging. Technologies like TiVo allow us to skip right over commercials; satellite radio empowers us to eliminate ads altogether; caller ID gives us the choice of accepting or rejecting anyone's call; and services like the National Do Not Call Registry—to an extent—put the power back in the consumers'

hands, preemptively blocking telemarketers from breaking up family dinner, for example. Translation: Yesterday (pre-Google), most everyone had to rely on mediums like TV, magazines, tradeshow, newspapers, the Yellow Pages, or even cold calls from sales reps to get answers to the questions they were asking. All the control was in the hands of corporations, and their sales teams. Today, not only does the Internet allow modern buyers and consumers to take back that control, empowering them to find information they need on their own terms, it turns out that people enjoy this self-led experience far better than being interrupted. So, the power has shifted away from corporations and traditional media platforms, and back into the modern buyer's hands.

While the challenges that came with this democratized access to information are well known in the global marketing community, they seem, in a way, to have been lost on their sales counterparts. Where does all this change in the way that people find, or block, information leave the modern sales rep? In a phrase: *Gone are the days where buyers rely on sales reps for information.* Therefore, as sales professionals, we need to change the way we sell to better match the way that the world now consumes information and makes its buying decisions. We must do this without having nearly the amount of control or, in fact, any control that reps of yesterday may have enjoyed. We must evolve and find new, relevant ways to connect with, and engage, buyers. Simply creating a target account list and cold-calling straight through it, repetitively, is dead.

Here are some facts that help shed light on how challenging today's selling environment is for sellers:

- ◆ Over 60% of the sales decision-making process is done before the sale is made (CEB Research).²
- ◆ By 2020, it is expected that as much as 80% of a buying decision will be done *without* a sales rep (Forrester).³

- ◆ Once a rep gets to the sales conversation, more than 50% of the decision-making process is driven not by *what* they sell, but *how* they sell (*Challenger Sale*).⁴
- ◆ Over 90% of CEOs said they *never* respond to cold emails or calls. For the ones that do, only 2% of all outreach turns into a meeting scheduled (*Forbes*).⁵

One of my hopes in writing this story is to do nothing more than share what I've learned, felt, and experienced with anyone who should feel so inclined to keep reading. At no point in this story will I claim to be a de facto expert. I've simply learned an immense amount through experience and expect to only learn volumes upon volumes more as I continue my career in sales. But I think it's critical to share what I've learned so far, document it, and make the front-line sales rep's and manager's perspective widely available.

I started my career as a research analyst a decade ago (about 2007), jumped into the startup world for a few years after that, and then decided to take the plunge into the sales world. No experience, no training, no prior coaching or knowledge. All I had was my mixed bag of experiences across five years and a determination to give sales a shot for at least one year.

So, my desires above all else in sharing this story are to:

- 1.** Inspire sales reps and sales leaders to rapidly adapt to the new sales world reality, so that they may thrive.
- 2.** Encourage reps yet to be born, considering a career switch into sales, considering a switch out of sales, or somewhere along their sales journey to keep going and take only the bits and pieces of this story that work for them.
- 3.** Create the possibility to improve the all-too-tenuous relationships that exist between buyers and sellers today.

To understand where we're going together, I'd like to take you with me to the beginning of my own story. It isn't necessarily interesting, and it probably isn't unique. But it's my story, and I think it's worth sharing with you, if for no other reason than context for how I arrived at where I am today.

When I came to HubSpot in 2012, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I had no sales experience, no training, and I had never been fully involved in a sales "process," I had never really asked anyone for money, at least not in the sales sense. What I did have, however, was a desire to make money, or at least that's how I perceived my sense of motivation in life back then (I would later come to find this was only partially true, and mostly derived from the fact that I'd been living paycheck to paycheck for the prior five years). I'm not sure where that desire came from, but it has been present my entire life. Rest assured, however, that this fascination is not what you think. I never did, nor do I now, value money for the sake of money. It's the freedom that it represents, and the work almost always required to get it, that motivates me the most.

A brief timeline of events that led up to my adventure in sales at HubSpot: By the time I graduated from college (circa 2007) and secured my first job, I literally had \$100 to my name. And that Benjamin Franklin needed to last me approximately two weeks until my first paycheck hit my meager checking account. The time passed, the check came, and I made it.

More time went on and I couldn't manage to save all that much. Even when I got my first bonus for a whopping \$2,500 (which I thought was a ton of money until someone explained how corporate bonuses were taxed), it was barely enough to keep me on schedule paying rent. I never really worried about running out of money that much, I just had this deep desire to never need to think about it—to be able to buy what I wanted, when I wanted, whenever I wanted. I never wanted to have to check my bank account before buying something.

If I were to strictly adhere to a chronological regurgitation of events, I would go into my work experience at the Corporate Executive Board (CEB, acquired by Gartner in 2017⁶). However, I won't go into much detail because this is supposed to be a book about my transition into and experience with sales so I'll keep the focus there. But there were a couple of important seeds planted in my head while I was at CEB—from 2007 to 2010—that I think are relevant and worth sharing.

The first seed planted came about two years into my time at CEB, when I sat in on my first sales call. I can't remember the sales rep's name, I just remember that he was "smooth." Very smooth. Too damn smooth! What struck me as odd, however, was the way in which he opened that call I joined back then. It went something like this:

Hi [Prospect Name]—Thanks so much for taking some time to chat with us. [He went on to make introductions after that]. Tell me, Mr. Prospect, what do you know about Corporate Executive Board?

It struck me as odd. Was this how all sales calls opened? Was it a sales tactic? I don't remember how the rest of the call continued, but that opening line really stuck with me. It just seemed so unnatural and off-putting. Wasn't the sales rep supposed to be learning about the prospect's business and that individual's role first, instead of the other way around?

The second seed planted in my mind came about six months after that experience. I was helping the company grow a line of business in the federal government space. I was responsible for organizing the team, contributing to the corporate strategy, driving our underpinning marketing efforts, as well as writing responses for applications to get us on the General Services Administration and contracting schedules for the Library of Congress. And when I say "I was responsible for," I mean, "I was the grunt who did the heavy lifting at the

discretion of a Managing Director.” As I helped this business get off the ground, I saw a lot of salespeople around me making a *lot* of money. Eventually, we needed to fill a spot on the sales team, and I briefly flirted with the idea of making the leap to sales then. I don’t specifically recall why I decided against it—perhaps there was too much risk—or perhaps I already had one foot out the door. Either way, I didn’t take the role and continued to crank away as a research analyst for about another seven months.

In retrospect, I believe these two seeds—observing sales firsthand (and frankly, being somewhat flabbergasted at what I saw) and flirting with the idea of getting into sales—set me on a path to at least consider the sales profession in the future. I was fascinated by how sales reps approached conversations. I was even more amazed at how they could start a conversation with something that sounded as arrogant as “What do you know about us?” and somehow end it with a prospect signing a contract for tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars. Compounding this fascination, as a research analyst at the time, I truly believed *I* was the one creating all the value and getting paid for a small fraction of the results. This, I knew, was a great injustice! So, as the age-old saying goes, “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” I eventually did.

In mid-2010, I decided to make what felt like a big career switch and go to a startup because I was offered an *amazing* amount of equity: a whopping 20% stake in the company! By the way, if you didn’t catch my attempt at sarcasm, 20% of nothing is . . . nothing. Of course, that alone wouldn’t suffice if I were to truly escape the corporate world and live the bohemian startup life, so I gladly *also* took a \$30,000 pay cut in the process.

I was brought on to run sales and marketing for a tiny little business you’ve probably never heard of called GiftsOnTime. Obviously, this was a perfect fit for my set of skills as a research analyst, considering I spent absolutely zero time doing any

sales or marketing at CEB and had exactly zero education in either discipline. Reflecting on it, I think I tried to express how real my lack of experience was to my business-partners-to-be, but I'm sure they countersold into my ego. Replaying this conversation in my mind's eye, it sounded something like this (paraphrased):

Siggy, you're a smart guy and a hard worker. It doesn't matter that you haven't done any of this. We haven't either. You'll figure it out as you go. We're all in it together, anyway.

I took the bait . . . hook, line, and sinker. I-d-i-o-t.

So, starting in September 2010, I took the sales and marketing reins at GiftsOnTime and had to address a few pressing issues. First, our vendor relationships were totally screwed up. We were relying on two vendors and needed to reduce our exposure to relying on just those two for all our product fulfillment. So, we took care of that by building marketing materials and cold-calling into companies like Brookstone, 1-800-Flowers, Godiva, and Tiffany's. Looking back on it, in some ways I was shocked that I sold them on allowing us to resell their products on our site. We were absolute nobodies! We didn't even have one paying customer at the time.

Once we took care of that little issue (which I assure you was not little, and did in fact continue to be an issue that we should have taken more seriously), I moved on to the next big task—getting our sales and marketing strategy in place to go to market! Hooray!

My business partners at the time had spent the previous three years building software prototype after prototype, which ultimately culminated in a beta product ready for release (sort of) around November 2010.

My God, I remember those first few months so clearly. September through the end of the year was insane. We worked seven days a week, had conference calls with everyone

constantly, poured money into ads, bought every email list we could get our hands on, and shelled out seven grand every month for an agency building our social media presence.

I think we generated something in the ballpark of \$20,000 to \$30,000 in transactions in our first month with a “live” product, but it was also the December holidays, which is, more or less, the Super Bowl time of year for anyone in e-commerce. It was thrilling to see orders coming in—albeit mostly from friends and family. Back to the sales and marketing strategy.

As you can see in my notes about how we were initially marketing ourselves, we learned two important things: (1) We liked spending money on marketing activities that were expensive, and (2) we hated tracking the return on investment (ROI) of those efforts. So, what did we decide to do next? Trade shows! Again, knowing nothing about sales and marketing, I figured, “What better way to build a prospect pipeline than to be directly in front of our ideal buyers?!” Looking back on it, I don’t completely blame my younger self for thinking this way. Intuitively, it made sense. People have been going to trade shows to do business for a long time. We also thought we were brilliant by targeting specific associations that fit our buyer profiles and personas. And it might have *actually* been genius if it weren’t for three realities about most trade shows: First, they are mostly vacations for all attendees. Second, they are full of influencers, not decision-makers. Third, they’re mostly brand-awareness events, not closing events.

Coming down from our trade show highs, we had “amazing” (also known as “not amazing”) direct-mail and email campaigns lined up to nurture everyone we met at the trade show. We ran at that hard for the first few months of the year. It wasn’t until May or June 2011—about nine months into our marketing launch efforts—that we realized it wasn’t working. As in “crash and burn” not working.

Very sadly, I remember how excited we were to go to our first trade show. We had our booth built, plane tickets

booked, a 400-pound trade-show box ready to be shipped to Orlando, had our pitch down, and all print marketing collateral ready. We had our armor on and felt like we were ready to sell . . . whatever selling meant.

That very first conference we went to was for the Legal Marketing Association, and the attendees appeared to be so fascinated by our business model. But that was just it . . . they were just fascinated. We won next to no business out of that trade show, but after the show ended we truly thought we were millionaires. Millionaires, I tell you! We had collected over 300 business cards. I so vividly remember sitting in our hotel room, looking at all those business cards, each of us with a drink in hand and sore feet from standing for three days straight. I said, “So, this is what a million dollars looks like.”

I was so naïve, but I thought I was so brilliant in the moment. I thought that was *our* moment. The exact moment in time into which all our hard work culminated. That pinnacle moment that we just knew we were going to make it.

When we followed through after that conference we saw some positive feedback but nothing substantial. We had a handful of other conferences lined up for human resources professionals, real estate professionals, accountants, financial services providers, and more. We had our trade show circuit and plan down pat. Yet in the end, we had nothing to show for it. Then, somewhere along the way—in the throes of giving birth to that business—everything changed. I found HubSpot.

Truth be told, I didn’t find HubSpot; HubSpot sort of found me. When I was working at GiftsOnTime we were working with two technology consultants that were helping us outsource our software development—I’ll call them Roger and Barry. At one point along the way, Barry jumped in and helped me dissect our sales and marketing plan. He thought it was crazy for us to be paying a marketing agency \$7,000 a

month (which it was, for this particular agency) and to be buying every technology under the sun, never mind spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on trade shows that we thought were putting us in front of our target audience. He was right, but it was an incredibly humbling and embarrassing moment for me privately. Barry pointed me in the direction of Verndale—a local technology and marketing consulting firm. He also pointed me in the direction of a small startup technology company at the time called HubSpot. When I compared the price for each side by side—about \$100,000 a year (Verndale) versus \$10,000 a year (HubSpot)—I was obviously attracted to the latter for the very stupid but very valid reason that we had spent so much money on sales and marketing tactics that failed us previously. We were literally down to the last \$10,000 to \$20,000 of what was once a sizable sales and marketing budget. We had no choice.

My HubSpot sales reps were Jon Marcus (serial entrepreneur) and Mike Redbord (now VP and GM of the Customer Hub for HubSpot). I remember that first conversation we had so vividly.

JON: “So, what do you guys do?”

BRIAN: “Well, we’re kind of a software company and kind of an ecommerce company. We have a software platform that allows our customers to automate all their business gift-giving throughout the year. It’s designed for accountants, attorneys, financial advisers, real estate agents, etc. Anyone who maintains a client relationship and uses gift-giving as an ongoing marketing and customer retention tool could benefit from our service and software.”

JON: “Okay, so how do you make money?”

BRIAN: “Well, we don’t get paid for the software. We give the software away for free right now because we think we

need to get the market to adopt the platform. There are tons of competitors out there that people are used to using, such as Godiva, Harry & David, Wine.com, and so on. So, to get people to break out of the status quo, we think we need to give the software away for free. As for making money, we take a margin on the products we sell, anywhere from 15% to 40%, depending on the product.”

JON: “Okay, and how’s that going for you?”

BRIAN: “Not so well.”

JON: “Why do you think that is?”

BRIAN: “Well we feel like we’ve used every marketing tactic in the book. We have a website, have Google analytics running on the site, we have been paying an AdWords consultant, we hired a marketing agency to get us published on major websites and build our social media presence, we purchased lists to run email campaigns, we purchased technology like Constant Contact and Tableau to deliver those emails and understand our user universe, we’ve also done a handful of direct mail campaigns, placed ads in trade show publications, and spent over a hundred thousand dollars on trade shows themselves. We’ve done so much for the past year and we feel like we have so little sales to show for it.”

JON: “What about your website? Do you generate any leads through your site?”

The conversation went on like this for a while. But the light really went off in my head when Jon asked the last question that I paraphrased above. You’ll also notice that at no point in those first series of questions did Jon say a single thing about HubSpot; instead, he focused the entire conversation on us

and our needs (go back and read the dialogue carefully to see the use of “you” and “your”).

Jon helped us realize our website had been doing absolutely nothing for us. We also realized that we spent loads of time and money building a product that no one knew about and had no way to find and that this must have been our problem. And we were partially right. We were right that our website was not a lead generation tool and was not being the “sales rep” that it should be. I think we were also right that the service we were providing could create value for a significant number of people. The real problem that we had was simple: We had no idea how to run a software business.

The startup failure aside, I was truly blown away with HubSpot and using its inbound marketing methodology when we launched our first campaign through their platform. We only wrote a couple of blog posts, placed one call-to-action on our site—something like “Download the Ultimate Guide to Client Gift-Giving”—and published a landing page to convert the people interested in that blog post on our site into leads. In other words, we gave them value in the form of an e-book that educated them; we got value when they shared a little information about themselves with us to get that e-book. I realize this may sound elementary now, but in 2010 and 2011, it was a big deal.

Within the very first day of publishing those blog posts, that call-to-action (which, by the way was buried in our homepage’s footer), and the corresponding landing page, we generated over 40 new leads. Most of these leads were people we had never heard of and had never met before. It was the instant success we were searching for. Yet in that same moment of elation, I almost simultaneously panicked. I crashed from the high. I faced a new problem. What happened next? I had absolutely no idea what a sales process was, how to implement

one, or how to measure the quality of execution. But I *loved* inbound marketing. It made sense to me. It was simple. And it worked. So, I metaphorically hid from this scary sales monster in my inbound marketing fort. When it came to GiftsOnTime, the inbound marketing process was simple:

- ◆ Who are you trying to attract to your website?
- ◆ What are their biggest problems, goals, or challenges?
- ◆ How would they ask someone about those problems, goals, or challenges in the form of a question?
- ◆ Turn said questions into blog articles.
- ◆ Publish those articles to your website, share them via social media, even use them in your PPC ads!
- ◆ Get more website traffic, get more leads.

Okay, it's slightly more complicated than that. But at the same time, that's pretty much it! At least, that was it to drive the site traffic. The leads, the opportunities, the customers . . . that's a bit more complex. But even that part isn't so complex so long as you continue to add value to a decision-making process over a long, or even short, period.

I pushed and pushed for the rest of that year, trying with all my might to make GiftsOnTime's revenue engine work. Sadly, and in my own opinion, at the end of 2011 we weren't generating remotely enough revenue to continue onward. We were probably seven figures in the red, and the bleeding didn't show signs of slowing. We laid off a handful of employees, others quit, and we scaled back our operation at the exact time we needed to scale up but had very limited cash to do so. We had to face the music that so many other startups face—we weren't going to make it because we ran out of money.

I decided to leave GiftsOnTime around February 2012. The split from a man I considered, and still consider to this day, my second father and my best friend from childhood was very

tough. We all aged more than we wanted to because of it and learned our lessons in a way that we hoped we never would. Best intentions all around; worst outcomes.

During that time, I also received some much-needed advice from my former boss (at the Corporate Executive Board), Sampriti, who helped me take the leap of faith out of GiftsOn-Time. The same woman I had let down by skipping out on business school, in the end, was also the one that helped me turn my career around in a huge way. This is the email I wrote to her in early 2012, seeking wisdom:

Subject Line: Was wondering if you could help . . .

January 2, 2012

Hey Sampriti,

Happy New Year! Hope you and the family had a great time over the holidays. What'd you all end up doing?

I also wanted to give you an update on the business and share some of my thoughts for 2012, hoping you might be able to point me in the right direction.

To keep a long story short, GiftsOnTime didn't do well this year. There were obviously many contributing factors (some controllable, others not so much), but a lot of money has already gone into the operation with little to show in return. In other words, if I were an investor, I don't think I would be willing to go any further (given the amount of time and money that has already gone in). It's also concerning to me that we lost a significant number of "whale" accounts that we were relying on to bring us into the New Year and don't have many "deals" lined up in 2012. So, I'm starting to ask

myself, "What's the deal in 2012?" Do we go back to the drawing board and stick it out for one more year, or cut the losses short and be thankful for the opportunity we had while we had it?

Ron and Josh are already fully committed to another year of running the business. I haven't talked to them about it, but I can't say that I'm feeling quite as enthusiastic or committed. And when I reflect on the past 16+ months, I feel like I've (i.e., all of us) learned a tremendous amount in new areas of business (sales, marketing, corporate communications, general management, software development, VC presentations, etc); however, I'm wondering how much "new stuff"/incremental learning there is to be had. I know that probably sounds self-centered, but it's just me being honest with myself. I guess the truth is that I don't see light at the end of this tunnel and I'm not sure how much more I have to gain by continuing down this path.

I have a few ideas in mind for opportunities in Boston that I would like to explore, but that's still a few months off. So, before I get any further ahead of myself, I thought I would ask you for your thoughts. I'm sure there's no silver bullet, but you've always seemed to get my head straight no matter how many times I've managed to crank it around the winch.

If it's easier to catch up over the phone, I'd be more than happy to do that as well.

Hope you're doing well and look forward to catching up soon.

Best,
Sig⁷

And Sampriti's response:

Hey Brian, happy new year to you. I hope you had a great holiday with your family. Certainly sounds like you've got a lot on your mind. It's probably better to have this conversation via phone. Until then I leave you with a thought and that is something to consider. The more fundamental question I have in addition to what you are likely to learn this coming year is what assumptions need to change in order for the business to be successful? If you aren't sure what those assumptions are, nor do you believe they are likely to change, then I would suggest it may be time for you to evaluate other options.

Another thing to consider is if you're not in for another year the way your business partners are, is it fair to just commit partway?

Let me know when you would like to speak next week and we can flesh out how best to proceed.

*Regards,
Sampriti⁸*

It was then that I knew, when I read, “*if you're not in for another year the way your business partners are, is it fair to just commit partway?*”

I knew in my gut that the answer was “No.” And I knew that it was a hard no because it was the same decision-making process I had gone through when I decided to leave Sampriti only about two years prior. I was out. I knew I was out, and once you realize that, you should leave. There is no way to be successful or to be fulfilled if what you're doing does not bring you fulfillment. If you are not inspired or motivated by what

you are doing, or the work your company is doing, it will ultimately show up in your work. Once it shows up, you're cooked. It's best to get out early and leave on a high note than to drag yourself—and those around you—down in the process only to collect a few extra paychecks. It was then that I decided to make my move and start pursuing new opportunities. But what would I pursue? I had such a strange medley of experience. I had no idea where I might add value to another company.

Reflecting on my experience as a HubSpot customer, I felt like I would be an excellent customer onboarding specialist. I knew the product well, lived the pain the company solved for, and felt analytical enough to become a master educator on both the inbound methodology and the software. However, as I began the interview process, Mike (Redbord) convinced me to pursue sales instead of the inbound marketing consultant role (which is now called an Implementation Specialist).

After my experience trying to build a sales pipeline at GiftsOnTime, I wasn't exactly sold on the idea of sales at first. I had the worst impression of sales. I hated cold-calling, hated crafting outreach emails that would never get read, and loathed writing direct-mail campaigns and stuffing envelopes going to people that would just throw them in the trash. I had also been on the other side of the buying equation, and generally hated the way most sales reps tried to play games with me. They were mostly self-serving, taught me basically nothing, and went negative in a childish way when it became clear to them that I was not ready to move forward. The only time I didn't feel that way was when I went through the HubSpot sales process. I thought there might be something to that, so I spoke with my dad about the idea of pursuing sales.

The more I thought about it, the more I convinced myself that I had to work for HubSpot. The company was disruptive. It was flying in the face of conventional wisdom about how marketing worked. And I loved that. I had to be a part of it.

Ultimately, my dad convinced me to give sales a shot for a year, to give it my all, and if it worked out then to keep going. If not, I would go back into research or consulting.

This is what I refer to as my second awakening in my professional career. The first was when I became a student of inbound marketing. It had flipped all conventional knowledge I had about marketing on its head. It made sense to me, and it worked. This awakening to pursue sales as a profession—the second awakening—was even more powerful. In retrospect, it showed me that everything I thought I knew about sales was wrong and sales didn't have to be the way I had experienced it to be—in short, a thankless, dirty, low, and disrespected profession.

As I pursued this career with HubSpot further, things immediately started to feel different from as early as my first call with a recruiter. My first phone screen was with a woman named Lisa. My first manager phone screen was with Doug (now my colleague). My second phone screen was with Pete Caputa and Dannie Herzberg (who would ultimately become my manager). My in-person interviews were with Chris, John, Pete, and Dannie, and I think one more person that I can't remember. The “at home” portion of the interview process also included a two-hour, SAT-style exam laden with behavioral and analytical questions. I was also required to do a mock role-play as a part of the process before my in-person, final round of interviews.

Simply by experiencing the intensity of the interview process, I felt reassured that I was in the right place. These people were truly challenging everything about me. They also had zero reason, whatsoever, to hire me as a sales rep. Sure, I had five years of work experience, just not in sales. I was analytical and did not consider myself outgoing. I worked for a small startup that failed. My main objectives at the startup included customer acquisition and raising investor funds, both of which I failed to achieve. The battle was uphill the

whole way, but I somehow, in the end, convinced them to take a chance on me. Either that, or they were just desperate for warm bodies. Or both. I doubt they were desperate, but I still believe both forces were at play. I was never *supposed* to be in sales; yet, here I was, a job offer from HubSpot in hand. The journey was already under way.