ACPA P³ PROGRAM MODULE I - SALES & MARKETING COURSE

DEVELOPING A SALES IDENTITY

Years ago, when British tall ships ruled the seas, there was a captain acknowledged by all as the best to ever sail. A cabin boy who served the captain faithfully for 18 years watched every morning as his master unlocked the top drawer of his sea chest, and looked in at its contents for one minute. Then, the captain would close the drawer and lock it until the next morning. Finally, when it came time for the captain to retire, the cabin boy could resist no longer and asked his master if he might look into that top drawer. The captain smiled, unlocked and opened the drawer, then stood aside so his faithful steward might peer inside. The cabin boy was amazed to see that the drawer was empty, except for a single piece of paper. On the paper was written, “Port is Left, Starboard is Right”.

It’s important to remind yourself of the basics from time to time. The more involved we get in a process or project, the more inclined we are to lose ourselves in the details and ever-changing urgencies. All too often, we forget the essential principles of how and why things work. In this course we will concentrate on developing your sales identity. Your sales identity is how you see yourself, and how others see you... which, in the selling process, can often be just as important. Most of us live our lives as the person we believe we are. More than any other factor, the way we see ourselves as a salesperson determines the salesperson we become. We become what we think about.

In this course, our objective is to help you develop your personal sales identity. An identity that makes you effective. An identity that helps you be the person you want to be. A model that you can maintain and refine over the long term. First, like the sea captain, we’ll go over the basics. Then, you’ll decide which of these basic concepts and characteristics you want to incorporate into who you are as a sales person: your sales identity. Once you’ve decided who you want to be, you will map out a strategy to become that sales professional. Not in terms of vague and wispy daydreams, but through a step-by-step process, which you design to guide yourself to goals you have set. To help direct and motivate you through this process, you will be accountable to yourself and at least one other person from start to finish.

As with all courses in Sales and Marketing Module I, you will need to find a mentor for this course. If you are a professional sales person, the best choice might be your immediate supervisor. It doesn’t have to be your supervisor, but it should be someone who can give you competent counsel on the suitability and validity of any selling plan you develop. Another reason to involve your direct organizational superior in this process lies in the fact that you will work together in drafting a selling plan. You will both agree on the definition of what is required for you to do a ‘good job’. Then, all you have to do is work your plan. Everybody will have committed to be happy with that.

If you are not a professional sale person, just look for a mentor among people who are willing to devote some of their time helping you become awesomely effective in your life. They should be someone you trust and someone with whom you can share the things that are important to you. You are always free to contact your ACPA Regional Engineer for help should you get ‘stuck’ in the course. Don’t know who your Regional Engineer is? No problem. Just call ACPA and ask.
You are free to have the same mentor for as many courses as you like. But, it’s equally acceptable to have different mentors for different courses. Whichever works best for you and your mentor(s).

Remember, as with every other portion of this module, we are talking about sales on a level broader than simply getting the order. For our purposes, selling is changing the outcome. No matter what your occupation, you will be more successful if you can influence your environment and the people in it. As we talk about developing your sales identity, think in terms of developing a reputation and a set of work habits that lead you, and others, to see you as someone with good ideas who gets things done. An influential team member. Ultimately, you will either influence the world in which you live, or default to a world created by those who do.

In this course, as with A Sales Model - Have A Plan, we have assembled, organized, and edited what we believe are the central concepts for effective selling from our three required texts... another gift for you. You’ll find these ideas below, under the heading, The Basics. We’ve done most the work for you. These key concepts are even color-coded to the source-book.

Sprout!

The Little Red Book of Selling

The One-Minute Sales Person

Editorial Content & Commentary

Now, before beginning Exercise 1, re-read all three required texts. Don’t rely on what you remember from A Sales Model - Have a Plan. When you’ve finished, begin Exercise 1.

EXERCISE 1

(1) Read through The Basics, below. As you will quickly notice, this is an extensive list of ideas. Take time to study and think about each concept and how it relates to you. Don’t hesitate to go back into the reading material to build or clarify your understanding. Ask someone else if you still aren’t clear about something. You’re investing in yourself. The more you put into this process, the more tools and skill sets you will have at your disposal going forward.

(2) After you have read and thoroughly understand each concept in The Basics, Go to the Appendix for this course and print a copy of The Basics. Check the concepts and ideas you like, think are important. There are no right or wrong answers. Go with your
gut on this. Take your time, give it your best effort. If you want, get the involvement or ask questions of others; including your mentor.

(3) Go back through the listing you completed in (2) and circle the concepts and ideas that are part of how you currently do business. Be honest with yourself. No one else will see this exercise.

(4) Now, pick at least three people who know you and how you do things. Print a copy of The Basics for each of them and ask each to check the concepts that characterize you and how you interact with them. Urge each of them to be honest and forthright. You don’t have to show the information they provide to anyone but yourself. So, the more candid their answers, the more you’ll learn.

(5) Print another copy of The Basics. Without any of the copies from (2) (3) or (4), to reference, check the concepts you believe are essential in order for you to reach your goals and work your Sales Plan. While completing this exercise, it would be useful for you to reference a copy of, A Sales Model - Have A Plan - Exerice XXXXXXX, from the previous course. Take your time and give your choices some serious thought.

(6) Now, on a large, flat horizontal surface and lay out all the sheets you and others have completed. It’s probably most helpful to sort them by page, laying all page 1 sheets side-by-side for comparison. Then, all page 2’s side-by-side, and so on. Take your time, study what you and others have recorded. On another, fresh printout of The Basics, based on all the sheets you have assembled, check the concepts and ideas that are important in reaching your goals and working your plan. This final time through The Basics, you will have:

• your listing of what you like and believe to be important (2) (3)
• the assessment of 3 other on how you do business (4)
• your evaluation as to which concepts will make you successful (5)

Carefully weigh all these responses to bring together an objective assessment of The Basics that should characterize your operating style, and at least some idea as to areas where you have opportunities for strengthening your sales identity and effectiveness.

(7) If you want, print out yet another copy of The Basics and post it somewhere that encourages you to read it through from time-to-time. Ideally, you’ll look it over at least once a week. Pay particular attention to the items that relate to your goals and plan. You can even edit the list down to those items you have determined are critical in working your sales plan.

You will be amazed how these ideas start coming to you in your real life, day to day contacts. You’ll remember a concept that’s appropriate to your current situation. You’ll try it. It will work. It will become part of what you do and how you think.

______________________________________________________________________

THE BASICS
Do you have clearly defined goals?

Do you have a plan to achieve them? Is that plan the basis for how you work on a daily level?

When you create your own goals and mentally see them as already accomplished in a measured, competent way, you lessen the unknown:
- You can see where you are going, and boost the probability you'll get there
- You become more confident, and others have more confidence in you
- You feel good about yourself

People who feel good about themselves, produce good results

Self-belief is the first and most critical function of the selling process. How is yours?

The most powerful fuel for high personal performance is a high level of self-esteem

Sales is a confidence business. Maybe the ultimate confidence business

Learn to recognize opportunity. Act to capitalize on it.

Be willing to take risks and make mistakes. Accept responsibility.

The more positive you are, the easier it is to succeed - have fun doing your job

The more you love it, the more you will sell

The more you believe it, the more you will sell

How conducive to success is your attitude and your environment?

Find something that you love, find something that you can believe in, find an environment that’s creative and supportive, and people that you can respect... then jump in to that situation with both feet

The more you prepare for this sale, the more you will sell

(this is one of the key training objectives in these sale courses - it can be learned and implemented by anyone - it works disproportionately well because others usually don’t do it)

Mediocrity stems from a lack of belief more than a lack of skill. Passion is the intangible in a salesperson’s presentation and manner that makes the message transferable and believable.

Believing that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to, that you work for the greatest company in the world, that you sell the greatest products and services in the world, and that you are the greatest salesperson in the world, all lead to a high self-esteem.

High self belief leads to high success

Sell to satisfy your customers’ needs not your own
I have more fun and enjoy more financial success when I stopped trying to get what I want and start helping other people to get what they want.

When the typical person thinks about selling, the underlying presumption is that people do not want to buy the product or service. It is as though a salesperson’s job is to be smart enough and tough enough to get people to do what they don’t really want to do.

If you sell things that people don’t want or need, they won’t come back. Even worse, they tend to look for opportunities to share that unpleasant experience with others.

People don’t buy for your reasons - they buy for their reasons. Find their reasons first and sell to them based upon that finding. The most important process in selling is finding the other person’s “why”.

You can change the other person’s “why”. But, that should be undertaken as a long-term (marketing) project, not be tied to the selling process.

Never forget that people hate to be sold, but they love to buy. If I approach selling as I should, all I’m doing is helping people do what they already like to do: feel good about what they buy.

Sell on purpose:

- be conscious of what you are doing
- don’t unconsciously repeat a memorized sales routine
- always have a plan
- take the time, make the effort to know them and what they want / need
- care about people before, while, and after you try to sell to them

When you are under pressure to sell, the other person senses it and backs off.

Whenever you feel a disconnect or uneasiness, remember to put yourself in the buyer’s place. Try to feel what they feel:

- what and who do they trust and/or distrust?
- what do they fear?
- what do they want?
- how do they want to feel about what you propose?

Help people get the good feelings they want, about the things they buy and about themselves. There is no adversarial component in that approach to selling.

If you focus every contact with people on them and what they want, every contact will bring you closer to a long-term sales relationship.

“All things being equal, people want to do business with their friends.”
“All things being not quite so equal, people still want to do business with their friends.”

Know your product cold... all the advantages, all the shortcomings, and how these attributes make people feel. That’s your knowledge bank. You can reference...
(withdraw) from it whenever you need. The more to know (deposit) about what you are selling, the more you can concentrate on the other person. Too often, the salesperson loses focus worrying about whether they will be tripped up by product or market issues. Not many people value a salesperson who knows less than they do about the product or service.

[ ] You aren’t likely to strengthen your knowledge base by watching TV

[ ] Making people smile or laugh puts them at ease and creates an atmosphere more conducive for agreement

[ ] Funny and friendly are 1000 times more engaging than professional

[ ] NEVER substitute comedy for knowledge or skill. People laugh at clowns. They don’t seek out clowns to help solve problems or offer advice on matters that are important to them.

[ ] Be careful about telling jokes… see The Little Red Book of Selling for guidance.

[ ] Selling is not about techniques. Selling is about focus and creative verbal exchange. And, the only way to master focus is to work at it

[ ] It’s not about blackberries, cell phones or e-mails. It’s about the one-on-one, face-to-face contact where you get to know your customer, hear their problems, and learn their dreams.

[ ] People must first believe in, and like, a messenger or the message has no credibility.

[ ] People sense whether you care, and are far more likely to trust you if you do

[ ] You must have at least as much passion for the process as for the result. If you don’t, you will lose to somebody who does

[ ] After all, you don’t make the sale. The other person does. The more you let other people determine what is important to them, then relate what you have to offer to how they want to feel (about what they buy and about themselves), the more likely you will succeed.

[ ] If you lose the sale, and the person wins by your loss, what you were offering was the wrong choice for them.

[ ] A person is less inclined to accept your assistance if they:
- don’t trust you
- don’t feel the need for your service or product
- don’t believe the product offers more help than the competitor’s
- don’t feel any urgency to buy (act or make a change)

[ ] Your need to sell is of no interest to the other person, except to the extent that they see it working to their advantage. Employing ‘need to sell’ as a strategy is simply another form of selling on price. There is no loyalty established. You have built no value in the eyes of that person.
If you neglect your customer, if they see you as indifferent, they will stop growing as far as you are concerned. Love may grow stronger with absence, but trust dies quickly if not nourished and tended.

Customers memories are often short. Turning away from them, even for a little while, is enough for them to forget about you.

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Most failures occur from quitting too soon.

The selling cycle timeline is to the end of time and space. If you give up, people will assume you didn't really believe what you were telling them, never really cared about them, or both.

In sales, persistence is figuring out what works and replicating those successful actions over and over... repeat it exactly.


Never be afraid to advocate to those around you for what you believe is the right thing to do.

Relationships are won and lost on the basis of doing or not doing the right thing when the chips are down.

If they trust you, they are more likely to recommend you to others.

The more people trust you, the more they're willing to share information with you - that's the acid test for trust.

If people already know you, you already have credibility.

I put useful information in the hands of my most probable purchasers so they can benefit, get to know me, come to respect me, and call me wanting to purchase.

People are not looking for facts, they want answers and solutions. The better job I do in providing answers and solutions, the more valuable I am.

What's valuable:
- something done for other people, in favor of that person given first
- given to people who can help the most
- given often
- given without expectation of anything in return

The sales garden is a philosophy of sales, a mindset that can be applied to any other approach to sales. It deals with the bigger picture of how to keep yourself fresh and energized.
If you view the process of taking care of your customers as fun and rewarding, just as you do when you tend your garden, then you’ll take the time to do all the hard work, and you’ll do it gladly.

By treating a business like a garden:
- the business grows better
- life becomes simpler
- you are happier and more relaxed

Self managed sales:
- decide what is the most important 20%
- make that 20% your goal
- in 250 words or less write those goals (as accomplished fact)
- continually check to ensure your behavior is taking you to your goals

Goals focus my effort more efficiently, and get me where I want to be more quickly.

Decide who you want as a customer (who is the important decision-maker), then get to know their business better than they do.

Never surprise your customer with something they don’t want or need (usually these things originate in your company’s meeting rooms from people who never talk to customers).

Weak and scattered thoughts are worthless. They will not do you any good.

Strong, focused thoughts that include visualization... that’s good stuff.

We become what we think about. Whatever you think will work is usually the way you will do it.

There is a strong connection between clarity of vision and the excitement about working toward that vision.

For a vision to be motivating, you must see what you want to achieve, in detail. Clear, positive pictures give you energy and create optimistic feelings that carry you through.

The One Minute Sales Person offers a simple, effective technique for positive change:

- Goals begin behaviors. Consequences maintain behaviors.
- Help yourself realize your goals by catching yourself doing something right... ...then praise yourself - take a few minutes to feel good about what you’ve done, even if it’s just approximately right, then tell yourself to do this more often.

BUILD YOUR BRAND

Anyone can influence other people through the power of line authority. It’s a circumstance where people obey and comply because they must. But, you can also influence through skill and knowledge. In most environments, people will seek out
people who can help them. They are rewarded by association with such people. Especially, if you don’t ask for anything in return or appear to be trying to impose your will on them.

Line authority is necessary in the operation of most organizations. It is granted by the organization and can be withdrawn at the organization’s discretion. Influence and authority arising from skill and knowledge originates with the individual. It is highly portable and cannot be taken away from those who possess it.

In this section, we are going to take a look at your brand. In many ways your brand is your sales identity. Both are heavily dependent on other people and their perception of you. We’ve covered branding in another course within Module I. There, we looked at the importance of branding as it relates to the American Concrete Pipe Association. Even if you are not that familiar with exactly what a brand is or how it works, the concept of a brand for companies and organizations is one you’ve likely encountered before. Here, the concept is similar, but focuses on you as an individual. When other people think of you, they think of certain characteristics and behaviors. To them, what they think you are is who you are. Or, to quote an axiom of marketing: “The customer’s perception is your reality”.

The perception others hold of you is your sales identity. It greatly influences whether they seek you out when needs arise. It determines the credibility they attribute to what you say, whether they like and trust you, and how much they believe you take their interests to heart. To other people, what you do and how you do it trumps most everything else. They can experience that themselves, or they can hear it from others. If you have a strong brand (sales identity) established with your current customers, you can receive instant credibility when those customers endorse you to their friends. Need any other reason to build a strong brand?

So, let’s get started on building your brand. Your sales identity (brand) is one of the most important of your selling tools. It is who you are to the people you sell, or hope to sell. In The Basics, you already did a lot of the ‘heavy lifting’ toward defining the sales identity you want. Whether you are a professional sales person, or someone who just wants to exercise more influence about the course of your life, you should now have a much clearer picture of how you want to be perceived by others. And, you should be able to define that perception in terms of characteristics and actions.

Again, we’ve brought together the key thoughts from all three books. This time we focused on concepts and ideas related to building your brand. And, as before, each item is color-coded to it’s source.

**EXERCISE 2**

Print a copy of **Build Your Brand**. Take your time and read through the listing of concepts carefully.

Mark the items that you want people to attribute to you and the **way you do business**. As you’re completing this exercise, don’t hesitate to add notes that help you understand, expand, or question an item. If you don’t remember a concept, go back in the book and read about it again.

After you have completed this profile of what you want others to see in you and your performance, go on to **Exercise 3**.
EXERCISE 3

In Exercises 1 and 2 you have made a good start in describing what you regard as important in selling and what you want others to see in how you sell. Now, let’s get an overview of how those you work with see you. Print two copies of the Build Your Brand listing. Ask two people you respect within your professional life to check those characteristics and methods that they believe accurately reflect you and the way you do business. Don’t ask any of the people you used in Exercise 1 - The Basics. Don’t ask your wife, or husband, or mom. If you really want to get information that can help you grow, ask your two biggest and/or best customers, your boss, or both. Get people who will be honest, who know you and care enough about you to spend some time doing a thoughtful evaluation. If your mentor falls into one of the desirable categories above, it’s okay to ask them to participate.

Don’t hesitate to read the description of Exercise 3 to them, word-for-word, so they understand what you need.

EXERCISE 4

When you have completed Exercise 2, and your two volunteers have returned the completed listings for Exercise 3, use them to Build Your Brand on paper. On your favorite media (paper, computer screen, the sidewalk out front), in 250-500 words, write a concise, complete profile of how you want the people you do business with to describe you. In other words, build a statement of your Brand.

Don’t profile the person you believe you are now. Paint a word picture of the professional you want to become. View yourself as you want your boss, your customers, and your coworkers to describe you, when you’re not around. Write that description as though it is already accomplished; not some pipe dream that may come to pass some day. Be as self-serving as you like. Bring tears of pride to your own eyes when you read about yourself.

You’ll find that it’s not easy. But keep at it until you like what you read. Don’t plan on getting it right the first time, just start writing. Don’t hesitate to quote from the listing and don’t hesitate to edit the listed items if that works better for you.

Set it aside for a day or so. Then, get out the listings again and do a revised draft. Stay at it until you have described the person that’s exactly like you want to be. It may take a while. No problem. No hurry. This is an opportunity to rebuild and renew yourself, in whatever image you want.

When you have it just right, show the profile to at least one person you trust and respect. Go over it with them, in detail. Talk about it and probe for their thoughts. Then, make revisions, if that seems appropriate.

Now, you have a tool you’ve probably never had before. It’s you, just like you want you to be. Keep it where you can read over it as often as once a day. Read it and read it, until you can recite it from memory. Behavioral science tells us that most people require
about 21 days to establish a new habit pattern. If you will review what you’ve written once a day, far sooner than you ever imagined, you will begin to become the person you profiled. It works. It will work for you.

PS: if you find you’re not liking the person in the profile as much as you thought you would... change the profile

BUILD YOUR BRAND

[ ] Your brand is:
  how hard you work, and for whom
  how smart you work
  had dedicated you are, and to whom
  how much you care, and about whom
  how valuable you are to others

[ ] Advantages of a good brand:
  develops confidence in you, your company, your product, your service
  establishes you as an expert and a resource
  separates you from your competition
  builds your stature, your image as defined by others
  creates demand for you

[ ] If you are no longer trying to get people to do what they don’t want to do, the stress of selling is greatly reduced. Adversarial relationships go away, because you and the other person are no longer locked in a battle of wills. No one has to lose so that the other person can win.

[ ] Selling is about people. Take care of the people and the numbers will come:
  let’s find what’s best, displaces me-against-them
  let’s work together to find the solution, displaces get-the-sale-now
  learn more about their business and ways they want to be helped
  focus attention on them as a person
  recognize that everyone is different - different approaches, different solutions
  invest the time and effort to know your customer on a deeper level
  learn to be more observant; more attention to the other person, what they want

[ ] Always be asking. Always be listening

[ ] When you are with your customer, listen and ask questions (75%). The customer should do most of the talking and you should do most of the listening

[ ] Asking the right questions is critical. It produces solutions. Ultimately, it takes less time. Cultivate listening as an active skill. Read between the lines, ask questions to check your assumptions. All that can be learned by anyone.

[ ] Ask questions to learn, not to lead or manipulate

[ ] Sell yourself, not your product or your service.
[ ] Build your network.

[ ] Establish yourself as a presence.

[ ] Build and polish your skills.

[ ] Attract new customers.

[ ] Have an impact in your customers’ businesses.

[ ] How valuable are you to others? That is your market value. There is no way to overemphasize how critical this factor is to establishing a strong sales identity.

[ ] People will want to be around you if they think you have value to them and/or their business. **You must become a valued and recognized resource.**

[ ] What do people regard as valuable?

  - Information about how they may profit
  - Information about how they can produce more effectively and/or efficiently
  - NOT information about you and/or your company

[ ] Those who value what you know and what you can do are inclined to attribute credibility in proportion to your **usefulness to them**.

[ ] Remember, put value in the hands of potential customers, without ever asking them to buy anything. That should be one of the first interactions you have with people you want to influence.

[ ] For existing customers, find something you know they consider valuable, and give it to him.

[ ] Always exceed people’s expectations by providing some form of added value:

  - before the sale
  - after the sale
  - asking nothing in return

[ ] If you don’t know what the other person considers valuable, your research is still incomplete.

[ ] The more value you provide to the other person, the less price matters.

[ ] Your customer never knows how good you really are until something goes wrong. They want to see how persistent you are in a crunch.

[ ] Build a reputation as a problem solver. Build a reputation as someone who will drop what they are doing and go out and do the right thing to protect their customer.

[ ] Be there the first time a customer tries a product. That signals an above-and-beyond level of caring and allows the customer to interact with you at their time of greatest uncertainty.
Be known as a person who gets things done. The world has precious few people who actually produce. Once people find someone who can produce the outcome(s) they want, those same people will give a great deal to keep that ‘producer’ around. Not only that, but when you can get things done, word gets around. And, you bring in more bidders for your skills and services.

In sales, it’s more who knows you, not who you know

Arguing with the customer is ALMOST ALWAYS the wrong thing to do

After you get the sale, it’s time to begin service that supports your customer’s decision and lays the foundation for future sales and endorsements. Salespeople are frequently unwilling to contact people after a sale is made. They are afraid there might be a problem. That’s always a mistake. A sale is the ultimate vote of confidence from your customer. Use that as an opportunity to support their buying decision and set the groundwork for your next approach:

“I honestly and briefly praised them for their buying decision. I remind them of something specific they did during the sales process that helped them make such a good decision”

ALWAYS ask for referrals. It reinforces the other person’s buying decision

Then, ask them if they know other people who would appreciate your help

You, the salesperson, can become the Competitive Advantage: Trust and service are the keys. That’s especially important in a marketplace that believes there is very little difference between the products of various vendors. If everyone is the same, even a small advantage produces huge results. You can be that advantage.

EXERCISE 5

Congratulations, you have built a detailed vision of the professional you want to become. If you keep that vision in your consciousness every day, part of the process of becoming who you want to be will occur without a specific effort on your part. Once you teach your mind to know what you want, it makes subtle adjustments to steer you in that direction. We become what we think about. But, not all of the process can be automatic. If you want to be extraordinary, you will need to undertake some extraordinary efforts to get there.

As part of this course, and to help you get on your way, you will plan at least three educational initiatives for yourself. And, you will complete at least one of them during the course.

First, read through the Train, Learn, Earn Your Advantage section. Pick three areas or topics where you would like to undertake initiatives for building your professional competence. Those initiatives can come directly from the listing, or you can create an education project that helps bring you closer to being the professional you described in Exercise 4:
• Maybe you want to take a writing skills course at your local community college. You don’t have to take it for a grade or credit. Just go and learn.

• If public speaking is something that would make you more effective, Toastmasters International® likely has a group in your area.

• Read a book that takes you toward being who you said you want to be. Thinkertoys by Michael Michalko, takes a little time to read, but it’s a remarkable tool in building your capacity for creative thinking.

• Want to know more about yourself? Grab a notebook and a pen. Sit down someplace that’s quiet, stay there for a while. Clear your mind, listen to yourself, and take notes. Do that for a half-hour every day for a week. You’ll be amazed what you have to teach yourself.

• Want to know what you do well? Ask 25 people you work with or for. Get them to commit to 15 minutes each. Take a notebook and a pen. Ask them, “What things do you think I do well?” Then sit there for 15 minutes and take notes. If they say something you want to know more about, ask them about it. It’s great practice for good (selling) listening technique.

It’s your choice. Be as creative as you like.

Once you’ve decided what you want to do, run the list by your mentor. Tell him/her which project you are going to do first, for this course. When you complete the first training project, be sure to let your mentor know. Tell him/her how things went and what you learned. If your mentor is not interested, you picked the wrong person.

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TRAIN, LEARN, EARN YOUR ADVANTAGE

[ ] No one is going to hand you any degree of success. That’s up to you to build on your own

[ ] Invest in yourself. Train yourself. It’s portable

[ ] Invest your time in things that can help you succeed. There are no neutral activities. You are either making progress or losing ground. If your competition is training, learning, working on becoming better... you, and your family, will pay the price for drifting along with no plan, no goals and no strategy for success.

[ ] Even if your plan is to ignore the things those around you and pour yourself and everything you have into a selfless enterprise, you’ll suck at it without a plan that’s well conceived and faithfully executed.

[ ] Learn how to do the things that build your brand. Read and study things that will build your value. Observe what really valuable people do. Get help from others: allow people to help you; ask people to help you

[ ] How much time do you spend learning something new?
[ ] Write.

• Writing effectively is a powerful business skill. Virtually every person who occupies a decision-making role reads about what they do. That’s a key part of how they reached that position.

• Writing will take you from where you are to any place you want to go

• The more you write, the more ideas you will get, and the clearer they will become

• Useful, original writing in journals, newspapers, web publications and industry organization literature leads others to conclude you might be useful resource.

• Being published has an authenticity about it. It is an affirmation that your thinking is clear and your positions are sound

• Being published gives you a position of leadership and authority

• Putting your ideas in writing and having those ideas distributed to your target audience allows those who agree, or disagree, with you and your ideas to connect. If there are weaknesses in your thinking, you can have that challenged and recognize the need to change or reinforce your position(s). If you can’t put your ideas in writing, you probably don’t understand them well enough to share with others. Writing forces us to think more clearly

[ ] Speak in Public:

• Do it very well.

• Do it often.

• Target the audience most useful in building your brand

• Speak to people who will value you

[ ] Effective public speaking will position you as a leader and a thinker in your community, and in your industry. Even those who disagree will recognize you as a “player”

[ ] Going into any meeting without preparation is STUPID:

Project (forecast what might occur) , anticipate and rehearse what you think the next meeting or call will be like:

• going into a meeting unprepared, even if the proposed topic has little to do with you, is an excellent opportunity to be perceived as an idiot

• what might go wrong - help the customer through these objections and/or concerns

• avoid setting yourself up for an adversarial encounter; whenever possible, try to have your battles in private, where egos and public perception aren’t the ruling factor
don't focus on yourself... approach every meeting, every contact, focused on the other person(s) and the need to find out what they want and what they need

by focusing on the other person you will remain more upbeat, positive and less vulnerable to open conflict

if you are prepared and focusing on the wants/needs of the others, participants are more likely to see you are part of the solution, rather than part of the problem

[ ] Creativity:

If you tell yourself you are creative, more creative things will happen

All creative people take risks... wherever your creativity takes you, risk comes along for the ride

Negative attitude blocks creative thought

Stupid people aren't very creative

Ideas are a lot like photographs of the Grand Canyon... the more you have, the greater the likelihood one will be great

Take a course in something you love

Celebrate the effort, not necessarily the results... sooner than you imagine, you will begin concentrating as much on what you're doing as you do on why you're doing it, more likely than not, you'll stumble across something really ingenious

We're not advocating that you lose sight of your goals. They're important. But, don't make goals the sole focus of your days. As they say: Life is a journey, not a destination. Creativity is found in the game, not the trophies. Everyone can play, not everyone gets a trophy... or, wants one.

If you want to learn more about creativity and how you can become more creative, look at the book Jeffrey Gitomer recommends:

Thinkertoys by Michael Michalko (Ten Speed Press)

[ ] It's not so much what you know, it's what you're good at:

• Ask others to help you recognize what they believe you do well

• Discover how you can get better at what you already do well

Unless something you do very poorly is an absolutely key component of the value you must to provide for others, spend your time learning to excel at what you already do well, rather than trying to 'correct' areas where you are weak.
Remediating your weaknesses is usually an inefficient use of energy and resources.

To learn more on this concept, see:

Go Put Your Strengths to Work by Marcus Buckingham (Free Press)

Be vigilant to invest enough of your time into things that can help you succeed.

EXERCISE 6

The final exercise in this course will encompass three sections:

- Dealing with Competition
- Eliminating the Distractions
- Maintenance and Repair

The exercise is very simple. Organize a group of at least four people to get together and talk about stuff. All participants should understand that this is a support group for professional salespeople and/or group members interested in becoming more influential within their environment. Set the group up any place you like, where you have enough privacy to talk together about issues that matter to you. A small meeting room in a local restaurant is really good. You can meet for lunch or drinks after work. Have at least two meetings of 30 minutes each. If you find it useful, keep meeting as the group finds helpful. In most cases, the meetings get longer and the group grows larger. It all happens on its own.

Topics you might want to start with, just to get things going:

- your situation, their situation
- this course... the other members don’t necessarily have to be participating in this course for the group to talk about it
- your competition, their competition (see Dealing with Competition)
- distractions, as listed in Eliminating Distractions
- the economy
- disasters in your sales career

... it’s your meeting, you decide
DEALING WITH COMPETITION

You probably noticed that we haven’t included much about ‘the competition.’ Most people in business, salespeople in particular, pay far too much attention to competitors. If you are not succeeding, it is rarely because of something a competitor has done. More often than not, your competitor is benefiting from things you have failed to do, or failed to do well. If you concentrate on the attitudes and skill sets you targeted, the competition will not be much of a problem. You will either beat them, or they will hire you.

Like price, competitors matter. But, to the extent you are responding to what the competition does, you are allowing your competitor to run your business...and, your life.

Competitors are like weeds. They will take advantage of fertile soil and excellent growing conditions. If you help people become successful, they will help you fend off the pests for you...just as healthy plants do in a well-tended garden. Tend your garden well and there’s much less chance for strange new plants (weeds) to get a foothold.

Always be aware that competitors are out there. Interact with your customer at least twice a month. Bring them something of value. This isn’t just something that would be nice to do. Competitors are serious about taking your beautiful, productive garden away and harvesting all your hard work for themselves. The sales person at your competitor’s office has a family, just like you. His boss has told him or her to take that garden, or there will be no job. In their mind, they are just as “right” as you. Their motives are just as pure. It’s a simple struggle. The best sales person survives. Everyone else does not.

Whatever it takes, figure out a way to know more about your accounts than any of your competitors do. Never waste their time. Have value to give every time you make contact. Ask for feedback: what’s working, what’s not working, what’s next, how you can help them.

ELIMINATING THE DISTRACTIONS

Stay around positive people, and away from office politics, hostile coworkers and especially other salespeople who are negative. They are all like sucking insects, and they’ll draw the life right out of you, if you let them. Be clear on this. Pests don’t go away if you ignore them. You must eliminate the parasites. Do whatever you must to keep them from influencing your environment. If you find yourself being the one whose negative, complaining, defeatist attitude is on display, get help. Get help immediately. You are in danger of becoming a pest. Pests are eventually eliminated.

In the workplace, the less time you spend in other people’s business, in other people’s problems, in other people’s drama, the more time you’ll have for your own success.

If you add up the time you spend on things that are none of your business, of no direct concern to you, or situations where you cannot affect the outcome (news, TV and stuff that’s just crap) you could become the greatest salesperson on planet Earth.
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

“Sales professionals, in particular, are constantly measured against rigid, economically driven barometers and exposed to constant internal and external competition. It makes you feel like you’re on an island about yourself.”

When market conditions, economic trends, or product quality issues create difficulties for you, it’s not unusual for the situation to start getting the better of you. And before you know it, you begin to think the world is conspiring against you, or that you’re no good at what you do anymore.

When you feel like saying, “I quit!”:

• create a new and different environment
  You can’t sell when you’re tired, frustrated, depressed, and unhappy. You’ve got to make a change.

• cultivate new associations
  Find or develop a support group: other salespeople sharing experiences, swapping war stories, and encouraging and teaching each other. They don’t need to be selling the same thing or working in the same industry. In fact, it may be helpful if the group comes from a broad mix of industries.

• get new information
  When something goes wrong or, when something goes right, both present opportunities to think and learn. Pay attention.

build a new mindset
  Self managed selling helps me realize how good I already am and lets me enjoy becoming even better.

  When what you do is unacceptable, reprimand your behavior: be specific and pay attention to how you feel about that behavior.

  Sell yourself to yourself. When you think well of yourself, it gives you a mental lift. It literally energizes you.

An acid test of a real sales professional is often how they look at setbacks, mistakes, and little perceived injustices, coupled with how quickly they act to return the climate to one of the mutual win-win.

Great salespeople have a plan. They anticipate the unexpected. It’s not that great salespeople always know what to do in every circumstance. But, they know that things are going to ‘hit the wall’ from time to time.

Great salespeople have learned that bad experiences often provide the best referrals later and lead to repeat business... if you’ve done a good job dealing with them.
Great salespeople know that when someone does not purchase, they are temporarily rejecting what I propose. They are not necessarily rejecting me.

Great salespeople know that the more often you honestly appraise yourself, the less stress you feel and the less ego you invest in getting the sale. After all, you’re most interested in the other person’s best interest.

Problems, at any time, represent an opportunity for you to help people, to provide added service and value, to become more effective going forward.


Don’t quit. Don’t panic. Don’t press. Don’t quit.

Making money is not your purpose in selling. It’s one of the rewards for being successful.

Learn to love the selling process. Everything else flows from doing that well. Don’t get distracted by those who talk about your job only in terms of dollars. That usually means they don’t understand anything about selling, are completely in the dark about what to do, or they are an ass.

Be the best and the money will show up.
APPENDIX

THE BASICS (All Sections - Exercise 1)

[ ] Do you have clearly defined goals?
Do you have a plan to achieve them? Is that plan the basis for how you work on a daily level?

When you create your own goals and mentally see them as already accomplished in a measured, competent way, you lessen the unknown:
- You can see where you are going, and boost the probability you’ll get there
- You become more confident, and others have more confidence in you
- You feel good about yourself

People who feel good about themselves, produce good results

Self-belief is the first and most critical function of the selling process. How is yours?

The most powerful fuel for high personal performance is a high level of self-esteem

Sales is a confidence business. Maybe the ultimate confidence business

Learn to recognize opportunity. Act to capitalize on it.

Be willing to take risks and make mistakes. Accept responsibility.

The more positive you are, the easier it is to succeed - have fun doing your job

The more you love it, the more you will sell

The more you believe it, the more you will sell

How conducive to success is your attitude and your environment?

Find something that you love, find something that you can believe in, find an environment that’s creative and supportive, and people that you can respect... then jump in to that situation with both feet

The more you prepare for this sale, the more you will sell

Mediocrity stems from a lack of belief more than a lack of skill. Passion is the intangible in a salesperson’s presentation and manner that makes the message transferable and believable.

Believing that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to, that you work for the greatest company in the world, that you sell the greatest products and services in the world, and that you are the greatest salesperson in the world, all lead to a high self-esteem.

High self belief leads to high success

Sell to satisfy your customers’ needs not your own
I have more fun and enjoy more financial success when I stopped trying to get what I want and start helping other people to get what they want.

When the typical person thinks about selling, the underlying presumption is that people do not want to buy the product or service. It is as though a salesperson’s job is to be smart enough and tough enough to get people to do what they don’t really want to do.

If you sell things that people don’t want or need, they won’t come back. Even worse, they tend to look for opportunities to share that unpleasant experience with others.

People don’t buy for your reasons - they buy for their reasons. Find their reasons first and sell to them based upon that finding. The most important process in selling is finding the other person’s “why.”

You can change the other person’s “why”. But, that should be undertaken as a long-term (marketing) project, not be tied to the selling process.

Never forget that people hate to be sold, but they love to buy. If I approach selling as I should, all I’m doing is helping people do what they already like to do: feel good about what they buy.

Sell on purpose:

- be conscious of what you are doing
- don’t unconsciously repeat a memorized sales routine
- always have a plan
- take the time, make the effort to know them and what they want/need
- care about people before, while, and after you try to sell to them

When you are under pressure to sell, the other person senses it and backs off.

Whenever you feel a disconnect or uneasiness, remember to put yourself in the buyer’s place. Try to feel what they feel:

- what and who do they trust and/or distrust?
- what do they fear?
- what do they want?
- how do they want to feel about what you propose?

Help people get the good feelings they want, about the things they buy and about themselves. There is no adversarial component in that approach to selling.

If you focus every contact with people on them and what they want, every contact will bring you closer to a long-term sales relationship.

"All things being equal, people want to do business with their friends.”
"All things being not quite so equal, people still want to do business with their friends.”

Know your product cold... all the advantages, all the shortcomings, and how these attributes make people feel. That’s your knowledge bank. You can reference (withdraw) from it whenever you need. The more to know (deposit) about what you are
selling, the more you can concentrate on the other person. Too often, the salesperson loses focus worrying about whether they will be tripped up by product or market issues. Not many people value a salesperson who knows less than they do about the product or service.

[ ] You aren’t likely to strengthen your knowledge base by watching TV

[ ] Making people smile or laugh puts them at ease and creates an atmosphere more conducive for agreement

[ ] Funny and friendly are 1000 times more engaging than professional

[ ] NEVER substitute comedy for knowledge or skill. People laugh at clowns. They don’t seek out clowns to help solve problems or offer advice on matters that are important to them.

[ ] Be careful about telling jokes... see The Little Red Book of Selling for guidance.

[ ] Selling is not about techniques. Selling is about focus and creative verbal exchange. And, the only way to master focus is to work at it

[ ] It’s not about blackberries, cell phones or e-mails. It’s about the one-on-one, face-to-face contact where you get to know your customer, hear their problems, and learn their dreams.

[ ] People must first believe in, and like, a messenger or the message has no credibility.

[ ] People sense whether you care, and are far more likely to trust you if you do

[ ] You must have at least as much passion for the process as for the result. If you don’t, you will lose to somebody who does

[ ] After all, you don’t make the sale. The other person does. The more you let other people determine what is important to them, then relate what you have to offer to how they want to feel (about what they buy and about themselves), the more likely you will succeed.

[ ] If you lose the sale, and the person wins by your loss, what you were offering was the wrong choice for them.

[ ] A person is less inclined to accept your assistance if they:
   - don’t trust you
   - don’t feel the need for your service or product
   - don’t believe the product offers more help than the competitor’s
   - don’t feel any urgency to buy (act or make a change)

[ ] Your need to sell is of no interest to the other person, except to the extent that they see it working to their advantage. Employing ‘need to sell’ as a strategy is simply another form of selling on price. There is no loyalty established. You have built no value in the eyes of that person.
If you neglect your customer, if they see you as indifferent, they will stop growing as far as you are concerned. Love may grow stronger with absence, but trust dies quickly if not nourished and tended.

Customers memories are often short. Turning away from them, even for a little while, is enough for them to forget about you.

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Most failures occur from quitting too soon.

The selling cycle timeline is to the end of time and space. If you give up, people will assume you didn’t really believe what you were telling them, never really cared about them, or both.

In sales, persistence is figuring out what works and replicating those successful actions over and over... repeat it exactly.


Never be afraid to advocate to those around you for what you believe is the right thing to do.

Relationships are won and lost on the basis of doing or not doing the right thing when the chips are down.

If they trust you, they are more likely to recommend you to others.

The more people trust you, the more they’re willing to share information with you - that’s the acid test for trust.

If people already know you, you already have credibility.

I put useful information in the hands of my most probable purchasers so they can benefit, get to know me, come to respect me, and call me wanting to purchase.

People are not looking for facts, they want answers and solutions. The better job I do in providing answers and solutions, the more valuable I am.

What’s valuable:
- something done for other people, in favor of that person
- given first
- given to people who can help the most
- given often
- given without expectation of anything in return

The sales garden is a philosophy of sales, a mindset that can be applied to any other approach to sales. It deals with the bigger picture of how to keep yourself fresh and energized.
If you view the process of taking care of your customers as fun and rewarding, just as you do when you tend your garden, then you'll take the time to do all the hard work, and you'll do it gladly.

By treating a business like a garden:
- the business grows better
- life becomes simpler
- you are happier and more relaxed

Self managed sales:
- decide what is the most important 20%
- make that 20% your goal
- in 250 words or less write those goals (as accomplished fact)
- continually check to ensure your behavior is taking you to your goals

Goals focus my effort more efficiently, and get me where I want to be more quickly

Decide who you want as a customer (who is the important decision-maker), then get to know their business better than they do

Never surprise your customer with something they don’t want or need (usually these things originate in your company’s meeting rooms from people who never talk to customers)

Weak and scattered thoughts are worthless. They will not do you any good.

Strong, focused thoughts that include visualization... that’s good stuff

We become what we think about. Whatever you think will work is usually the way you will do it

There is a strong connection between clarity of vision and the excitement about working toward that vision

For a vision to be motivating, you must see what you want to achieve, in detail. Clear, positive pictures give you energy and create optimistic feelings that carry you through

The One Minute Sales Person offers a simple, effective technique for positive change:
- Goals begin behaviors. Consequences maintain behaviors.
- Help yourself realize your goals by catching yourself doing something right...
  ...then praise yourself - take a few minutes to feel good about what you’ve done, even if it’s just approximately right, then tell yourself to do this more often
BUILD YOUR BRAND

( Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 )

Your brand is:
- how hard you work, and for whom
- how smart you work
- how dedicated you are, and to whom
- how much you care, and about whom
- how valuable you are to others

Advantages of a good brand:
- develops confidence in you, your company, your product, your service
- establishes you as an expert and a resource
- separates you from your competition
- builds your stature, your image as defined by others
- creates demand for you

If you are no longer trying to get people to do what they don’t want to do, the stress of selling is greatly reduced. Adversarial relationships go away, because you and the other person are no longer locked in a battle of wills. No one has to lose so that the other person can win.

Selling is about people. Take care of the people and the numbers will come:
- let’s find what’s best, displaces me-against-them
- let’s work together to find the solution, displaces get-the-sale-now
- learn more about their business and ways they want to be helped
- focus attention on them as a person
- recognize that everyone is different - different approaches, different solutions
- invest the time and effort to know your customer on a deeper level
- learn to be more observant; more attention to the other person, what they want

Always be asking. Always be listening

When you are with your customer, listen and ask questions (75%). The customer should do most of the talking and you should do most of the listening

Asking the right questions is critical. It produces solutions. Ultimately, it takes less time. Cultivate listening as an active skill. Read between the lines, ask questions to check your assumptions. All that can be learned by anyone.
Ask questions to learn, not to lead or manipulate.

Sell yourself, not your product or your service.

Build your network.

Establish yourself as a presence.

Build and polish your skills.

Attract new customers.

Have an impact in your customers’ businesses.

How valuable are you to others? That is your market value. There is no way to overemphasize how critical this factor is to establishing a strong sales identity.

People will want to be around you if they think you have value to them and/or their business. **You must become a valued and recognized resource.**

What do people regard as valuable?
- Information about how they may profit
- Information about how they can produce more effectively and/or efficiently
- NOT information about you and/or your company

Those who value what you know and what you can do are inclined to attribute credibility in proportion to your **usefulness to them**

Remember, put value in the hands of potential customers, without ever asking them to buy anything. That should be one of the first interactions you have with people you want to influence.

For existing customers, find something you know they consider valuable, and give it to him.

Always exceed people’s expectations by providing some form of added value:
- before the sale
- after the sale
- asking nothing in return

If you don’t know what the other person considers valuable, your research is still incomplete.

The more value you provide to the other person, the less price matters.

Your customer never knows how good you really are until something goes wrong. They want to see how persistent you are in a crunch.

Build a reputation as a problem solver. Build a reputation as someone who will drop what they are doing and go out and do the right thing to protect their customer.
Be there the first time a customer tries a product. That signals an above-and-beyond level of caring and allows the customer to interact with you at their time of greatest uncertainty.

Be known as a person who gets things done. The world has precious few people who actually produce. Once people find someone who can produce the outcome(s) they want, those same people will give a great deal to keep that ‘producer’ around. Not only that, but when you can get things done, word gets around. And, you bring in more bidders for your skills and services.

In sales, it’s more who knows you, not who you know.

Arguing with the customer is virtually ALWAYS the wrong thing to do.

After you get the sale, it’s time to begin service that supports your customer’s decision and lays the foundation for future sales and endorsements. Salespeople are frequently unwilling to contact people after a sale is made. They are afraid there might be a problem. That’s always a mistake. A sale is the ultimate vote of confidence from your customer. Use that as an opportunity to support their buying decision and set the groundwork for your next approach:

“I honestly and briefly praised them for their buying decision. I remind them of something specific they did during the sales process that helped them make such a good decision”

ALWAYS ask for referrals. It reinforces the other person’s buying decision.

Then, ask them if they know other people who would appreciate your help.