

The Sales Mentor
by Bobby L. Butler
Excerpts

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From the Preface

My most basic philosophy regarding selling is that selling (or, the ability to sell) is instinctive to every human being. I say this because I believe that selling goes deep into our innermost being as the need to survive and the will to thrive. Therefore, the ability to sell is, in fact, at the core of human nature for each of us.

To understand this philosophy one needs to fully comprehend that selling is nothing more than persuading. As such, it is fundamentally the ability to 1) draw attention and 2) incite to action. In other words, at its very essence selling is the ability to persuade others to get what you need.

To make my point here, let's consider how each human being begins life persuading others. We do so by examining how a newborn baby persuades to get what it needs. Consider the following statement:

As you know and perhaps have experienced directly, every newborn baby has needs, and the most fundamental of these are love, nourishment and comfort. However, with one exception the newborn is virtually a helpless human being when it comes to meeting its own needs.

This exception is that all babies have a built-in mechanism—, and in fact, for the first few months of life the only mechanism—to let a parent, guardian or caretaker know that it needs to be loved, nourished and comforted. Therefore, it instinctively knows how to 1) draw attention to itself and 2) incite its parent, guardian or caretaker to give it what it needs.

To fully demonstrate this, I'll ask you a series of questions. And unless you've spent your entire life up to now in a vacuum or on some remote and desolate island, you already know the answers to these questions.

When a newborn baby needs to be held what does it do? Or, what about when the newborn needs to be fed? What does it also do? And, what is it that the newborn does when it needs a diaper change?

I am sure that you answered, "it cries" in each case. Isn't that right? Has your attention been captured in this way before?

Okay, here is my next set of questions for you.

That same baby who started crying to get its parent, guardian or caretaker's attention to be held, fed and/or changed somehow realized that no one's 1) picked it up yet, 2) fed it yet and/or 3) changed its diaper yet. So, what does it do next?

How about, "it cries louder?" Have you ever experienced this? Has it caused you to take action?

Okay, here is my final question for you.

Our baby still hasn't captured the attention that it needs and somehow it knows just what to do next. So, what is that?

Well it's been my experience, and most likely yours as well, that it cries even louder, even to the point where it turns red and its veins pop up on its head, and it kicks and whales about until someone finally comes to its attention.

Can you relate to this?

From Chapter 3: Position Selection

Many of us who are tenured sales professionals today, and most that have previously pursued a profession in sales, can attest to the fact that the position selection process is ultimately critical to our success in sales. We also understand that, for most, the insight and skills necessary for working through this process are generally not present either before the start of our careers or during the early stages. Here my friend is the rub and a true paradox, because to possess the capabilities necessary for thorough sales position selection, the professional must have knowledge of the profession generally and some understanding of the specific sales position(s) that he will pursue. But because of inherent limitations within the profession, he can only acquire such knowledge, experience and expertise through direct exposure in conventional sales environments.

Why is this? The answers are simple.

First unlike other professionals, sales professionals are not generally prepared for their professions with formal education, apprenticeship or vocational training. Rather, regardless of institutional venue or format (high school, trade school, college/university), there are no curricula and few, if any, classes dedicated to the sales profession. Generally, any sales or salesmanship training offered by these institutions is offered at the college/university level, done on a limited scale, and usually offered only as part of a marketing or general business curriculum. Therefore, little or no attention is given the sales profession in pre-employment educational environments. Thus, unlike most other professionals (accountants, attorneys, doctors, engineers or carpenters, plumbers), sales professionals are not educationally or functionally prepared for their chosen field.

Second, in addition to the lack of pre-employment training, most sales professionals receive little or no professional training and development support during employment. For those who do receive training in the work environment, it is estimated that 90% of the training is only product-based and most of this training, perhaps 60%, is rather simplistic. Therefore, most new or novice sales professionals are left to their own devices when it comes to career development and have only two choices: 1) if they remain in the field long enough, they learn their profession purely through trial and error, or 2) if they are wise, they seek training and development support from external resources—usually at their own expense—while also learning, perhaps to a lesser degree, from their mistakes.

I call this “the school of hard knocks” for sales professionals. This situation requires them to learn basic survival skills in addition to gaining the experience and expertise necessary for career development principally on their own.

Note: It should be said that some sales professionals (perhaps 10%) are fortunate in that they align themselves with organizations that both appreciate and understand the value of their profession, and thus value them as professionals. These organizations provide professional training and development support. Therefore the few individuals who align themselves with supportive organizations are able to rely less on survival skills and more on their intellect as they are generally exposed to what I call “the sales university system.” These systems are generally structured to provide extensive career development support.

As mentioned before, there is paradox here—one which few other professionals are faced with. Because of the lack of pre-employment education and limited training and development during employment, most sales professionals learn their profession only after years of real-time exposure in the field, and as stated previously, by way of trial and error. Therefore, most sales professionals don't truly find their selling niche until they have experienced firsthand (and learned from those experiences) the pros and cons of the profession in general, and specifically, the positions held during the early stages of their careers. Subsequently, provided they stay in the profession long enough and work hard at developing their professionalism, they eventually develop both the insight and skill necessary to chart their courses for successful careers.

From Chapter 19: A Winning Time Management Plan

Before exploring how to build, launch and manage your winning time management plan, however, I'd like to first reiterate to you in greater detail the value of time management to you. As such, let's first consider the following statement:

If I were to sum up my concept of time management and how it relates and is important to each of us as sales professionals, I'd do so by emphatically stating to you that when it comes to time management, if you are not in control of your time, then, simply put, someone or something else is in control of you.

While I am not sure if this statement means anything to you or not, at this point I want you to key on the word "control" for when it comes to time management, control is essential. Let me explain this by taking you through a series of questions.

Question 1: As a sales professional, looking back over the past few days, weeks, months, even years, who or what would you say has been in control of you, your time, your effort, your sales day?

Provided you already have a winning time management plan, it is highly likely that your answer to this question is that you were in control. And if that is, in fact, the case, I applaud you because you will no doubt already understand most, if not all, of what I will explain in this chapter. However, if you do not already have a winning time management plan (and my assumption is that you don't), it is likely that your answer to this question is that someone or something else was in control, or perhaps he/she/it were in control most of the time.

Question 2: Okay, then, assuming you are of the second camp, tell me how the lack of control has affected or will affect your level of success.

If you are already in sales, my guess is that the effect has been negative. However, if you have not yet begun your sales career, my guess is that you can only guess just how negative this can be to you. And if this is the case, I recommend that you take this scenario outside of the sales environment and apply it to what you are most familiar with—school, other work, sports, or parenting. You see, the principle applies regardless of environment. You are either in control or you are not, and you are either productive/successful or you are not. Get my point? I hope so.

Question 3: Okay, how does this make you feel?

My guess is that, regardless of environment, your answer to this question is that you feel bad, inhibited, unproductive, or unsuccessful. Am I correct? It's more than likely that I am.

Question 4: And finally, what are you prepared to do about it?

Again, my guess is that your answer to this question is that, provided you are actively involved in selling, you want to correct the situation, and thus, you are prepared do what it takes to take control. And if you are not yet engaged in the profession, my guess is that you will want to do everything possible to avoid the situation when you start selling. Am I correct? My assumption is that you agree with me on this; whatever your situation.

Are you beginning to understand the meaning of my statement now?

From Chapter 20: The Three Way Win

Throughout my tenure in the profession I have found that, all too often, most of the sales people that I have worked with had little or no understanding of the principles behind the three-way winning philosophy. Also, it has been my observation that this proved to be a great hindrance to those individuals' successes in the profession and their development as sales professionals.

Therefore, in selling you must understand that, generally speaking, there are three principal parties involved in every sales interaction which, in their own right, have vested interest in the outcome of the interactions. Also, you must understand that it is incumbent upon you, as a sales professional, to ensure that each of the principal parties engaged in your sales interactions win. Consequently, the three-way winning philosophy is a sales philosophy that is predicated on the premise that in sales interactions, the sales professional not only wins, but as importantly, so must his clients and employer.

Although this may appear to be a no-brainer for you, more often than not, the best of us truly must learn the significance of this philosophy before we can effectively make it a key part of our success as sales professionals. It is therefore very likely that you are, in fact, in need of fully comprehending the philosophy.