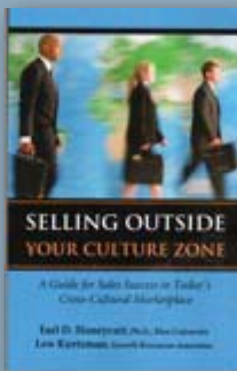


Changing Times

SELLING OUTSIDE YOUR CULTURE ZONE



by

Lew Kurtzman and Dr. Earl Honeycutt

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Traditional Sales Training Doesn't Work Any More Train Business Professionals - Not Peddlers

What is the best way to train salespeople to be effective? That question does not have an easy answer. Indeed, sales success depends on many factors. It often relies on the product, buying trends, market conditions and other aspects that influence decision making. The old term, "born salesman," refers to the classic fast-talking peddler. Hardly an example for modern sales professionals to follow; yet still a model of many sales training lessons.

Training sales people now includes a wide variety of skills that bring people together in agreement that a product or service is the best choice. Fine tuned interpersonal skills are imperative for successful selling. Although product knowledge is important, buyers have immediate access to product details online. More critical is the knowledge of how products can help to solve specific problems. Creativity is also needed when it is unknown whether or not a product or service may be of value. Empty promises or hunches usually backfire unless the risks are made clear and there is agreement on the uncertainty of success.

Time management also is a key factor toward selling success. Timing is critical as window of opportunities open and close rapidly. "Howdy" calls may be comfortable, but they are also expensive when there is no return on the time investment.

Knowing buyers' respective roles in the decision making process helps to plan for targeted presentations. Top sales professionals know their respective accounts inside out. They carefully plan, schedule and execute with detailed precision.

The Problem

Traditional sales training provides outdated approaches to selling success. Assumptions are made that certain "techniques" will somehow improve one's ability to close sales. Many of these "techniques" worked in the past but are no longer effective and can cause delays and botched sales. For example, the old *assumptive close* is deemed as overbearing and pompous by most modern buyers. In fact most of the ancient sales methods were meant to be traps. The term *sales pitch* comes from baseball where the pitcher strives to trick the batter. Not quite a mutually beneficial business intention! That's why English language dictionaries define the verb, to Sell, with words like, Hoax, Cheat, Violate and other adverse expressions.

The Solution

Rather than train sales professionals to practice clever and tricky maneuvers, why not provide them with the skills that are intended to earning customer trust and respect? It is the responsibility of sales management to help the members of their teams to learn how to plan and skillfully schedule their time for maximum return. But training them to build a customer "fan club" will create referrals, shortening the prospecting time, and develop lasting business relationships and repeat business. As relationships grow stronger, so does the probability of making sales. The old sales "techniques" were largely adversarial, causing mistrust, disappointment and lost time. All GRA sales workshops stress the professional skills that build customer loyalty and open doors to new business opportunities.

The Yellow Buggy Classic Sales Tale
<http://www.grasolutions.com/SalesTales.html>

"We are already getting some positive feedback on orders in accounts where the skills have been practiced." Regional sales manager of a large scientific instrument company

Worn out "techniques" Peddler Ploys

The business environment is undergoing rapid change. The internet has opened communication links that were science fiction not many years ago. Information moves at lightning speed around the world opening frontiers of new sales opportunities

Nonetheless, sales training has lagged behind. For the most part, sales training sessions still emphasize product benefits and tricky ploys to get buyers to give in to persuasive "silver bullets" or closing tactics. A few examples are:

The Tie Down

This is the rhetorical question intended to get a positive response. *You agree that the model XYZ will speed up your process, don't you?* This ploy is so old that it has become rusty and repugnant.

The Ben Franklin Close

This is as old as Ben himself. This is the technique of listing the pros and cons of a buying decision. The trick is to stack the list on the pros side, while minimizing the cons. This is, indeed, a "con" job. The peddler always has a pocketful of benefits to add to the pros side of the equation. Often those benefits have no connection to the buyer's actual needs.

The Closed Probe

This manipulative scheme is out of the 1960's sales training manuals. It assumes that the buyer will select one of two choices. *Which do you like more, blue or green?* The modern buyer has endless choices and can easily find a product that is specific to his or her preferences.

The Anonymous Third Person

This technique is used to overcome objections by telling buyers that others

felt the same way until they realized how much the product or service will _____ (*insert benefit*). This maneuver allows the peddler to appeal to the buyer's comfort in knowing that his or her objection is legitimate. The intent is to continue to pitch features and benefits. It rarely addresses the buyer's specific situation.

Supporting Statements

Here's another one of those '60's textbook tactics. It's used to confirm anything that the buyer says that is a positive step to the sale. For example, if a buyer states that he or she likes a particular feature, the Supporting Statement might be; *You are very wise to think that the framulator will help to solve your static problem.* Pretty patronizing, isn't it? (sorry about that tie down)

Proof Statements

These are usually documents that show the cynical buyer "proof" that your product or service does what you claim it does. While documentation is necessary in sales, it must be pertinent and totally accurate. Too often proof statements are nothing more than prepared illustrations of unsubstantiated, bias information.

These are just a few of the peddler's "tricks of the trade." Others sound more like wrestling moves than selling skills:

The Inverted Tie Down

The Tag On

The Alternate Advance

The Porcupine Technique

-----and the old favorite:

The Tag Team Close

All GRA sales workshops stress the most up-to-date selling skills with a clear emphasis on professionalism.

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SCHEDULING

To schedule a GRA workshop, call **910.617.1817** to discuss your training objectives and requirements. Once the critical training needs are outlined, workshop content is laid out. GRA works closely with clients to match content with corporate values and culture. Workshops are conducted only after client approval of the content and presentation materials.

Workshops must be scheduled at least one month in advance.

Head Coach



LEW KURTZMAN

Lew has been coaching and training managers and sales professionals for over thirty years. He founded GRA in 1993 because he was unsatisfied with ordinary, "off-the-shelf" training programs.

Lew spends much of his time researching real world business situations and applies his findings to every GRA workshop. This insures that all training content is up-to-date and realistic.

The highly requested workshop, **SELLING FOR PROFIT**, has been enhanced to reduce discounting.

<http://www.grasolutions.com/Prosell.html>

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