



Understand Selling

Target customers,
close deals,
win new sales



KEN LANGDON



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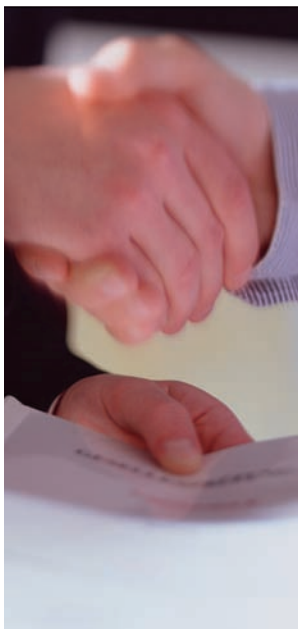
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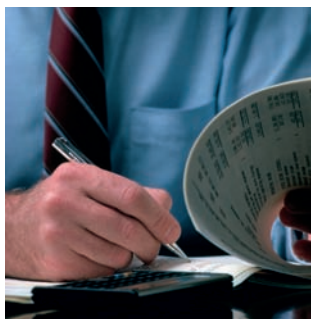
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Introduction

No business can succeed without effective salespeople. Understanding professional salesmanship is, therefore, a key competency not only for front-line salespeople, but for anyone whose job in any way affects the most important asset any organization has—its customers.

Professional sellers understand the necessity of making an excellent first impression. They know that a feature of their product only helps to make a sale if the customer can see how it will benefit them. And they understand each stage of the sales process, from the basics of questioning and listening to leading a customer toward saying “Yes, please—I’ll buy it.” So whether your customer is someone in a clothing store, a highly skilled buyer in a multinational, an entire board committee, or a middle manager controlling a budget, you



need to develop the selling skills that will make more profitable sales quickly.

Understand Selling helps you to assess your current selling skills and then guides you through every aspect of the sales process,

from effective opening techniques, through to the best ways to satisfy your customers and manage a sales team. It takes you from making the first telephone contact with a new prospect and planning your sales campaign to making the first sale and delivering your promises. It also looks at how to handle your key accounts—your most important customers, who typically supply up to 80 percent of an organization’s total sales revenues—and tells you how to plan and manage such accounts to ensure customer loyalty and a growing stream of predictable, profitable sales.

**Effective selling is
the foundation of all
business success**

Specially commissioned photographs illustrate the subtle visual signals a customer sends, and show you how to interpret and select the right technique for the right moment. There are also invaluable case studies, techniques that you can practice in your everyday life, professional tips, and special features on key aspects of the selling process—in short, everything you need to understand selling and become a top salesperson.



Assessing Your Skills

The aim of this questionnaire is to get you to think about your selling skills and assess your scope for improvement, so answer honestly. Complete it before reading the book, choosing the answer that comes closest to your preferred response, and putting the appropriate letter in the "Before" box. After you have read the book and applied the techniques, complete the questionnaire a second time.

- | | Before | After |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 How often do you use open questions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A You are not sure what they are. | | |
| B Whenever you meet a prospective customer. | | |
| C Frequently throughout the selling cycle. | | |
| 2 How do you describe your products? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A In great detail, emphasizing the features that beat the competition. | | |
| B You concentrate on the features that seem to interest the prospect. | | |
| C You describe the features only in terms of their benefits to the prospect. | | |
| 3 How well do you establish the prospect's requirements? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A You assume all prospects need your products. | | |
| B You ask them for their requirements early in the sales campaign. | | |
| C You listen to their needs, summarize them back, and check regularly to see if they change. | | |
| 4 How accurate are your sales forecasts? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A It's impossible to forecast in your business. | | |
| B You have months when they are quite accurate and others when they are miles out. | | |
| C You usually hit your targets, within 10 percent. | | |

Before After

5 How often do you set time aside for finding prospective customers?

- A You do it when you run out of them.
- B You do it from time to time.
- C You do it every week at different times.

6 What percentage of your time do you talk during an opening sales call?

- A Most of the time, to maximize selling time.
- B About fifty-fifty.
- C You aim for a balance of 20 percent you talking, with 80 percent from the prospect.

7 How well do you distinguish your offering from your competition's?

- A You can't in your business; the products are pretty much the same.
- B You know your products' USPs.
- C You can demonstrate USPs in your organization and your market position.

8 How well do you establish the prospect's basis of decision?

- A You are unfamiliar with the term.
- B You ask about the criteria at the first meeting.
- C You use the prospect's basis of decision as the framework of a sales campaign.

9 Do you maintain good records of contacts?

- A They're on a database.
- B You keep details until you have made a sale.
- C You keep your lifetime address book updated.

10 How do you complete an opening call?

- A You thank the prospect for his or her time and say that you will call back.
- B You explain the actions you are going to take following the meeting.
- C You agree on an action plan that always includes an action for the prospect to complete.

Before After

11 Do you give discounts or other concessions?

- A Your starting price is the best you can make.
- B You start with the book terms and conditions, and offer what you can at the appropriate time.
- C You never give anything away unless it is vital to do so, and always show great reluctance.

12 How much time do you waste on prospects who do not, in the end, buy from you?

- A It happens all the time—that's selling.
- B If it becomes obvious that they are not going to buy, you drop the prospect.
- C You qualify prospects continuously and always explain your reasons to unqualified prospects.

13 How do you measure customer satisfaction?

- A You get a feel for it when complaints increase.
- B You get a few customers to fill in a customer satisfaction form at the end of each quarter.
- C You agree on customer satisfaction targets and use external and internal surveys.

14 How well do you know your key account's strategy, strengths, and weaknesses?

- A You don't need to in order to sell your products.
- B You ask the main buyer how business is going on a regular basis.
- C You have an agreed Account Development Plan that you keep up to date with this information.

Final Scores

	A	B	C
Before	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Analysis

Mostly As

Your answers suggest that you are fairly new to selling and, while you may be enthusiastic, you need to think about the basic techniques of professional selling and the sales process. Consider first your contact with prospects and customers, and learn to listen more. Then work on the selling process to ensure that you understand each stage and are confident how far down the selling track you are at any point in time. Think more about your customers and what they need and want.

Mostly Bs

You have some knowledge of professional selling and deal with your prospects and customers quite well. You are starting to see the sale from the customer's point of view, but you need to put more time and energy into improving your skills in this area. Start with one customer and one sales campaign and plan your way through each stage in the process. Be self-critical of your overall approach to a key account.

Mostly Cs

You certainly have a professional approach to your role as a salesperson. Make sure, however, that you establish good rapport with customers as well as treating them professionally. Concentrate on the long-term strategy and use some of the techniques in this book to help build mutually profitable relationships. Use these techniques to assist other people in your team to improve their skills. Show them how important it is to have open and honest contacts with prospects and customers.

Conclusion

If this is the first time you have done this self-assessment, then bear in mind the above analysis as you read the book. Pay special attention to the areas highlighted by your responses and take onboard the tips and techniques—these will help you to reduce the number of A responses, next time around, and help you to achieve a more balanced mixture of Bs and Cs. After you have read the book and had a chance to put the techniques into practice, take the quiz again. Provided that you have answered honestly, you will be able to directly measure your progress and should see a big improvement.