



# **SELLING**

By: Peter M. Mosley

Well, as we are knee deep in the “ECONOCLYPSE”, I just may have the solution for you.

It stems from something I have been noticing for years. We can't sell. Full stop.

I can list dozens of alleged sales contacts I have had over the last few months alone, with seemingly professional sales folks who, quite frankly, couldn't sell eternal life to a dead person. I believe this is a pandemic. And, no a “Pandemic” isn't a sick, cuddly, black and white bear.

We hide behind marketing (Whatever the hell that is today?) with all that PowerPoint drivel with its spinning globes, throbbing gristle and jumping bunnies. And the all-too-hip glossy, marketing-speak chest pounding end-to-end-solution brochures. The sales pipelines done in spread sheets longer than Rip van Winkle's beard and all-to-common ever-so-soft useless, pointless, make-me-feel-good titles like Business Development, Account Executive, Business Drivers, Thought Leaders, Change Agents and on and on and so on and so forth. Makes me want to scream. If I ever see a card handed to me that says "Joe Schmoe – Salesman" I will die of apoplexy!

What the world – the marketing world that is – needs and needs right now, to get us out of this mess, is a good kick in the ass.

I'm talking about old-fashioned selling.

Selling is about building long-lasting relationships. You cannot have a relationship where fear is the starting point. You can't have a relationship built on lies. And, most importantly, you can't develop a relationship without a lot of work.

Selling is in grave danger. True selling that is. And in all businesses – sales are key. "Nothing happens till someone sells something."

I am not talking “order taking” – which is “clerking.” That's where the customers surprise you.

I am talking about selling. Where you go out and surprise them!

My view on selling is as follows: Selling is like hunting. There are two types of hunters (Metaphor alert: I am referring to salespeople).

There are those folks who like to sit around the hunting lodge wearing the funny hats and vests playing with the guns. And, there are those who go out into the forest and kill stuff.

No, you're right, this is hardly politically correct. Sorry. Tough. Get over it. (Images of Glengarry Glen Ross – flitting through my brain.) There will be lots more to get your shorts in a kerfuffle. So, if this is too strong for ya – better move on. It ain't gonna be pretty. It will work. But, trust me – pretty it ain't!

I believe that there is a proven, tried and true path to successful selling that, by the way, only some of us elderly know. Because we were around when selling was still a good thing. We were around when hard work was a good thing. And we were around before people spent 3/4 of their time doing PowerPoint decks and sitting in useless meetings!

I figure now is as good a time as any for a refresher course – a look at the past.

I remember the previous two recessions. Early 80s and Early 90s.

Things I learned:

- No one made any money – everybody thought they had everyone else over a barrel. Wrong.
- Clients went to the agencies and asked them to tighten their belts and feel the "burn" – they demanded "more for less."
- Ad agencies got stuff for free from folks who were/are starving for work – ergo they cut down staff, especially high-priced help, and bought really cheap or on the "if come" when they needed it.
- Media trimmed and trimmed – out went the editorial and most of the quality – in with the bundling and deals and networks. Economies of scale = drive out costs!
- Suppliers and vendors were asked right across the board by their customers for sweeping cuts to stay as suppliers!
- These clients also cut staff but from the top and left the bottom less expensive folks in place
- Boards & CEOs were never touched BTW! Any of this sound familiar?
- The end user ended up payin' more and buyin' less.

What that left us with – especially in the early 90s recession - was:

- Big clients run by receptionists and clerks turning into mid-managers who wrote the book on CYA - if they stayed!
- Suppliers dropping their drawers, but really cheaping-out on what they supplied.
- Agencies adopting "An approved campaign is a good campaign" belief system 'cause they had no senior staff left and were run by accountants – so they did what they were told.
- The end user saying "Screw your Brand! I want it all cheap!" except for in a couple of cases – and in those cases the companies were simply lucky. Not brilliant marketers.

Okay, so I got that RANT out of the way. (Insert medication. Literally! Ok I am better now!)

I believe that the benefit to the new path is obvious. When all else fails, sell. And when you sell, you succeed. And nothing succeeds like success.

Success can be measured in financial terms, in career terms, in long-term security, in notoriety and/or good fortunes.

We are talkin' full-blown unadulterated success.

As a side benefit you also get:

- A solid reliable process to follow
- Measurable tools
- A working and workable plan
- Something to rally round
- A strategy to fight in even the most difficult economies

I have been fortunate to have been a salesman, to have run companies as a CEO and Board Member and to have been a marketer. The following are my "To Dos" for each of these points of view

### **Here is a list for the Boss:**

**Note:** These are business truisms as I personally know them. I am not talking about anything here that I haven't personally experienced. These I believe with all my heart!

#### **1. Hire properly.**

- Hire real slow – fire real fast. No one wins by keeping dead wood around the shop. It's better for you, your company and for the folks who are probably in the wrong posts to change. It is a very stressful thing to do. I know. I have hired literally hundreds of folks and sadly had to let a few go. That is never good. In fact, a couple were friends. That hurts even more. But no one said being a boss is easy – you can't stand the heat, get the hell out of the kitchen.
- I have heard umpteen times, especially at agencies that "Our assets go up and down in the elevator every night." Wow. When I hear that the first thing that comes to mind is a joke. Consultant asks company Prez "So how many people work here? Prez ... "Oh, about half."
- I have always wondered how, or why, certain people ever got hired. Folks, if you have what my Ol Buddy David Maister calls "Human Capital" issues and they are rotting on the shelves? Get rid of them. They will poison the rest of the assets,

smell when customers come near them and be really nasty to look at. Enough metaphors – you get my point.

**2. Price, promote and plan properly.** If ya don't know how – get help.

- Most people running companies aren't marketers. Hell, most marketers aren't marketers! I know, Sally- "Pete say it ain't so!" They are engineers, accountants, inventors, sales folks or simply kids whose parents left 'em the shop. If you aren't a great marketer – get help. Companies will eventually tank without great marketing. Companies like GM, who haven't had a marketer within 1,000 miles ... ever, are evidence of this fact.

**3. Get out and meet the folks.** You staying in your office is like the faux-hunters at the lodge I mentioned in the previous instalment.

- One of the best ways to go out of business is to keep your head down or buried. That also entails surrounding yourself with sycophants telling you what you want to hear.
- I was recently called into three different companies to try and help – sadly way too late. The Prez in each case was so out of touch as to what the customers saw, and what he or she thought they saw, it was mind boggling. Get out there – get the truth.

**4. Spend against a sales effort – it is not FREE!**

- New business isn't sitting some young kid down at a phone with a business directory doing cold calls. Yes, you should do that. I personally like cold calling – but a sales effort is multi-faceted, multi-layered. Thinking it is simply cold calling is like thinking marketing is only Posters.
- It also needs a budget, timing, metrics and resources.

**5. Reward the sales effort.** You want loyalty...buy it.

- So many folks – when sales start to come in – want to weasel out on the original deals. They start upping the quotas of their sales ponies or worse, not paying in a timely manner – or at all.
- Come on, sheeeesh – pay the sales ponies.

**6. Get better advice than you are getting now.**

See below.

**7. It ain't what ya don't know that will screw ya... it's what ya know that ain't so!**

- This is the best piece of advice I have ever received. It was told to me one lovely morning by Peter Zarry. We were partners once and this guy was a genius. In essence, the learning in this phrase is simply not to base your decisions on corporate dogma. Institutional beliefs are a dangerous thing. While a lot of Bosses are sitting there right now worrying about their competition and what they will do next, it is probably your staff, your vendors and your advisors that are killing you. Ask the tough questions. And get proof when someone pipes up with an answer.
- Always get a second opinion.
- And my favorite saying is and will always be – "Oh, and how do you know that?" In other words – prove it.

### **8. If you get the chance, leave the office. Do it. And stay away from the office. A lot.**

- A great company will run without you there. If you have to micro-manage you are doomed. Full stop. Hire the right folks and tell them what to do – not how to do it!
- And I don't know a single company that isn't cheerier without the Boss there. Think of it as a cheap perk for the employees. Go golf with your best customer. A win/win situation.

### **9. Speak to a customer, an employee and a supplier each day.**

- Lee Iacocca said this. Truer words were never spoken. If you speak to a customer, an employee and a supplier each and every day you will be so far ahead of the competition it will make your head spin.
- And if you want to emulate someone – try Lee. Worked for me. No nonsense. Tough. Fair. Not afraid to speak his mind and not afraid to act.

### **10. "When someone tells you how to run your business – you go out of business."**

- Never let the lawyers (and any other folks) make final decisions on how to run your business. Trust your instincts.
- Great leaders have faith. They never doubt. Imagine if JFK said – *"It is not what your country can do for you it is what you can do for your county! If that is OK with you, like, if you don't mind. Maybe we will have a meeting and get consensus first."*
- I took over a public company as CEO Prez and Board Member – when I went in there were over 50 lawsuits. Trust me it was nasty. I am not a lawyer – I have some exposure to law as I was a policeman in a prior life, but I wanted to put my beliefs to work here – I made a pledge to solve all of these suits without litigation, or simply buying our way out. The latter was easy to avoid, we had no money.
- Well, after a year and a half we had eliminated all of the suits and did so without retaining lawyers. Also, I am not a trained negotiator nor anything near an expert

in dispute resolution management. I am an expert obviously in calling someone and asking, "So, how do we fix this? Let's chat."

### **11. Follow the passion. And if it ain't fun? Don't do it. I repeat DO NOT DO IT!**

- – Why the hell would you do something that doesn't turn your crank? If you happen to be somewhere running something that doesn't get you really turned on, hire someone to do it and go start something else – or write a damn book. 'Cause there is an old saying "Fish rot from the head down." And if you are not excited, guaranteed those underneath you are asleep.
- Have a look at the 1985 book *The E-Myth* by Michael E. Gerber – I won't steal his thunder here – this is a good read.

### **12. Bigger is only better – if it is.**

- Tom Peters and a whole whack of pundits claim there is an optimum size to a successful organization. Well, I believe if it works, go with it.

### **13. One more time - "Fish rot from the head down." If something screws up – it is your fault.**

Now, moving on to some tips for the Marketers:

#### **1. Stop reading pamphlets.**

- Please stop thinking every new trend will save your ass.
- You know when Total Quality Management was the buzz in the last recession over 70% of companies that went bankrupt listed TQM as their #1 priority. Yeah, well #1 to me is doing your damn job.

#### **2. There is no secret cure. There is no quick fix.**

- Everything is hard to do. And more importantly everything worth doing takes hard work.
- If something is too good to be true – it is!

#### **3. Like above - a baseball game is won by getting on base. FIRST BASE!!!**

- Home runs are great – but no one wins a pennant with just home runs.
- Really focus on your core strengths – make 'em better and treat every customer like they are your ONLY customer.

**4. That insecure feeling you get everyday at the office is good for you – it will keep you in your place.**

- You know that feeling. Wake up and wonder if today is the day they will finally find out just how much of a fraud you are? Yeah, we all feel that – get over it. If you stopped thinking about yourself as the centre of the universe, you might actually get your job done.

**5. Yep, you are the KING or Queen of toothpaste – but get over it too. No one else but you gives a shit!**

- Funny thing about marketing – it really is "Where the rubber meets the air!" Let's not get carried away here – you are responsible for a brand and probably not that great a brand. In fact, probably a real shitty trade brand like a valve. Just do your job. When you go to the bank with your paycheck the teller isn't judging you on your brand. Just deposit the check – do your job. Your job is to sell a ton of valves.

**6. Your competitor is probably as confused as you are – so stop worrying about them.**

- I said in the Boss diatribe that "It ain't what ya don't know that will screw ya – it's what ya know that ain't so" ... well, same goes for you.
- Being aware of the landscape is critical. Being paranoid is stupid.

**7. Shut up once and a while. Keep some stuff secret. Play it close to the vest. Ya never know!**

- I always liked the idea that I had something up my sleeve – just in case. That is tough to do if you (Metaphor alert) play your Bowers first. (Euchre alert as well!) Leave 'em wanting a bit – and try and keep your mouth shut.
- – Everyone loves the strong silent type – heavy on the silent!

**8. Marketing drives business. Sales drives revenue. And accountants drive us nuts.**

- Accounting strategy when times get hard if often: "Hey! We need money! SELL A DESK!"
- Just nod at them. Play nice. They know not what they do. You, on the other hand, have to know.
- You are the change/adapt/plan person.
  - Drive the change.
  - Adapt and win!
  - Fail to plan, plan to fail!

- Lead, follow or get the hell out of the way

**9. There is nothing worse than the wrong message to the right audience. Except maybe the right message to the wrong audience.**

- Please ... please ... please – get a good agency. One that has a vertebra.
- I know you would love some sycophant grovelling at your feet 24/7 – who wouldn't? Oh, yeah – your customers.
- Your customers would like great ads, great DM, great Web, Great Social Media. They want amazing products with USPs the size of the Ohio!!! Oh, and they want it cheap... and now... and guaranteed for life – and they want that product to make 'em feel like a million samolies!!!
- Get an agency – the good ones are trained in dealing with your psychosis.

**10. When you have to find fat to cut, don't cut anything that will affect sales.**

- Lose the Christmas shindig – but don't stop the trade ads. If ya have to cut, cut the size of the ad not the frequency.
- Cost containment is an art.
- Watch what has to go – if you throw out your power adaptor, your laptop may not work.
- Always check what is connected to what you are going to cut off! "Make like a Mohel!"

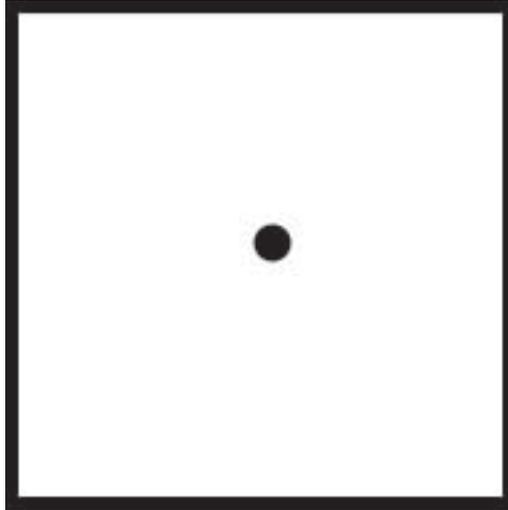
**11. Ask. Always ask. Everyone has an opinion. Ask them. That is called research.**

- Get input from the shop floor, from the street, from the Web, from your father-in-law (especially if he owns the company and hired ya!)
- Be careful what you do with all the info – but take it gratefully and use it wisely.

**12. Don't be afraid.**

- If you are constantly wanting to get stuff perfect like 10 out of 10 before you launch – you will get run over by your competitor as they launch at 8 out of 10.
- Make it so, #1.

As marketers, it is YOU that is supposed to be smart. Don't disappoint us.



Here's my advice to salespeople.

Ok all you sales types, gather round and listen. Grab a "Cup of Joe" and pay attention.

The above illustration is the first thing we have to get over.

What do you see?

Most folks – if not everybody – sees a "black dot."

Well, that is an example of why things aren't working as well as they should for you. That black dot represents everything that is wrong right now. The bad coffee, the idiot Boss, the way they treat you, the shitty leads, the bad sales territory, the commission structure, the fact you got up this morning, tore a hole in your pants, spilled juice on your tie and the cat peed on you. All that stuff!

It goes on and on, doesn't it? This is sadly the most critical issue you face – it is called fear. It masks itself in all sorts of manifestations – mostly us wanting to have something else to blame for our failures.

Well, I believe that the first thing to do is look at the rest of that illustration. I call the technique "Eliminating Black Dot Days". There will always be something wrong – there will always be a gripe. But by focusing on these things you miss the point. Look at the big picture – the white space which represents everything that is right.

Okay, here is the list of "do's" and "don'ts" for the sales types:

### **1. Do a projection formula for reliable, real, achievable results – don't lie.**

- You need a formula. It has to be real. Start with what you want to make this year. Then figure out just how many sales that would have to be and base the net on what you get from each sale. Then calculate how many sales presentations you have to make to get the sales. Then the sales calls to get the sales presentations and then finally the number of sales cold calls. This is called turning Suspects into Prospects, into Sales and then repeat Sales.
- You will need to track honestly exactly how you measure up. Number of cold calls that end up in sales is a sales ratio.

### **2. Get a sales system that can be tracked, adjusted and monitored – and don't lie.**

- Your system must be solid, real and one that can be tracked and adjusted.
- Track the number of suspects that you need to turn into prospects (whether by sales calls/phone calls or letters) and then the number you need to turn into presentations or sales visits. And then track the number of conversions from prospects to sales. You then can track repeat sales. Look at the numbers, do some initial percentage calculations (i.e. 100 suspects = 40 prospects = 20 presentations = 6 closed sales).
- Then, if you have to, modify any and all factors. A better presentation, more work on your phone techniques, more suspects, better initial sales contacts, better "CLOSING" tactics or better tracking. All are flexible! All can be improved. And should be!

### **3. Never talk to other sales folks. Full stop. They lie.**

- The absolute worst thing you can do is talk to other sales folks. They will suck the life out of you like a pack of vampires. Avoid hanging with other sales types – especially where you work or at the very least in your industry. You run the risk of drinking the poisoned sales Kool-Aid.
- You are the one that has the secret of eliminating the "Black Dot" – not them. Not only does this give you an edge, it makes you far more powerful.

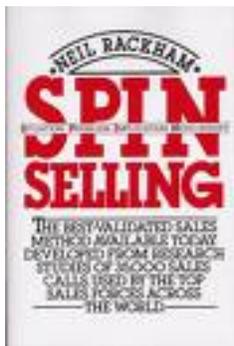
### **4. Put a little "Post-It" note on your phone and on your computer. All it says is "Is what I am doing making me money?"**

- If the answer is no? Hang up.
  - Sadly, sales folks are easily distracted. Selling is hard work and when we are faced with rejection day-in and day-out, taking advantage of distractions is natural and welcomed. It is, however, the professional salesperson who knows that rejection is all part of the gig! In fact I look forward to the 6th and 7th

rejection I get in a row – I KNOW numbers 8 through number 10 will be SALES!

**5. Read. Read lots. Read trade mags, newspapers, online, journals press releases. Anything you can get your hands on.**

- I personally believe there is a gold mine in reading. You hear about mergers, company take-overs. New plants, new divisions, new promotions and new ideas. I get my best sales strategies based on what is going around me in MY industry. Over the years I have developed a pattern for reading – Company notices, promotions, listed tenders and new product intros.



**6. 85% of the sale happens in preparation. Do your damn homework!**

- As above – use the market knowledge to formulate your plan. I have used the SPIN selling technique of Neil Rackham for years – Situation, Problem, Implication and Needs payoff.
- Going in cold simple, asking “Any today Ma’am?” is so old, so tired and doesn't work. Develop a nose for where you and your product could fit in. And become valuable!
- Don't forget true selling is where YOU surprise THEM! So, do it. Surprise them with your knowledge of their issues and challenges. And a point worth knowing - companies hate hearing they have a PROBLEM you want to solve. They inevitably have “headaches” and “challenges.” You can become a valued supplier when you can show them how you and your company can solve one or more of these issues.

**7. Believe and live your system.**

- Don't get caught up in the day to day. Selling is all about numbers. Believe in it. It is about the long haul!

**8. Systems don't have to be elaborate, complex or involved to work. They just have to work.**

- All you need is a way to track – pencil and paper will work. You don't need a 20k SAP or Oracle software package to track your calls, turned into presentations turned into follow-ups into sales!

**9. Drop anything you are doing that does not end up in the sale.**

- We all love to feel important and vital. There are just way too many folks out there that will gladly take your time and bleed you dry. Is there a deal anywhere in this meeting, phone call or email? Or is it simply someone wanting "sumthin fer nuthin". You are there to hunt something down, kill it and eat! Don't waste your time.

**10. Call at least two current customers each and every day.**

- I have always contacted all my customers at least once every three months. Whether I am doing active business with them or not. A note, an email a phone call (the best) just to say hi.
- The best thing is to sort by industry and in your reading, find two or three items per sector that you can start off the conversation with:

*"Hey Sally! How's tricks? Great – Listen, I read that Blogtastic.com just purchased www.Ihavenoclue,.com? Does that impact you? What did you think about that?"*

(Oh, and then let em talk.) You have two ears and one mouth. Listen twice as much as you speak!

**11. As above, have a communication process for contacting all of your prospects – a note, an email, a letter ... have something.**

- Do it so your customers are contacted at least twice a year. Better still get them something of value. No, not logo's golf balls! A report, some research, an interesting find.
- You have to keep in front of folks. Squeaky wheel and all that. It is important to stay in touch. Out of sight – out of mind.

**12. Further to the above – Get your best customers some "New Customers". Introduce them to someone they want to do business with.**

- One solid strategy I have always found: find out who your customer's best customer could be. Set up a lunch or dinner with that "potential customer" and invite your "current" customer. Talk about fertile ground. I like to be a fly on the wall and not manipulate the meeting.
- Better still, for my personal preference, I use a golf game. Golf is a "contact sport". In all my years I have NEVER come off a golf course with a group like this without a solid appointment, a sale or at the very least, a plan to move forward on something we – the three of us – had just discussed.

**13. Eliminate all "Black Dot" days.** (See above!)

**14. Sell yourself, then your company and then the product/service.**

- Further to the "Black Dot Day"- if you are in a pissy mood – forget it. Get over it!
- If you get up and the cat threw up in your shoes, had HUGE argument at home as you are leaving, you spilled coffee on yourself in the car to work, and the parking spot you normally have is being occupied and you forgot your power cord for your laptop at home – AND that happens to be the the best part of your morning – get over it. Those are the "Black Dot" issues of the day.
- Selling is tough and it is not for the weak. The weak focus on the Black Dots!
- The white space is:
  - You are working! Read: you have a gig. Full stop.
  - You are alive.
  - People really dig you (Or they would have fired your ass months ago!)
  - And your customers don't want to hear about your problems!
- When you speak to anyone and they ask... "Hey, Slick? How's business?"

You answer...

*"I am working like crazy. harder than ever in fact! These times are amazing for really getting out there and helping folks. It is fantastic. Bubba, just the other day I discovered this amazing new thing – say, how's your week looking ... say, Wednesday I can get over to see ya? Or maybe Thursday morning at 10?"*

(Oh and then shut up and wait – the next person to speak makes a sale – or if you speak – it's a no sale!)

**15. Don't lie.**

- This is the biggest rule for all sales folks. Do not lie. And I mean, to yourself, your boss or your family.

- If times are getting tougher – ask for help. If you are feeling more and more pressure – ask for help. If you are feeling boxed in – ask for help. Get it? ASK FOR HELP!!!
- Help comes in the following forms:
  - Understanding.
  - More/better/improved resources (Lists, leads and contacts.)
  - Better presentation materials (brochures, ads, sales letters, PPT decks and product offerings)
  - Training

## Summary

I want to end with a lovely sales story that was told to be over 30 years ago.

A young sales guy was down in the dumps – sitting at his desk on a Friday afternoon. The old, wise, sales manager sees him and calls him into his office to find out what's what.

The young guy tells him he has had a bad week ... a couple of deals fell through – no one is returning calls and it just ain't happening. Totally defeated.

The sales manager say – “No problem, happens to us all. Why don't you call it a day – go have some fun and a great weekend and get back in the saddle Monday all bright eyed, refreshed and bushy-tailed!”

The old guy continued ...” But, do me a favor – read this!”

The sales manager reaches into his desk drawer and pulls out a well-worn Reader's Digest.

He says to the young sales guy “Read this over the weekend. It has the secret to sales in it.”

The young guy went home and had a pretty good weekend blowing off steam. Sunday morning, he picked up the Readers Digest and thumbed through it – all the usual stuff. "Humour in Uniform," "My Favorite Person – Aunt Minnie" etc etc.

He saw a page, turned at the corner under Quotable Quotes ... “NB” was written in the margin and highlighter all over the place. On that page was a footnote – it said "5% of the Canadian population is mentally ill.”

Monday morning and the young fella bounces into the office – clean shirt, pressed suit – lookin like a million bucks!!!

The sales manager calls him into the office and asks if he had a good weekend and did he, in fact, read the book.

The proud young man proudly states “I did! Yes indeed. And I learned that "5% of the Canadian Population is mentally ill!”

The old guy smiled and said, “There! You have now learned the secret to selling. GO OUT THERE AND CALL 100 PEOPLE! 5 WILL FREAKING BUY ANYTHING!!!

Folks, the moral to this is that sales is a numbers game. Want ta win the game? Win by the NUMBERS!!!!

Good hunting to all!