

CHAPTER 1

Salesmanship as an Art and a Science

There is an easy way and a complicated way of talking about the art of selling, just as there is an easy way and a hard way to live.

Since I personally like books that are easy to understand, I will try to present things as simply as I can. But since I know some of us also enjoy the theoretical, difficult, and mentally challenging aspects of marketing theory, I will throw in a little bit of that, too.

First, the simple stuff.

One of the things that I have liked the most about interviewing executives and CEOs is that on many occasions I have had to sit patiently in the corner of a large office while the executive took a sales call that could not be missed. Listening to these sales calls has been an education in itself.

The funny thing is, almost every salesperson I have ever heard on the phone uses exactly the same approach. It is not like the movies, such as in Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*, where high-powered egomaniacs are talking fifty million miles an hour into their cell phones and screaming at the top of their lungs to convince people to buy their products or ideas.

In fact, what you hear is exactly the opposite. Most buyers, whether those buyers are elderly people looking for a good vacuum

cleaner or a board of directors looking for a new CEO, are cautious buyers, and they tend to trust soft-spoken, highly credentialed people who talk slowly, express the facts, and give other people time to think.

This is how real master salespeople act:

- Master salespeople, especially when they are on a sales call, either in person or on the phone, speak very quietly and very slowly.
- Master salespeople on a sales call hardly ever seem to show any emotion except for enthusiasm, compassion, or positive regard. They never display prejudice, political opinions, or any kind of defensiveness or negative emotion whatsoever. Master salespeople rarely get angry and *never* express anger, even if they feel it.
- Master salespeople never take no for an answer but always seem to quietly find some different angle to pursue in conversation, even if their original proposal is turned down.
- Master salespeople seem to always find a way to get every caller to “leave the door open” for another conversation, even if they don’t get what they want the first time.
- Master salespeople seem to realize that cultivating and building personal relationships is more important than making an immediate sale. They would never compromise a friendship to make a sale. But by using this approach, they make more sales to more people more often.

Those are the basic similarities I have noticed about all master salespeople whenever I have seen them in action in person or on the telephone.

But there is another important similarity I have noticed that is harder to capture in a few phrases. It is this: Most master salespeople seem to use a precise scientific formula to communicate themselves and their products to potential customers in an extremely methodi-

cal but powerful fashion. After listening to many master salespeople do the same thing several thousand times, I began to figure out what they were doing.

I gradually discovered that they were all using an invisible marketing worksheet that contained a highly distilled and focused strategy for communicating certain key points about themselves and their products to every person they talked with. They all seemed to have done research on the personality styles and the interests of the people to whom they were trying to sell. And they used a different style of communication, depending on whom it was they were talking to.

Moreover, I noticed that all these master salespeople almost always spoke in a level, nonemotional tone in short, direct sentences. And although each one used a highly personalized technique, they were all using some kind of invisible sales sheet in their heads that might look something like this if you were to put it on paper:

Sales Strategy Worksheet

Customer: _____ Time/Date: _____ Assistant(s): _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Occupation of customer/buying power: _____

Product to sell this customer: _____

Competitive strengths of my product:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What's in it for the customer? Why should the customer care about my product?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Customer type:

Age/Sex/Marital status/Education: _____

Personality type: _____

Stress points: _____

Calming points: _____

Interests/Family values: _____

Sales strategy: _____

Initial comments of customer to first call and follow-up strategy: (i.e., How did I handle obstacles and what do I plan to do. . . keeping notes on every call) _____

Granted, all master salespeople, such as CEOs and other top executives, don't actually have paper versions of this kind of worksheet. Some simply carry the information around in their heads. But make no mistake about it, all master salespeople know every single piece of information that would be included on such worksheets, if they used them. And some of them actually do.

So, in the first part of the book we will spend some time talking about why it is important to know each piece of information on this Sales Strategy Worksheet; then, in the next part, we will talk about how to use this information to your sales advantage once you have it.

But first, I want to introduce you to another "invisible sheet" that all master salespeople seem to use. Let's call it the Marketing Identity Worksheet. It is this sheet that gives the master sales and marketing professional that supreme self-confidence and power in a sales call. It is each businessperson's manifesto, and it guides every business letter, marketing statement, or press release he will ever write or approve.

If you were to put the key elements of this invisible Marketing Identity Worksheet on one page, it would look something like this:

Marketing Identity Worksheet

Company name: _____

My mission: _____

My values: _____

Services and/or product(s): _____

Potential customers: _____

Competitive strengths of services and/or product(s):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What's in it for the customer? Why should the customer care what I have to say?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, anyone who has completed a few business courses might scoff at such a sheet, protesting that it is too simplistic.

Only after they have been successful in business for a while or have accepted tenure as a professor at a major business school does it dawn on most people that marketing *is* simple and that if you ignore the basics for one second, you're finished before you start.

That is why every single CEO or other master salesperson I have ever met seems to project with absolute solid authority, every single second spent in public, the filled-in blanks of the Marketing Identity Worksheet.

As a matter of fact, to continue refining the message of their key marketing points and then commit the message of this worksheet to

heart and memory until it becomes a mantra is usually an ongoing and pivotal part of their job. To keep selling this refined message to the entire organization is the next step.

Why?

Think about it. The preparation that goes into a sale may take months and months of intellectual analysis, but there always comes the moment of truth that, for lack of a better expression, is called the sales call.

The sales call might be a presentation made before a corporate board, or it might be an interview on someone's front porch. It doesn't matter. The approach has to be the same. You don't have the time or the luxury to make up your sales presentation on the spot. If you try to wing it, most people will think you're unprofessional, or simply mad.

The business world has no tolerance for extemporaneous genius or sudden bursts of wild emotion and undisciplined enthusiasm.

In business, you must always project yourself as being nonemotional, well-prepared, and *right*, just like *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock. Most potential buyers, because of the science of personality, would buy anything from Mr. Spock, because Mr. Spock has no emotions—just facts. As mentioned, most buyers, as a general rule, are made suspicious by high emotion and uncontrolled enthusiasm.

On the other hand, buyers *are* made comfortable by facts and a calm assurance: "My product is going to take the guesswork and uncertainty out of your life."

Therefore, your sales pitch has to be memorized; it has to be precise; it has to include a personal knowledge of all the information on the worksheet above; and whether you like it or not, it has to be *spiritually oriented*.

By spiritually oriented I mean this: *You must be selling a product that you believe in to the core of your soul*, and that you feel can make people's lives better, or easier, or ease human suffering in some way.

If you do not feel this passionately about your product, no one is going to buy it. Even worse, people will sense your insecurity and will resent you for trying to sell something you don't believe in, and your reputation will be ruined forever with these people.

Now, some people might challenge this idea, saying that it is not applicable if, for example, you are selling garden seeds or used cars. It is my experience, however, that the spiritually grounded and customer-conscious aspects of sales are paramount, no matter what you are selling—even if it *is* used cars. The reason is that, again, most people are made uncomfortable by people who give potential clients or customers the impression that they are selling something they do not believe in, and/or that they might be trying to sell them something that they don't need or want. Your ultimate goal as a salesperson is to put people at ease and to let them know that you are concerned about their purchase. So even if you are selling used cars, you will sell a lot more of them if you make a habit of letting your customers know that you do not want to sell them a used car that is not right for them, and that you would like to make the extra effort and take the extra time to help them find something that best suits their needs.

Rule: The most important thing you can do as a businessperson and a salesperson is to convince other people that you have an almost religious dedication to and belief in your company and the value of its products to improve the quality of human life and happiness as well as a devotion to a cause.

That is why it is important to make very sure that you have correctly filled in the Marketing Identity Worksheet before you go out on a sales call or get on the phone and attempt to sell your company, an idea, a product, or a service.

Therefore, let us look at the elements of that Marketing Identity Worksheet one by one and talk about why they are important.

Your Company Name

Your company name had better be good, especially if it is a new company. It is your primary sales tool. It should be short, powerful, and have a lofty, service-oriented ring to it. A name that you can feel truly proud of.

A great company name, in my opinion, is ICon, the name of the computer service and Internet corporation with offices located in New York and New Jersey. At the time this book was written, my good

friend Tom Livaccari was vice president of New Media for ICon and was serving on the advisory board of my own company. (Tom has since moved on to become director of sales and marketing for Dennis Interactive, one of the nation's leading Interactive software development companies and a subsidiary of Dennis Publishing, the largest independently owned publishing company in the United Kingdom. A master salesman, Tom will present his theories on the psychology of salesmanship in Chapter 11.)

Not only does the name ICon connote the "paragon of authority," it is also linked with one of the most visible and often-used symbols in software, that of the computer software program *icon*.

And there's a lot more going on in the ICon name, too. Remember that a few paragraphs before I said that all great business visionaries have tried to find a way to project their companies as having an aura of almost religious integrity and devotion to a cause.

Please do not underestimate the importance of having such an aura around your company.

Look, for example, at the definition of icon from the Random House Dictionary: "*Icon N. 1. Eastern Ch.* representation of a sacred personage . . . ; 2. anything devotedly admired."

Now, it is easy to see that, with such a name, any person calling on behalf of this company has a distinct psychological advantage. Their psychological advantage is that they are portraying themselves as being associated with things that are:

1. Sacred, or treated as sacred by the people who work for it
2. Unquestionably authoritative
3. Admired by everyone else
4. Associated with one of the most commonly used words in computer software terminology

As common sense would dictate, if you are striving to come up with a company name, it is often smarter to strive for a powerful, dignified and important-sounding name rather than a cute or clever

name, which, even if it works, might fade from the public imagination in a couple of years.

In some rare cases, of course, there will be times when a cute or clever name will suit your needs just fine. Say, for example, that you live in Vermont and make muffins. One day it occurs to you that you want to start your own company and you decide to name your company the Moon Patch Muffin Company. (Since I just made this name up, I apologize to anyone who might actually be using it unbeknownst to me.) All of your friends love the name and you feel good about it, too. Who knows, the Moon Patch Muffin Company name may eventually work its way into the collective heart of America and you might end up a billionaire.

But more often than not, the choice of a cute or clever name is risky because these names are prisoners of fashion and the fickleness of trends. Fashion is a very fickle goddess, and she rules her kingdom hand in hand with her equally fickle sister, Fame. One minute you are their favorite person and the next thing you know, you have been banished from the kingdom forever.

If you don't believe my point of view on this, just go into the grocery store and look at the latest lineup of supercool sodas, juices, and bottled waters. Then go back to the store a year later and see how many of them are still on the shelf.

My point is that if you are starting your own company and have the luxury of choosing your own name, you had better pick a name you can be comfortable with for a long time. When it comes to creating an image, most CEOs would tell you this: Be wary of being cool. What is hip this year will not likely be hip next year. You may be stuck with the unpleasant task of having to peel off your own skin in order to shed a name or concept that you no longer want to be associated with.

So first of all, try to associate yourself with a name, concept, and product that you are proud of and believe that you can remain proud of for a long time.

Next you must convince people that you are not only *proud* of your company but that you also *believe* in your company.

Which brings us to the next question.

What is it that you believe in?

Your Mission

There are few companies in existence today that have not devised a *mission statement* and a *values statement*.

Unfortunately, some of these mission and values statements sound patently phony, and so they have the opposite of the intended effect.

Consider this facetious example:

Big Bob's Nuclear Bomb Discount House: Mission Statement

Our mission is to offer quality nuclear armaments to psychotic terrorists and other world leaders along with the latest variety of biological weapons. We promise quality results and unsurpassed excellence with all of our instruments of mass destruction. Along with quality customer care and a dedication to excellence, we seek to promote excellent community relations and a respect for the environment, with a special level of compassion for the rights of women and minorities, except in those instances when our clients want to blow them up.

The point that I am trying to make is that mission statements have become so formulaic that they all sound alike, and no one believes them anymore, so easy is it to spew out a paragraph of pure mental garbage as is represented in the words of the example given above.

The original intent of mission statements, I think, was to get companies and executives to actually ponder what it is they believed in and wanted to do to make the world a better place—what they *really* believed in, and not what they just *said* they believed in.

What Do Mission and Values Really Mean?

All of this mission and values stuff really started taking off in 1994 when two business school professors, Gary Hamel and C. K. Praha-

lad, wrote a book called *Competing for the Future* in which they introduced “core competencies,” a term that has now become commonplace in the business world.

I believe Hamel and Prahalad have written a very useful and intelligent book, but when you really get down to it, what they asked companies to think about was actually a very simple series of questions:

What is it that we do?

What are we good at?

What skills and services make us unique?

Why should anybody care what we have to say about anything?

With the changes that are occurring in consumer demands, what will make people think we are the best at what we do five or ten years from now?

What Hamel and Prahalad also suggested was that every employee of every company must be able to answer a similar set of questions. The most important questions employees must ask themselves might be summarized this way:

What is it that I do?

What am I especially good at?

What skills and services make me unique?

Why should anybody care what I have to say about anything?

With changes occurring in my field of expertise, why would anybody want to continue employing me five or ten years from now?

What executives, corporate visionaries, and managers are supposed to be responsible for, in effect, is making sure that the company knows all of the answers to the company questions and that each employee has adequate personal answers, which are at least vaguely related to the answers the company gave.

Obviously, if a company cannot answer the simple questions listed above, it has no business being in business. And just as obviously, if an employee cannot answer the questions that pertain to employees, the employee had better start looking for a new line of work.

But you will be surprised what many management professionals found when they began going around asking executives what their company was best at. Hard to believe, but many companies simply do not know or cannot express in the English language what it is that makes them more interesting or valuable than the next guy. I know because I have been one of those consultants companies have called upon to help define such things as “core competencies.”

I keep noticing, by the way, that almost every time I pick up the paper, I find that yet another large company has “right-sized” or “downsized” and has laid off another group of 5,000 people.

Is it possible that all this downsizing in the United States is occurring, at least in part, because no one in these companies knows exactly what it is they’re trying to sell, and why anyone should care? Could it be that someone at these companies might want to try writing a mission statement that actually makes sense?

Mission statements should not be complicated, but they should be carefully thought out and they should be as sincere as you can make them. They cannot be glib but must involve a certain amount of genuine soul-searching.

If you are going to be successful at marketing or sales, you must also do a little soul-searching of your own.

These are the main questions successful people seem to ask themselves:

What do I really want to do with my life and talent?

If I am not doing what I want, why am I not doing it?

What obstacles can I remove so I can do what I want?

Am I creating a personal mission statement that makes me happy, or one that merely sounds good to people I want to impress?

How can I condense my personal goals in life—what I want to achieve and can achieve—into as many words as would fit on the back of a cocktail napkin?

How can I wake up every morning and do several small, manageable, and accomplishable tasks before sundown that will allow me to get one foot closer to my goal, while reminding myself every second that no one's opinion of me matters, except for my own?

Which brings us to the next stage of the Marketing Identity Worksheet. What is it about your own character that you value the most?

My Values

Writing a values statement is the other part of the mission and values writing assignment most companies have asked their public relations departments to do.

Giving short shrift or inadequate attention to your mission and values statements is not always the wisest course of action, because many times what you get is a lot of mamby-pamby nonsense prettily displayed in a nice little frame.

This is how many combined mission and value statements prepared by public relations departments appear to me:

Two-Timing Tommy's Toxic Waste Disposal: Mission Statement

Our mission is to maximize our profits and increase the dividends of our shareholders by disposing of toxic waste in a way that makes the very best of state and federal loopholes, while constantly consulting our excellent team of corporate negligence lawyers. Even in the face of outrageous demands from a meddling and self-righteous public, we will continue to put our shareholders first, and to dump our toxic waste when and where we want to, unless irreversible Supreme Court decisions force us to stop.

Two-Timing Tommy's Values

Integrity
Compassion
Commitment to Excellence
Loyalty
Quality
Dedication

I think you get the point. Many times, when we read the values statements of companies we wish they hadn't bothered to write them at all because we can't think of a single person in those companies who seems to reflect those values.

When management gurus first brought the importance of writing values statements into play, I think they hoped that executives in the corporation would actually sit down with one another and talk about the values that really mattered to them—the ideas that made them *strong*—and then compare notes to see what values they had in common.

That is still what management gurus would like companies to do—to get their executives to actually define the values that make them *strong* and then write a list of *shared* values.

I don't think this exercise is being done as often as it should, so organizational development directors tend to get excited when anyone shows the slightest interest in improving the company's mission and values statements.

I heard a good story about a consultant who was doing business with a corporation that will remain anonymous. This story will give you an idea of the general state of the union as far as corporate values statements are concerned.

The head of organizational development of a major corporation reported that she had been asking one of the corporation's top executives to give some thought to mission and values for the past year. After putting her off many times he had finally come through.

The management executive handed the consultant a dirty, wadded paper napkin. The consultant unwadded the napkin. Written in

nearly undecipherable handwriting on this crumpled piece of paper was the following collection of words: “integrity? profit, stakeholder happiness, quality, vision? excellence?”

Apparently the executive had scribbled these words in haste during lunch in order to complete his thinking assignment about values. It was my impression that he did it as quickly as possible just so the organizational development executive would shut up and leave him alone.

But this crumpled napkin is now a highly prized possession of the organizational development executive. “It’s wonderful,” she is reported to have said of her napkin, in a quavering, emotional voice. “They’re finally *thinking* about it! This company is headed for the future at last, and the evidence is right there on that napkin.”

But, if you want to be a great salesperson, you have to give a little more thought to your values than the executive who composed that little cocktail napkin. Why? Because your values—and everything else on your Marketing Identity Worksheet—constitutes your psychological armor when you go on to the battlefield of business. They also come in very handy on the battlefield of life.

The Struggle of Staying True to Yourself

I don’t think the hardest part about business is the work, after all. I think it’s the grueling process of sticking to your mission and values and not letting anyone undermine your convictions or your belief in yourself.

Sad Fact: The moment you decide to be successful and focused and happy and emotionally independent, letting all potential critics know that their superficial opinions of you don’t bother you one bit, you will have made enemies of many members of the human race, including not a small number of people who used to be your friends.

Why? Because some people who used to be nice to you as long as you didn’t show them up will be jealous of your success. That’s just one of those sad and pitiful facts of life, I’m afraid. The more self-contained, independent, and happy you become, the more hidden enemies you will create.

That raises a tricky issue because most successful and happy

people are also nice, sensitive people. That's why they're happy. Because they have a heart. But, if you have a heart, you're also vulnerable to the envy of those people who don't have the courage to do what you do.

This gives you two options:

You can pay attention to the mad lunatic ravings of all the people who will be jealous of you for trying to be successful and happy; you can get confused about your values and mission in life and learn to lose confidence in yourself. If you do this, you will quickly turn into a neurotic and then help your psychiatrist build a really nice summer home to which you will never be invited.

Or, you can sit down once and for all and give some serious thought to every single line on the Marketing Identity Worksheet. Decide once and for all what you want to do (your mission). Write down, on the same sheet of paper, what it is that makes you great. Write down the values that you really believe in—the ones that give you strength in the face of adversity. Decide why people would want to buy what you have to offer the world, considering your knowledge and intelligence and the quality you have to offer. Commit all of this to memory. Carry it forth like a banner. Recite it in the shower when you get up in the morning. Surround yourself with brilliant, honest, and cheerful people. Make sure all of your friends and significant others understand your values and mission and are completely supportive of them. If your friends or significant others do not support or understand, immediately dissociate yourself from them and find new friends and significant others who do. Stick to your guns and follow this game plan until you achieve everything you want. Do not allow anyone to undermine your confidence in yourself in any shape, form, or fashion. Only share your vision with people who respect you. In this way you will save yourself a lot of money in psychiatry bills and live a long and happy life.

This is, in essence, what the importance of values is all about—getting to know yourself and being proud of who you are. This, in fact, is the most powerful psychological advantage you have as a businessperson and salesperson.

It will also give you a sense of peace beyond Zen.

In order to keep from getting overwhelmed with introspection too early in the book, we will leave our Marketing Identity Worksheet behind for a moment so the concepts we just discussed have time to sink in. But we will keep returning to this worksheet throughout the course of the book because one of your goals as a reader will be to completely think through the answers and meaning to every line on the Sales Strategy Worksheet and the Marketing Identity Worksheet.