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1

Getting Started

“It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult undertaking that, more than anything else, will determine its successful outcome.”

William James

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Introduction

“You can learn new things at any time in your life if you’re willing to be a beginner. If you actually learn to like being a beginner, the whole world opens up to you.” – Barbara Sher

When I began to think about what this book should contain, in order to make it as useful as possible, I reflected on the numerous books I have read on sales techniques, most of which seem to have been written by academics.

Naturally, those authors have never been in Sales and, of course, can have a good idea about the theory of the Sales process, but I feel that an author’s long and successful experience in numerous selling roles is more likely to make a book’s contents useful to the reader.

This is written from a background of real experiences and situations that have led, through those experiences, to pragmatic learning and development. I have, of course, made mistakes along the way and, by talking about the lessons learned, I intend to give you the opportunity to shortcut that learning process. Why should you have to repeat the mistakes that I have made just to understand that you need to do things in a different way?

With that in mind, I have written this book in a way that I believe will give you genuine helpful, informative and practical tips to help you become more successful in your Sales career.

You can try these ideas and methods immediately and see the benefits they bring in real terms – more customer meetings, better information gathering, winning propositions, more orders and, therefore, a greater Sales performance.

Each element of the sales process is covered in simple categories, so you can easily find what you need for any given circumstance.

Like so many things in our lives, sales is a process that can be broken down into a series of steps, each of which is covered in order. Helping you find the actions and style that will suit you and what will help you succeed. The only thing that you need to do is try them, learn them and use them.

For the newcomer, I will help you get into the sales process without forming bad habits, which will become difficult to change once they are ingrained into your performance and style.

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For the experienced Sales person, I will give you enough tips and ideas so that you will find something you hadn't previously thought of, or which will act as a reminder about something you are currently no longer doing.

It is so easy for us to get into a rhythm in our techniques and not have the opportunity to review them. This prevents us making the necessary adjustments that will increase our productivity.

This book will act as a prompt so that you revisit your own techniques as well as discovering some new ones. As with bad ones, getting into good habits can easily be achieved and doing the right things at the right time will soon become natural, automatic and successful.

For this title to be genuinely comprehensive, it would need to be in several volumes. As I don't have that luxury, I have covered those issues I know are fundamental to you being successful in your Sales career.

The fundamental element of what we need to do in a Sales role is to uncover and create "needs" and "wants" your Prospect (or customer) has. We need to understand what their key drivers and motivations are and then have the ability to be creative enough to find a solution to those issues.

This book will often save you the "creative" bit but, if it doesn't, you may well have the answer based on your own experiences; you sometimes simply need to take a step back, think about your other experiences with similar customer types and, consequently, relate the solutions to what you face now.

You will also be surrounded by colleagues who will also have knowledge and experiences to draw on, too, so make sure that, if you uncover a situation you are finding difficult to handle, you seek help and advice from those around you. Never be afraid to ask for help and guidance – the only stupid question is the one you don't ask.

A critical aspect of your organization's continued success, especially within challenging markets, will be the ability of its external salespeople to protect and increase profitable business with current customers, whilst winning business from new ones.

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Strengthening the skills required to consistently achieve those outcomes is the focus of this book.

A key player in your success should be your Sales Manager. One of my most disappointing discoveries in recent years is that Sales Managers no longer seem to coach and guide their sales teams, which I believe should be fundamental in what they do. Instead, it appears that they give them challenging targets and chastise them for not achieving them, rather than helping them achieve them.

They will find time in their busy day to chase their Sales people for not doing their reports on time (which I accept is an important element of the whole Sales process) but they rarely seem to do the most fundamental task I believe they are employed to do. Being an excellent Sales coach, to ensure that every one of their Sales team is operating at the very highest level of their ability and productivity, would be the most productive and effective use of their time and position and would produce the best possible results for their Sales Teams, themselves and their organizations.

They have the opportunity to observe you in action, take an objective view and, therefore, help you adjust your style to maximize your success.

My aim is to become your 'virtual' Sales Manager, someone who can coach and help you be the very best Sales Person you can be.

If you are a Sales Manager reading this book, I ask you to reflect on your own activity and motivations. Are you helping your team to improve and develop by using your own experiences, knowledge and skills? If you are not, what could you do to change that situation? Do you have the coaching skills to carry out that element of your role and, if not, how can you improve to become an excellent Sales coach? Your role is to achieve targets and objectives through the performance of the individuals who report to you; the better you can make them, the more success you will have yourself. My experience as a Salesman, Regional Sales Manager and Head of Sales is that help and support is more effective than punishment and penalty.

I hope that you will take this book with you as you travel, so that, before you go into your Sales call, you will review your meeting

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objectives and remind yourself of some ideas on how you can ensure that you meet those objectives. Working in Sales is a very rewarding and enjoyable career – as long as you are successful. To a degree, you are your own boss, with the flexibility to decide who you see and when you see them. The contents of this book will help you in your productivity, effectiveness and success so that you really can enjoy your Sales career.



Some basics

Be an optimist

There are some fundamental things you should know - if you don't already - about your life in Sales.

The first thing I need to tell you is that this career is one that will only suit you if you are an optimist; someone with an energy and drive to accomplish their goals. You will spend many days alone between sales calls, which, day after day, can be very difficult.

Despite your contact with customers and 'the office', you are primarily alone in terms of motivation and handling difficult issues.

- It's YOU who has to decide whether to get out of bed in the morning and walk into that first sales call
- It's YOU who decides which direction to steer your car as you drive away from your home
- It's YOU who decides what your day's objectives are

For that reason, Attitude plays a huge part in your ability to succeed. I think it's crucial and want to give you some sporting examples of why I believe that to be true.

The 4-minute mile

Break through barriers

On 6 May 1954, Roger Bannister became the first man in history to run the mile in under four minutes. He ran the distance in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds. Apart from the fact that, in doing so, he broke the world record for the mile, Bannister's feat was even more remarkable when you look at the thinking of the era, especially amongst those in the medical profession.

At that time, it was believed that running that fast over that distance was physically impossible. The heart was thought unable to pump blood around the body fast enough to fuel the muscles with sufficient oxygen to perform to that high a level. Roger Bannister, however, didn't believe them – he believed that he could run that fast and so it proved.

I think this is a perfect example of how your attitude to a task can have such a demonstrable impact on the outcome.



Maybe what supports my thinking even more is that I was not surprised to learn that, having spent over 2000 years not running that fast because we didn't believe that human beings could, it took just 46 days for another athlete to not only break the 4-minute mile but Roger Bannister's newly set record. John Landy of Australia ran the mile in 3 minutes 58.0 seconds.

Once it was believed and even accepted that it was possible, others achieved the same feat. Today, the mile has been completed in less than four minutes over 4500 times by almost 1000 athletes

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with the current record, set by El Guerrouj in 1999, at 3 minutes 43.13 seconds.

There is no doubt that technology and sports science have played their part in that significant reduction in time, with the production of better track surfaces and better running shoes and diet knowledge. However, I still believe that attitude was significant for the current situation in World athletics. I wonder if anyone will ever have the belief that El Guerrouj's record will one day be broken.

Achieve the impossible

The second example is even more astonishing.

You may even think that I have embellished this story as you read on; I haven't and I strongly advise you to use your favored search engine to find out more about this incredible man.

The man is called Cliff Young, he was an Australian sheep farmer. In the early 1980's, he ran a 2000 acre sheep farm with his 81-year-old mother. They had 2000 sheep but could not afford a vehicle to get around the farm to round them up when the storms came in. So Cliff Young would run around his 2000 acres to herd the sheep and bring them in. Now that's not the remarkable bit, although, in itself, it is an impressive feat.

In 1981, when Cliff was 63, he decided to enter the 'Sydney to Melbourne' Ultra Marathon. Standard Marathons are impressive enough, especially when taking into account the time taken to run them by today's top athletes. However, running an Ultra Marathon is astonishing. This Ultra Marathon was 544 miles long.

Cliff Young turned up at the start to collect his race number and was greeted with disbelief when he told the stewards that he was there to compete.

The thing is, there's more to this remarkable story than first meets the eye. Whilst the other highly toned athletes had the very latest equipment – Lycra® running clothes, bespoke running shoes, etc., Cliff turned up in overalls and galoshes!

The other thing that all the other athletes had was a support vehicle; a camper van where they could rest. The known wisdom of Ultra Marathons was that you ran for 18 hours and slept for 6

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hours. Cliff didn't have a van or anywhere else that he could rest.

The race started and the other athletes soon began to lose Cliff as he shuffled along, losing ground. He didn't have the best of knees so instead of striding out like Michael Johnson, he kind of shuffled along, with just short strides, not bending his knees much to maintain a low impact style for his ailing knees.

The main group was well ahead of him by the time nightfall came and they stopped for their sleep and recuperation. Cliff Young didn't realize that you were supposed to stop to rest... so he didn't; he just kept on running through the night. This went on for 4 days and 4 nights. He just kept on running.

During the 5th night, he caught up with the other athletes and overtook them, winning the race and breaking the previous record by over 9 hours. He later explained that, as he was running, he imagined chasing sheep as a storm rolled in off the mountains.

You must believe in yourself

The point is, his superhuman feat was achieved because his attitude was one of pure self-belief. He believed that he could run for over 5 days and nights without stopping to rest. So he did.

Just think how powerful that attitude could be in other areas of life – and specifically in your sales career.

Every single very successful sales person I have ever had the pleasure to work with has had a similar attitude, that no matter how tough their targets were, they believed they could achieve them, and, of course, they invariably did.

Look around you at your colleagues and you will recognize that

- some spend their time explaining that their targets are unachievable, and
- others just get on with things

Invariably, both achieve what they expect to achieve.

Don't forget



Have great attitude and believe you can achieve your goals. Only those that believe will consistently succeed.

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- 1 Remember Cliff Young when you feel that the task ahead of you is a daunting one
- 2 Decide to take the approach that you can conquer it
- 3 Then make sure that you do.

The rewards and satisfaction will make the effort worthwhile – every time.

Be driven and self-motivated

Communication is certainly easier and faster now than it has ever been, with the development of excellent new technology tools.

However, you will still inevitably have days when nothing seems to go right and there isn't someone sitting next to you to chat with or discuss last night's TV to get your mind off the difficult day you're having. So you must be someone with

- optimism
- drive
- a real desire to succeed.

Without these qualities, you can still have a career in Sales but I would doubt very much that it would be either enjoyable or successful.

I feel that there is a comparison to be made with a Sports career; a top athlete or sports star will be able to

- pick themselves up when things go wrong
- try a new tactic when the current one isn't working, and
- drive on through adversity to ensure they have done everything in their power to succeed.

So, if you are the sort of person who likes a challenge and has a competitive streak, welcome to your successful sales career – I hope it's a long and successful one.

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If you're not, maybe you should evaluate your choice of career and take a look at something else; in the long run, it may well be the best thing to do.

In summary, performance can be described easily as a simply equation:

$$P = A + A \quad (\text{Performance} = \text{Ability} + \text{Attitude})$$



Summary

- Be an optimist – selling can be a lonely profession; you need to be positive about what you can achieve and keep your enthusiasm up, even during difficult days
- Anything is possible if you have the right motivation and truly believe you can achieve it. You are the one who will set your own boundaries – make sure they are wide enough to achieve your objectives
- Remember Cliff Young – have a reminder for yourself that simply says “Cliff Young Thinking” to focus your mind on your high level goals – then make sure you achieve them
- Motivation comes from within you. It is not your manager’s responsibility to get you motivated to be successful; it’s yours
- Keep your energy levels high, to enable you to be involved in the right activities, which will deliver your success
- Set regular goals for yourself – specific achievements that, together, will deliver your overall objectives