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Everyone's a salesperson

No matter what level of selling ability you possess, by continued practice, you can become better, and the more effective you are at selling, the more successful you will be in every area of your life.

by **Brian Tracy**

plus ATTACHMENT

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Sometimes I ask my seminar attendees, “How many people here are in sales?” It’s interesting to watch how people respond to that question. There are always a few people who will raise a hand at first, and then another hand goes up, and then another, and soon perhaps half the people in the room have a hand up, even though they may be in fields such as management, administration, finance and accounting.

I then smile and ask again, “Now, how many people here are really in sales?” At this point, virtually every person in the room has raised a hand. We all smile at the realization that each of us is in the business of selling every single day.

From the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night, you are negotiating, communicating, persuading, and influencing—trying to get people to cooperate with you to accomplish the things that you want them to accomplish.

> ***So, the pivotal question with regard to selling is not if you are doing it, but if you are good at it.***

All top executives are excellent salespeople. All effective parents are wonderful salespeople. All effective employees use sales techniques to get their coworkers and bosses to go along with them and to cooperate

with them in getting the job done. Everyone who is effective in virtually any area of life that involves other people is an excellent salesperson of some kind.

Unfortunately, over the years, a stigma has grown up around the selling profession. Many people feel that selling is a low-level type of activity and they don't like to be associated with it— even people who are in sales! Virtually no colleges or universities have a "Department of Selling," even though almost 15 million Americans make their living by selling something to someone. It is the largest single, identifiable occupational group in the United States.

> ***Salespeople are the movers and shakers in every business and industry. They are the key people who create the demand for all the products and services that keep everyone employed at every other occupation.***

The basis for all successful sales efforts is a discipline called gap analysis. Gap analysis is clearly defining what your idea, product, or service can do for a person and then deciding how to demonstrate that in a compelling way.

People tend to buy based on how they anticipate feeling as a result of owning and enjoying a particular product or service. In fact, they make their decision based on whether or not that feeling is more valuable to them than the money they will have to part with.

In selling or persuading anyone to do anything, there is an "ABC theory of motivation" that is very powerful. In it, "A" represents a state of "felt dissatisfaction." This means that the individual is not satisfied with his or her current situation or condition.

The "C" represents a state of greater satisfaction. If the individual can get to this state, the felt dissatisfaction in his or her current situation will be

relieved.

The “B” in this ABC theory is the product, service, idea, action, or activity that you are trying to persuade the person to acquire or to engage in.

So, to repeat, the “A” is the existing state of dissatisfaction. The “C” is the future anticipated state of greater satisfaction or relieved dissatisfaction. The “B” is what you are offering as a means to that relief.

According to this theory, getting people to do something that they would not have done in the absence of your influence is possible only when a gap exists between their current situation and the ideal situation that they would like to enjoy.

> ***The very best persuaders, communicators, and salespeople are those who concentrate their attention on identifying the exact gap that exists and determining how big it is.***

They then focus on widening that gap in every possible way, until the prospect begins to feel more and more dissatisfied with his or her current situation and more and more desirous of enjoying the preferable situation that is achievable by the use of the product, service, or idea.

Let me give you an example. I was quite happy with my car until recently. It was a nice car, it was paid off, and it was running fine. Then I took it in to the dealership for a regular checkup and service. The service manager did an excellent job of analysis and came back to me with the sad fact that the car required not only new tires all around, but also a complete new set of brakes, a wheel alignment, and a lot of other things. The total cost would be about $3,000.

You can imagine my reaction. I was shocked. I had no idea that the car required that much service. Well, I thought, what the heck, at least it’s cheaper than buying a new car. Then a salesman at the dealership

pointed out to me that the car would drop another $2,000 in value at the turn of the model year, which was coming up in about 60 days. He told me that if I kept the car, and repaired it, I would lose $5,000 off the total value of the car, which I could never recover.

Suddenly, I went from complacency about my car to dissatisfaction, and then to great dissatisfaction and an intense desire to improve my condition in some way. The salesman then went on to explain that he could take my car as a down payment on a brand new luxury automobile, with no cash out of my pocket, and he could spread the payments over three, four, or five years, so that the cost to me would be very reasonable. At that, all my resistance vanished. I started out satisfied with my car, then became so dissatisfied with it that I bought a brand new, expensive luxury car - and, surprisingly enough, I drove away happy.

Here are some of the key points in gap analysis that my salesman applied. You can use these same techniques to persuade people to move from where they are to where you want them to be.

> ***Remember that people buy solutions to their problems, not products or services. In fact, as a salesperson, you need to be more of a problem finder than a vendor.***

The more you focus on the problem, or the gap that exists between the real and the ideal in the customer situation, the faster you will find a place where your product or service can plug the gap.

The bigger the problem that the customer or prospect has, the bigger the potential sale. One of the most powerful questions you can ask a person is, “How much is that problem costing you?” Help him to identify not only the obvious, direct costs, but also the not-so-obvious, indirect costs.

Ask the prospect, “What are the implications? What is the meaning of that problem to you? What other things does it affect in your work or personal life?”

The most astute salespeople are those who are capable of finding a small gap and then expanding it into a wide gap. They are capable of discovering a small problem or dissatisfaction in the mind of the prospect and then, by questioning and commenting, increase it until the prospect develops an intense desire for the solution they are offering.

If you are selling to companies, you have to ask what the decision makers in the organization want to accomplish. What is the gap between where they are and where they want to be? How is the decision maker rewarded, and for what? What does the decision maker have to do to earn the respect, esteem, and support of this or her superiors and coworkers?

> ***One of the deepest subconscious needs of all people is the need for self-esteem, for feeling valuable, important, and worthwhile.***

If you can ascertain what people need to do to increase their self-esteem and their perceived value in their organization, and then show them that by using your product or service, they can earn the approval and appreciation of the people around them and above them, they will often be very motivated to buy what you are selling.

When you meet prospects for the first time, you will find that they are usually unaware that a gap exists between where they are and where they could be. They will often say things like, “I’m not interested,” or “I can’t afford it,” or “We’re quite happy with our current situation.” These are normal and natural responses. No one likes to change. Your job is to describe a state of even greater satisfaction that they could enjoy if they did something different. Virtually all advertising is aimed at showing people how much better off they could be with a product or service that they have not yet acquired.

Gap analysis is based on asking good questions— questions focused on discovering problems that might be troubling the prospect. There is a direct correlation between the use of good questioning techniques and sales success. The more and better questions you ask aimed at finding a

problem or uncovering dissatisfaction, the more interest the prospect will have and the more sales you will make. The person who asks questions has control.

> ***Good salespeople always plan the wording of their questions, rewriting them and practicing them before they get face-to-face with a prospect. Poor salespeople, on the other hand, make up their questions as they go along.***

Here are some great questions for gap analysis.

The first question is an application of the “magic-wand technique.” Imagine that you have a magic wand that you can wave over the prospect’s situation and you ask this question: “Mr. [or Ms.] Prospect, if this situation were absolutely perfect in every respect, what would it look like? Then remain completely silent. When the prospect begins to describe that perfect situation, you’ll uncover the gaps you can fill to create his or her ideal future. When you explain how your product or service can bridge those gaps, you will greatly enhance your chances of making a sale.

A great set of questions begins with the words What if? For example, you can ask, “What if we could achieve this particular result for you; what effect would that have on your current operations?”

Good questions that grab the prospect’s attention will start him or her visualizing and imagining an ideal future state, exactly the state that your product or service is meant to achieve.

A final key to effective selling through gap analysis is to share some of the experiences of people who have previously purchased your product or service. Use third-party references, testimonials, and anecdotes. Say

something like, “I have a very good customer who had a similar situation to yours not long ago.” Then go on to explain how your customer was able to rectify that situation in a cost-effective way by accepting your recommendation.

> ***To be truly persuasive in the selling process, use gap analysis. Instead of trying to overwhelm your prospects with reasons and rationales for doing what you want them to do, ask questions aimed at uncovering their current problems, needs, and dissatisfactions.***

Listen carefully to the answers they give you, and ask additional questions to help them expand on their situation. Take a few moments to feed their answers back to them, to show that you were really listening and that you really understand their needs. Then position yourself to influence and persuade your prospects by showing them how your product or service just happens to be the ideal way to solve their problem, satisfy their need, or achieve their goal.

When you take this low-pressure approach to getting people to do what you want them to do, they will buy from you with pleasure, and they will recommend you to their friends. They will feel they are being helped to improve their lives rather than being pressured into buying something that they may not want or need.

The wonderful thing about selling is that it is a learned skill. No matter what level of selling ability you possess today, by continued practice, you can become better and more persuasive. And the more effective you are at selling, the more successful you will be in every area of your life.

Brian Tracy is one of America's leading authorities on the development of human potential and personal effectiveness. He addresses more than 250,000 men and women each year on the subjects of personal and professional development, including the executives and staff of IBM, Deloitte Touche, McDonnell Douglas and The Million Dollar Round Table. His exciting talks and seminars on leadership, sales, management and personal effectiveness bring about immediate changes and long-term results.

Brian has traveled and worked in 90 countries on six continents and speaks four languages. He is an avid reader in management, psychology, economics, metaphysics and history and he brings a unique perspective and style to his talks. He has the remarkable ability to capture and hold audience attention with a fast-moving combination of stories, examples, humor and concrete, practical ideas that get results-fast.

He is the author/narrator of many best-selling audio-cassette programs, including: ***The Psychology of Achievement, Breaking the Success Barrier, The Psychology of Selling, Peak Performance Woman, The Science of Self-Confidence, Thinking Big,*** and ***How to Master Your Time.***

Brian Tracy has produced more than 300 audio and video learning programs covering the entire spectrum of human and corporate performance. These programs, researched and developed for more than 25 years, are some of the most effective learning tools in the world.

Brian is married with four children and lives on a golf course in San Diego. He is active in community affairs and serves on the board of two non-profit organizations.

Visit his website, **Brian Tracy International**, at: BrianTracy.com
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