



Selling Chat

The Big Sales Mistakes

Costing You Money

A Special Report by Russ Emrick

The Big Sales Mistakes Costing You Money

By Russ Emrick

This weekend I returned from a sales seminar in Phoenix. It was a company sponsored training with one of the big guns on Salesmanship, a household name that I'm sure you'd know and who spent the week teaching us his 'selling system.'

Attending those seminars teaches you a lot of things – most of which the trainer doesn't intend, like why some salespeople outsell other salespeople, and not by small amounts but by factors of 5 and 10. You walk away with a deeper understanding of the behaviors that cause people to fail while others are succeeding – those that are making quota and huge incomes and the salespeople who are just hanging on.

There is a huge gap.

Now the gap isn't one that can't be overcome...if you know how. Identifying the mistakes many salespeople make is the first step in increasing a person's income and sales success. As a long time Sales Manager, VP of Sales, and from 30 plus years of selling I'd like to help you avoid some of the traps that I've learned which stop salespeople from being successful.

Please let me warn you: I am going to slay quite a few sacred cows here, like relationship selling and smart trumps work. Sales author Jim Rohm says "affirm the truth." Business giant Jack Welch, former CEO of GE says that in order to be successful "we must be brutally honest with ourselves and our businesses." It's only when you when you look at a situation with accurate thinking that you can create a plan based on reality.

Otherwise, you'll come up with excuses. People are either really good at making money or really good at making excuses – never both.

Pick one.

There is one other necessary thing you will have to do with this report in order for it to change your life and income level: you must make the commitment to read this entire report and act on what you learn. Then you will increase your sales and income dramatically. Hundreds of salespeople who have either worked for me or been coached by me have increased their incomes and become part of that 20% of salespeople producing 80% of the results.

This report isn't going to be long or wordy. It doesn't need to be. There are plenty of good sales books on selling systems, on skills, on selling strategy and on tactics. This report isn't one of them. The training I went to in Phoenix showed me that almost all salespeople already have the skills, knowledge and talent to succeed. What they lack is a coach to correct the mistakes of their craft – mistakes they've picked up or have been taught. I can't coach all the great individuals out there that want more out of their careers and income out of their selling. This report will help you do just that.

Mistake 1: Not Realizing that it's ALL About the Money

Last month I had lunch with one of my salespeople. We were discussing an account we both had a mutual interest in getting business from and so I asked how things were going.

"Russ," Shawn said, "the customer appreciated our helping him figure out his needs and even incorporated much of what we talked about into his RFP. He said that "we are at the top of his list when he's ready to buy."

"Really, what does that mean?" I guess by the tone in my voice Shawn knew I wasn't impressed.

"It means that we're his preferred vendor."

"Shawn, what that means," and I drew out the word 'that' for effect, "is that you're his favorite until the next salesperson walks in the door. You only have a real deal that's moving to closure if he has committed with you to take the next step in his buying process. Do you know what that step is?"

Shawn looked at me like a deer caught in a truck's headlights. For many salespeople they've fallen victim to the first mistake about selling: not realizing it is all about the money - not helping, not being consultative, not about the relationship. Those things are certainly a part of selling but the first part and the most important part is there a deal on the table that both parties want to work to get done. Simple but most often overlooked.

You don't get paid for consulting. There are no bronze or silver awards when a customer makes a purchasing decision. Only one competitor gets the gold - the one who gets the deal. You won't be cashing any commission checks for being helpful or getting the best possible deal for your customer with another vendor. So the principle that must always be foremost in your mind should be: is there a deal on the table? The second is: are we working together so that I can win it or am I just being helpful, which actually means

being used by the customer to get the more information, the best possible pricing and the best terms but from someone else?

Realizing that it's ALL about the Money is helpful in another way. Keeping your eye on the cash is not only beneficial for you but for the customer as well. All the fancy brochures, consulting, closing techniques, your product knowledge, and the products or solutions being offered mean nothing unless they produce real, measurable results that equate to more money in the bank for your customers. To put it plainly, the bottom line for every business is, they want to save money (cut costs, expenses) and they want to make more money. That's all they're interested in.

The faster, easier and more cost-effectively you can produce these results for your clients, the more impressed they will be by you and your expertise. If they're interested in anything else, you probably shouldn't be doing business with them.

(I'll explain why later.)

Almost everyday someone asks me how they can overcome prospects indifference. There is so much noise out there that just getting heard in order to sell is a huge challenge. You get heard by focusing on results and broadcasting those results on the only channel people listen too – WIIFM, “What’s In It For ME.”

Selling is all about results. Nothing else. Nothing else matters, and nothing else should ever be placed above getting results. Results in selling are measured in dollars and cents. Realize it's ALL about the Money and your results will skyrocket.

Mistake 2: Not understanding the point of what you do

Almost all training on selling these days is about relationship selling or consultative selling. We're told that salespeople must become a valuable part of the customer's business and help them however and whenever we can. Most salespeople today even get fancy titles, like Customer Advocate or Territory Manager.

Sometimes you'd think that selling isn't even a part of the job anymore that is of course until your quota review or forecast call.

Like most conventional wisdom that is WRONG there is always some truth mixed in with a great big deception. Being a knowledgeable asset to your customer is very important, as is building and developing a relationship. However those don't get you across the finish line.

Let me repeat what I said in Mistake #1: selling is all about results. Nothing else. Nothing else matters, and nothing else should ever be placed above getting results. Results in selling are measured in dollars and cents. There are no second prizes, no commission checks for being the most liked or best consultant. You are paid to "get the signature on the line which is dotted" to steal a phrase from the classic movie "Glenn Glerry, Glen Ross."

Now I know that makes many of you uncomfortable. You may even be thinking of closing this report or worse tearing it up and swearing at me. But let me ask you a question, after the deal is done how many dinner invitations do you get from customers? How many customers do you have over the house for socializing with the family? See customers aren't looking for friends – they're looking for business solutions that impact the bottom line. Take a moment and reread Mistake #1.

This was brought home to me years ago when a client said to me "Russ, no matter how this turns out I hope we remain friends." I mumbled something in response "like, Amy I only care that you make the best possible choice"

while I was actually thinking about the twenty thousand or so commission check Amy had just put into question. I'd worked with Amy for two years on a million dollar project and spent thousands on site visits, dinners and expenses. I even created the purchase's justification and did the presentation to her Board. To hear the deal might not be mine was a shocker. Turns out Amy was going to get the best possible deal my friendship notwithstanding.

Here is how you beat the mistake of misdirection. Know exactly what you're doing and why. Never get lulled into a false sense of security because you have an internal champion or a special relationship. Don't get fooled by your own title or how much your customers value your 'expertise' or consultancy. Those things are nice. Sometimes they are indispensable and the ingredients needed to win. However winning is the point, the end game, the entire reason for playing.

Know exactly where you are going with the sales opportunities your working and the people who will get you to the wins. Be interested in the ideas, people, and activities that will get you there faster or enhance what you are already doing by making things easier or more enjoyable. Don't get sidetracked by time wasting activities, conversations and friendships that don't further your singular objective of winning opportunities.

There are many things that could make you a better salesperson. You could study rapport, NLP eye movements, personality typing, Web 2.0 lead generation, negotiating. All of those things are important but let's not pretend there isn't a big learning curve to any of them. I'll bet you are already good enough with the skills needed to sell successfully. Most sales jobs and opportunities have only a few critical success factors. Know yours and use them.

Don't allow yourself to become overwhelmed. Be ruthless with your time and energy.

Mistake 3: Being Afraid of a Decision

Ever been with a group of friends trying to decide where to eat? Sometimes I'll go to lunch with a group of seminar attendees. It takes them 10 minutes to decide what kind of restaurant they like, 10 more minutes to decide where to go and then another 10 minutes to pick from the menu. That doesn't even count the time organizing the car pools, chatting, and just getting ready to go.

It's torture.

But how many of us run our sales life like that?

Too many from my experience.

We don't make decisions. Clear binary yes/no decisions. We don't cut loose bad deals or bad clients. We don't insist our prospects make clear choices. We put on our 'happy ears' and accept wishy-washy fuzzy feel good answers like "You're at the top of my list," "you're my preferred vendor" or as soon as the committee makes a decision I'll give you a call."

There are probably many reasons for this. Salespeople and their managers tend to like big sales funnels, even if it is so full of air it could float. We figure that if we don't get a 'no' a yes is always possible. We count on having enough balls in the air that some will pay off – someday. It's like the business owner who says "I loose money on every sale but I make up for it in volume." Someday never comes. Putting spaghetti through a fan and sure some will stick to the wall but you're have more of a mess than a real meal.

Hope is never a strategy.

Again, at the risk of offending some readers here, we need to put on our grown up panties on and make some, force some decisions. There is one clear cut way to do it. But first let me repeat:

Hope is never a strategy.

Do you want a truck full of promises, half commitments and sunshine or a pocketful of cash? Are you willing to get your feelings hurt, cut friends and projects out of your funnel, and pare down all the fat that is killing your real opportunities? Can you in the words of Jack Nicolson in the movie "A Few Good Men" handle the truth? Okay here it is –

Start with NO.

Don't go for the yeses. Look for the NO. Find the reasons the customer won't do business with you EVER and get out. If you're going to lose – lose early. Get out early. Move onto the deal that is winnable.

But how do you know? Ah, the million dollar commission question.

Use what I call in my book "Eat What You Kill Selling" Quid-Pro-Quo Selling. When the prospect wants you to do something get something in return. They ask for a quote, you say fine, however you need them to fill out a questionnaire. They want a meeting. Great. You need the Decision Maker present. Get them to have skin in the game. If they aren't working as hard as you in making the deal happen it is most likely that you're the third column choice being used to get leverage on those they really want to buy from.

Please, read that last paragraph again. It will save you untold grief and wasted time.

A great strategy for effective selling is to get incremental commitments from the customer that decisions can be acted on. Early in the buying process map out with the customer what's needed to go from idea to delivery. Insert milestones and dates. Get the customer to agree and whenever possible have them add input. Have points where both of you agree it is worthwhile going forward or ending the process. Then religiously follow the plan forcing decisions along the way. If the deal is going wonky agree on a fix or politely exit.

But you say “I need every deal. Times are tough. Deals are few and far between.” True. But for every pull-from-the-fire miraculous deal you hear someone wins there are hundreds that went down in flames.

A weak opportunity list doesn’t add up to bigger commissions – it only confuses you by the oldest ruse in the book –

Being busy instead of being effective.

I don’t know about you but I’ve certainly had enough practice. I don’t need any more. I need closed deals. I suspect you do to. Working hard, investing hours, weeks, even months on a deal that won’t close is not only a waste but it is demoralizing. It wastes the company’s money but more importantly it devastates your commissions.

Quantity isn’t a substitute for quality. Have better deals and more of them if possible. Don’t accept puffy pipelines so that you’re simply busy. Being busy is no substitute for being effective.

The solution is getting decisions and qualifying your prospect over and over again. Qualifying a deal isn’t simply about finding out if a customer has the budget or need for your solution. Qualifying is the constant activity of determining the value of working together both for you and the prospect. Qualify, re-qualify, get commitments, get the customer to invest with you and the more likely it is that you’re both “playing for real” and the more likely it is that you’ll win the business.

The solution is having the customer earn the privilege of doing business with you, of wanting the deal every bit as much as you do. Of course this requires some backbone on your part. Are you a salesperson or not? Don’t check your business card because it might lie to you. Check your compensation plan.

Become decisive and demand decisiveness.

Decisions are your best friends, even the NOs.

Mistake 4: Mistaking different from easier

Since we were in a selling seminar in Phoenix we heard about how “this strategy” and “this tactic” made selling “easier.” Calling high, calling the VITO (Very Important Top Officer) was easier because fewer people do it. You can just focus on value and be more successful.

That’s a lie.

Neil Rackham, author of Spin Selling, and a sales researcher has said that selling high “has never proven to have demonstrable effects on the overall selling process.” Calling high isn’t easier it’s just different. Just because something is different doesn’t make it easier.

It is a different selling model.

Many salespeople want to believe it’s easier...because they wish it were true. We all want that silver bullet that ends our troubles and results in showers of cash raining down on us. However, wishing and wanting are usually the enemies to making sales. A much better approach is accurate thinking.

Here’s my philosophy: harder is easier. Since fewer people do it the weaker get weaned out. I like that is a little bit harder to push for incremental decisions solidifying the customer’s commitment to my sale than waiting until at the end the customer might or might not call me back with an order. That way my competitors only find out they’ve lost when my check clears the bank.

Don’t think easier...think harder. Look for those things that require just a little more effort. Those are the things you want to do because most people won’t do them. And if you do enough of those things, you’ll develop a competitive advantage and a robust, strong stable of opportunities.

Mistake 5: Over-estimating the Importance of Selling

As salespeople we tend to overestimate our importance and the importance of selling in the business process. Now I know that is a radical idea that may set your jaw on edge. I would never say that to the CEO or my boss when looking for a raise but here we can be honest can't we? To prove that selling is not as important as we think let me ask you one question:

How much selling does Apple do to sell iPhones and iPads?

Not much. Every time Apple releases a new product people camp out in front of their stores to get one. Long lines form with some people even staying overnight in tents. Often Apple sells out of the product and exceeds its stock. Is this the result of good salesmanship or a new selling system?

What is Apple's secret? Apple's success comes from knowing what their market is, what their market is rabidly hungry for and serving up a value proposition that can't be touched by their competitors. They've connected with the right people the right message with the right product. And they win, they win big.

Salespeople used to be a customer's primary way of getting information. Now it is the internet. Salespeople are no longer needed for product information, pricing or even solutions. Our profession has scrambled to fill that void, largely ineffectively. That is why you hear so much talk about relationship selling, about salespeople being the communicator of value and the need to sell "high."

Unfortunately customers continue to use the Internet, Voice Mail, eMail and other technologies to keep salespeople out. Businesses have adapted while the profession of sales hasn't.

The evidence of this is the pressure sales managers are putting on their teams. Sell more! Make quota! Meanwhile, according to CSO Insights, one of

the largest research firm in Sales, the percentage of salespeople making quota has fallen every year since 2000, over 10% last year alone. Certainly the economy plays into this but so does the broken business processes we're expected to sell from. Over priced products, cobbled together solutions that customers don't want and unrealistic sales plans are just as responsible for stalled growth as the economy is.

Just ask Apple.

Jill Konrath, author of the top selling sales book "Selling Into Big Companies" says "that if a salesperson is having a hard time getting into a company it is because they have a weak value proposition." Agreed. However what can we do to continue to sell and overcome obstacles that we have no direct control over?

The answer is rethinking what you're doing. Are you making any of the mistakes described in this report? What have you done to increase your visibility, value, and importance to your customers and prospects? Here is the rule...

If someone is selling and winning business you can too.

If Apple can sell millions of overpriced phones you can sell your products as well, regardless of its defects, the market, the economy, or the blunders of your company (and sales manager).

There are many people who sell inferior products, who don't try nearly as hard, and who aren't as good as I am who are making more sales and more money.

What is their secret? They are connected to the right people. They have figured out how to navigate the terrain of their prospects – learning who is buying and who is making the decisions. They have people who champion them and coach them. People who have put them in contact with the right opportunities and gave them access to placers that you and I can't get access to.

People are more important than skills, information or products. Having key contacts is more important than an entire inventory of products, closing tactics, and special offers. Every buyer has access to good information, products and services. Everything they need to learn they can generally get without you and for free.

Don't fool yourself anymore. Instead of learning more selling systems or product information, spend more time making contacts with people. The best way to do that is to do something for someone else that benefits them before asking anything in return. Network, become visible.

Here is the GREAT news about selling becoming less important – the Salesperson is more important than ever. The value is no longer in what we know but who we know. The internet might provide information but it doesn't provide direction. With all of the marketing, product, and solution noise buzzing around people are looking for leadership.

Salespeople link customers with companies and people. They join business objectives with quantified results – linking the right audience with the right message. However if you're not connected with people you'll be locked out – a peddler in the waiting room hoping for a few minutes with a non-decision maker.

Remember - the more exposure you get, the more likely your chances of becoming involved in a good opportunity becomes. The more you're known the more people will want to know you.

There is a saying that today you need to work smarter rather than harder. That's not true. Today you need to work both smarter and harder. It's been said that the harder you work the luckier you'll get. That is true. Stay at it long enough, working both harder and smarter and you'll eventually get lucky.

Find a mentor.

Pay for a coach.

Mistake 6: Not Reducing Everything Down To Its Simplest elements

Sales have a million moving parts. At any time a salesperson has more balls in the air than a human can juggle. Opportunities, cold calls, lead generation, emails, customer complaints, CRM, reports, meetings, webinars, training, the list is endless.

Here is my sales plan: only time with a customer counts. Everything else is subordinated to that.

There is a linear relationship between my face time (or ear time) with customers to my income. I don't take on other people's work and I don't allow busy work – even the essential busy work like reports and funnel calls – to get in the way of customer facing activities.

Don't get me wrong – that isn't easy. It is one of the 'hard things' we discussed earlier. But it can be done.

Do you attend trade shows out of your area? Do you make follow up calls because you don't trust service? Do you rifle through lead cards instead of dialing the phone. Honestly look at how you are spending your time. Take a sharp scalpel or even a rusty knife to your calendar and unnecessary activities.

Become ruthless with your commitments and activities. Put customer time above everything else.

Steven Covey, author of the perennial best seller "The 7 Principles of Highly Effective People", asked one of his employees to take over a project that Steven didn't have time for. The employee opened his desk and pulled out his list of goals and supporting projects and asked Steven which one he could remove in order to take over this new task. Want to know what Steven did? He found another employee not so focused and added more work to that poor smucks plate.

Stop being a smuck. Here's how...

Boil your goals into their simplest elements. Every job, every sales opportunity has a few critical success factors. Do you know what yours are? Do you have a list of goals and the important milestones needed to accomplish them? Do you start the day with a list of must do actions? Have you simplified your life by jettisoning the unimportant, the irrelevant and the unproductive?

Want to make more money and sales immediately? Do this exercise right now before reading another word...

Write down the three most important things you could do right now that would have the biggest impact on getting a sale won.

Now do those three things.

Repeat

Make this a habit. Do it every day.

Sales is complex but that doesn't mean it has to be complicated. The difference is in your organization. How do you prioritize your time and your activities? Do you know your few, and believe me when I say that in any sales process there are only a handful, critical success factors? Are you willing to do the hard things that others avoid? Are you willing to cut loose the activities that might even be fun in order to focus on the important tasks?

How you answer those questions will determine your level of success.

Simplify and execute – the plan of champions.

Mistake 7: The Desire to Start from Scratch

I struggled with titling this common mistake because it is much bigger than most people wanting to start from scratch. The problem is excusitis – of allowing anything and everything from stopping taking action, executing.

Inertia is your enemy.

Here is an example from that seminar in Phoenix. I was talking to a rep over coffee and I asked him what he expected to get out of this seminar. He told me he was looking to improve some selling skills to make him more effective at prospecting. He mentioned that other reps had let him know that cold calling was the hardest part of the job and so he decided to avoid it until he got some training on how to do it effectively.

So basically for 3 months after being hired this salesperson waited for training living on his base and delivering donuts to his existing customers. Wow.

Here's my motto: go with what you've got. I know, it's crazy but people wait for the right skills, for the right timing, for the right whatever instead of taking action now. It is far better to do something well, even just good, and do it than waiting.

Want to know what I told my new friend in Phoenix? Okay. I said, "look you're thirty something. You've been using the phone and talking to people for almost that long. You've got all you need to cold call. Pick up the phone. Call your customers and find out why they buy from your company. Ask for referrals. Then call some new people. Tell them the great results their competitors are achieving by working with you and ask for an appointment. If they say no, ask why. Then thank them, hang up and make another call.

Go with what you've got.

You'll get better as you go. You'll learn to be effective by doing. Prospects are the best teachers; actions sharpen the saw better than any class will ever do.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Don't wait until you're ready. Pull together the resources you already possess and start using them. Ain't no magic bullet coming along, no new masterful technique that you have to learn. You've got all you need. Act on it and act now.

Go with what you've got.

Final Thoughts

In business nothing happens until a sale is made.

We all know that. What we don't know, or at least rigorously practice and apply is that is job of a salesperson to make that sale.

We get busy in our jobs, we take care of the needs of the company instead of our opportunities, we see ourselves as consultants and problem solvers. There are millions of things that get in our way. Demands seem to come out of nowhere – new reports, more meetings, more more more. Meanwhile our incomes diminishes, our sales performance slips and the pleasure we once got out of selling turns sour.

Turns out by correcting only a few things however we can dramatically impact our incomes and sales success. By focusing on results in terms of dollars and cents we can dramatically impact our effectiveness both for ourselves and our customers. By reconnecting to our purpose of selling, of getting the signature on the line which is dotted we can eliminate the stress of working without seeing results.

By simplifying our jobs into the few critical success factors and becoming more involved with people instead of things and activities we can hit the

targets we've been shooting for. By deciding to get real or not play the pleasure, satisfaction and enjoyment we once achieved by selling will return.

I hope this short report was helpful but I have a secret to share with you.

Please close the door, put your hands over these words and read the next few paragraphs to yourself. I'm going to tell you something you probably won't hear from your manager or any sales trainer alive.

You're already a success. You've already got the skills and character to succeed. Want proof? You've read this report. Out of a hundred salespeople who get any new book, idea, or report perhaps 5 finish them. Only one acts on it. I believe you are that one.

Let me share one other rarely confessed secret. It is not really a secret but something that most sales managers don't want to do. In 20 plus years of selling and training salespeople this is the most important lesson I've learned...

People need support. People need coaching. Even the greats. Tiger Woods has a coach. Michael Jordan had a coach. The greater the athlete the more they need a coach.

I want you to be even more successful. That won't happen with more training. You already have the knowledge, talent and skills to sell. What you probably need is a good coach. You need to find one.

If you don't have a coach perhaps I can help. I don't know. If this report has been helpful visit my website at www.breakoutselling.com. There are other free resources there you can use as well as ways of contacting me.

If you this report helped you please do two things. Visit that website and take action.

Now go out and sell.

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About Selling Chat

Selling Chat is a monthly letter to salespeople. Meant to be read quickly and used immediately, Selling Chat isn't about products or tired worn out practices written by academics. Selling Chat comes directly from the field - what's working and what isn't. Inside are the strategies and ideas that work in today's marketplace from salespeople and sales managers.

In the current selling climate of too little time for too much work no-one has time to waste, especially salespeople whose income depends on producing results. Selling Chat is a tool for sharpening a salesperson's skills and attitudes.

Selling Chat has one and only one goal - "to get the signature on the line which is dotted" to use a famous movie line. If you want a fast tips, coaching and help boosting your income Selling Chat is a must read.

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