

First 100 Days of Selling

A Practical Day-by-Day Guide to Excel in the Sales Profession

Written by
Jim Ryerson

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Dedications

To my wife, the best friend I have. Thank you for putting up with my bottomless energy, laser-like drive and constant activity. You're the best!

To my three beautiful daughters: Katherine, Elizabeth and Anna. I learn from you every day. Continue doing what you love and a wonderful life will follow.

To my Father who taught me the discipline of Integrity and Hard Work and my Mother who was always optimistic! Three principles required for sales success.

To my Creator, God, who has given me everything I have including the gift to enjoy this race called life.

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Foreword: Selling—And Loving It

If you're reading this book, it's either early in your first sales role or you've been in sales for sometime and are looking to grow your skills. Maybe you're thinking about pursuing a sales position and want to know what to expect.

Whatever your situation, you know customers have many more choices than ever before. It keeps getting more difficult for customers to decide among all the options. They also have less time due to continued pressure on productivity and cost.

As a result, numerous programs have emerged that promise sales success in challenging times. Many sales programs stress in-depth psychoanalytical approaches to the client contact. Others focus on using technology to create heavy traffic and multiple leads. Still others rely on clichéd slogans, recycled ideas, or unproven theories.

However, these programs fail to take the most important factor into account: A person's decision to engage with us and ultimately buy from us is based on how he or she *feels about us* and our ability to meet his or her needs.

And here's the best news: you can learn behaviors and processes that will help people have a good feeling about you from the first minute they meet you. It's easy and it takes practice, patience, and perseverance. And that's what this book is all about.

Introduction: The Sales Continuum™—The Art, Science and Discipline of Sales

What you are about to read is the result of many years of sales experience and analysis of the sales process. I guarantee that no matter what your situation, you will walk away with a solid, step-by-step roadmap to selling. It includes not only what I've learned, but also the best practices of the best salespeople across numerous products, services, and markets.

It's not just another book about a specific sales technique or a particular sales trick. It's much more. This book defines a complete process based on the realities of day-to-day, in-the-trenches selling. I call this process the Sales Continuum.

The Sales Continuum covers the art, science and discipline of sales. The art of selling involves understanding your strengths and leveraging them. It involves learning your areas for improvement and practicing until you minimize the negative impact of those areas. When you learn the material so well over a period of time, through discipline, it becomes second nature. You've heard people remark that a salesperson has mastered the "Art of Selling." This simply means they have worked at making their sales approach appear like they have done it successfully for a long, long time.

The question is what have they worked at that makes them so good? The answer is the science of selling. Shortly after I began sharing the Sales Continuum with salespeople around the world I encountered a particularly difficult attendee. I was told that this sales professional was the top salesperson in his company for several years in a row and was also considered one of the top in his

INTRODUCTION: THE SALES CONTINUUM

industry. This sales professional was also nearing retirement and was not excited about the prospect of someone much younger—namely me—training him in a discipline where he clearly excelled. He sat towards the back of the room with his arms folded across his chest, clearly a visual sign of his disinterest. As the day went on I noticed him becoming a bit more engaged, especially with those at his table. It wasn't until lunch that he came up and shared with me that he really enjoyed our approach. He went on to say that he had been very blessed in the sales profession but that he never realized the science behind what had made him so successful. The science of selling consists of the behavioral and psychological elements of influencing your customer. This does not mean to manipulate them as that will eventually lead you down a dead end.

Finally, the discipline of selling takes our stated initiative (“I want to be the best salesperson in my company”) and converts it to measurable, quantifiable steps that you can follow in a disciplined manner. This becomes our real initiative! You may have great stated initiative. The question is – do you have the real initiative to accomplish those goals?

In each chapter there are icons that represent the Art, the Science and the Discipline of selling. This will help you identify how the information should help you achieve your stated initiative to become the best in your profession.

The Sales Continuum starts with your first hello and handshake with a potential prospect. The process continues to the handshake that closes the sale—and beyond, because what follows the sale is just as important as what leads to it. That's why I call the program a “continuum.” The steps are connected, and each step is dependent on the others.

There are six key sales activities in the Sales Continuum:

Networking: the process of expanding your network and finding prospects.

Prospecting: the process of qualifying the accounts to identify your opportunity.

Appointments: the process of creating value.

INTRODUCTION: THE SALES CONTINUUM

Proposals: the actual submission of a proposal to a prospect.

Closing: the point at which the client accepts your proposal and you have the order.

Referrals: a referral from an existing client or someone in your network.

We'll go in-depth with each of these steps later.

An important part of the Sales Continuum process is my LINK program, which was developed to give you a framework and repeatable process for successful networking. Each letter in the word LINK stands for something you need to know about everyone you meet: Line (of work), Interests, Needs, and Knowledge.

I feel this approach is ideal for the sales environment we are entering, where prospects will continue to get harder to reach. At the same time prospects are being bombarded with more and more products and services *just like yours*. How will they make a decision to take your call? How will they decide to choose your product or service over the mass of competitors making their own pitches? The answer: The Sales Continuum.

This program is a complete, comprehensive approach to sales that deals with every aspect of the sales process: Networking, Prospecting, Qualifying, Appointment, Trial Closing/Closing and Referral.

These are the activities sales professionals do every day, and it's the process we teach. If you're looking for a trick, this is not for you. If you are going to invest in selling as a career, then this is the ideal process to build a business that will continue to grow and fuel future growth. Like other sales programs, the key is creating a stream of referrals. But the Sales Continuum does it differently. We create referrals at every step of the sales process.

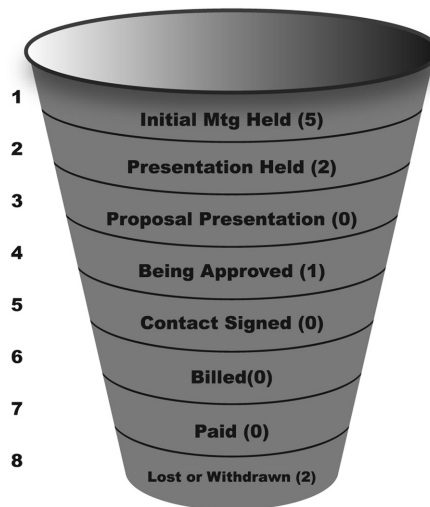
One last thought: for years I thought that the top sales performers were fortunate and just happened to stumble into the right situation at the right time. Once I realized that top sales performers had a specific approach to creating their success, I set my focus on understanding that process and defining the details that drive it.

Good selling!

Jim Ryerson

Getting Started: Think Outside the Funnel

Most salespeople are familiar with the idea of the sales funnel.



Sales Funnel

The funnel is filled with “suspects”—people you suspect are candidates for your products or services. We research and/or follow up with these suspects in a “prospecting” phase, much like the prospectors who searched for gold. Our goal is to prospect and ultimately connect with them so we can move to the next step: qualification.

Through various questions, data gathering, and plain observation we determine if they are, in fact, qualified as a candidate

GETTING STARTED: THINK OUTSIDE THE FUNNEL

for our products or services. If they are, the lead moves down the funnel. The funnel gets narrower since many of your suspects never materialize as qualified leads. For leads that move farther down the funnel, you work to uncover their needs and identify all the reasons why they would benefit from your product or service.

After finding a qualified prospect you connect the features, advantages, and benefits of your product/service with the prospect's needs. If the prospect is still interested, you provide them with a proposal and then close after you deal with any objections they have. The bottom of the funnel is where you close and either win or lose the sale.

Incidentally, "close" may mean you get the order, or it may mean you "close" the file because you have lost. It could also mean nothing will happen until the future, if at all. Whether you win or lose does not change the fact that the customer exits the bottom of the funnel.

Whenever I hear salespeople talk about the funnel, they say they work every stage of the funnel but feel guilty when they focus on anything other than what is "inside the funnel." However, our experience suggests that a great deal of a salesperson's time is spent "below the funnel," making sure the implementation occurred correctly after the sale. Regardless of your business, whatever occurs after you close a sale is referred to as implementation.

The company you work for may have people deployed against the implementation process, but you may have to drive many of the implementation issues. Even though we are not directly involved in the process of implementation we take accountability to make certain the implementation goes as planned.

When I ask successful salespeople why they get involved with implementation issues, they say they learn a great deal about their customer during the implementation stage. They learn whether the solutions they promised in their proposals are accurate. They get firsthand confirmation of the issues, often referred to as the client's "pain," that they addressed in their proposal. They learn about other problems that their product/service can solve. They often

GETTING STARTED: THINK OUTSIDE THE FUNNEL

gain a better idea of the value/savings their customers experience with their product/service.

On top of all that, the relationship the salesperson creates with the client during the implementation phase becomes stronger because the salesperson is present whenever there are issues and takes total accountability for satisfying the customer. But if you look at the typical sales funnel, it's not a salesperson's job to be accountable during the implementation phase. And that's where the traditional sales funnel process has to change.

In the real world, it is essential for the sales process to recognize that performance during the implementation phase is part of a salesperson's accountability in the eyes of the customer. Of course, the goal of a leader/sales manager is to provide the necessary support and follow-through to minimize the amount of time a salesperson has to spend on implementation. Nevertheless, the salesperson must always be accountable because it positions them for the next and most important step of the sales process.

Getting Referrals

Let me ask you if this is your personal buying experience. When I've ever acquired a product that did not work as well as I was told it would work it was because:

1. The product did not do what was promised, or
2. I did not get good follow-through by the company on how to use it, or
3. I'm an idiot and was not using it properly.

Whatever the reason, I was dissatisfied and would typically try to connect back with the salesperson who sold me the product/service. They were often unavailable or inattentive to deal with my dissatisfaction. Often their lack of availability or inattention to my needs was not just confined to the implementation process. It was just the way they did business. And guess how I felt when I came to that conclusion?

After repeated attempts to find a solution, I would toss the product aside and look for another solution and, share my dissatisfaction

GETTING STARTED: THINK OUTSIDE THE FUNNEL

with people I know—the company’s other prospective customers. However, when I acquired a product/service that did not work but the salesperson was available and willing to do everything possible to make sure the problem was solved, I would rave about the product/service to others. Even when I acquire a product/service that works as promised, I find that the salespeople who stay in touch with me better position themselves for my next acquisition.

You have to take the time, initiative and accountability to make certain the product/service performs the way your customer expects “below the funnel.” It is non-negotiable. When you make sure they are totally satisfied, you’ll get additional business from them. And far more important: you will get a chance to ask for referrals. If you make certain they are satisfied, you earn the right to ask for referrals.

We hear a lot about the topic of referrals, but most salespeople see referrals as reactive versus proactive. A salesperson is pleased when they receive a call from a prospect who was referred by an existing customer. That’s easy. What we are talking about is proactively working to develop a referral stream.

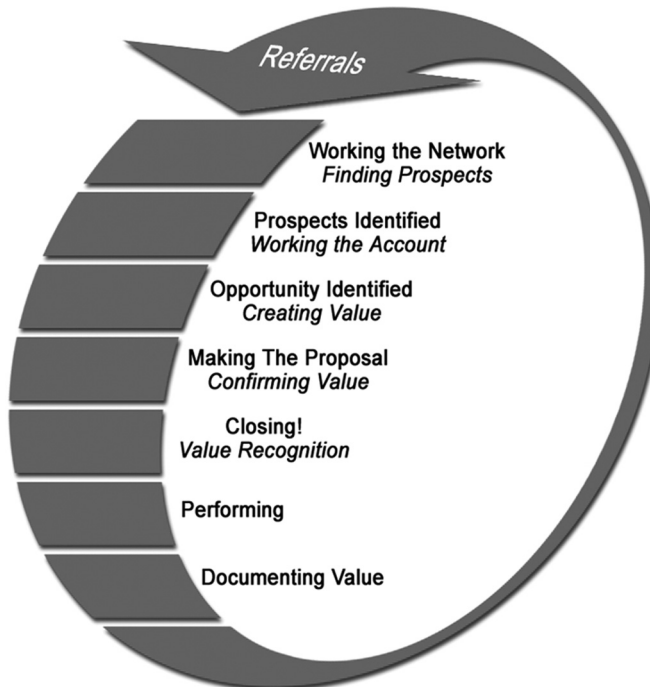
There are two important reasons why we want to proactively develop referrals. First, the sales cycle is shorter when a referral is involved. Prospecting a referral requires fewer prospecting calls. Getting the prospect’s attention and differentiating your product/service from all the other options on the market takes far less time. Second, you will close at a higher rate when a referral is involved.

Unfortunately, most salespeople don’t make the connection between how they can speed up their sales cycle and improve their closing percentage. This is one of the key outcomes of the Sales Continuum process. You will position yourself for the referral, which will speed up your sales cycle and improve your closing percentage. In addition, you will assume 100 percent accountability, because at a minimum you must meet your customer’s expectations in order to reasonably expect to receive a referral. This is a key trait of top sales professionals. They assume total accountability

GETTING STARTED: THINK OUTSIDE THE FUNNEL

because they recognize they lose the opportunity for referrals *if* the customer's expectations are not met.

When a salesperson structures their entire sales process by focusing on obtaining referrals they will find they are standing on a field of gold. The Sales Continuum will help you prospect for that gold.



The Sales Continuum™

How to Use This Book

To gain the most benefits from this book, read one chapter a day. The book is set up to begin on a Monday (Day 1) and continues for five days, Monday through Friday, with the step-by-step approach of the Sales Continuum™. The subsequent two days (Days 6 and 7) are specific guiding principles for sales professionals and will revive, renew and inspire you on your weekend. The weekend days are called Sales Octane Mantras. The balance of the book follows the same five days of sales process and two days of inspiration. Each day you will learn the material, do some exercises, and develop positive selling habits. It won't take long. Best of all, you'll have the foundation and the framework for a successful and rewarding career in sales. It's a great way to start the day!

SECTION 1: Knowing Yourself and Influencing Others

DAY 1

Preparation: Get Going Early! Read, Plan, and Restore

Sales is one of the most rewarding careers due to the opportunities and independence it provides. Sales is one of the highest paid professions and offers greater independence than any other occupation.

The rewards, income, and independence all begin with a quick start. Your clients and prospective clients are typically available early and late in the day. If you get going early you will have the opportunity to talk to more clients than your competition. Decide what “early” is for you and set a goal to meet that expectation each and every day. Take your planner, PDA, or electronic calendar and mark it in every morning!

Take a few minutes of this early time to read this book, plan and restore. Reading is one of the key differentiators between those who accomplish great things and those who don't. The average person reads less than two books per year. Your commitment to reading this book places you ahead of the pack!

Briefly scan Days 9 through 11 today so you begin to think about where you can locate the information. This will give you a glimpse at how much farther you will be within days and help you

SECTION 1

balance your week with other activities that your company requires. Keep in mind that this discipline of starting early and beginning with reading should be a life-long habit. In 100 days you'll be completely done with this book. Then find another book on sales and read that during your early hours. You can download my "Recommended Reading" list free at www.salesoctane.com. We frequently add books to the list so you may want to pencil this activity in your planner every few months to check the list.

Plan

You'll learn more about planning later on. However, for the duration of this book, review the goals of each day to make sure you accomplish the tasks in this book. They are the most important steps to ensuring success so place them at the top of the list!

Restore

Whatever the foundation in your life, I recommend taking a few minutes of this early morning ritual to reflect on that foundation. This adds perspective to the day and gives you the strength you will need when you encounter obstacles.

Move ahead

Now that you have read the Forward, Introduction, Getting Started, How to Use this Book and Day 1, continue with your existing sales activities. If selling is what you're meant to do you are going to have the time of your life. Enjoy!

DAY 2

DAY 2

Know Yourself – It Starts with You – Part I

People buy from people they like. If you are buying a candy bar at the local convenience store you probably don't care if you like the person behind the counter. You buy the candy bar and move on. However, when someone has a choice of who to buy from or when they have to deal with a salesperson for a period of time they will buy from someone they like versus someone they dislike. This makes sense and most salespeople understand this concept and work diligently at being friendly and liked by their customers. However, your potential customer is also more inclined to buy from someone who is similar to them. We refer to this similarity as their behavioral style. You have a particular behavioral style and your potential customer has a particular behavioral style. The way they make their decisions is influenced by their behavioral style. For the next several days we will be touching on the concept of how a prospect makes decisions and how we can modify our approach to make it easier for them to buy from us versus our competitor. We are talking about how the prospect processes information in their mind when making a decision, how they behave. Think about it this way. When I decide to buy something, I am quite impulsive. I recently bought a car over the Internet. After looking for a particular model on the Internet I found a few cars matching my criteria. Those particular cars were selling fast and when I called about the

SECTION 1

first two they were sold within the next twenty-four hours. As a result I bought the third car that met my criteria, over the phone, with a simple deposit on my credit card without having viewed the car in person or driven the vehicle. The car was in another city so I purchased a one-way plane ticket to the city where it was located and drove it home.

Some of you are aghast at the thought of making a sizeable purchase without doing a lot of research. Many of you would review information online about the model you were looking to purchase, go to several automobile dealerships, evaluate several vehicles, drive them, look at the history of the car, etc., etc. Some may even think it's reckless to make a major purchase in this manner. And that's the point. It was not reckless for me but it is for others. People think about buying decisions differently and in some cases very differently. Unfortunately, many salespeople never realize the way *they* make buying decisions is often different from how a prospect will make a buying decision. Issues such as the amount of information or analysis required, their level of suspicion or trust, their impulsiveness or lack thereof, how quickly they make a decision and their level of emotional engagement in a purchase are just a few of the ways that people differ in how they make decisions. The unknowing salesperson will approach every prospect with the same type of information, the same quantity of information, the same "lines," the same follow-up and the same close. With some prospects they win and with some prospects they lose. You could get more business, faster, at higher margins *and* position yourself better for the referral *by understanding* how the prospect makes decisions from a behavioral standpoint and then adapting your approach to fit their style!

Incidentally, if you are asking yourself the question, "Jim, how often is the behavioral style of the prospect different from my behavioral style?" It can be as high as 75 percent of the time! That means you may only have a 25 percent chance the prospect behaves just like you when making a decision. Those are not good odds.

DAY 2

The goal of these next few days is to understand your behavioral style and how *you* come across to your prospects and customers and then how to identify your prospects behavioral style. We will give you a general approach to adapting your approach on Days 6 through 8, and then later in the book (Days 61 on) we go into greater detail with how to prepare for each style, what to do during the sales call with each style and how to follow up after the sales call with each style. In some cases the approach will be very different from the way you currently “sell” and in some cases it will be similar. However, before we look at the prospect’s style and how to approach them we want to make sure *you* know your behavioral style. Our organization uses a tool available through Target Training International. You can get more information at our website www.salesoctane.com. There are two options to help you identify your sales behavioral style.

1. You can take an online assessment through Target Training International or another DISC provider. This online assessment will not only provide you with your exact behavioral style but it will also give you twenty-plus pages of insight into how you present yourself to others, how you respond to stress when selling, how you adapt yourself and a review of your strengths and areas for improvement as a salesperson.
2. You can go to Day 3 and follow the same methodology we use to identify a prospect’s behavioral style.

Note: Three important reminders if you take the online assessment: 1) This will require ten to fifteen minutes of uninterrupted time (once you start please make sure you finish the assessment in a single sitting). 2) Answer the questions as you *are* and *not how you wish you could be* or not how your manager would want you to answer. If you answer honestly you will have a very clear indication of how to improve your approach to get additional business. The only style that is bad for selling is the one you don’t know (see Sales Octane Mantra #3 on Day 13). 3) Once you complete

SECTION 1

the assessment online you will *immediately* receive a copy of the results! Please have someone that has known you for some time read the overview of your results (typically the first two to four pages) and ask them the following question: “How accurate do you think this is?” Oftentimes you may feel like it is 80 percent accurate but someone close to you will say it’s 95 to 100 percent accurate! Be prepared to learn! If you have taken the assessment online through *www.salesoctane.com* please proceed to Day 4.