

# ESSENTIALS OF SELLING

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## INTRODUCTION

**S**ELLING is a splendid vocation for any man or woman who likes people. Good salesmen are well paid. With less average education, they often earn considerably more than clerks and accountants. Many a company treasurer has good reason to envy the pay checks he mails out to salesmen.

Selling cannot yet properly be called a profession, but when the importance of training and experience for salesmen is recognized to the same extent that it is for doctors, accountants, or electricians; and when a satisfactory code of ethical practices in selling is developed, it may attain that status. In no true profession would a man be expected to "make good" with so little preparation. However, industry is beginning to recognize that the chances of success in selling are decidedly improved by adequate educational backgrounds.

The importance of the salesman as an educator has scarcely been appreciated. What made America great? Was it the possession of raw materials? Was it our great development of the use of machinery in mass production and our resultant high standard of living? These things could never have developed if salesmen had not continuously created public demand and expanded the markets for the products of our mines, fields, forests, and factories by forever showing people something better, something more to want than they already had to make life easier, more pleasant, or more productive.

During the summer of 1943 the Small Industries Action Committee representing the Committee for Economic Development in Rochester, New York, held a series of luncheons to which, in rotation, they invited executives of three different small businesses each week. After about fifteen such luncheons it was quite apparent to Walter Niles, Chairman of the Small Industries Action Committee and Works Manager of the Electric Writing

Machine Division of the International Business Machines Corporation, that after the war these small businessmen would suddenly be faced with the acute problem of rebuilding their sales forces to prewar strength or greater.

Many of these small industries had completely transformed their facilities to produce on contract or sub-contract for just one customer: Uncle Sam. Many of their former salesmen had gone to war; others were busily expediting the procurement of materials or were working on production. Meanwhile those men were getting older and forgetting how to sell.

After managing Stromberg-Carlson's radio sales force, I, too, had been a production man for four years. However, it was my good fortune to be Chairman of the Sales Managers' Club of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce \* as well as Vice-Chairman of the local Committee for Economic Development when Walt Niles came to me with this problem. He had already looked among Rochester's public, vocational, and business schools and found that the sales training material being offered was surprisingly meager—in fact, practically non-existent; whereas any number of schools stood ready to train draftsmen, screw machine operators, or engineers for the hungry, war-busy factories.

My immediate reaction was that the problem presented no difficulties. Here, represented in the membership of our club, are firms that have done extensive sales training for generations. All we need do is to write to a few of them, ask what they teach their salesmen, and just which subjects they feel would apply to salesmen in general whether concerned with industrial, wholesale, or retail sales of goods and services.

We were in for a shock. Our club wrote in August to sixteen of the largest Rochester firms, seeking their information. Eleven of them replied that they had nothing to offer, even though many said they had done consistent sales training before the war, but either they had not bothered to write out a formal course of training or their material was so out-of-date as to be unsatisfactory even to themselves, and they did not want to submit it. A twelfth manufacturer telephoned that he had nothing to offer but didn't want to say so in a letter! Four firms sent in good

\* Now, the Sales Executives Club of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce.

material, but most of it was product information rather than basic selling principles—and rather specialized product information at that, such as how to sell glass-lined railroad tank cars.

Next, the Executive Committee of our Sales Executives Club wrote to six large eastern colleges and universities, some of which had graduate business schools. One of these was located in Canada. Here again we received a complete and prompt response, but the curriculums and other material that they sent in were meant primarily for training sales *managers*, not salesmen. They discussed how to select salesmen, how to assign territories, how to set quotas, how to interpret call reports. Our need was for material to help a man to work the territory assigned him, so that he could meet his quota and turn in adequate call reports on his way.

By this time we had an interesting project on our hands. We drew up a chart listing down the left-hand side sixteen subjects that we thought would be important to any kind of salesman: subjects such as how to close an order, how to handle objections, the pre-approach to a prospect, how to conduct yourself during the interview, when a price quotation is simply an offer and when it is a deal. Across the top, we listed the sixteen Rochester firms and the six colleges we had contacted and under each we put an "X" wherever the material they submitted had even partially covered a subject. The chart was a little blacker under the colleges, of course, but even there it was full of holes.

With chart in hand, we invited the sales managers of the sixteen large firms to a luncheon. We pointed out how little we had to offer to small businessmen. We asked if these large businesses would not need to rebuild their sales forces, too, and, if so, if these national sales managers were content to wait until the end of the war before tackling the job. To a man, they said that they were ready to tackle it at once, and that they would like to share the task among themselves, each studying one of the subjects that were listed, preparing a paper on it, and exchanging the papers among themselves. They agreed to share the results with the small businessmen; but, before doing so, they wanted to present their papers before a closed meeting of the members of our Sales Executives Club, asking the other sales managers to



"chew each paper to pieces" in discussion, then have the papers tried out in the classroom before making them widely available in book form. Arrangements were made with The Rochester Institute of Technology to digest the material in each paper and to use it in a course offered both to experienced salesmen and to brand-new postwar sales applicants. An announcement of this plan brought out an overflow registration necessitating two courses instead of one.

This was the birth of a series of Monday evening sales training clinics conducted by the Sales Executives Club of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce from October 4, 1943, to February 7, 1944. The meetings were held in addition to the regular program of Friday noon meetings. The clinics were held every other week, starting promptly at seven and ending at nine-thirty. Usually two papers were presented at each clinic, with frequent recourse to the blackboard and to the fine charts which many of the sales managers prepared at their own expense. I mention these details because the sales managers who prepared the papers tell me that *they* benefited more through their participation than anyone else. It is our hope that other clubs in the National Federation of Sales Executives will develop an equally satisfactory pattern and conduct their own clinics.

For further guidance of our sister clubs, let me say that we insisted that each paper be prepared and submitted at least one clinic (two weeks) in advance of its presentation. This policy later proved its value when one man was taken sick the day he was to deliver his paper; we were already prepared with two substitutes. Another valuable detail was the use of question sheets which did not require a signature, in order to stimulate complete and searching discussions.

Before the completion of the initial list of subjects, additional suggestions began pouring in, all of which were tested by our Executive Committee from the standpoint of *general interest to all types of salesmen*. It must be acknowledged from the start that any list of basic selling principles must be supplemented by product information on the specific goods or services of the individual employer. Our aim, however, was to develop—and to cover adequately—the minimum list of subjects that ought to be un-

derstood by every salesman. We included some subjects that are all too often neglected in the rush to select a good salesman and to send him out behind the counter or into the field to represent our firms. On this basis we closed our series of clinics after treating the twenty-two subjects that make up the chapters of this book.

Here, then, is good sales training material, gathered by twenty-two men experienced in their field, scrutinized for general interest by an Executive Committee, and supplemented by comments and criticisms from over a hundred additional sales managers.

The Rochester club was indeed fortunate; Rochester is the national headquarters for so many large firms that we had ample top-flight talent to draw upon. An exchange of views with the Kansas City Advertising and Sales Executives Club (which began a similar series of clinics early in 1944), with the New York Sales Executives Club (which conducted a refresher course for sales managers early in 1944), and with the officers of the National Federation of Sales Executives (who have endorsed our pioneer efforts) convinced the Sales Executives Club of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce that the groundwork was well laid.

When *Newsweek* published an announcement of the Rochester clinics on October 18 and hinted that the papers would be published, a flood of inquiries began coming in from soldiers, sailors, marines, merchant seamen, men in the Coast Guard all over the world, wounded men in hospitals, Army rehabilitation officers, schools, boards of education, other sales managers' clubs, private firms, and individuals. Subsequent publicity items in *Printers Ink*, *Sales Management*, *Retailing-Home Furnishing*, *Advertising Age*, *The New York Times*, and others gave sympathetic encouragement. Each new announcement brought a new group of inquiries, and as time went on, it became more and more certain that this book would have to be published.

We feel that this book is one that any man who sells can read time after time, with benefit from every reading.

LEE McCANNE

*Vice President and General Manager, Stromberg-Carlson Company  
Regional Director, National Federation of Sales Executives*



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

**I**N THE Introduction, Lee McCanne tells how this book came into being as the result of the need for more effective material for training salesmen.

We who have had a part in creating it are aware of the fact that there are hundreds of books in the field of personal selling. Nevertheless, the members of the Sales Executives Club of the Rochester, New York, Chamber of Commerce, who, as part of their day-to-day work, have been facing and will continue to face the problem of getting results from field selling forces, felt keenly the need of a somewhat different approach in text material for sales training.

This book is the result of the combined efforts of this group of sales executives. They represent firms ranging from wholesale distributors to industrial giants with international distribution. Drawing on their own experience, they selected a group of topics with which they know practicing salesmen—their salesmen—must be fully acquainted. Each topic was assigned to a specialist in the field or to a member of the Sales Executives Club whose training and experience enabled him to write with the greatest authority and in the most practical manner.

As a result, this book presents that material, and only that material, which sales executives *know* is necessary for the proper training of salesmen. Some topics commonly included in texts on salesmanship have been omitted because they were not considered essential as basic training material. Other topics which are seldom, if ever, considered in sales training matter have been included as essential in creating the type of salesman which these men want to develop.

No person with the experience which these businessmen have behind them would be so naïve as to claim that this book can turn out finished salesmen. We are confident, however, that it can play an essential part in that process. The book is designed to provide a complete and rugged framework around which the sales

manager can build in creating salesmen. On this framework each individual firm can build the specialized knowledge of its product and its specific techniques which, combined with experience, *can* create the finished salesman.

Without this framework the rest of the structure is likely to be weak and flimsy. It is likely to be upset by the first storm of unusual conditions. Without it the salesman cannot profit fully from his own experience. He will be more likely to fail to appreciate the significance of what he sees and hears and does.

As editor, it has been my privilege to attempt to bring a greater degree of uniformity and continuity to the chapters, which were naturally somewhat diverse in character since all were written by different men, at different times, and in different styles. The excellence of the material is their contribution, not mine.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the contributions of others to the editorial task. I am particularly indebted to each of the authors for his advice, co-operation, and understanding of the task.

The work of the publication committee of the Rochester Sales Executive Club was invaluable. This committee is composed of Lee McCanne, Vice President and General Manager of the Stromberg-Carlson Company, chairman and godfather to the entire project; Victor A. Noel, Sales Manager of the Ritter Company; and William A. Burdick, Director of the Rochester Sales Executives Club. Each of these men gave liberally of his time, and without their aid the task would have been immeasurably more difficult. I wish to express my appreciation also to Mr. Leonard T. Thomasma, Assistant General Sales Manager of the Todd Company, for his valuable suggestions.

To the University of Rochester I am greatly indebted for furnishing, in a spirit of public service, the substantial amount of secretarial assistance so essential to the completion of the work. Specifically, I am indebted to Dean J. Edward Hoffmeister of the University faculty, on whose judgment and experience in writing I drew heavily, and to Miss Marguerite Lyon of the University secretarial staff for correcting and typing the manuscript.

CHARLES W. LEWIS

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## Chapter I

# WHAT IS A SALESMAN?

by

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MR. F. W. NICHOL, Vice-President and General Manager of The International Business Machines Corporation, is said to have answered the question, "What is a salesman?" by saying, "A salesman is a man who sells." This definition is simple and to the point. However, I want to approach the same question from a different angle. I will answer this main question by asking and answering four subquestions.

### How do the Salesman's Activities Affect Society?

The activity of the salesman has been of primary importance in providing people with more goods, more different kinds of goods and better goods at lower prices. In short, his efforts have helped materially in raising the standards of living.

Invention alone is not enough to do this. Mass production under the factory system which is part and parcel of our surplus economy could not have developed without the aid of the salesman and his brother in the field of advertising. There was a time when many people believed that the automobile was an instrument of evil and should be suppressed. They argued that the creator had not intended that we dash along the countryside at the incredible speed of forty miles an hour—that to do so for any length of time would impair our health. The sewing machine was at one time frowned upon and the bathtub was not accepted as a boon to humanity without a struggle.

My point here is simply this. A new device may be invented and even put into production in factories, but until the salesman has convinced the public that it is desirable and beneficial it cannot contribute to an increased standard of living. The public must be persuaded to accept it, must be made to realize that the new thing will contribute to their comfort, welfare or happiness before there can be a demand for the product of the inventor and the factory. With few exceptions we have had to be persuaded and cajoled to accept and use new goods and new ideas. Usually such new things do not become a part of our everyday life for many years after they have been perfected mechanically. Even after a new commodity or idea has been accepted in some parts of the country or among certain types or classes of people, salesmen continue to induce more people in other areas to enjoy its use. Of course, I do not claim that the salesman is doing this for humanitarian reasons. He is trying to make a living, but in so doing he is helping society to enjoy new things that it had not used before and would not otherwise enjoy until much later.

Mass production—the great cost reducer—is in a very real sense dependent for its existence upon the salesman and his much maligned kin. The system of factory mass production is dependent upon mass markets. And mass markets do not develop automatically. People must be told about the product and induced to buy it before a mass market for an article—and hence, mass production—can exist.

There is another respect in which the salesman makes an important contribution to improving our standard of living. The inventor and the production man are, at present, necessarily far removed from the consumer of goods. The salesman whose work is with the consumer or user of goods is the one who is in a position to learn just what it is that the buyer wants—what changes he wants, what he does and does not like, what new conditions are developing that demand new goods or changes in the old ones. It is to the salesman's interest that his firm meet these new needs. If his firm falls behind, his cries are likely to be loud and doleful. In this way he carries back to the production men the



information that enables us to get the things we want and need sooner than we would otherwise. The salesman is, in a sense, the connecting link between the consumer and the producer. He is the modern pioneer, constantly seeking the new and the better.

Thus, part of the answer to the question, "What is a salesman?" is that he is an equal member of the great triumvirate of progress: the scientist, the manufacturer, and the salesman.

### What Traits Should Salesmen Possess?

We might further define a salesman by identifying the traits which a good one possesses. We may not find universal agreement on all of them but we can list certain traits which good salesmen usually possess to greater or lesser degree. Of course, only the rare man possesses all these traits in perfect balance. Some of them may predominate in one man and others of the traits in another. Among the more important traits of a good salesman are the following:

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Courage                      | 7. Knowledge     |
| 2. Persistence                  | 8. Enthusiasm    |
| 3. Initiative                   | 9. Tact          |
| 4. Vision                       | 10. Friendliness |
| 5. Confidence                   | 11. Honesty      |
| 6. Ability for self-supervision |                  |

From my own experience I would say that the following are most important: initiative, knowledge, enthusiasm, persistence, friendliness, and tact.

So, another part of the answer to the question "What is a salesman?" is that he is a man who possesses in some measure these traits of character and mind which we have just listed.

### What Abilities Does He Possess?

A salesman, furthermore, is a man who possesses certain specialized abilities. In particular, I refer to the ability to conduct a sale properly. This involves several techniques which I will mention only briefly.

1. He must be able to approach a prospect and attract and hold his attention. No man can sell successfully unless he can do

this. Otherwise he will seldom have the opportunity to tell his story.

2. He must be able to present his samples or tell his story in such a way that he will create interest. Obviously, no prospect will act on a proposition unless the salesman can get him really interested in it.

3. He must be able to arouse in the prospect confidence in himself and in the company which he represents. One of the most important factors in doing this is his knowledge of the product or service he is selling and the way in which that product can benefit the prospect.

4. He must be able to arouse in the prospect a desire to own the goods or services which he is selling. This he does by his demonstration and teaching explanation in which he shows the prospect what his product can do for him, how it will do it, and why it is important that the prospect receive the benefits that the product or service can give him. There are, of course, a variety of ways in which a salesman can accomplish this general objective but in one way or another it must be accomplished.

5. He must be able to sense the point when the prospect's desire for the product is ripe to be turned into a sale and actually to get the order. While this step may be comparatively easy if the prospect is really a prospect and the previous steps have been carried on properly, it is one at which many salesmen stumble. There is a difference between the desire for a product and the actual signing of an order, and a successful salesman must have the ability to bridge this gap.

It should not be assumed that these specialized abilities are born in a man and that only a select few can have them. They are developed by training and practice in much the same way that a proper golf stroke is developed. While some may be more adept at learning than others, anyone who will try can develop them to a greater or lesser extent. In later chapters you will be given the groundwork on which you can successfully build up these abilities in yourself.

To our question "What is a salesman?" we can now add another part of the answer. A salesman is a person who possesses the ability to carry out the essential steps involved in selling.

### What Principles and Facts Must He Understand?

A salesman, if he is successful, is a person who, from training or experience or both, has acquired an understanding of certain important principles and facts. Among the more important of these are the following:

1. He has learned that no prospect is changed from an indifferent listener to a satisfied customer except by going through the steps outlined above. This does not mean that all these steps must be taken on each call. Part of the job may have been done on a previous call so that at a given time the salesman may be able to start right in creating the desire for the product. Or interest and desire for the product may have been created by the company advertising. But at some time these steps must have been carried out before the prospect can be expected to buy.
2. He has learned that each step should be taken in a simple, orderly and dignified manner.
3. He has learned that the various steps are not separate processes but are all a part of one continuous process.
4. He has learned that a salesman does not do all the talking himself. The prospect's own ideas and opinions are of the greatest value in guiding the salesman—in showing him what he has accomplished and what he has yet to accomplish. Many salesmen have talked themselves out of a sale.
5. By the same token the salesman knows that he should not interrupt the prospect when he is talking. While he may try to guide the direction of the conversation he does not try to monopolize it.
6. He avoids a cock-sure, positive attitude. He must not be wishy-washy and must sometimes be firm, but he knows that the cock-sure, positive attitude often antagonizes the prospect.
7. In the first part of the interview he will inquire rather than attack. It is merely the part of common sense to find out the prospect's ideas and wants first.
8. He will re-state clearly and vigorously in his own words the gist of each objection as soon as it is advanced.
9. He will identify the main objection with one key issue, then stick to that issue and not wander.