

"Practical advice on how all salespeople can use the brand to boost their sales"

—Neil Rackham, bestselling author of *Spin Selling*

SELL the Brand FIRST

**How to Sell Your Brand
and Create Lasting
Customer Loyalty**

DAN STIFF

With a foreword by John Schiech,

SELL THE BRAND FIRST

HOW TO SELL YOUR BRAND
AND CREATE LASTING
CUSTOMER LOYALTY

McGraw-Hill

*New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London
Madrid Mexico City Milan New Delhi San Juan
Seoul Singapore Sydney Toronto*

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-147042-5

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This book is printed on recycled acid-free paper containing a minimum of 50% recycled, de-inked fiber.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stiff, Dan.

Sell the brand first : how to sell your brand and create lasting customer loyalty / by Dan Stiff.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-07-147042-5 (alk. paper)

1. Brand name products—Marketing. 2. Customer relations. 3. Consumer satisfaction. 4. Customer loyalty. 5. Brand name products—Social aspects.

I. Title.

HD69.B7S75 2006
658.8'27—dc22

2006000695

To my parents, Al and Vivian Stiff

*Dad, thanks for your living example of courage.
You taught me dedication, honesty, and hard work—
all from a wheelchair. I know you're smiling now.*

*Mom, you thrived through 10 kids.
You showed me how to love unconditionally,
forgive and move on, and laugh with life.*

*Thank you both for beating the odds
and leading us by example.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

You cannot write from experience unless you have been fortunate enough to have had good experiences. You can share what you know only when your past environments have allowed you to learn invaluable lessons. Surely, you can have the confidence to write only when countless people have encouraged you to do so. Many people have contributed greatly to *Sell the Brand First*—whether they know it or not. I am grateful and blessed by your time, efforts, examples, thoughts, and prayers. To the following teams and colleagues:

Corporate Team

The Black & Decker Corporation and DeWALT—the lessons I learned while waving the company flag were invaluable. When you are able to work, learn, play, and give back freely in a strong leadership, marketing, and sales environment, it is much easier to claim the Brand and sell it first. There are far too many people to thank within the sales and marketing organizations there, but suffice it to say that this book is theirs too.

NCR Corporation, which gave me my first glimpse of excellent sales training and grounded me in the importance of being a professional within the world of sales.

The Ken Blanchard Companies for providing me a great example of training with passion, showing me the importance of culture and the power of simple truths.

The Center for Creative Leadership for showing me the importance of feedback and “give-back” in leadership.

Executive and Sales Teams

Tracy Bilbrough—your uncompromising passion for Brands, insights into the trade business approach, and mentality of overdelivering on promises were great examples to live by. You immediately saw how this idea could affect the marketplace, and you fueled the dream.

Ron Foy—your support and early encouragement of the Brand Staircase and its underlying concepts made it easy not to compromise my beliefs. Your input on the business-to-consumer setting and ideas that impacted selling the Brand first helped the material come alive.

John Schiech—thank you for allowing Black & Decker/DeWALT to be put on public display in terms of its beliefs and Brands. You saw the potential for looking at a new way of selling and marketing the Brand, when it would have been easy to say, “We already have it figured out.”

Jim Quinn—your willingness to get creative with the Brand and draw from your past experiences, yet allow me the freedom to drive new ideas and concepts opened unexpected doors. Your commitment to stay the course will always be remembered.

Todd Barth—your persistence, pursuit of excellence and clear understanding of the power behind selling the Brand has given me ideas, provided energy, and challenged my thinking along the way.

Jim Paterson—your belief that we had hit on something big with this concept kept my wheels turning and momentum going forward. You fueled the fire for understanding consumer Brands at retail in light of the invaluable role of the reseller.

Mike Babula—your viewpoints on crossover Brands within traditional channels of distribution created valuable insights to help demystify the most complex sales. Also, your passion for strong Brands within a real-world selling environment was contagious.

Rich Teza, Cris Gross, and Charlie Elkins—your friendships, long-term commitment, and willingness to be creative risk takers around your Brand allowed me to dream beyond what you could imagine. You have also set a standard of excellence in collaboration that other sales and marketing teams will be hard pressed to match.

Rich Stam, Michael Dwyer, and Charlie Stover—your excitement about Brand selling, confirmation of the topics in multiple channels within your real world, and willingness to bring together new reinforcement ideas for the future have made it easy to build a strong infrastructure for the future.

Creative Team

Donya Dickerson at McGraw-Hill—you were able to see the gem that this book could become, with an eye for editing the important things,

not the mundane. Thanks for believing in the unique approach and fresh ideas within this book. Your support and encouragement have been instrumental.

Marcia Horowitz—you brought a fresh eye to the book, a clear understanding of the publishing and writing process, and the ability to chide me, challenge me, and congratulate me at the appropriate moments. Your editing left me laughing at myself while maintaining a clear voice.

Danny Flanagan of Zachry Associates—your graphics will be the visual cornerstone of this book. Your patience, persistence, and creativity will long be appreciated and remembered.

Jeff Warr of Zachry Associates—our brainstorming while on “the road to Abilene” feels like it was only yesterday. Your creative insights and cheerleading approach to Brand selling were a valued source of ideas and energy for me along the way.

My Colleagues

Sue Dunlap—you were there to verify and test the trade business model. Thanks for helping to crystallize, debate, and implement the core concepts in the classroom with the early adopters. You have believed when I was down, kept me going through some “brush fires,” and helped me dream along the way.

Gary Connor, Greg Forte, and Todd Davisson—you have helped me forge ideas, and trained with me side by side. You listened to me harp on new ways of thinking and encouraged me to pursue this project.

My Local Team

Doug Scheidt—your business sense, insights, entrepreneurial spirit, and thoroughness left me thinking big about this project.

Geoff Miller—your encouragement, positive thinking, and sense of humor allowed me to believe in myself.

Peter Kirby—your curbside chats and business conversations over the years have been a significant “sanity check” for my ideas.

Joel Freeman—your encouragement as an author and your knowledge of publishing greatly reduced my anxiety and learning curves.

To my siblings—Kathy, Sue, Tim, Greg, Becky, Tony, and Penny . . . Robin and Mack. Growing up in the “Stiff Clan” taught me many

lessons on life, including the value of belonging and the importance of believing in something bigger than yourself. Thank you all.

Matt and Adam—my boys. You have kept me focused on the importance of family while giving me the freedom to follow this passion.

Kim—my wife. You have put up with the schedule and roller-coaster ride of book writing. You have been dedicated, honest, encouraging, insightful, and tireless. Thanks for your cheerleading, love, and support.

To God—you have opened many unexpected doors. I would not be here without you.

FOREWORD

Whether you are businessperson or a consumer, you never fully appreciate how valuable a strong Brand is unless you have experienced one of lesser value. Dan Stiff and I grew up in a world where we had an outstanding consumer products Brand at Black & Decker. However, because of that consumer image, we struggled as a company to become a relevant Brand choice for the professional contractor. Even when our product was superior, it was tough for us to sell against another strong competitive Brand in the professional marketplace. After all, what self-respecting contractor is going to walk onto a job site with a circular saw that has the same Brand name as his wife's hair dryer? All of the success that we have subsequently achieved with DeWALT started from that simple dilemma.

Intuitively, we can all recognize how important a strong Brand is to an organization's success. Brand gives a company its personality; it becomes the rallying point around which Sales, Marketing, and the entire organization work together. Brand becomes a source of pride for employees and customers by making them members of an elite club that uses the Brand. So, knowing all of this, why don't we push our selling organizations to fully capitalize on that strength? Until now, the answer probably has been that Management assumes that Sales is selling the Brand, while Sales assumes that Management and Marketing are taking care of the Brand. Another possibility is that we don't consciously make the connection between the Brand and sales at all, or that we simply don't know how to sell the Brand. Now, with *Sell the Brand First*, we have a great tool to allow us to bridge this knowledge gap.

Sell the Brand First does an outstanding job of introducing the insightful yet logical notion of leading with your Brand, and then weav-

ing this concept into a tried-and-true selling process that can be quickly understood and implemented by your sales force.

Let's face it, even great companies sometimes make it hard for their sales team to perform well. They unconsciously create self-imposed roadblocks like price increases, product quality problems, and sales personnel changes. Brand, standing as the surrogate for the strong company behind it, can be the long-term stabilizing force that provides continuity through these challenging times and events. Selling your Brand is not something to pull out only when times get tough. Instead, it has to start from day one, constantly reinforcing the idea that a great brand represents a great company, one that may not win every battle, but in the long run has the strategy to win the war.

Dan Stiff is uniquely qualified to be an authority on Brand selling. He began his career as a salesman, selling strong brands and competing against them. He taught other salespeople similar lessons as a manager, and then was promoted to run our training organization, where he led a training effort that drove the concept of cherishing and leveraging the Brand into marketplace success. Since then, he has crystallized these ideas across multiple industries and now has effectively captured the key concepts in this book for other companies to utilize. I believe that if sales professionals and leaders across industries read this and apply it, they will perform at a higher level and with more consistency than they could in the past, thus having a positive impact on their organization's future growth.

John Schiech

President, DeWALT Professional Products

A Division of Black & Decker

INTRODUCTION

All of us come to a moment of truth in our careers, a defining moment when our profession becomes clearer than ever because of what we've experienced in the trenches. You may have experienced this in your career, too—a moment when a stirring event changes your belief system, when a huge success spurs you on to new levels of performance, or when a subtle change in how you sell proves invaluable to your business. We all have at least one epiphany in our career.

My profession is selling, training, operations, and leadership. My moment of truth arrived when I least expected it—one day at lunch with a very good friend and business owner. I was sharing some observations that I had drawn from my experiences with key customers. These particular customers had been asking my sales consulting company for help in selling their Brand creatively. As I described some of the experiences I had encountered with many of these salespeople and their managers, we both noticed the same two themes surfacing:

- Most salespeople are taught how to sell their product or service, but not how to sell their Brand.
- Salespeople don't know how to insert Brand into their sales language to bring it alive for the buyer.

This awareness of these repeated behaviors, within organizations, in selling Brands launched me on a great adventure that has been both rewarding and challenging. I began to learn, document, and practice the fine art of Brand selling—and it is an art. My customers were my inspiration and my teachers. They taught me a great deal about the importance of selling the Brand—through their everyday sales experiences, their challenges, and their searching questions. In fact, over time

I have been able to develop a system of ideas and practices that those very same customers now use and find effective in their organizations. They are now Brand sellers.

As I look back at my past selling and leadership experiences, it has become increasingly clear that salespeople need to *sell* the Brand, and that they need to be taught how to do it. While I was conducting some of the initial workshops on Brand selling, numerous participants approached me saying that these ideas should be written down. Over time, I resolved to share in a book what I had learned about this new and successful practice of Brand selling. My intent here is to help you, whether you are a salesperson in a retail store, a salesperson calling on a wholesale distributor, or a sales manager leading the charge, to understand the power and satisfaction of selling the Brand first.

How This Book Is Different

As I was sharing with my friend the discovery of the simple reality that salespeople are not encouraged to sell the Brand, it struck both of us that there is actually little, if anything, out there in print on how to sell a Brand. Why not? Probably for the same reasons that salespeople don't sell the Brand—because they believe that the Brand is in Marketing's territory, and, frankly, it just doesn't hit their "sales radar." However, it seemed obvious to us that knowing the value of the Brand and using it as a sales lever can actually have long-term positive effects on a company's reputation and marketplace position. Sure there are many books out there on how to market a Brand or how to create a catchy slogan to be the rallying cry for a product or ad campaign. There are books on how to

- Build Brand strategy.
- Build Brand allegiance.
- Take advantage of Brand touchpoints.
- Add or assess Brand value.
- Create Brand power.
- Launch a Brand into the marketplace.
- Operationalize the Brand.
- Develop a Brand metrics system.
- Spend the Brand advertising budget.
- Develop a media plan for the biggest Brand impact.

These are all valid and important topics. Nevertheless, I would argue that they are looking at Brands from other perspectives: inside the company boardroom, battles within the marketing "war room," or through the eyes of the advertising agency. But the best set of eyes on

this topic has been largely ignored—that of the salesperson. In other words, there was nothing on how to *sell* a Brand and keep it simple, and also nothing on how to build on the marketer's efforts to leverage a Brand's identity or a Brand's positioning in the marketplace at the point where the "Brand message" really matters the most—during conversations with the customer. What's more, because there is nothing on how to sell the Brand, there is also nothing on how to build the company's culture around a Brand, with all employees becoming stakeholders in the process.

This book fixes that problem. It is directed to the salesperson and his issues, challenges, and rewards when selling the Brand. It is straight talk from me to you on Brand selling. It delivers concepts and tools that will serve the entire sales profession. I introduce here a simple Brand selling model called the *Brand Staircase* that explains how to sell the Brand where all of us routinely buy the Brand—at the consumer level. Later on, the book expands and broadens this concept by outlining implications for selling to the professional buyer in a business-to-business setting.

The Core Premises of This Book

In this book, you will find the expression of these simple beliefs:

- Salespeople need to discover Brand as a foundational sales tool and sell it first.
- Salespeople need to put the Brand into their sales language in order to leverage their Brand's strength in the marketplace.
- Brands are very personal in nature, and we experience them daily. Our Brand preferences and selections (as buyers) are affected by personal interactions with salespeople.
- Every Brand has some inherent value. The key is to find that value and sell from it.

After watching many companies spend millions building powerful consumer Brands and business-to-business Brands, one big problem became obvious: they failed to maximize their investment and educate their employees, customers, and, most importantly, salespeople on the power of their Brand and how to sell the Brand first.

Many experienced salespeople simply adopt the marketing department's version of their Brand and do not make it their own and leverage it as part of their sales language. In fact, salespeople often sell everything but the Brand. They will sell on price, delivery, product quality, features, benefits, and warranty, but seldom do they speak to what the Brand means to the buyer in terms of her lifestyle, her expe-

riences, and even her emotional connection to the Brand. At best, they seem to take their Brand for granted, and could not tell you why people buy the Brand even if you doubled their bonus payout. (Now, for most salespeople, that's some serious neglect!)

When salespeople can't sell something, they may revert to complaints like, "The price isn't right," "We don't have the right products to sell," or "The warranty isn't good enough" (to name a few). They act as *Brand imposters* because of their neglect of the Brand. Instead, they should be *Brand ambassadors*, so aligned with the Brand that it might as well be "Branded" on their foreheads to signify their allegiance. They should be so committed to the Brand that when competitive salespeople are crying the wrong price or wrong product woes, they are busy selling the experience of their Brand, the connection to their Brand, or the affiliation with their Brand.

The myopic view of Brand in most sales organizations needs to change. Companies, leaders, and salespeople are seriously underselling their Brands.

In this book, I attempt to change that view. The book provides a system of ideas and a set of actions that will help the individual salesperson in the business-to-consumer setting and the corporate salesperson in the business-to-business setting.

In Part 1, we address the importance of Brands. How many of us, consciously or unconsciously, make major purchasing decisions based on Brand? It is hard to fully grasp the scope and impact of current Brand messages in our daily lives. We also discuss the importance of developing what I call *Brand language*. As if he were in a foreign country, the salesperson has to learn another language to be able to communicate effectively.

Part 2 speaks of a model called the *Buyer Stair-Step*, which highlights the key components buyers consider when purchasing products. The focus then turns to the Brand, and you are introduced to the *Brand Staircase*. These chapters provide tools for the salesperson, examples from real life, and lots of good advice from experienced Brand sellers.

Part 3 discusses the very important areas of the internal landscape of both buyers and sellers during a sales interaction. Mindset and motives are introduced, and we discuss why people buy and the importance of migrating the buyer from his current mindset to a Brand mindset.

Part 4 focuses on the business-to-consumer setting. It identifies the importance of the buyers' lifestyle choices and the emotional receptors of buyers that could connect them with the Brand. We also discuss the *Brand Rules of Engagement* and the need to ask questions. We walk through proven methods, exercises, and action steps on how to migrate the buyer toward Brand.

In Part 5, we build on the foundation developed in the business-to-consumer section, and provide additional ways to move buyers toward Brand in a business-to-business context. Here we focus on the differences in selling to a professional buyer in the trades by identifying your company's *Brand pillars*. Again, proven tools are provided.

Finally, Part 6 contains a discussion that is relevant to organizations: How can Brand selling become part of the culture? What do they need to do to help their salespeople become familiar with the concept and the language?

Who Should Read This Book and Why

This book is by an experienced salesperson for experienced salespeople. Yet, to the astute student of the Brand in any organization, it will quickly become obvious that this book has widespread application beyond the sales and marketing teams. It is useful to senior management and those in operations, manufacturing, distribution, customer service, logistics, and supply-chain management. It is useful for any major decision maker within an organization. As a matter of fact, if the sales organization embraces Brand selling and the rest of the organization does not, then the effort will have less of an impact. Accordingly, this concept is a practical approach to selling the Brand and building a companywide Brand culture.

The book is written in a pragmatic, hard-hitting fashion that salespeople, business owners, and senior executives alike can easily absorb. It illustrates key teaching points through numerous case studies, proven personal selling experiences, anecdotes, and common Brand examples in the marketplace. Through corporate examples and other practices, the chapters will also illustrate how organizations can effectively build a Brand culture.

The practical, hands-on approach carried throughout the book comes from nearly 30 years of corporate experience selling with NCR Corporation, Black & Decker, DeWALT, and LPD Inc. to consumers and professional buyers. I have represented great Brands and competed against great Brands. I have sold on the street, am a practitioner, and understand the issues and problems facing salespeople and their leaders today.

Training, coaching, and developing salespeople was my focus while I was running the training organization at Black & Decker / DeWALT. In addition, I have mentored and counseled sales leaders and executives throughout my career. In the last six years, while delivering custom workshops to LPD Inc. clients, I have seen these sales mindsets and skill sets come alive. LPD Inc., founded in 1999, develops and delivers

customized workshops to thousands of participants on the topics of leadership, sales performance, and development of people. We engage the customer with a specialized approach to its issues and how the Brand affects the culture. In particular, the customers who have taken the Brand selling workshop have confirmed that the topic is on target, hard-hitting, practical, unique, and transferable across industries. This book supports and adds value to what has been learned in customer workshops and from selling experiences in the field. Should you desire more information on these business applications, refer to the section About the Author at the back of this book.

Lastly, this book will supplement the good skill sets that you have learned from sales processes, training workshops, and good sales coaches. It may even change the way you look at selling, operations, or your culture for the better, and permanently. My hope and dream for this book is that it will help people sell the Brand first and benefit personally, professionally, and financially from what they learn.

Salespeople build Businesses

... Leaders build Futures

... Brands build Equity



SELL THE BRAND FIRST