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**Robert B. Miller** rose from associate to vice-president-general manager for North American operations at Kepner-Tregoe, Inc., which offers consulting services for senior management of Fortune 500 corporations and the federal and state governments. He personally consulted with such companies as Ford, General Motors, Citicorp, and Rolls-Royce. In 1974, he founded Robert B. Miller & Associates, where he began developing the innovative sales systems and other programs that have made Miller Heiman & Associates one of America's top sales consulting firms.

**Stephen E. Heiman** rose in nineteen years from national account salesman for IBM (where he increased sales in all product areas by more than 35 percent and was in the top 5 percent for total sales and percentage quota) to director of marketing at Kepner-Tregoe, to executive vice-president of North American Van Lines, where he increased sales and profits by 36 percent in four years. In 1978, he joined Robert Miller as co-principal and full partner in what became Miller Heiman & Associates Inc. and has since helped train thousands of sales management executives from top corporations across the country.

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# FOREWORD

When Strategic Selling was first introduced to us at Hewlett-Packard some eight years ago, the concept had an immediate appeal. It was an approach to selling that represented the high degree of professionalism and the kind of buyer-seller relationship to which we aspired. Thousands of HP sales engineers worldwide have been trained in Strategic Selling, and its influence can be directly seen in the results they have attained.

Strategic Selling doesn't attempt to teach the sales representative how to make an effective pitch. It doesn't rely on luck or charisma. And most importantly from our perspective, Strategic Selling is not manipulation.

The methodology in this book looks at the buying decision. The focus is outward, on the customers we serve. Their needs—both organizational and personal—are identified. The resultant analysis allows us to better determine how we can add value to that customer's organization and create a long-term business relationship that benefits all

parties. Strategic Selling points not only outward to customers, but forward. It aims at creating the kinds of partnerships that will last over the years to come.

Strategic Selling has strengthened Hewlett-Packard's customer focus by providing a common discipline and vocabulary that have helped create a unified customer emphasis throughout the company. Our sales representatives have found it immediately applicable to the accounts they serve. Its usefulness has spanned product disciplines and national boundaries.

Considered a somewhat revolutionary approach when first introduced, Strategic Selling has also spanned the years very well. This is because the objectives it seeks—providing customers with real value and establishing long-term relationships with them—are timeless. Professionals seeking those goals will find this volume a most useful resource.

—JOHN A. YOUNG, President and  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Hewlett-Packard Company

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# OUT OF THE TRENCHES: A NONTRADITIONAL APPROACH TO SELLING

Selling is the largest profession in North America, perhaps the world. Yet it has one of the worst reputations of any profession—second only to that of politics. “Professor” Harold Hill in the classic musical *The Music Man* and Herb Tarlek in the television series *WKRP in Cincinnati* typify the popular image of the salesman: a charming, fast-talking scam artist who wears loud clothes, cons the customer, never delivers on his promises, and is genuinely interested only in filling his pockets with your money.

This stereotype is so pervasive that men and women who sell are rarely called salesmen and saleswomen any more. To disguise their true function, their companies give them high-toned euphemistic titles: marketing consultant, account representative, field engineer, account manager, customer service consultant, marketing specialist—and occasionally sales consultant or sales engineer. They’re called anything but what they are.

We were reminded of this not long ago, when we asked a

senior vice-president if “sales” was considered a dirty word by his people. “Oh, no,” he assured us. “Everybody is really on board with the importance of selling. But,” he went on without batting an eye, “remember that we call it marketing.”

Whatever the euphemism used, the implicit point is the same. “Sales” is a dirty word to many people, because it has so long been linked to images of manipulation and deceit.

Unfortunately, we sales professionals have only ourselves to blame for this. Many of us have perpetuated the stereotype by the way we’ve sold our customers. No wonder our methods turn people off—many of them *are* manipulative.

You see this in the sales literature even more blatantly than in the field. Many sales-training systems actually *encourage* manipulation and deceit, by teaching the salesman “tricks” and “techniques” for getting the order in spite of what the customer really wants. Many sales representatives today still adhere to that approach. They believe that their job is to sell their products to as *many* people as possible, whether or not those people really want or need them.

This old-fashioned, “refrigerators to Eskimos” approach is encouraged by corporate attitudes. Companies pay lip service to the idea of customer need but make it clear to the sales force that it’s supposed to *make* the customer need what the company has to sell. Therefore, many people in sales go by the old slogan “You can’t call yourself a salesman unless you can sell somebody something he doesn’t really want or need.” And they do or say anything that will get their customers to buy.

The logical outcome of this approach is that the salesperson and the customer come to see each other as adversaries. It’s no accident that working out in the field is often spoken of as being “out in the trenches.” Many catchphrases of the sales profession testify to a battleground mentality. “Find his weak spot,” you’ll hear sales representatives say, “so you can sink in the hook.” Or, more simply, “Get him before he gets you.”

Given the pervasiveness of this attitude, it’s not surpris-

ing that most large organizations have created professional dragon-slayers to protect their decision makers from sales people. Purchasing agents and buyers often form a defensive perimeter against the supposedly barbarous hordes of sales representatives. Heaven help a manager, the corporate wisdom runs, who is inadvertently cornered by an invading Attila the Rep.

The image is comical, to be sure. But it's also a sad commentary on the way many potential customers view members of our profession.

The amazing thing is that this old "trench warfare" approach to selling works at all. It does work, of course: once, twice, maybe three or four times with a given customer. But eventually it breaks down. If you approach your sales as battles and see your customers as enemies, eventually your customers will lock on to the huckster stereotype and back off.

Why? Because they'll see you as having Won, and themselves as having Lost. Even worse, they'll see themselves as having been *manipulated* into Losing. At which point your credibility—and thus your selling effectiveness—will be gone.

The scenario of "Salesman Wins—Customer Loses" has been entrenched in mythology and in practice for many years. But it's not the only scenario. Through all the years that the Professor Hills and Herb Tarleks have been slog-ging their way into disrepute, a small, quiet group of salesmen and saleswomen have been rising to the top of the professional ladder—and pulling down enormous incomes—by adopting exactly the *opposite* approach.

These are the sales representatives who have systematically built up customer trust and confidence by *never* treating the customer as an enemy, and by always making sure that the customer Wins on every deal. They're also the people whom everyone else perceives as lucky—although luck has nothing to do with their success.

These "lucky" sales professionals don't concentrate on the traditional tasks of overcoming objections and asking for the order. They know that you only have to overcome objections when you're cramming something down some-

body's throat. And they're not interested in "getting" an order that a customer isn't anxious to give them.

They concentrate instead on providing solutions, solving problems, creating opportunities, and in general making their customers feel good about the sale, no matter how much effort that takes. Many of these "lucky" top professionals actually refuse to take an order unless there's a solid match between their product or service and the customer's real needs. They pay much more than lip service to the notion of customer need.

This small cadre of supersuccessful salespeople have adopted what we call an "I Win—You Win" strategy. The essence of that strategy is the recognition of a fundamental truth: The best way for sales professionals to serve their own self-interest is to make sure that the *customer's* self-interest is also served. Success, the Win-Win strategist knows, depends on *mutual* satisfaction.

We emphasize mutual because manipulating the customer into Losing is only one way you can mismanage the sale. Another way is to allow *yourself* to Lose so that the customer Wins. Sales professionals do this all the time, in the usually vain hope that doing their customers "favors" will pay off in the end. Satisfying your customers at your own expense is, in the long term, just as bad as not satisfying them at all. A Win-Win approach to sales involves maintaining a delicate balance: It means keeping your customers happy *without* giving the store away.

Win-Win salesmen and saleswomen don't overstock their customers. They don't pressure, threaten, or cajole. They don't ask for or offer mere "favors." They don't overpromise and underfulfill. They don't misrepresent the match between product and customer need. Instead, they work with their customers to provide satisfaction for *everyone* concerned. They follow up, check up, fix problems, provide liaison to their factories, help the customer move the product, and stick with the customer long after each sale is completed. Far from behaving like their customers' sworn enemies, they act like partners instead.

As a result, they discover an irony. Because of their genuine support and service to the customer, Win-Win sales

professionals often are able not only to sell *more* product or service, but to sell it at a higher price than the competition! And they do this not just once, but time and time again, because they help their customers understand that they're getting a "value-added" product.

It takes very little talent to sell somebody something *once*. Even the Herb Tarleks and Professor Hills of the world can do that. But once is never enough. All viable companies today are built on *long-term* relationships, and the main drawback of the old trench-warfare approach to selling is that the Win-Lose scenarios it generates are inherently *short-term*. Adherents of the traditional approach have to start out on each new sale from scratch, because they never create a Win-Win history to build upon. And what good is it, after all, to keep selling new customers at a record pace if you're losing your old ones even faster?

The "lucky" sales professionals understand that long-term success means keeping all of your customers not just sold but *satisfied*. That's what this book is all about. It shows the modern sales professional how to manage every prospective sale into a solid, Win-Win outcome—one that will generate income not just today, but all the way down the line.

If you don't mind seeing your customers as enemies—and if you don't mind their seeing *you* that way—this book is not addressed to you. But if you're fed up with the old slick-talker image, if you don't really enjoy "sticking it" to your customers—most of all, if you want to profit from what the "lucky" sales leaders already know—then welcome to Strategic Selling.

If you're ready to come in out of the trenches, your "luck" is about to improve.

Among the people who have already discovered the value of a Win-Win approach are our clients. Most of these sales leaders handle relatively high priced product or service lines in the face of low-bid competition, so they *have* to "add value" for their customers. Our Strategic Selling programs have helped these already successful professionals to do that in an increasingly effective manner.

But if we've helped them, they've also helped us. Strategic Selling, whose principles form the basis of this book, is a dynamic vehicle. The feedback we've received over the years from our program participants has enabled us constantly to improve and clarify those principles. These behind-the-scenes contributors to this book now number over twenty thousand. To them we express our deepest gratitude.

Rather than list individual names, and risk omitting an important individual contributor, we are dedicating this book to *all* our client companies, and the individuals whose interest and enthusiastic support for Miller Heiman & Associates Inc.'s Strategic Selling programs served as the basis for this book. Our thanks to:

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*R.B.M.*

*S.E.H.*

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