

PROFESSIONAL SELLING

The central graphic of the book cover is an abstract composition. It features a background of horizontal blue stripes. Overlaid on this are several geometric elements: a large red triangle on the left side, a horizontal red bar extending from the center towards the right, and a curved red line that starts from the left edge and arcs towards the top of the red triangle. Two white circles are present: one is positioned inside the red triangle, and the other is at the right end of the horizontal red bar. The entire design is framed by a solid red horizontal band at the top and another at the bottom.

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Professional Selling

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Preface

Traditionally, a preface is an author's statement of what his or her book is about. This preface will take a slightly different approach. It will tell you why we wrote this book for you: the student and the reader.

We believe that everyone can benefit from improving their communication skills. You might ask, "What does professional selling have to do with communication skills?" And, you might ask, "What does professional selling have to do with me?" Our answer is, "Everything!"

Let's start with the obvious. Some of you may choose a career in selling. Selling is a profession that relies on the ability of people to communicate with each other. Rest assured; our intent is not to sell you on the idea of becoming a salesperson if your inclinations and your heart do not lie in that profession. We know that most of you will pursue careers in other professions. We also know of no profession that is not greatly improved by people who can communicate effectively. In addition to your profession, all of you will be customers. Customers communicate. Customers tell salespeople and other organization representatives what they want and need. All of you will be members of a variety of civic and church-related organizations. All organizations require people to run them, to organize them, and to make decisions. The integrity of organizations is improved by people who are skilled in communications.

If one or more of these reasons do not convince you that communication skills are important, perhaps the following will. As you pursue your careers and begin interviewing, ask interviewers (or ask representatives of your college placement center) what are the most essential skills sought by employers. Communications skills will often be the first thing that prospective employers cite. If not the first, communication skills will be one of the two or three most important skills you can take with you as you graduate from your university and begin your career.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

This is an action book. To be sure, it is a textbook. But it is not meant to be just studied and memorized. Its purpose is to get you actively involved in professional selling and communications. We want you to think about professional selling and the importance of communications even when you are not in class: how professional selling is useful in your sorority or fraternity meetings, or your professional society meetings, or in making group decisions in some of your other courses, or in presenting your case to one of your instructors.

As you can see, we believe that professional selling is an exciting subject . . . and a useful one. It is a subject like medicine, law, or engineering, the principles of which can be studied in the classroom. Like the principles of those subjects, the principles of selling are rooted in scientific disciplines like psychology, sociology, accounting, and statistics. As you will see, salespeople frequently draw on pertinent materials from all these professions in their efforts to communicate with customers.

Classroom understanding of the principles of professional selling is just the first step. You cannot learn to be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer—or a salesperson—in the classroom. That learning results from the experience of applying classroom principles to real world situations. But the skilled practitioner of medicine, law, engineering, or selling learns the principles first. An aspiring surgeon would not be handed a scalpel and told, “go heal someone.” The experience of purely trial and error learning would indeed be a painful, time consuming, and expensive one. Practical experience must be grounded in a basic classroom education.

And so it is with professional selling. You must learn the principles first. Bear in mind, however, that you are studying these principles not to pass examinations but for future application in real world situations—selling yourself in a job interview, selling your idea to a board of directors, or buying something from a salesperson. We have tried to do our part by making this book as realistic as possible. We have eliminated the typical hallmark of textbooks, the footnote. We have tried to limit the jargon, but unfortunately, every profession has its own language, and so does professional selling. We have tried to facilitate your learning of important concepts by providing a section at the the end of each chapter called “The Salesperson’s Vocabulary.” In this section key terms are identified and defined. Now let us tell you how we think this book can help you.

BOOK CONTENT

First, a little about the content. *Professional Selling* is organized around one primary objective: how to make informative, persuasive, and ethical verbal presentations. Each of the fifteen chapters is related to that objective.

A few of the points emphasized in the first three chapters include: the importance of learning how to make informative, persuasive, and ethical

verbal communications and the importance of developing long-term relationships with customers. We do not believe in the hard sell approach. We believe in working with customers and prospects in an effort to better service their needs and wants. This theme is developed in the first three chapters and carried throughout the rest of the text.

The next three chapters focus on the customer. The customer is the focal point of all professional selling activity. While some of this material may be a review for the reader, we believe, as do all good salespeople, that you can never learn enough about customers as you endeavor to service their needs and wants. It is also important to learn that each customer and prospect is somewhat unique and that uniqueness often requires salespeople to adapt their message content and style in order to demonstrate that they are in the business of serving customer needs and wants.

The following two chapters emphasize managing yourself. Effective and successful salespeople (and anyone else who is effective and successful in any other profession) spend time preparing themselves to work with customers. In this text we have devoted a chapter to how salespeople can improve their effectiveness in working with customers by developing qualities that help the salesperson add value to the relationship with the customer. We have also devoted a chapter to efficiency. We provide a number of ways in which salespeople can manage their time and other resources in order to provide value to customers.

Finally, the balance of the text consists of seven chapters. The topics in these chapters are often conceived as the building blocks of informative, persuasive, and ethical verbal communications. Each of these chapters elaborates on one aspect of the professional selling process: prospecting, preparation, representation preparation, presentations, persuasion (or handling objections), partnering (or closing the sale), and post-sale activities. You may have seen other conceptualizations of the selling process and your instructor may present an alternative conceptualization of the professional selling process. In our judgment, we hope both of these occur. Our purpose in presenting these chapters is not to describe *the* way to sell. Rather, our purpose is to describe, comprehensively, a variety of activities in which salespeople must engage if they are to be effective and efficient in servicing customers. There is not one way to sell. There are many styles, formats, and approaches to professional selling. We have endeavored to provide you with a foundation that revolves around key professional selling activities.

BOOK FORMAT

Now, let us say a word about the format of the book. It is designed with the intention that you master, not just read, the content described above. Each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives for you to accomplish by the end of the chapter. Please read these before studying the chapter, and then again as you proceed through the chapter to check your progress.

Each chapter ends with a summary of key points. Then comes a list of key concepts, which we have called The Salesperson's Vocabulary. Be sure that you understand each of these terms and concepts as they are illustrated in each chapter. We do not want to burden you with jargon, but every profession has a language of its own and it helps to know some of that language.

There are also several discussion questions and scenarios for discussion at the end of each chapter. You will find that some of these will tap into your memory skills. However, many of these are designed to help you apply materials in the chapters to common selling situations. Working through the discussion questions and scenarios should extend your understanding of the materials presented in the chapter and by your instructor.

A textbook cannot do the total job, however diligently you apply yourself. The logical place to go for a deeper understanding of professional selling is to your instructor. He or she is an expert and, therefore, is your best single source to answer questions, elaborate on points of interest, and provide additional insights. Your instructor is there to assist you, so take advantage of the available help.

Some additional reading may be helpful. We have tried to provide you with a number of real world sales examples. Many selling examples are found throughout the text. In addition, each chapter contains several boxed examples entitled, "From the Field." These are excerpts (or complete) reprints of articles written by practicing salespeople, sales managers, and consultants. The "From the Fields" will provide you with a great deal of insight into how professional selling is actually accomplished *in the field*. In addition, you will find interesting selling-related material in such publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Sales & Marketing Management Magazine*, *Personal Selling Power*, *The Selling Advantage*, *Sales Manager's Digest*, and *The Sales Manager's Bulletin*. For those of you who might be interested in selling research, we refer you to *The Journal of Professional Selling and Sales Management*. Ask your librarian about each of these. If you cannot find them, please give us a call.

We close by exhorting you not to read this book passively. Become actively involved in mastering its content. As we mentioned at the beginning of this preface, communications skills are highly regarded by all employers. We believe that if you make the effort, you will find the materials in the text interesting and rewarding, not only in the short run as you interview for your first job, but in the long run as you build your career and become involved in serving the community. We hope that much of the material in this text will serve you for life.

HOW TO LEARN FROM THIS BOOK

As we have stated, we hope you do not just read this book. We hope you really learn from it. We have planned it carefully to assist you in your

learning. Let us suggest a procedure for using this book to learn about professional selling.

1. **Familiarize.** First, get a feel for the material in the chapter. The learning objectives should help you do this. Skim the chapter, looking at headings, passages that catch your eye, and the like. Then read the summary and look through “The Salesperson’s Vocabulary.”
2. **Read.** Now that you know what you are going to learn, carefully read all of the material. Circle, underline, or highlight points and passages that you judge to be important and useful. Think of situations you have already experienced in which you may have, or could have, applied the material you are reading. Read the entire chapter in one sitting.
3. **Absorb.** Go back and reread the parts that are interesting, that were not completely clear, or that do not completely square with your previous knowledge and experience. Think about these parts and try to come to some conclusions. If you cannot, prepare questions to ask your friends or your instructor.
4. **Apply.** Talk over the material with classmates, your instructor, your friends, and experienced salespeople. Use the “Discussion Questions” and “Scenarios for Discussion” to build a solid working knowledge of the material. We are not asking you to agree with all of it . . . or memorize all of it. We *do* want you to *apply* the material to real professional selling situations which you have experienced or may encounter.
5. **Review.** Now check yourself out. Manage yourself. Put the material aside for a time. When you go back to it, look carefully at the objectives of each chapter. Have you mastered each one? Can you explain each of the objectives to your instructor? Your classmates? Reread and reabsorb the material until you are comfortable in applying it.

If you follow this procedure, or one similar to it, you will master the material in this text. You will be able to use it in professional selling situations and in your personal life, now and in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An author of any book owes a great debt to many others. This is particularly true of a textbook author. We have learned much from the teachers, colleagues, and students with whom we have associated. Our combined forty years in the business makes these too numerous to list.

We hope that those whose work and thoughts we have used, whether explicitly referenced or unwittingly adapted, are not dissatisfied with our representations of their work.

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Of course, we bear responsibility in fact and in law for the finished work. Since we did not always heed the advice offered, and often avoided decisions that had to be made, we cannot shirk our responsibility and blame. But it would not have been possible without the contributions of all. We thank all of those who helped us in putting together this text.

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