

7 Traditional Selling Truths that you need to challenge....Or you will lose sales.

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Watch Who You Let Near Your Mind

I was told once to 'watch who you let near your mind'.....and I pass this advice on to you – especially when it comes to what are valid, ethical and professional strategies to engage and retain our potential and existing clients.

In this SalesCoachCentral® *Sounding Board Report*, I want to focus on dispelling some myths about connecting emotionally and intellectually with our clients.

You know, when it comes to communicating with people, I am convinced that there are some traditional truths that have been readily accepted for a long time, that in the 21st century we need to seriously challenge and change.

The Seven Traditional Selling Truths That You Need To Challenge

Here are seven traditional selling truths that you need to challenge – or you will lose sales

1. In sales, we need to be experts in interpreting our potential and existing clients body language
2. In sales, we need scripts that we can repeat without really thinking about them when potential or existing clients say certain things
3. In sales we need a wide range of closing techniques and strategies to ensure that we can secure the sale
4. In sales we need to focus on the decision makers to get the sale
5. In sales price doesn't matter – it all has to do with value
6. In sales we need to be experts in 'small talk' to build rapport at the start of any sales call or meeting with a client
7. In sales the best time to ask for a referral is when the customer has just bought

Let me spend a moment on each of these to explain why these traditional truths need to be challenged.

Traditional Selling Truth #1: The first traditional selling truth is that in sales we need to be experts in interpreting our potential and existing clients' body language.

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

Now, I firmly believe that we do need to be aware of the impact that we are having, on our potential and existing clients' thoughts and feelings when we are communicating with them.

Body language gurus tell us that when a client physically reacts in certain ways to what we're saying, we need to interpret that body language to mean certain things. However, our research demonstrates that if we believe and take action on this type of advice from the body language gurus, we are potentially at risk of losing sales.

Here are just **three examples** of what we are 'traditionally' told, as to the way we need to interpret the body language of our potential and existing clients.

1. If the **client folds their arms** when we are discussing something with them, or when they are talking to us, we are supposed to (based on traditional truths about selling and body language) interpret that as the client being deceitful or closed to what is happening.

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Our research has shown that on many, if not most occasions, this is just not the case. Some people just like to sit that way – they find it comfortable. Some people might be cold. Some people have it as an habitual response to what happened to them when they were at school, when they were told by their teachers to sit up straight and fold their arms and to listen to what is being said.

2. If the **client sits back in their chair** while we are talking, we are supposed to (based on traditional truths about selling and body language) interpret that as the client having a negative reaction to what is being said....you see.....it may have nothing to do with deceit or being closed.

Our research has shown that in many situations, once again, this can be a simple case of the client stretching to become more comfortable, or actually the reverse of the traditional truth – that is, instead of them actually being negative to what we're saying, they're giving themselves more space to really take it all in – positively.

3. And to top that, again based on traditional selling and body language truths, there's the concept that what we need to do is to **mirror the client's body language**. So if they lean forward we should lean forward...and if they lean back, we should lean back etc.

Our research suggests instead of assisting the emotional and intellectual connection that we are trying to establish with our existing and potential clients, this type of technique based approach to body language will actually cause a distraction – and in the clients mind they're hearing themselves say....why is this person copying every movement I make?

So the traditional selling truth of us needing to be experts in reading prospect and client body language needs to be challenged. Of course, we do need to be aware of what messages our own body language might be sending to clients, but if we're trying to interpret other people's body language, we're possibly not focusing enough on their needs, and potentially will lose the sale.

Traditional Selling Truth #2: The second traditional selling truth is that in sales, **we need scripts**, rehearsed standard answers and responses, that we can repeat without really thinking about them when potential or existing clients say certain things.

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

Preparation and planning is important in many facets of our lives and especially in selling. However, I would caution any sales professional against learning and regurgitating scripts unless they are based on **solid principles and are value-focused**.

Knowing 'in general' the principles upon which you believe in the value of your products and services can allow you to respond to every client's specific situation (because they will be very different on occasions), and not be locked into just one standard answer.

By **really listening** to what each client's specific situation, and based on solid principles of genuinely wanting to help them achieve the most value that you can, you will be able to not rely on just one standard answer and be able to easily improvise and tailor your responses – and the client will be able to tell that you're not just using a standard answer and that you are really considering their point of view and particular situation.

Of course we need to be confident and comfortable to effectively and positively communicate with our clients. However, having a standard memorised **script actually locks us into inflexibility**, where, because each client's specific situation can be quite different, having the flexibility to respond in a number of ways, as appropriate, will lead to greater emotional and intellectual connections with our clients and result in more sales.

Traditional Selling Truth #3: The third traditional selling truth is that in sales we need a wide range of **closing techniques** and strategies to ensure that we can secure the sale.

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

Some of the closing techniques that have been traditionally offered include; the puppy dog close; the hat in the hand close; the I'll be your friend close; and the sneak up on them and get them to say yes before they realise it close.

You don't need 101 ways to close a sale.

The reality is that in a value-focused and professional advice approach to selling, regardless of your industry, there are only **two principled ways to close a sale**.

The first is to **ask for the clients buying decision at the appropriate time** – and the appropriate time is of course, when you believe that you've done your job properly in discovering the needs and value that the client seeks, and have demonstrated effectively how your products and services can deliver on that value. And most importantly, that you're confident that client will say yes.

The second, and in my personal opinion, the approach that most clients want professional salespeople to practise, is to confidently **make a recommendation to the client** that they make the purchase because it will deliver the value they seek, and follow this up by confirming the steps to start the value delivery.

Closing sales isn't about techniques or manipulate communication strategies. It's about an attitude of professionally and ethically wanting to provide the client with the value that you have discovered that they want to receive.

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Again, you don't need 101 ways to close sales. You don't need to attend the next 3 day boot camp on how to close sales. What we all need to do to be successful in sales, is to fully understand what value each client seeks, and communicate to the client how our products and services will deliver that value at a fair and reasonable price.

Selling isn't about closing sales....despite this traditional selling truth.

Selling is a process of building trust relationships, with the aim to create reciprocal value on a continual basis.....closing a sale is just an end point, but creating advocates, repeat and referral business, is so much more than just closing sales.

Traditional Selling Truth #4: The fourth traditional selling truth is that in sales we need to determine early and then **focus our attention on the decision maker** to get the sale.

Now, while this does have some 'truth' to it.....

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

Sure, the person who is going to make the decision is obviously someone we need to engage with. However, sometimes salespeople can misinterpret this traditional selling truth to say **only** focus on the decision maker.

Now, I don't know about you, however, as a married couple, depending on what we are going to be buying, my wife Liz and I typically consult each other on most important purchases. When we are actually in a buying situation where we are together at the point of sale, again depending on the purchase, one of us is probably going to be the person who is going to be the final decision maker (and that can vary). However, whilst one of us might be the decision maker, the other is a key influencer.

I remember when we were going to buy a house many years ago, that the real estate agent foolishly focused all of his attention on me and ignored Liz. At the end of the appointment when Liz and I were walking back to our car, I asked her what did she think about the house (I'd actually missed the point that the salesperson hadn't really acknowledged Liz at all). Liz replied with "For as long as his two feet are on the ground, we won't be buying that house from him."

Now interestingly enough, and as life sometimes moves in mysterious ways, the house (which we both really liked), was soon put under contract for sale with another real estate agent.....and we ended up buying the house from a wonderful sales agent, and it became our home for fourteen years where we raised our two children through their pre-teen years.

Of course **getting to the decision maker is important**. It helps us save time. It helps us understand what their needs are. However, we also need to understand that for every decision maker, there is usually at least one other **influencer** (and sometimes many).

Focus only on the decision maker at your peril.

Traditional Selling Truth #5: The fifth traditional selling truth is that in sales **price doesn't matter** – it all has to do with value.

Once again, and if you've ever attended one of my seminars, or received any of my regular sales tip journal updates or are a member of SalesCoachCentral®, you will know that I am a firm believer that people do buy value.

However....

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth – at least to the extent of understanding what is truly meant by the importance of value over price.

Let me start by stating what may be the obvious, however, it's almost as if in traditional selling that it's taboo.....so here goes.....

Price *IS* important.

Wow....that feels good to say!

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I can't tell you how many times I've heard other sales trainers, coaches and managers say that price is not important.....rubbish. It is. And to say that it isn't is nonsense.

For some people, their ONLY consideration is price.

For others, it is a very important consideration and if the price differential between two products or services is significant enough, and if the client can't differentiate the value of the products or services on anything other than price.....why wouldn't they go for the cheapest. I know I would. Wouldn't you?

However, there is at least an element of substance in this traditional selling truth.....and it all has to do with the **five dominant deciding values** that buyers have as a hierarchy of choice when making any purchase.

I don't have time to discuss these dominant deciding values in this report, so I'll mark that down for a future topic. However, the general principle is this. If you can significantly demonstrate more and meaningful value for the client, in such a way to tap into their other dominant deciding values (other than what I refer to as **the Economic Deciding Value**or....in other words the importance they place on price), you will find that even if your price is higher than that of your competitors, some clients will buy from you despite the higher price, because of their perception of higher value.

Traditional Selling Truth #6: The sixth traditional selling truth is that in sales we need to be **experts in 'small talk'** to build rapport at the start of any sales call or meeting with a client.

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

Apart from the fact that not everyone is a natural 'ice breaker' when it comes to conversations, the reality is, that not every potential or existing client will want to waste time with small talk banter like discussions about the weather, or the traffic, or who won the world cup in soccer.

If you're a natural at starting conversations with people, and you feel comfortable doing so, well done.....and keep doing what comes naturally. My only **caveat** or warning to that, is to be aware that some potential clients may not want to be too chatty at the start of a buying situation.

If you're not a natural conversation starter, then trying to 'fake it' will just sound clumsy and insincere to the potential or existing client.

A positive way to start any type of conversation with a potential client is to let them know how you typically like to work with your clients. In some instances, having a verbal or even written agenda can be a wonderfully effective way of starting a conversation to build rapport in business. The key is to quickly follow-up your brief outline of how you typically work with clients with a question about what are they hoping to achieve, learn, experience or gain from meeting with you.

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In this way, you both get down to discovering what the potential is for an exchange of value – which is a great definition of what selling really is, **an exchange of value**.

So don't think that you've got to fake your sincerity at the start of a sales call by trying to be an expert at small talk – many clients will value you and your process more when you explain how you like to work with your clients and just get on with it, and you can get to know each other along the way through the exchange of information through the questions you ask to help the client clarify what value they seek.

Traditional Selling Truth #7: The seventh traditional selling truth is that in sales the best time to **ask for a referral** is when the customer has just bought.

Professional salespeople need to challenge this traditional truth.

This traditional selling truth is based on the principle of 'strike while the iron is hot'.

However, our research has shown that this approach can potentially cause a **stress fracture in the new client relationship** unless you have set the expectation early in your conversation that you will be asking for a referral should you proceed to do business together.

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If you haven't set that expectation early, and even if you have at times, some clients may feel that you're pushing too hard for the next sale, before you've even delivered value to this particular client.

The overarching principle that our research and experience has demonstrated attracts more referrals than any other approach, is to first and foremost focus all your attention on **delivering value early** to your clients.

Once you are confident that you have delivered value and that the client is happy with the service that you have provided, there are a number of ways that you can then confidently and comfortably ask the client for a referral.

Again, the process and strategies for asking for referrals at the appropriate time is a separate topic in and of itself and will feature in a future SalesCoachCentral® Sounding Board Report and podcast on www.SalesCoachCentral.com, however, the key is to ensure that early in your initial conversation that you set and manage the expectation of your client that you're proud to say that your business is built on the warm referrals that you gain from your satisfied clients.

This demonstrates again the way that you like to do business. It demonstrates to the client that you have loyal clients already who provide you with referrals. It demonstrates to the client that you're not going to pressure them right now for a referral in this initial conversation. It demonstrates to the

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client that your primary focus is always on delivering value to them first, to earn any referrals that they feel comfortable to provide in the future.

So let me summarise.....

These are just seven traditional selling truths that I firmly believe any professional salesperson needs to challenge.

Ethics in sales is about sincerity and focus on discovering and delivering value to clients, in such a way that there is reciprocal value that returns to the salesperson.

In sales, **we get the sales we deserve**. We get the clients we deserve. We get the repeat business and referrals we deserve.

Let me finish by reminding you that at one stage almost the entire world believed that the earth is flat.....and unless you're a member of the flat earth society.....we now know that it isn't.

Sometimes the traditional selling truths that you may have bought into, might just need to be challenged, and in so doing, help you achieve even more sales.

I trust that you've gained value from this SalesCoachCentral® Sounding Board Report, and as always, I welcome any comments or feedback that you might have on this or any other future topic that can help you and other sales professionals sell more comfortably, confidently, consistently and commercially.

Until next time.....my very best to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Penglase", written in a cursive style.

About the Author:

David Penglase is widely recognised as Australia's leading expert on the ethics of selling. He is a dynamic, entertaining and content rich sales coach, conference keynote speaker, and sales workshop facilitator.

His clients range from financial institutions, pharmaceutical sales, surgical equipment, recruitment, professional services, retail, engineering, technology and materials management to name a few.

Since 1994 David (along with his wife Liz who is the Director of Client Service) has provided corporate conference keynote presentations and breakout workshops, seminars, products and on-line sales coaching resources that assist sales people and sales managers in their pursuit of achieving more profitable sales, developing stronger client relationships and repeat and referral business.

David is accredited as one of the top registered professional speakers worldwide and has been awarded by his peers with the designation of Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) which is the only recognised standard of the International Federation for Professional Speakers.

Supporting over two decades of experience in the fields of organisation and people development, David has a degree in business and human resource development. He holds an MBA, and a Masters Degree in Professional Ethics.

His commitment to creating long term and successful changes in the skills, knowledge, attributes, attitudes and activities of salespeople resulted in the development of [SalesCoachCentral®.com](http://SalesCoachCentral.com).



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SalesCoachCentral®.com is a next generation web based sales development resource center designed for sales managers and salespeople to have 24/7 access to a range of on line courses, podcasts, multi-media tips, audio books, onscreen demonstrations and the incredibly effective sales problem solving center.

If you're not already a member, you're welcome to visit this exciting next generation community website designed for professional salespeople and sales managers at <http://www.salescoachcentral.com> where you can experience the vast content and value to be gained through a complimentary and no obligation trial period.

David lives in the bay side suburb of Sans Souci in Sydney Australia with his wife Liz, their teenage sons Matthew and Anthony, and their Groodle dog Buddy.

Sell more confidently, comfortably, consistently and commercially.

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