

BECOME THE EXCEPTION

# A SPECIAL TRAVEL REPORT

BY  
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## 11 TRAGIC SALES MISTAKES YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE

Just when you think you have this selling thing down to a science, you begin to witness a lull in the action. Is this the most whacked-out industry or what? Commission cuts followed by internet competition followed by customers dropping you after 15 years of unparalleled service.

What is an agency to do?

My answer to you is to do the only thing you can do. Keep on selling smart. And this means avoiding those foolish mistakes that creep back into your sales routine without you realizing they are sapping you of positive results.

You asked for them and here they are in review.....**The Big Eleven.**

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### Sales Mistake #1 . TRYING TO SELL UP!

The “gift of gab” has no place in business today. There is no need for memorizing and rehearsing “come-backs” and pro-active “sales pitches.” After taking the time to understand one’s particular buying motives, your one and only recourse is to simply recommend what you feel is best for the buyer.

All the sales books I have read include a lengthy chapter telling how it will be in the interest of you and your pocket book to *sell people up*. “If the prospect says this...you say that. If they do that...you do this”. When they finally do buy “this”, you slide in a few “that’s”. Sounds pretty manipulative if you ask me. I feel strongly that you should think less of yourself if you ever find yourself trying these tactics.

***Selling people up*** is not a good thing, unless, of course, it is in their best interest for you to do so. The moral of this story? Don’t sell up. Sell right.

?? You are (supposedly) the expert. You’re the specialist. Tell me what I need to know. Tell me what I need to hear. If I don’t ask the right questions, tell me what I should be asking. If need be, put the right words in my mouth. If it cost more, so be it. If it cost less, I can learn to live with that as well. On occasion, you will feel that the right thing to do is to “sell down”, or recommend a less costly item. Sometimes it will be correct to make no recommendation at all. Other times you may find yourself pointing your would-be clients toward the competition. If you need a slogan to live by, here is one you can take to the bank: **DO WHAT’S RIGHT!**

A sale for a sale’s sake is yesterday’s news. Your primary objective should be to strive to establish a relationship with your steadily growing customer base....based on trust. And this calls for honesty and straightforwardness, and time. ***If you or your boss find it difficult to swallow this advice, you are probably running your sales program from a script hand written by monks on parchment. Unfortunately, you are still in good company. There remains in our country a plethora of clowns (educated and non) who still demand buying their expensive gold plated watches with the money they have fleeced from customers who have a difficult time saying “no.”***

Your job is to look out for your customer’s best interest and recommend a workable and acceptable solution. At times, this may indeed result in a higher commission; at other times, you may forfeit your commission altogether.

What turns many people away from a career in sales is the misguided mind-set that they must learn how to present ideas and solutions that border on fiction or sheer nonsense. Nothing is further from the truth. To become successful in sales you must speak the truth in a clear, slow and orderly fashion while encouraging the customer to candidly voice their concerns in like fashion.

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### **Sales Mistake # 2: Not being obsessed with helping people.**

***If you want to get to the top of this profession, you have to stop worrying about yourself and start thinking about helping others. Sounds absurdly simple. It isn't.***

***As I mentioned earlier, your primary goal is to stop selling.***

When you try to sell, it appears to everyone that you are selling, and nobody I know enjoys being “sold”. But, when you are legitimately, openly and sincerely interested in helping people, you will have their undivided attention, and eventually, the combination to their check book.

A well known sales trainer once said,

***“You will get everything in life you want if you first try to help others get what it is they want in life.”***

I agree 100%. Focus on helping others first and your turn will come.

Looking at it from a different angle, make it your business to make other people successful. That's your new mission in life...to make others successful. If your product or service can help make others successful, then you will soon be in high cotton

**Bottom Line: Get out of you and into them. Focus on trying to help other people succeed. Use what you know and who you know for a single purpose, and that is to help others.**

### **Sales Mistake #3: Not listening to the prospect ...is a mistake.**

***You must give the communication skill called “listening” more than just lip service. You have to actually hear what the other person is saying and make every effort to understand what is being said.***

Not listening to what others are saying, and not saying, is a mistake. Nobody cares what you want or think...unless it ties directly to what your customer is interested in. I don't know how to make this complicated or drawn out. Once you get the customer speaking freely and comfortably about their ideas, wants, needs and desires, you are bound to witness a sale unfold before your very eyes. You'll become a spectator and won't have to say or do much more. Ask and then listen. Repeat back to the speaker what it is you think you heard and then listen some more.

People who are in the market to buy stuff, will buy stuff if you simply act as a guide, as a sounding board, and as a source for information.

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You have undoubtedly heard the real estate mantra that the three most important determinates of value are: **location, location, location**. In sales, the three most important determinates of your value to the prospect are: **listening skills, listening skills, listening skills**.

### **Sales Mistake #4: Not empathizing with the prospect.**

***You must manage to see your offer from the eyes of your prospects/customers. This is known as empathy. Being empathetic is easier said than done.***

When you want a distinctive edge, start envisioning the world from your customer's side of the table. Popularly known as empathy, seeing things through your customer's eyes is a pretty intelligent way of operating your business. This is worth rephrasing...no one really cares what *you* think. Once you can tie your point of view to your customer's primary interest, fears and concerns, you will be well on your way toward establishing a working relationship.

The next time you begin your sales presentation, pause and reflect on the person you are speaking with. Think about what is important to them. Think about their current working environment...the problems they might be dealing with. Only true pro's practice this pre-call meditation. Adopt this practice and you too will soon be enjoying the fruits of your labors...by ten fold.

### **Sales Mistake #5: Seeing the prospect as an adversary.**

***Biting the hand that feeds you makes no sense. It never has...and it never will. Treating customers as enemies is dumb. Don't be dumb.***

As bizarre as this sounds, a "me against you" selling mentality is often the case. Sales shouldn't, and cannot happen this way.

How can anyone think negatively about the hand that feeds them? Prospects will only become customers if treated properly. Customers pay your bills and are responsible for feeding your family. No customers ..... no business. So here is a clever idea, let's bad mouth our customers and show them what a lousy attitude looks and sounds like every opportunity we get. (I hate this phrase, but it seems to fit perfectly right about now.)  
**HELLOOOWWW!!!!!!!!!!**

Can someone tell me what's wrong with this line of thinking?

Let's get something clear. Prospects, having passed from the suspect stage, are good things. Talk to them as if they were good things. Treat them with respect as if they were good things. Behave in public as if they were good things. **THEY ARE GOOD THINGS.**

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### **Sales Mistake #6: Becoming distracted**

***You can't allow your attention span to drift away from the task at hand. Becoming distracted is often considered normal. You simply can't be considered normal in this regard.***

If your primary responsibility is to help people, then it is in your best interest to pay attention to the people you are trying to help. Reality, as well as my personal experience, says your mind will wander at times. If in fact you have a short attention span, like I do, knowing that you do is 99% of the battle.

You can't provide your prospect (or customer) an opportunity to interpret your wandering mind as a sign of disinterest on your part. This might prove to be fatal.

Work on focusing on your prospect. Concentrate. Notice what they are wearing. What they are saying. How they are saying it.

This especially is true when you are not within direct eye sight ...like when you are on the telephone. Resist the temptation to plug the phone into your shoulder while continuing to open envelopes, write sales memos, click through computer screens or straighten out your desk draw. People on the other end of the line can hear this activity and you can be sure that they will interpret it as a sign of disinterest.

Discipline yourself and let everything take a back seat when you are on the telephone. You might want to try standing while speaking. I do this regularly. It takes too much effort and promotion to finally get your phone to ring. Why risk blowing it all at the point of contact?

### **Sales Mistake #7: Not taking detailed notes**

***Relying on memory is a fatal practice. Here is the long and short of it: Write everything down. Take notes.***

Memories can be short. And nights are for sleeping. Not tossing and turning trying to remember if you have forgotten some important issue for tomorrow's sales presentation. The master at this is a client/friend of mine. This man is running a \$150 million company and forgets nothing. Paul has a mind like a steel trap. Or does he? He is the best I know of at not dropping the ball while juggling a great many of them at any single moment in time. His secret is no secret. He writes things down. He writes everything down. And he doesn't throw the note away until he feels that he has received complete satisfaction by his definition. Once the task is appropriately addressed, completed or formally delegated, he takes the piece of paper and rips it into tiny shreds before throwing it away which clears his mind for the next one. When this guy crosses something off his list, it stays crossed off.

Write things down and give your memory a much needed rest.

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### **Sales Mistake #8: Failing to follow through.**

***After all is said and done, more is said than done. The key is follow through. Everyone says they know this...very few people manage to do it.***

Talk is cheap, so after all is said and done, more is said than done.

If you want to distance yourself from the competition, do what you say you are going to do. Then, do these three things:

- (1) Show up if you say you will;**
- (2) Show up on time if you say you will;**
- (3) Show up on time looking good if you say you will.**

That's it. The Big Three.

Here is a bonus suggestion for good measure:

- (3A) Call people back if you say you will—sooner rather than later.**

Everyone is quick with a promise today. Most of us have sincere good intentions. Few people can be counted on to follow through consistently. Be that person. Be the exception.

### **Sales Mistake # 9: Focus**

***68% of lost business comes as a result of lack of attention. Counter this statistic by paying attention to current customers, those on your prospect list and all lost customers who you still care about.***

The selling profession runs rampant with “hit and run artists. It is a costly practice. Think about it. You spend endless hours investing money after bad trying to schedule face time with some stranger. You finally say and do what it takes to establish some degree of rapport. For any one of a million reasons, the client chooses not to do business with you, and you drop them like a hot potato. Not much logic here folks.

I recently received a phone call from a woman who I used to do business with years ago. She was responding to a postcard I sent to her a week earlier. I was just keeping in touch. My timing was perfect. She called me and gave me the name of the person I should be speaking with if I was interested in earning some money.

Is this the only time a random postcard has worked some magic for me? Not on your life. I can't count the occasions where my touching base with “former clients” has resulted in a solid lead for new business.

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I'm getting tired of my banging my fist on the table on this subject but I am going to do it just one more time. **DON'T GIVE UP ON PAST CLIENTS.** Contact them. Don't quit on them and don't quit on yourself. Persistence works when administered properly. It works. Do it!

### **Sales Mistake #10: Not planning the day efficiently.**

***Don't talk yourself into thinking you can "wing-it". Your success will come as a direct outcome of how much time you put into planning.***

This mistake can fill a book all by itself. I once was as guilty as the next person when it came to sales mistake #10. So, to avoid being labeled a hypocrite, here is a single thought for you. Think about planning your day around the acronym W-I-N. Win stands for "what's important now."

Regardless of the task at hand, keep asking yourself what is the most important use of my time, right now? Your answer will undoubtedly change as the day unfolds, but by using this stop check, your chances of remaining focused on the most important task at the moment will be enhanced.

### **Sales Mistake #11: Not looking your best.**

***True, false or indifferent. A book is still judged by its cover. So is a movie, a magazine, a car, a house and people, people, people.***

You can't afford to take the chance that your prospect might not approve of your "packaging". I'm not talking about the price of your wardrobe. I'm referring to the condition of it. ...and yourself. Here are a few reminders:

- ?? Get plenty of sleep
- ?? Drink plenty of water -Have clean fingernails -
- ?? Comb you hair - so it looks better than Kramer's on the Seinfeld show.
- ?? Use mouth wash - especially if your sales call is scheduled after lunch and you have a taste for raw onions on cheddarburgers.
- ?? Shine your shoes (more than once a year.)
- ?? Wash your car (more than once a year.)
- ?? Learn how to plug in and use an iron. Or, have the courage to ask your spouse to do it for you. Or if you have a fat wallet, have a local service handle this chore.
- ?? If you aren't sure, have someone critique your tie selection (I do and am very pleased that I do. If you want to see just how humorous tie selection can be, tune to your local evening news. Match your socks in direct sunlight. (I made this mistake just the other day. Very embarrassing.)
- ?? Update your belts now and then (loose the giant EXXON buckle)
- ?? Check for unwanted facial hair. Ears, nose and neck.
- ?? When using cologne, perfume or after shave, remember this guideline: If bees swarm you after application, lighten the dosage.
- ?? Remove old tattoos. (especially any referencing Hells Angels or any acquaintance you made while in the Navy.
- ?? Carry a handkerchief . (Preferably a clean one.