

Introduction

THE ART OF ACCELERATION

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ay I help you?”

Invariably drawing a “no-thank-you-I’m-just-looking” response, this question is probably the worst opening line a retail salesperson could ever use. While not exactly an earth-shattering insight, here’s a question for you: Heard it lately?

Of course, you have—and that’s the problem. Far too many sales professionals are stuck in neutral, and it’s not just at the retail level. Countless business-to-business sales teams also suffer from a dearth of sales skills. Product pitches, sales scripts, and ridiculous notions like “Always Be Closing” are just a few reasons why salespeople and their organizations are going nowhere fast.

Fast Facts

Here are some startling statistics that prove this book is desperately needed. According to research conducted by The Sales Board, Inc., which studied more than 16,000 customers and 300 salespeople in 25 industries:

- » 86 percent of all salespeople ask the wrong questions and miss sales opportunities.
- » 82 percent of all salespeople fail to differentiate themselves or their products from the competition.
- » 62 percent of all salespeople fail to earn the right to ask for a commitment from the buyer.

But the most frightening statistic for every senior executive, sales manager, and shareholder should be this: 82 percent of salespeople rely on discounting the price to make the sale. That's right: Most salespeople have to give it away.

To top it all off, the Internet has generated an explosion of consumer-to-consumer education via chat rooms, forums, and blogs. These platforms create dynamics in which customers get smarter—and get smarter *faster*—than salespeople. Executive vice presidents, sales leaders, and salespeople are desperate to reverse this trend.

Accelerate the Sale will help, enabling you to create, discover, and internalize distinct sales skills and approaches—quickly giving you an edge in the marketplace. Appealing to senior sales executives, sales managers, sales team members, and aspiring sales professionals, this book will help anyone who relies on sales to succeed. Simply put, *Accelerate the Sale* will result in you selling more, faster.

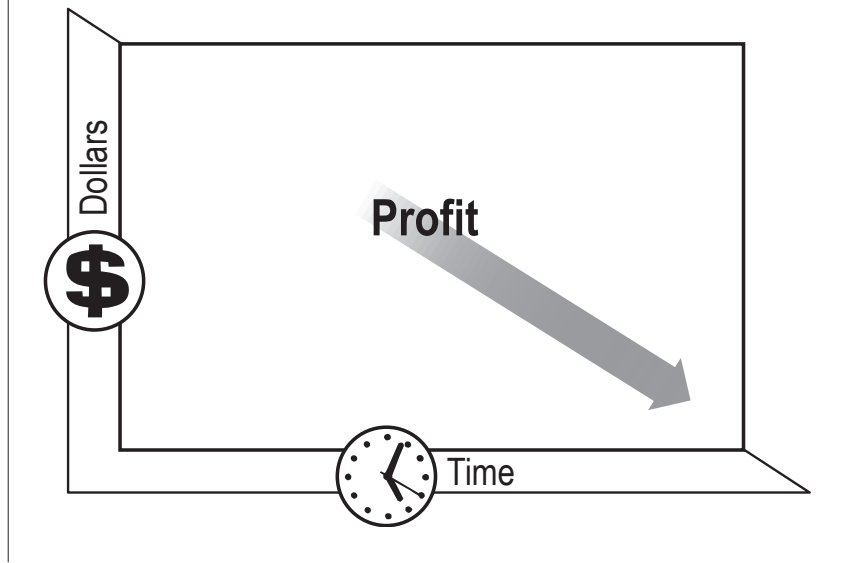
Time and Profit Relationship

When selling anything, a successful salesperson needs to grasp one concept immediately: Wine and cheese may get better with age, but deals don't. (See Figure I.1.)

Here are a few reasons why time decreases success and profit in so many sales situations:

- » The buyer reconsiders his or her decision to purchase.
- » Price negotiation plays sellers off one another.
- » The natural ebb and flow of emotions can diminish buyer enthusiasm.

■ **FIGURE I.1**
Time and Profit Relationship



- » Many products lose value over time.
- » Inventory-carrying costs and interest on wholesale lines decrease profits.

Accseleration: Closing More Business, Faster

Acceleration may be Newton's second law of motion, but the art of *accseleration*—the act or process of closing more business, faster—is the first law of sales success. And with selling, it is an art form. There are guides, but no exact formulas. Ideas are presented, but left open to interpretation. So, get ready to be creative!

My definition of *accseleration* includes sharpening preparation, developing skills, and producing the mind-set necessary to operate in today's competitive sales landscape. This is a notion I will refer

to frequently throughout the following pages; when I do, I use this unique spelling: *accseleration*. Keep an eye out for it; when you see it, you'll know that idea is of utmost importance.

In an attempt to enable you to go further, faster, I've also created "accselerators" at the end of each chapter. These are at-a-glance, priority takeaways; simply turn to the shortcuts to refresh, remind, and review.

In *Accelerate the Sale*, I will endeavor to provide practical, results-driven techniques. Some will be quick and simple, others more sophisticated. But all will be translated into pragmatic approaches. This is more important now than ever, because the traditional sales environment is rapidly changing.

I will, in most instances, present both a business-to-business (B2B) and a business-to-consumer (B2C) perspective. This is an attempt to broaden your view of the utility of these ideas and make them directly applicable to your specific situation.

The strategies and tactics presented in *Accelerate the Sale* will help with almost any sales exchange. Please keep in mind that some sales cycles are *extremely* long and can take six or nine months; others can take years. Certainly, ideas here can help in those unusually long sales cycles. Additionally, I also encourage you to read another terrific McGraw-Hill book, *The New Solution Selling: The Revolutionary Sales Process That is Changing the Way People Sell*, by Keith Eades.

In researching this book, I've endeavored to bring you diverse perspectives from successful sales practitioners in a wealth of industries: from motorcycles to marketing, forensics to firearms, computer technologists to consultants par excellence, from giants of academia to a giant of an alcoholic recovery mentor. These contributions are labeled as "Street Smarts" sidebars. (We had so many great contributions, in fact, that I've had to use the book's website to showcase them all!)

Accelerate the Sale also includes insights from prominent thought leaders such as Alan Weiss, Daniel Yankelovich, Martin Seligman, and Robert Cialdini, as well as references to "The Simpsons," Rush drummer Neil Peart, and my favorite Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. Yes, I know. It's not your typical sales book.

As mentioned previously, bonus content is available at the book's website, www.AcceleratetheSale.com. Here, you'll find podcasts, videos, articles, and a forum to share your sales experiences. Think of it as an asylum for sales professionals.

Of course, there's no shortage of my own editorial comments. (I've been told I work in sarcasm the way Michelangelo worked with stone, and sometimes—just sometimes—I'm not exactly politically correct.)

Motors as Metaphor

Speaking of being politically incorrect, I know it's not PC to admit in 2011 that I *like* things that burn gas. But for me, nothing is as cool as the look and sound of a 1968 Chevy Camaro or a 1940s-era Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

There's just something about a finely tuned machine and the feeling it gives when you punch the gas or "twist the wick" (motorcycle-speak for rolling on the throttle). You feel the g-force as you're propelled down the road. It's almost the same feeling of exhilaration you experience when your buyer proclaims, "Yes!"

For the past 25 years, I've had the privilege of working with the Harley-Davidson Motor Company. After college, my sales career began in a Harley-Davidson dealership just outside of Philadelphia. I then moved to Milwaukee and spent years working for Harley-Davidson corporate. And for the last 14 years, I have operated a thriving consulting practice, of course, with the Motor Company as one of my favorite, long-term clients.

I've been engaged in almost every aspect of the sales profession—from helping dealership associates and managers improve their closing ratios to guiding phone reps through the handling of difficult customer-service situations, to assisting vice presidents of sales in creating and executing comprehensive sales-performance initiatives.

This has been an extraordinary experience. I've been able to hone and craft my sales skills, develop my distinct approaches with likeable and respectable people, and talk to individual customers

about unbelievably cool products. It also has provided me with a different way of thinking about the world.

In one of the older Harley-Davidson buildings in Milwaukee, down a darkened hallway, an old Harley-Davidson V-Twin engine is on display. Some resourceful employee carefully removed portions of the various covers to reveal engine mechanics, and the model is used primarily for training dealership technicians and occasionally entertaining visiting consultants. With a flick of a switch, this cutaway comes to life at slow-motion speed. The pistons thrust up and down, the valves open and close in perfect time, and the crankshaft spins—enthraling all who see it. For me, watching that engine move in such orchestrated precision is both mesmerizing and clarifying, reminding me why motors are the perfect metaphor for business.

If that V-Twin model were a real, fire-breathing, fuel-burning motor, it would create that all-important force known as torque. Think of combustion as the sale, pushing the pistons and generating the force (or revenue) to power the rear wheel, which provides the propulsion to move you—and your company—toward your ultimate destination.

Some sales professionals—and some companies—just arrive there faster than others.

This book will help you reach the finish line first.