

TOOL KIT

New Ways to Think About Selling

By PAUL B. BROWN

Want to sell more? The best advice may be to talk less.

The biggest mistake in selling is thinking that “if you just get the chance to ‘make your case’ — your prospect will be compelled to buy,” says Lenann McGookey Gardner, president of YouCanSell.com, a marketing consult in Albuquerque. “Selling is not telling.”

The reason why, she writes, on BusinessWeek.com, is because of the way most prospects listen to a sales pitch.

“When confronted with the opportunity to buy something, the buyer’s attitude is always ‘Why do I need this,’” Ms. Gardner says. “The more you talk, the more likely you are to say something that causes your buyer to say: ‘I don’t need that specific feature. That’s why I don’t have to buy your product!’”

Her suggestion is to find out what problems the customer has and then explain why your product or service can help solve them.

HOW TO NETWORK (I) Networking, the art of extending the universe of people you can draw on, “is about creating an extended family,” says Christine Comaford-Lynch, the author of the book, “Rules for Renegades” (McGraw-Hill Companies, 2007).

She suggests, in a column on businessknowhow.com that the best way to do it is by taking a “palm up” approach. “Palm up networking embodies the spirit of service, of giving and wanting nothing in return. When you network ‘palm down’ you’re grasping for personal gain,” she writes. Palm up, she continues, is the equivalent of a “heart-oriented interaction” while palm down is seen as “greedy grasping.” “The universe has a perfect accounting system,” she says. “Give to others, it’ll all come back to you in time.”

HOW TO NETWORK (II) Guy Kawasaki, co-founder of Garage Technology Ventures, a venture capital firm, agrees that a crucial part of successful networking is determining what you can do for someone else.

But in his blog he provides four additional ideas for networking, or what he calls “schmoozing.”

1. “Schmoozing is an analog, contact sport. You can’t do it alone from your office on the phone or via a computer. You may hate them but force yourself to go to trade shows, conventions and seminars.”
2. “Ask good questions, then shut up.” The idea is find out about the person you are talking to. “Ironically, you’ll be remembered as an interesting person,” if you get the other person to talk a lot, he says.
3. Unveil your passions. Talking only about business gets boring after awhile. “Good schmoozers unveil their

passions after they get to know you. Great schmoozers lead off with their passions. Your passions make you an interesting person — you'll stick out because you're the only person not talking about 802.11 chipsets at the wireless conference."

4. Ask for the return of favors. Sure you want to give favors. "However, great schmoozers ask for the return of favors. You may find this puzzling: Isn't it better to keep someone indebted to you? The answer is no, and this is because keeping someone indebted to you puts undue pressure on your relationship. By asking for, and receiving, a return favor, you clear the decks, relieve the pressure, and set up for a whole new round of give and take."

SUCCESSFUL SALES TIPS With a subtitle like "Secrets From Top Sales Professionals," it isn't surprising that the book, "Masters of Sales," by Ivan R. Misner and Don Morgan (Entrepreneur Press, 2007) is filled with tips.

Here are four of them:

¶ Set goals, says the self-help author, Brian Tracy. "Top salespeople are intensely goal oriented." The more specific the goals, the better the best salespeople tend to do.

¶ If you have to cold call, practice your pitch, says Wendy Weiss, a sales trainer. A salesman who does not to concentrate on his presentation can actually listen to what the person on the other end of the phone has to say.

¶ If you get a chance to meet with a prospect, do your homework, suggests Keith Ferrazzi, a marketing consultant at Ferrazzi Greenlight. "A good salesperson does research on companies, but a great salesperson does research on people. No one has ever sold anything to a company. Selling is done with people within the company."

¶ The foundation of successful selling is "honesty, character, integrity, love and loyalty," says Zig Ziglar, a motivational speaker. "With these skills, we can build a business, a life, a family, a friendship and a professional selling career while making a difference in the world in which we live."