

The GUEST Approach to Selling

“Guests are always welcome”

In recent years many different businesses have begun to approach their clients differently. They are now labeling them as guests, which has been the norm in the hotel industry for decades. Many restaurant chains as well as other businesses use this term. A gas station around the corner from my house boasts a sign on its door that reads, “Welcome, guests.”

A simple word like “guest” versus “customer” can make a dramatic difference in the way we perceive the people who pay our salaries. A customer is someone who makes a purchase. A guest, on the other hand, is someone we welcome with open arms and look forward to interacting with. A guest is more of a friend, someone we will treat with dignity and respect.

I'm not suggesting that you immediately begin calling all of your customers guests. What I would like to introduce to you is the GUEST model of selling. GUEST is an acronym for a five-step sales process.

1. **G**reeting your customer.
2. **U**ncovering the customers' needs.
3. **E**xplaining the product or service.
4. **S**olving objections.
5. **T**elling them to buy.

Many sales-based organizations have their own sales model or structure. The GUEST model is designed to fit into most sales cycles. These five steps are the key components to all successful retail selling. The majority of sales people in retail don't follow any structured process, preferring to allow the sale to flow

naturally. I've heard objections, excuses, justifications and rationalizations for this, such as:

“You can’t follow a structured process.”
“Customers just take control of the sales process.”
“It takes too long to go through a process like this.”
“My store is too busy.”
“I'm too busy.”
“I've done it my way for years and I've been successful.”

The list could go on and on. In fact, I could probably write another book just listing the excuses I've heard from salespeople. Here is the point. The GUEST process works. Ultimately, *you* need to take control of the sales process. If you don't, the customer will, which is what happens in approximately 80 percent of all sales transactions that take place on the retail floor. I have seen sales people shadow customers around the store trying desperately to sell them something.

News flash! Consumers will not buy from a sales person they don't trust, don't like, or who doesn't show confidence. I have known sales people with a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge who can't close the number of sales they are entitled to because they try too hard.

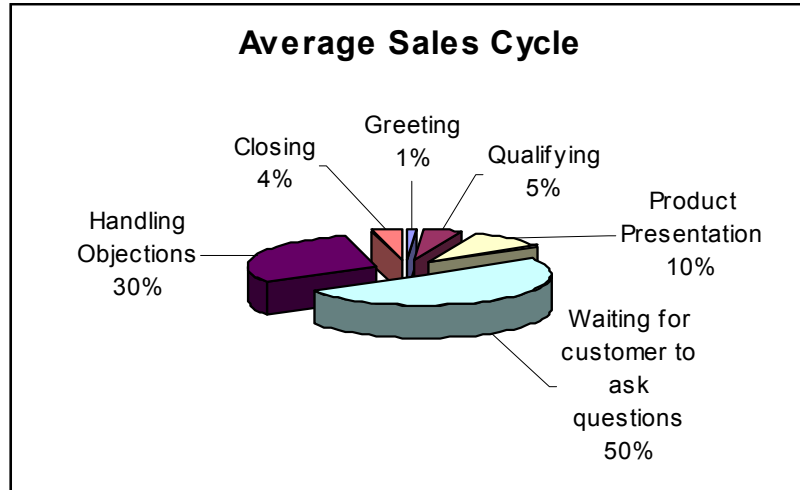
Here's a typical sales story. The customer is looking at a product. The sales person launches into a canned pitch about the product. The customer asks some questions and expresses some objections. The sales person tries to overcome or defend the objections. The process ends with the customer saying, "Gotta card? I'll be back." These words are the kiss of death in retail because few of these customers ever actually return. The reasons are simple.

The sales person did not greet the customer properly.
The sales person did not ask the customer any questions.
The sales person delivered a rehearsed presentation instead of focusing on the customer's needs.
The sales person did not gather sufficient information to overcome the customer's objection.
The sales person did not give the customer a reason to make the purchase!

The GUEST approach of selling addresses each of these issues. If you make a conscious effort to apply the concepts in this book you will notice an immediate improvement in your sales. The key is to concentrate on the process rather the outcome. If you work through each step instead of trying to close the sale you will increase your closing ratio. Too many salespeople work hard to close a sale because they need to reach a certain level of sales to earn commission, their boss is hounding them to close a deal, or they haven't reached their sales quota. The result is a desperate attempt to get the customer to part with their hard-earned money. These customers feel threatened, manipulated, coerced and often leave the store without making any purchase at all.

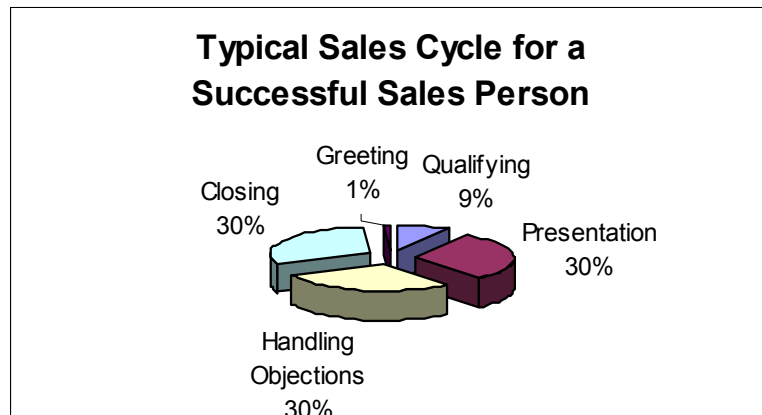
On the other hand if a sales person concentrates on the sales process the customer will be more relaxed, feel more comfortable and will be more likely to buy. In my workshops I encourage sales people to allow the sale to progress naturally. I instruct them to pay attention to their customers instead of focusing on closing the sale. This runs contrary to most sales training where the emphasis is on closing the sale. My philosophy is that the sale will happen when you put all five components together in a relaxed, comfortable manner.

The average sales person's sales cycle looks something like this:



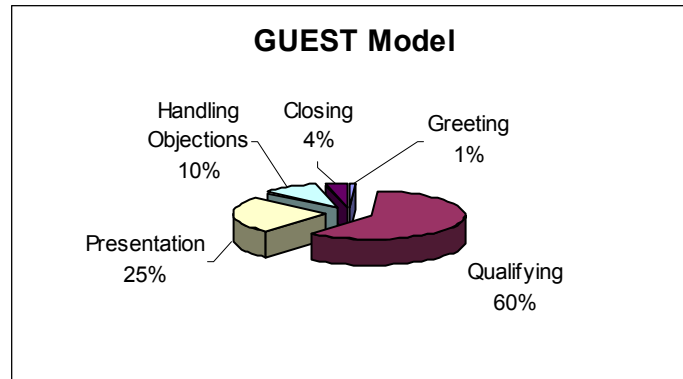
Half the sale is spent in a non-active, passive role! It's no wonder consumers aren't anxious to make a purchase.

Here is the sales cycle of a typical successful salesperson:



This individual divides his or her time equally between presenting the product, handling objections, and trying to close the sale.

The GUEST model of selling suggests this breakdown:



You will notice that most of the time is invested uncovering the customer's needs. When done properly, this step will eliminate many objections. Unfortunately, most sales-people either don't understand this or refuse to believe it. Most still feel that they have to skate quickly through the qualifying process to ensure they have enough time to deal with and overcome objections.

A business acquaintance of mine works in advertising. When I approached him to produce a training video he began asking me questions to fully understand what I needed and wanted in a video. Because he took the time to learn about my business needs, I immediately saw the value in this \$45,000 investment. Not once did I express an objection about the cost because he demonstrated the value while he uncovered my needs and presented a solution. He made sure that he positioned himself and his company as a problem-solver and a solution-provider.

Another friend of mine owns a training company that provides a variety of training programs to retailers. In his sales training he does not discuss how to overcome objections because he believes, and rightly so, that if you qualify your customer's needs you won't hear any objections. My experience in consulting has confirmed this as well.

As you progress through the book you will begin to see how the GUEST model of selling is different from, and is more effective than, the traditional style. It focuses on the customer rather than on closing the sale. It is designed to make people feel important.

Stop treating your customers like a pay cheque and view them as guests in your store. This may sound awkward and initially difficult to comprehend particularly if you have been accustomed to using aggressive selling tactics in order to close a sale. If you discipline yourself to follow the blueprint provided here, you will soon notice a difference in the way your customers respond to you. In return, they will be more willing to part with their hard earned money. They will be willing to buy from you – today – at your price!

Powering Up Your Personal Attitude

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a huge difference"

It has been said that attitude determines altitude. Your personal attitude will definitely determine the level of success you attain more than any other factor. If you don't have the right attitude you will not have the desire necessary to develop your skills. If you don't have the right attitude you will not be willing to invest the time learning everything you need to know to do your job effectively. Without the right attitude you will be deterred by the smallest obstacles and will give up long before you reach the level of success you deserve. If you don't have the right attitude you will not be willing to accept new challenges that will help you grow, learn and develop. You will also fear the risks that are associated with these new challenges. Although attitude alone will not guarantee you success in sales, without it you may well find success elusive.

Exercise

Let's explore this in a bit more detail. Assume that every letter in the alphabet has a numeric value according to its location. 'A' is 1, 'B' is 2, 'C' is 3 and so on. Take a moment and assign each letter in the word "attitude" its numeric value. Record your answers in your action planner.

Your responses should be A-1, T-20, T-20, I-9, T-20, U-21, D-4, E-5. Now add these figures together and write this number in the circle on your action planner.

If your math was accurate your total should be one hundred. Coincidence? I doubt it very much. This demonstrates that 100% of the results we achieve are a

direct reflection of our personal attitude. If you begin your day with the attitude that you are going to have a great day regardless of what happens, then you will likely have a great day and good things will happen. On the other hand, if you believe that your day will be one filled with negative situations, then that is what you will attract.

Let's take this a bit further. You are finishing work one evening and a friend you haven't seen in a while calls and invites you out for a drink. You are scheduled to work the next morning but accept the invitation anyway. You justify it by saying "I haven't seen him in several months. Besides, a couple of drinks won't be too bad." The two of you meet, have a couple of drinks, share stories, and before you realize it time has slipped past and it is now very late. You realize that by the time you get home you will only get about five hours sleep. "No problem" you say to yourself. "I've done that lots of times and always felt fine the next day." You arrive home later, set the alarm, and promptly fall asleep.

The next morning the alarm sounds. What is the first thing you do? If you are like most people, you hit the snooze button and go back to sleep. Nine minutes later the alarm beeps and again you tap the snooze button. On the alarm's third warning, you leap out of bed and frantically begin preparing for work. You race to your car thinking that if everything goes right you'll still make it to the store on time. You fire up the engine and notice that the gas gauge is hovering on empty, and recall that in your haste to get home last night, you said to yourself, "I'll fill up on the way to work tomorrow." If you are anything like me this happens more times than you care to admit.

You drive into the corner gas station and are pleasantly surprised to see an empty lane. You pull up to the pump, fill up your car and pay for your gas. You also pick up a coffee and a muffin for breakfast. As you head onto the highway, you look at your watch and think to yourself, "No problem, I've still got time to make it. Yeah, this day's going to turn out all right after all." No sooner have the words flashed through your head when the traffic comes to a grinding halt. You brake suddenly, spilling hot coffee on yourself. Now, you're caught in a traffic jam, *and* you're wearing coffee-stained clothes. You blast your horn in frustration, drum your fingers impatiently on the steering wheel, shout at other motorists in anger, and look repeatedly at your watch, willing time to stop. You realize with a sinking feeling that you are going to be late.

Ten minutes later the traffic begins to clear and you are on your way. However, your frustration does not dissolve. It seems now that whatever lane you move into, you find your way impeded by cars whose drivers choose to drive for the first time in their lives, right in your path. Slow, slow, slow. You weave in and out of lanes hoping to catch a break in the flow. After what seems an eternity, you arrive at the store, fifteen minutes late for your shift. As you rush through the front door your boss looks at you, taps his or her watch and asks in a somewhat caustically, "Do you know what time it is?"

Before you answer let me ask you – are you having a bad day? Or are you having a bad start?

Most people will now have a bad day. They will allow the circumstances of the morning to influence their entire day. When the boss questions their tardiness, they respond with "You won't believe the morning I've had. First my alarm didn't go off (embellishment #1), then my car wouldn't start (embellishment #2), and then some jerk cut me off and made me spill my coffee (embellishment #3). I got stuck in traffic for half an hour (embellishment #4). I'm having an awful day." This story will be repeated several times throughout the day to every co-worker and, in some cases, even to customers. Each time you tell it, you will add even more to it, so that by the end of the day it will sound something like, "I went to bed early last night but I slept in because the power went off in the entire block. My car was vandalized during the night and my coffee cup broke."

Do the other people you tell really care about your problems? Of course they don't. They have enough of their own to worry about. They don't want or need someone else's misery.

If you continue to think about what happened before you arrived at work, what will happen to your sales during the day? If you're lucky you might close one sale. Then, at the end of the day, when you go home and your spouse or roommate asks how your day went, you'll launch into another tirade. You'll go on about how difficult your customers were, how no one wanted to buy anything, how they tried to grind you on price, and how difficult it is to make a good living in retail. You'll end up reliving the frustration and anger of the morning's events. You create a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's no wonder no one would buy from you. They could probably tell as soon as they entered the store that you were in a foul mood.

A few years ago I encountered an unpleasant flight attendant on a flight I was taking. She became quite indignant over a mistake the airline had made pertaining to my meal. I in turn became upset and frustrated because of her attitude and stewed about it for almost thirty minutes. As time progressed I became engrossed in the in-flight movie and forgot all about it. When I arrived home several hours later, my wife asked me about my flight. The innocent question immediately stirred up my feelings of frustration and anger again. Within seconds I was stressed out over something that had happened hours before!

Your goal every day is to maintain a positive attitude through all of this. Accept the consequences for your actions, assume responsibility and move on. This will prevent your day from becoming negatively influenced.

I am not trying to trivialize an unhappy situation. Bad stuff happens to people all the time, usually at the most inopportune time. It is how we deal with this stuff that makes the difference. If you *respond*, which is positive, you will

look for the lesson or learning point in the situation. If you *react*, which is negative, you will add the experience to the mental baggage you carry.

Mental Baggage

Mental baggage is a collection of *all* the situations we have experienced or encountered during our lifetimes. We carry all this baggage around in our heads and draw from it when appropriate situations present themselves. Perhaps you tried to join a school sports team when you were a child. Your athletic abilities in that particular sport were average; for that reason you were unable to make the team. You filed away this experience in your subconscious until a similar situation to it came along. You immediately recalled the previous performance and outcome, and told yourself that you were not capable of successfully meeting the current challenge. Consequently, you did not make the effort required to meet it.

We all carry around this mental baggage. It influences us in everything we do, both in our business and personal lives. How it affects us on the sales floor is very simple.

At one time during our career we have all had to deal with a difficult customer. Let's say he was looking to buy a pair of dress shoes. He was attired in a navy-blue business suit, white shirt, and a maroon tie. His glasses had thick black frames and he displayed an aura of seriousness. After fitting him with several pairs of shoes, making several trips to the store room, and spending almost an hour with him, he left the store without making a purchase. You shook your head in frustration, repacked all the shoes and returned them to the back room. You also filed away that person's image in your mind. This became mental baggage.

Some time later a completely different person wearing a navy blue business suit, white shirt, maroon tie, glasses with black frames come into the store. You immediately – unconsciously – recalled the previous customer and remember that he wasted your precious time (your perception). You then made the decision to disregard the new customer. *If* you finally do decide to serve him, your mindset might still be negative because in the back of your mind you 'know' that this type of person is just a time-waster. Ultimately, you displayed outwardly this attitude and ended up with a potential customer who received less than satisfactory service from a salesperson with an obvious chip on his shoulder. This customer, in turn, made the decision *not* to buy from confirming your original assumption about him. Mental baggage may consist of customers who have been rude, abrupt, or angry toward you. Baggage can include situations from earlier in our work careers or even from our childhoods.

As time progresses, this mental baggage weighs heavier and heavier. Yet we continue to drag it around with us into every sales situation. Over time our attitude turns sour, we become pessimistic and jaded, and we view most sales

transactions as intrusions on our time. Our productivity drops, our performance slides, and our job security is threatened. We become increasingly bitter toward our chosen occupation, the customers we serve, and life in general. Our mental baggage is a weight on our shoulders.

How do we prevent this from happening? First, carrying around mental baggage is a natural part of being a human being. It is the way we view and deal with our baggage that makes the real difference in our lives. If we look at each experience and consider how we can learn from it, our baggage will have less hold over us. I recall the first paid keynote presentation I gave. I was well prepared, but not in the appropriate manner. The room was an awkward shape and the stage was positioned quite high, something I had never dealt with previously. I was uncomfortable during my presentation and I knew my delivery was affected. Instead of focusing on this after my session, I chose to concentrate on what I learned from the experience.

Second we must understand that every sales situation is completely different than the others we've experienced.

Third, we must recognize that some of our baggage is outdated. We may be relying on information that is several years old. This happened to me at the beginning of my career.

When I was twenty-three I was working for a restaurant chain as an assistant manager. I was promoted to general manager and lasted less than a year before I was demoted back to an assistant manager. I had proved unable to perform to the company's expectations. I ended up leaving the company shortly afterwards. For five years I hesitated any time an opportunity for a promotion presented itself; I had not been sure I could do it. Finally it dawned on me exactly what I had learned from that experience. I was not the only person responsible for that particular failure, and my leadership and managerial skills had developed since then. Nevertheless, it took me five years to realize it!

Exercise

Take a moment and, in your action planner, list some of the experiences or situations that may be holding you back. In other words, what mental baggage are you carrying around?

Identifying this is the first step to overcoming it. Here are some suggestions for doing so:

1. Realize that the baggage is only mental. You can replace any mental thought with another thought. Replace the negative image or thought with one that demonstrates your ability to succeed at that particular task or issue. Concentrate on creating a positive self-image. When you find

- yourself resisting new situations or experiences think about what mental baggage may be contributing to this resistance.
2. Evaluate what has changed since your first experience. Remind yourself of your growth and development since then.
 3. Determine whether inaction now will exacerbate the consequence you faced earlier. In other words, does the price of avoiding the current situation outweigh the reward you could gain if you chose tackle the situation?
 4. Take action. You always have two choices;
 - Do nothing, which means that you are allowing your mental baggage to dictate your life.
 - Tackle the situation head on. As author and speaker Susan Jeffers wrote, "Feel the fear and do it anyway." It may be challenging, frightening and intimidating. However, you will become stronger from tackling the situation.

Choosing to discard your mental baggage is the first major step that will propel you forward. Once you decide not to allow what has happened to you in the past to influence your future, you begin to take control of your life and your circumstances.

Confidence Plus

Taking control of the circumstances and situations around you will develop your self-confidence. When you consider the amount of rejection that many sales people encounter, the fact that many salespeople lack self-confidence is not surprising. Top performing people in any industry typically possess a high level of self-confidence. They may not necessarily possessed this confidence all their lives.

I have not always have a lot of self-confidence. Outwardly I was Mr. Confident while on the inside I seriously doubted my abilities. I had to wrestle with my own mental baggage for years before I became internally confident. Learning to deal with this begins with letting go of our personal baggage. Here are some methods that can help you develop a higher degree of self-confidence.

Affirmations

One of the most powerful tools is affirmations. Simply put, affirmations are statements that we repeat to ourselves frequently. Although many people are familiar with this concept, few actually use them on a regular basis. You may remember the Saturday Night Live skit that satirized affirmations. The truth is that affirmations really do work. They are designed to replace feelings of

inferiority, doubt, and the lack of self-worth. The way they work is simple; there are only 3 rules that you need to remember;

1. **Affirmations must be personal.** Only you can develop an affirmation for yourself. When you express it begin with "I". For example, "I earn \$35,000 a year."
2. **Put affirmations into the present tense.** Avoid saying, "I want to quit smoking." Instead, state, "I enjoy the lifestyle of a non-smoker."
3. **Affirmations must be positive.** Avoid using negative words. For instance, "I don't want to gain more weight" should be phrased as "I look great in a bathing suit."

The next important point of affirmations is that you must repeat them aloud and several times a day. Your goal is to drive this new message deep into your subconscious and replace the other thoughts that occupy your brain with it. The most effective way to do this is through repetition. The more often you repeat an affirmation the more your subconscious goes to work to produce it and make it become a reality. Sound too simple?

I too was also skeptical when I first heard about affirmations. Then I decided to try them. I was on my way to an interview for a job I was hungry for. I had to drive for forty-five minutes to get there, and during most of it I kept repeating what I wanted the outcome of the interview to be. I envisioned myself in the role I was being interviewed for. I kept that picture focused in my mind and stated my affirmation aloud repeatedly. I told myself this for the next several interviews and a few months later I was hired. Coincidence? Perhaps, but I don't really believe in coincidences. *We* create our own situations and outcomes. *We* determine what happens to us.

Here is another example. Eighteen months after beginning this new job I decided to quit smoking. I created several affirmations that reflected the outcome I imagined. "I am a non-smoker." "I enjoy a smoke free life." "I live the lifestyle of a non-smoker." "I enjoy living as a non-smoker." I repeated these affirmations several times a day, long before the deadline I had set. A few months later I did quit, almost five months sooner than I had originally intended. I also continued to repeat these affirmations for the first month afterwards to help me get through the withdrawal period. Affirmations helped me picture myself as a non-smoker. They helped my sub-conscious mind make it a reality. For someone who smoked for more than twenty years, this was a challenging picture to create.

You can use affirmations easily to develop self-confidence. First, choose an area in which you wish to increase your self-confidence. For example, you might have a hard time talking to people in a social setting. You could create an affirmation that concentrates on this. "I carry on intelligent conversations with everyone I meet" or "I speak confidently to the people I meet." The goal is to

repeat it out loud as often as you can prior to the event. I have use similar statements prior to attending networking functions and my confidence has in these situations has improved dramatically.

You may not see instant results, which is one of the major reasons why people don't accomplish what they truly could. You have programmed your mind to act and think in a certain manner for years. A few statements repeated once or twice are not enough to overcome that entrenched programming. This will require constant repetition. Day after day, over and over again. In this world of get-rich-quick, lose-weight-fast and solve-credit-problems-instantly, people are looking for easy immediate results. If they don't see results right away, they figure the process does not work. In fact, you must be prepared to devote considerable time to replacing years of an engrained thought or habit.

After I quit smoking, I craved a cigarette as soon as I got into my car after work, as soon as I finished eating a meal, had a cup of coffee, or drank a beer. I had to get through several months before these cravings subsided. When I felt them coming on, I would think of my affirmation, repeat it, and remind myself that I was not a non-smoker. Years after quitting I have still the occasional craving, but it usually disappears quickly. It just takes time to change a habit.

The same thing holds true with affirmations. Allow your subconscious the appropriate amount of time to generate the new thought, to bring into your life events and circumstances consistent with your new thoughts. If you are patient and maintain a regular routine of repeating your affirmations, they *will* happen. The trick, of course, is to convince your conscious mind to believe them.

If you are currently earning \$25,000 a year and your goal is to earn \$100,000, you must break this goal in digestible, bite-sized chunks first. Don't make that \$75,000 leap in one affirmation; your conscious mind will not accept it as being possible. Instead, create several affirmations. Start with the goal of increasing your income to \$35,000. Once you achieve this, create a new affirmation with your income at \$50,000, and then \$75,000. then make the jump to the final figure. You'll find taking the smaller steps much more effective than trying to make a huge jump at all at once.

If you don't believe that affirmations work, that's fine. I don't expect you to accept this concept immediately. But do try using it. Create an affirmation for one small change you would like to make in your life. Repeat it to yourself frequently every day. Be patient. Before long, you will notice the change gradually beginning to happen.

Talk to Me

Another way to build your self-confidence is to change the information you feed yourself. All of us have a little voice inside our head that provides us with a running commentary on everything we do. This self-talk often does us

more harm than good. When we make a mistake it will chastise, berate, and criticize us.

When I first heard that roughly eighty percent of our self-talk is negative I was skeptical. Then I began listening to what my own self-talk. Sure enough, most of the reinforcement I was giving myself was negative. I consciously tried to change my internal voice to mostly positive comments. Instead of criticizing myself when I did something wrong, I told myself what I learned from the mistake. I focused on something other than criticizing myself. Before long, I found that my entire personality changed. I became very positive and optimistic.

This is not as easy as it sounds. Consider how many negative messages we are exposed to everyday: it is little wonder that our self-talk is not the most positive. What do you read when you open a newspaper? When you watch television? When you listen to the radio? Most of the information we receive daily focuses on negative events. We hear about wars, murders, robberies, deaths, political unrest, scandals, labour disputes, and massive casualties from weather catastrophes such as floods and hurricanes. Where's the positive information in a paper? Usually tucked away on page 24 with twelve lines devoted to it. Consider this: would you eat garbage for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Then why would you fill your head with garbage every day?

Transforming your self-talk from negative to positive is a difficult process that requires constant effort and attention. Begin by telling yourself that you are going to be positive, that you are going to give yourself positive self-talk. Whenever you catch the voice inside your head feeding you negative dialogue, immediately stop and replace it with something positive instead. As time goes on and you become more adept at this, your self-talk will become more positive automatically. You will continue to have negative. The difference is that when you begin to think them, you will recognize that is happening and will be able to stop it and focus on the positive.

Once you are able to accomplish this you will face another obstacle – other people – individuals who seem to have been placed on this earth just to make life difficult for us. Some time ago, I worked with a very pessimistic person. Her mission seemed to be to bring me down. In fact, one afternoon she told me that I was not really a positive person. When I asked her what she meant, she answered that no one could be optimistic all the time, so I was just programming myself to be positive. The first words on the tip of my tongue were “Just as you program yourself to be miserable?” Fortunately, I bit back my response and avoided embarking on a major battle. I smiled and said, “What’s wrong with that?” She gave me an evil grin and exclaimed, “Ha! I knew it!” then she walked off, leaving me to figure out exactly what she meant by the last comment.

Negative people will challenge people who display positive mental attitudes. They will try to make you one of them – miserable and pessimistic. If

you succumb to their efforts you will wind up having the life slowly squeezed out of you. I learned this the hard way.

In one of the companies I worked for, one of my coworkers was this type of person. I didn't realize it at the time, but any time I spoke with him, I left feeling miserable, depressed, and discontented with how life at work. Several years later I finally realized what had been going on. He had been trying to recruit me into his club! Now, I socialize only with positive, energetic, enthusiastic people.

So what does all of this have to do with sales? So far, we've discussed how our personal attitudes can and will affect our actions and results on the floor. We need to prevent our personal baggage from interfering with our decision to try new approaches. We can build up our personal confidence, which will lead to higher sales. We can use affirmations to reinforce specific behaviours we want to develop. We can use positive self-talk to reinforce what we have done well in a sale rather than dwell on what we did wrong.

Each of these elements contributes to developing a healthy, positive, powerful attitude, also known as PMA or Positive Mental Attitude – the kind of attitude that will help us become successful on the sales floor.

Sales Person versus Sales Professional

The essential difference between a sales person and a sales professional is attitude:

A sales professional has the attitude of "How can I help someone today?" A sales person says, "I gotta sell something to someone today."

Their mental attitude is completely different; a sales professional is people-centered. A sales person is self-centered.

A sales professional is focused on helping customers solve a problem or issue. The sales person is concerned only with closing the sale.

A sales professional qualifies her customers thoroughly and effectively. Salespeople jump to a product demonstration as quickly as possible.

A sales professional demonstrates enthusiasm and excitement about his products. The salesperson gives the same canned presentation over and over and over again.

A sales professional is genuinely interested in other people. Salespeople care primarily about themselves.

A sales professional works at cultivating relationships with her clients. Salespeople just want to get through that sale and on to the next one.

A sales professional generates a high level of sales and income. A salesperson struggles to reach his sales targets every month.

A sales professional earns his customer's respect and develops a large customer base. The salesperson looks at each person as a one-time sale and treats that person accordingly.

A sales professional leaves her personal problems at home. A salesperson drags his problems along with him every day.

A sales professional gives the customer plenty of time to talk. A salesperson does most of the talking.

A sales professional's attitude differs completely from that of a salesperson. A sales professional concentrates on the customer while a salesperson concentrates on herself. Many salespeople view themselves as professionals when in fact they are not. Consider the number of people they must talk to in order to reach their monthly quotas, the potential income they are losing, and the enjoyment and fulfillment they are missing. Salespeople can make the transition to sales professional with little difficulty but they must shift the way they do business in their own minds.

Managing Change

At first, this change can be challenging. It means forgetting your own needs and paying attention to those of your customer first. It means changing the way you conduct yourself on the sales floor. It means adjusting your approach to the way you sell.

For most people, change is difficult. Change means uncertainty. We create routines in everything we do. When we wake up in the morning, we often follow the same routine to prepare for the day. We drive the same route to work. When we arrive at work, we follow the same routine everyday. We approach our customers in the same manner. Routines make us feel safe, comfortable. When we attempt to incorporate something new, we break our normal routines and often struggle to make the new process "fit in".

Changing our personal attitude and the manner in which we sell is uncomfortable at first. We fight to incorporate the new approach into our existing style. Like the child who changes school in the middle of the year, we feel torn away from our old comfort zone and pushed into something completely foreign. Everything seems out of place. Yet, in fact, we have only tried to change one aspect of what we do.

Relax. Be patient. Give yourself time to become familiar with the new routine. We all require time to adapt. The key is to be open to changing the way you do business. If you resist and say, "We've always done it that way" then you will be lost in the dust of those individuals who *are* willing to experiment. In today's business world, the survivors are those who are open and receptive to alternative methods of completing their job regardless of how radical the change may appear at first glance.

How does this apply to what we do on the sales floor? Consider for a moment how much different the consumers of today differ from those in the past. They are more knowledgeable. They have access to information they never dreamed possible ten years ago. They read more. They do more research. They're more conscious of price. They demand better service. What was once considered an "extra" is now expected at no additional charge. Consumers will not tolerate a salesperson who boasts about how good he is. They demand proof and will not hesitate to change companies if the one they have been doing business does not fulfill its end of the agreement.

As sales professionals we must adapt to our customers' changing needs and requirements. We have to listen to what they want. The demands they make today will pale in comparison to what they will request tomorrow or next week.

An interesting shift has occurred in the last fifteen to twenty years. In the early 1980s retailers *were* focused on the customer. Then, with a booming economy, they forgot about the customer because their businesses were not affected by what they did as salespeople; they could still close sales, people lined up to buy from them. Then the big-box retailers entered the marketplace. They offered consumers amazing prices with little or no service and people flocked – and still flock – to them in droves. Customers love talking about the money they save by shopping this way, and they are willing to accept poor or little service for the savings. However, many other consumers feel left out. They want good value for their money and they also want good service. Because everyone is trying to compete with the big discounters, many retailers have lost sight of the fact that many consumers still crave great service – service they are willing to pay for.

This unfulfilled desire is your opportunity! If you apply the concepts discussed here, you will attract these shoppers to you like honey attracts bees. It won't happen overnight. It won't happen without effort. Moreover, it won't happen unless you have the right attitude – the attitude that the customer is supreme. If you are ready to break out of your established routines, implement a few new concepts, and experience some discomfort, I guarantee that you will accomplish some astonishing results.

Change is not as difficult as you might imagine; it is primarily a matter of deciding that you will no longer accept what you do, in the manner that you do it. **You** decide to change your attitude. No one else can do it for you.

Summary

1. Your attitude determines 100 percent of the results you achieve.
2. Respond or react. You can have a bad start or a bad day - the choice is yours.
3. Deal with your mental baggage and prevent it from controlling your life.
4. Use affirmations to develop new skills such as personal self-confidence.
5. Affirmations must be personal, present, positive. *"I am the top sales person in the store."*
6. Feed your mind positive information. Change your negative self-talk to positive.
7. Understand the fundamental difference between a sales professional and a salesperson: attitude. Are you going to be customer-focused or self-centered?
8. Understand that change is part of the business world as much as it is in the rest of our lives. It always has been and always will be. You can accept change and move forward, or you can remain at the back of the pack. The choice is yours.

Action Plan

In your action planner, answer these questions:

What did you learn in this chapter?

How will you apply this information?

What challenges do you anticipate?

How will you face these challenges?