

Introduction

Most people sell every day of their lives. Sometimes what they sell is a product. Sometimes it is an impression they want to give. Usually it is an idea or a course of action. Foremen sell to workers. Managers sell to employees. Directors sell to colleagues on the Board. Husbands sell to wives. Accountants, brokers, dentists and lawyers sell to clients. Schoolteachers sell to students. And salesmen sell to customers.

Most people use sales techniques their mothers taught them when they were children. They learn through experience that it is better to do and say some things than others, without really understanding why. Strangely, in our society, only salesmen are formally taught how to persuade. Consequently, most people spend most of their time upsetting each other, an effect which is usually the exact opposite of the one they are seeking to achieve.

This book attempts to show that all forms of persuasion follow a logical framework; and it is necessary to learn this framework in order to learn the process of successful persuasion. Moreover, a real understanding of the framework helps in interpreting responses correctly and provides a rational medium through which experience can be converted into future action.

Product matrix

| | Direct | Indirect |
|------------|--------|----------|
| Tangible | | |
| Intangible | | |

All products are either tangible or intangible, and they are sold either directly to the consumer or indirectly to the consumer through a third party.

Whether you are selling a tangible or intangible product directly or indirectly to the consumer, one basic fact remains constant: the common objective in selling all products is to meet your immediate customer's requirements. The skills involved in defining these requirements, in matching your product to them, and in causing the customer to reach a decision, are the skills of persuasion. It is with these skills that the book concerns itself.

You are not the exception, so don't kid yourself. Whether you are a famous company director or a brain surgeon, the

rules of persuasion are the same no matter what you are selling or to whom. The only variations in the many different kinds of sale come in the actual shape of the presentation: in the differing emphasis that must be placed within the framework depending on the product, the customer and the salesman. Presumably, for example, you would not have too much trouble obtaining an appointment with your wife, although selling the benefits of a course of action to her might take a great deal of time. On the other hand, if you were selling office supplies to an accountant, the situation might be the exact opposite.

In writing this book, it was found necessary to rely almost totally on the salesman's vocabulary. It was well nigh impossible to repeat; and the salesman's vocabulary seemed to offer the simplest choice. Partly because of this, and partly because what the salesman does is capable of definition, the decision was made to concentrate the book on the salesman's function.

Similarly, to avoid confusion through too much variety, the examples of dialogue in the text are largely confined to one product and to one kind of salesman. Although this must lead to some loss in identification, it provides continuity through the process of the sale and allows the reader to follow the development in the salesman's thinking and presentation. In reading the book, therefore, where the situation is not your own exactly, try to understand what this salesman does and says, and see if there are any basic lessons in it that apply to you.

One final word about the way this book should be approached. It is designed so that you can open it anywhere and start reading. Each chapter – and as far as possible each section – is self-contained; and to aid in the learning process, there is a certain amount of deliberate repetition. The book is not meant to elaborate every single thought about selling, but to help you generate your own new thoughts and ideas. It is therefore intended not only for those learning to persuade but also as a constant reference for those already well practised in the skills of persuasion.

From this moment on, whatever business, occupation or profession you are in, the persuader (whether he or she) will be called the salesman, whatever he sells will be called the product, and whomever he is selling it to will be called the customer. Similarly, the final agreement he seeks to obtain will be called the order whether it is a contract, an order form, or a customer's agreement to specify a product, to contact a contractor for a quotation, to stock a product, to

commission a survey, or to take an action. A prospective customer will be called a prospect.

The book has been criticised first for being sexist and, secondly, for being unnecessarily abrasive particularly in those sections that cover conversations with the fairer sex. The author accepts unreservedly that some of the world's greatest salesmen are women if not ladies; and some of the fairest secretaries are men. The book is not designed to take issue on the varying abilities of the sexes except to wish them both a full and happy life.

Similarly the book does not wish to make the point that all salesMEN should be rude and ill-mannered to all secretary LADIES, The moral is more that information that cannot be used for you, will tend to be used against you. If your weakness is to reveal all to those who have no use for the information, your weakness in selling terms is likely to lead to your failure.

Life is much about the conspiracy of people to involve themselves in others' lives. Quite often the secretary (male or female), might dislike his or her boss (female or male), more than she/he feels dislike towards persuaders. You become involved at your own risk. That is all you must understand. The book only describes the techniques to break the spiral of a conversation going the wrong way. You can use them as you choose. Personally I use them every day of my life without upsetting more than my usual quota.

