

LIFETIME, INTERACTIVE BUSINESS GUIDE
A TEN-BOOK SERIES ON TOP BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

WIN @ BIZ[®]

Build a Successful
Sales Organization

KNOW WHAT THE WINNERS DO!

Growth & Business Coach

David Gabbert



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WIN AT BIZ®

BUILD A SUCCESSFUL SALES ORGANIZATION

A TEN E-BOOK SERIES

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BUILD A SUCCESSFUL SALES ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Think about the time and money you put into all the different aspects of your business. To be successful, you invest in a good real estate location, marketing, developing your product or service, its presentation to an audience; you invest in merchandising the price points, and in hiring and training all the support people. For many businesses, the success of all these efforts and investments rests with the quality and effectiveness of the salespeople employed to generate revenue.

Who do you trust to sell your product or service? Who in your company is responsible for its bottom line? Many business owners make the costly mistake of turning revenue potential over to people who do not have the talents, sales skills, or training to maximize the company's revenue. What about you—have you entrusted the revenue potential of your business to professional salespeople or to hourly-wage sales clerks?

Do not kid yourself; professional salespeople generate substantially more revenue. To understand how much money a mediocre sales staff can lose, all you have to do is compare the sales numbers among employees in any aggressive sales department. In every situation, whether a company employs three or forty professional salespeople, you will find a few outstanding performers, a large group with middling performance, and another group clustered at the bottom. It is simple to conclude that each salesperson except the top revenue performers is costing the company revenue.

So, how much revenue are you losing if you do not employ a competitive sales staff? This e-book is intended to illustrate how skills and knowledge differ between professionals who treat selling as their career and those individuals who do not. We will also describe the development of the necessary training and support required to build a successful sales team.

15 Abilities of a True Salesperson

1. Professional salespeople possess the human *talents* that are necessary to be outstanding. Typically, outstanding salespeople will receive an emotional high every time they make a sale and, as a result, possess the determination to do whatever it takes to experience that emotional high again and again.
2. Professional salespeople possess the *skills and determination* to develop their own leads rather than waiting for leads to be handed to them.
3. Professional salespeople are skilled at developing a personal connection in the first few minutes and are pros at *quick relationship-building*.
4. Professional salespeople know how to *ask the right questions* to uncover the wants and needs of their prospects.
5. Professional salespeople have *superior product knowledge* because they are willing to invest their time to learn everything there is to know about the product or service.

6. Professional salespeople know how to educate prospects about the services or products, *creating the trust and confidence* necessary for a prospect to make a purchase.
7. Professional salespeople can identify the benefits from the features of the product or service and understand the importance of *selling the benefits*.
8. Professional salespeople know how to improve communication by employing outstanding *listening skills*.
9. Professional salespeople *possess empathy* to detect subtle emotional responses from the prospect.
10. Professional salespeople know how to ask the right questions to *uncover the hidden objections* the prospect does not willingly reveal.
11. Professional salespeople have the *correct answers* to satisfactorily overcome the objections in the prospect's mind.
12. Professional salespeople continue to *trial close* by confirming with the prospect that the objection has been satisfied before moving forward with the sale process.
13. Professional salespeople are persistent in *following up* with the prospect until the sale is closed.
14. Professional salespeople know the appropriate time to *close the sale*.
15. The professional salesperson *adds value* to the company by servicing its customers more knowledgeably and professionally.

Win at Biz Scorecard

If you are entrusting the future revenue growth of your company to sales clerks rather than professional salespeople, you are shortchanging the revenue potential and prosperity of your company.

Invest in Your Sales Force

Assuming you have hired people with a talent in sales, it is vital that you provide an excellent training program and the tools that they will need to succeed. Can you really expect salespeople to excel if they are not given adequate training about the product or service they're to sell? All new hires should not only be thoroughly taught about the product but also provided with sales training specific to the product or service. If your product and sales training is going to become a productive operating system, it must be a formalized written comprehensive program.

As with any training program, the successful transfer of product knowledge needs to be verified by the manager doing the teaching. In order for sales training to be effective, the final test of knowledge and retention will be role-playing various sales situations. Even salespeople possessing the best sales skills will benefit from learning the questions, objections, and answers specific to your business and product. Role-playing is a great teaching tool for reviewing specific sales situations; it is also a valuable method for verifying the successful transfer of knowledge.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- Do you have an ongoing sales training program?
- Do you role-play to improve skills?

As is true with every employee, in order for salespeople to achieve maximum productivity, they need the proper tools. The “proper tools” will vary from business to business, however, the list could possibly include the following.

- A sufficient work area with a private desk, phone, and computer;
- Personalized voicemail and e-mail accounts;
- Personalized business cards and form letters;
- Professional point-of-sale literature;
- Professional and effective catalogs and/or websites to supply supplemental information to the prospect;
- Props to conduct effective demonstrations;
- Current pricing and delivery information;
- Updated product information as well as updated information about competitors’ products and services.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- Have you made a list of all of the tools your salespeople need in order to perform at peak productivity?
- Do you keep them abreast of accurate and updated information?
- Are your sales tools better than the competition’s?

Developing Your Sales Training Program

Can you afford to spend money on advertising and develop prospects, yet not convert a high percentage of those prospects into sales? Probably not for long. In order to build a profitable business, you will need to implement an effective sales training program that converts those prospects into sales.

A business cannot afford to spend money on empty advertising. The antidote is a continuous and effective sales training program. The *Sales Bible*, by Jeffery Gitomer, offers some excellent strategies and ideas, many of which are glossed in this e-book. The following sales steps offer guidelines to help you develop or improve your sales training program.

The following are the 11 pillars of an effective sales training curriculum, and include the preparation, skills, and communications you will want every person on your sales team to execute effectively. Use the following information and examples to develop your customized sales training program in the action-oriented workbook at the end of this e-book.

Skill 1: Develop Your Own Mini-Commercial to Use When You Network

Imagine you are attending your local Chamber of Commerce meeting and someone asks you, “What do you do?” Do you have a concise, effective mini-commercial ready to deliver?

It is best if your mini-commercial can effectively explain your main benefit. For example, let’s say you own a collection firm. If your answer is, “We collect bad debts,” you are not selling. Your reply should be, “My name is Bob Jones and our company is Cash Recovery Systems. We monitor company’s accounts receivable to shorten the number of days receivables are outstanding, increase cash balances and net profit.”

Once you have their attention, ask open-ended questions to give you more information on his or her company’s needs. It would be pointless to talk aimlessly until you know how you can be of help. Think in terms of formulating questions to uncover the type of information you will need. The following are some examples of how to choose your next question.

- What do you look for...?
- What have you found...?
- How do you propose to...?
- What has been your experience with...?
- How have you successfully...?
- How do you determine...?
- What is the one thing you would like to improve about...?
- What is the one thing you would like to change about...?
- What does your current provider do about...?
- How are you currently...?
- What are you doing to keep...?

For example, to continue the dialogue above you could ask, “What is the average number of days your company carries a receivable? “What have you found to be the best strategy to keep the average holding period of your receivables to a minimum?”

Once you have collected the information you desire, respond with a statement illustrating how your company can be of assistance. Next, you will want to follow up with a call to action by suggesting a meeting to further assess the company’s needs. Continue to stress the ultimate goal of increasing cash and profitability. Remember to always stay focused on the prospect’s needs and the benefits to them for continuing the conversation.

Skill 2: Be Prepared

Your preparation and product knowledge are essential to successful results. It is difficult to build confidence in a buyer when the salesperson is unorganized and not well informed about the product he or she is selling. To be successful requires doing your homework.

- Have all of your sales tools ready and organized.
- Thoroughly know all the features and benefits of your product.
- Have your answers to the most common buyer questions prepared.
- Have your questions to uncover buyer needs prepared.
- Have your questions to uncover objections and the replies well-prepared.

Skill 3: Qualify the Buyer

Very early in the sales process, you need to qualify the person with whom you are speaking to confirm that he or she is the decision-maker. This can be accomplished by immediately asking a few simple questions.

For example, “Is there anyone else who we will need to get involved with sharing the information to make the purchasing decision?” Make it a habit to ask questions to uncover the real decision-maker early in the sales process.

Skill 4: Build a Relationship

If you want to sell more, make more friends! The bottom line is that people prefer to buy from a friend. They prefer to buy from someone they trust and believe cares about their best interests.

To develop a meaningful relationship will require an investment of time—time to share experiences and create memories. It is true that in many sales situations it is impossible to devote the time to creating meaningful relationships; however, you can ask personal questions to show you care about the prospect as a person. Try to develop a quick conversation around a common point of interest; build further rapport with the use of humor. Remember, people buy from people they like.

Skill 5: Understand the Customer's Needs

The most important sales function to learn is how to ask the right questions. A good salesperson uncovers the prospect's real needs and is capable of focused listening. Too many salespeople make assumptions about customer needs and spend too much time talking about irrelevant features of the product or service. Your goal should be to *not talk*, not until you have composed a response that expresses benefits addressing the customer's needs, based on a single, quality, fact-finding question. The following are goals for developing quality questions.

1. Does the question make the customer think before responding?
2. Does the question force the prospect to analyze new information?
3. Does the question force the prospect to consider a new way of thinking?
4. Does the question address a specific concern of the person or business?
5. Does the question uncover information from the prospect that will bring you closer to closing the sale?
6. Do you ask another question to answer a prospect's question?

The questions you ask will be more effective if you set them up properly. For example, first make a factual statement; second make a statement that relates your experience, and then ask your open-ended question. Imagine you are selling a leather sofa. Here is an example of setting up a question that will get you closer to the close.

- Factual statement: "We have two types of construction, a continuous zigger wire construction with a poplar frame that looks like this (demo construction from sample) or an eight-way hand-tied coil spring construction with a hardwood maple frame which will cost about \$500 more and looks like this (demo construction from sample.)"
- Statement of experience: "I have witnessed thousands of both types of construction under use and there is no doubt that you will get more years of use out of the eight-way hand-tied construction."
- Open-ended question: "Which type of construction would you prefer?"

As you develop your questions, think in terms of developing them in a series of questions to uncover information as well as the prospect's needs and concerns. If the questions are crafted properly they will lead the prospect to the close. For example, if you were selling a lawn maintenance service you could start by asking the following.

- Question 1: "What criteria do you use to select a lawn care company?"
- Prospect answer: "Quality, service, and price."
- Question 2: "How do you define quality and service?"
- Prospect answer: "I define quality as having no clover in the lawn; good service means you have someone to answer the phone who can give me an immediate answer to my questions."

- Question 3: “We do not believe in voicemail. We have qualified customer service people who can answer your questions immediately. If we can guarantee to get your clover under control, would you consider us for your lawn maintenance company?”

Question number three about the clover is a feedback question that has been formulated from information collected from an earlier question. A series of questions which are composed properly will lead the prospect to closing questions or force the prospect to divulge objections. The following are examples of lead-ins to help you create effective questions:

- What do you look for...?
- What have you found...?
- What has been your experience with...?
- How do you determine...?
- What is the one thing you would like to change about...?
- What does your current provider do about...?
- How are you currently...?

Skill 6: Establish Confidence

Would you buy a product or service if you lacked confidence in the salesperson or company? Of course not. Likewise, you cannot expect to make a sale if you cannot build confidence with a prospect.

The following are ideas for building confidence in your prospects.

1. It should go without saying you must be knowledgeable and completely prepared.
2. Convey complete confidence.
3. Use professionally written sales aides that build authenticity.
4. Offer proof of satisfied customers by providing written testimonials.
5. Convey success stories of service delivered after the sale.
6. Be sincere; focus on educating the prospect, being helpful, and satisfying the prospect’s needs rather than on closing the sale.
7. Look professional and create a positive impression.
8. Demonstrate your conviction and enthusiasm for the product and the company.
9. Practice to impress. You must stand out against the competition; you must wow them.

Skill 7: Sell Benefits

What does the customer really want? What is important to him or her? What will the product or service do for the customer? Typically people buy for the following reasons.

- They want to save time.
- They seek a desired status.
- They want life to be easier.
- They want life to be more comfortable.
- They want to be more successful.
- They want to feel safer.

Once you have identified your most important benefits, build your sale around them rather than the features of the product or service. Features are the nuts and bolts that make up a product or service; however, features do not make sales. Benefits do.

Skill 8: Uncovering Objections

What is the real reason people are not ready to buy now? It is your job as a salesperson to uncover the reason. To accomplish the challenge of finding out why the prospect is not ready to buy will require skills to uncover the real objection.

Prospects will not typically disclose the real reason they are not ready to make a purchase but instead will offer excuses or stalls. Some of your typical stalls are as follows:

- I want to think about it.
- I have to talk it over with my wife or supervisor.
- I can't afford it at the moment.
- I'll call you in a couple weeks.
- I am too busy right now to make a decision.
- Another department has to be involved in the decision.
- The price is too high.

Real objections sound something like this:

- I don't have the authority to buy it without another person's permission.
- I have another product or service in mind.
- I think I know I can get a better price elsewhere.
- I have a relative or friend in the business that I want to check out.
- I do not have confidence in you, the company, and/or the product.
- I do not have confidence in my understanding of benefits of the product.

As a salesperson you should welcome objections. It is a signal the prospect is interested. Usually objections are raised either because the prospect has made a firm decision not to buy your product or he has unanswered questions needing more

information and clarification before he can confidently make the right decision. No one wants to make a purchasing mistake.

The professional salesperson's job is to be prepared with the right questions to uncover the objections and the solutions to overcome them. The following offer some ideas how to uncover the real objection and offer a solution to overcome it.

1. Listen to the objection and determine whether it is a stall or a real objection.
2. Regardless of your interpretation, agree with the prospect.
3. If you believe his statement to be a stall, you will need to press on to uncover the real objection. For example, if the prospect says, "I would like to think about it for a day or so," you can respond, "You are telling me you want to think about something and I respect that, but I also think there is something else you are questioning or not comfortable with. Let me help you. What is troubling you?"
4. Once you have uncovered an objection, question the prospect to confirm whether there are any more objections. For example, "Are there any additional concerns you have about purchasing this product other than _____?"
5. Confirm the objections a second time with the prospect before continuing. For example, "Am I correct in assuming if it wasn't for _____ and _____ you would consider purchasing this product?"
6. Confirm that a solution to the objection will move you toward closing the sale. For example, "If I were able to *assure you...* or *prove to you....* or *guarantee you...* that we will be able to _____, would you consider doing business with our company?"
7. Proceed to convincingly offer solutions to satisfy the objections in the prospect's mind.
8. After selling your solutions, ask a trial closing question to confirm you have indeed satisfied the prospect's objections. For example, "Are you convinced beyond any doubt that we can _____?"
9. Assuming you have solved the prospect's objection and he or she answered your trial closing question in the affirmative, proceed to ask a closing question in an assumption format. For example, "I can set up the delivery for next week. Is that soon enough?"

Skill 9: Preventing Objections

An important part of any sales preparation and sales training program is to be prepared to overcome objections. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is by practicing objection-prevention during your sales training.

Start by identifying all of the most commonly used objections by your prospects and put them all in writing. Next prepare sample scripts to practice in your sales training role-playing scenarios. Make the objection-prevention scripts part of your routine sales presentation. Examples of lead-ins are as follows.

- “We value the feedback we get from our customers; in the past many of our customers voiced concerns about _____. To alleviate these concern we initiated _____.”
- “Our previous experience has shown us customers are concerned about _____. Here is how we have solved those problems. _____.”
- “We used to believe the best way to _____ but after listening to our customers now we _____.”

Skill 10: Listening for Buy Signals

During the steps of your sales dialogue it is important to watch and listen for buy signals. The following is a list of typical buy signals.

- Questions about availability, delivery, or payment options.
- Questions about the price of specific items.
- Questions about features of the product.
- Questions about quality experiences and warranties.
- Questions about specific company policies.
- Questions about optional products or services.
- Questions about previous customer experiences.
- Request to see a demonstration.
- Request to take samples or literature.
- Handling or testing of the product.

When customers ask a “buy signal” question, have a prepared list of questions to ask your prospect rather than directly answering your prospect’s question. By deferring the answer for a moment with a question enables you to gather more valuable information and move the customer’s decision-making process closer to making the final purchasing decision. For example:

- Do you have these in stock? “*When do you need it?*”
- Does this come in different colors? “*What color would you like?*”
- Can you deliver this next week? “*Do you need it next week?*”
- Does this have a warranty? “*What type of warranty would you like?*”

Once you detect buy signals, it is time to start closing. You can prepare for the steps of closing during the sales dialogue by composing a list of questions that require your prospect to make a decision. For example, “Do you like it in the blue or the red best?” or, “Will you need service this week or is next week soon enough?”

Skill 11: Following Up

When you realize that most sales are not made on the first contact, following up becomes a critical component to closing success. Persistence equals success. Follow-up calls give you valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships and both review and clarify information.

Every conversation offers an opportunity to gather more information about the prospect’s needs and which competitors he is considering. Follow-up calls are a great time to uncover additional objections, compare your benefits to a competitor’s, answer questions not addressed in the original sales presentation, and move closer to a purchasing decision.

To be efficient at the follow-up process, every professional salesperson needs an organized system for tracking prospects. Follow-up systems can be automated in a software program like Outlook or kept on a file card in a simplified one to thirty-one file. What’s important is that you have a follow-up system at all!

15 Common Sales Mistakes

1. Lack of sufficient prospecting.
2. Spending too much time with prospects who are not qualified candidates.
3. Failing to get prospects to reveal needs and budget up front.
4. Too much talking, too many statements, too few questions.
5. Pushing the product too soon, too much emphasis on pitching product knowledge.
6. Poor questioning to uncover prospect’s needs and hidden objections.
7. No emotional connection, lack of thoughtfulness or sincerity in prospect’s needs.
8. Focusing on price rather than benefits and value.
9. No memorable stories to support selling points.
10. No third-party endorsements to build confidence.
11. Lack of personal branding to differentiate the product from the competition’s.
12. Not asking for the order.
13. Relying too much on props and not making a personal connection.
14. Poor time management.
15. Not investing time in improving skills and treating the position as a profession.

Motivational Reward Programs

Professional salespeople thrive on the financial rewards of a commission. To provide the proper financial incentives, a salesperson has to derive at least 50 percent of his or her income from commissions on sales.

If that number seems startling, think of your salespeople as the engine that provides the revenue for your company. Companies that do not provide financial incentives to grow the company's revenue will certainly lose market share to their competitors. True professional salespeople will have enough confidence in their abilities that they will prefer heavily weighted commission programs. If your salespeople are not deriving at least 50 percent of their earnings from commission, you are losing business and should consider changing your sales-related compensation, and/or changing your sales staff.

When implementing financial incentive programs, choose ones that are flexible enough to attract the "heavy hitters." Remember, not all athletes or actors are paid the same. The salesperson possessing the talent to bring in BIG sales to the company will need to be compensated accordingly. When you create your financial incentives, remember to consider other types of motivational reward programs other than a direct commission on sales. Consider cash bonuses, gift certificates, or vacation destination trips. When offering a vacation getaway, consider including the family to add additional motivation from all the employee's family members. These types of awards offer a lasting residual benefit. Also consider trophies, plaques and awards that can be presented at a sales meeting to publicly recognize the individual's outstanding accomplishments.

Win at Biz Scorecard

If your salespeople's compensation does not include strong financial incentives tied directly to sales performance, it is a drag on the company's revenue growth.

Win at Biz Checklist

- ✓ Do you search for the right talents to find and employ the best salespeople available? Yes No
 - ✓ Do you continually replace the bottom sales performers in an effort to build a more productive sales team? Yes No
 - ✓ Do your salespeople receive compensation that includes strong financial incentives to perform? Yes No
 - ✓ Does your company have a formalized written product and sales training program? Yes No
 - ✓ Do you role-play with your salespeople to both improve skills and to verify the transfer of knowledge from your sales training program? Yes No
 - ✓ Do you provide your salespeople with the tools that they need to succeed? Yes No
 - ✓ Do you continually provide your salespeople with accurate and updated information to aid in their peak performance? Yes No
-

About the Author

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Entrepreneur, business mentor and growth coach, David Gabbert helps business professionals, business owners, new startups, and students learn how to win at business. Self employed for forty-seven years, founder and owner of four million-dollar-plus businesses, and author of ten Win at Biz® business books, Dave offers free business articles about a variety of proven business strategies which compose the basic building blocks of starting and operating a successful business.

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- Book 1: Build a Successful Business Model
- Book 2: Develop Successful Marketing Strategies
- Book 3: Initiate Effective Financial Management Tools
- Book 4: Develop Efficient Business Processes
- Book 5: Hire the Right People
- Book 6: Train for Productivity
- Book 7: Motivate Your Employees
- Book 8: Build a Successful Sales Organization
- Book 9: Develop Effective Speaking and Listening Skills
- Book 10: Develop Successful Leadership Skills

Bonus Materials

Free with your Purchase of Book 1

- “If I Knew Then...”: Case Studies That Could Save Your Business
 - ✓ Developed from interviews with entrepreneurs who have founded businesses in the real world

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- Plus your Action Step Workbook, included with every e-book!