



**The Job *Nobody*
Dreams Of**

Bill Becker

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The Job Nobody Dreams Of – Bill Becker 2008

Acknowledgements

I found that writing a book on something that I am passionate about is a little like raising a child. As a father of five sons, I know of what I speak!

When I turned over my manuscript to my editor, I felt more than just a little nervous. Did I do a good job “molding” this creation? Would people like it? Well, those are questions for the readers to decide. However, the journey from my “epiphany” to the finished product and this revision could not have been accomplished without help and inspiration from several individuals.

Special thanks to Lisa Wilson and Stacey Byrne of OakTree Software, my “full-time” employer. They have given me the opportunity to work in the greatest sales job I have ever had.

Thanks also to Belinda, my wife of over twenty-five years. She may have not always understood me, but she has never lost faith in me. I love you, Belinda!

Foreword

If you are out of a job or stuck in a job that is not taking you where you want to go, this book should get you fired up. My purpose is to inspire you to get out there and get into an occupation that affords you the flexibility that many jobs do not offer. I want you to have the flexibility to make as much money as you want — something that is a direct correlation to how hard you want to work — and sometimes the flexibility to work the hours you choose.

This book points out that everybody sells to some extent. Stop and think about it. I do not care what you are doing in life; to be successful; you must sell yourself, your product, or your services.

A career in sales is not for everyone, but it does afford one an opportunity to make a good living and, in many instances, the opportunity for advancement. You may have to make some sacrifices to be successful in sales, but most success stories include sacrifices. A career in sales also puts you in front of a lot of people. If you are good at what you do, people will notice and that will open many other doors.

This book has some excellent tips and ideas to help you get started. It is an easy read but the information in it could change your life and your family's life forever. Good luck and good selling.

Steve Rankin, President
Oklahoma Automobile Dealers Association

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Foreword	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter 1: Introduction (Why this book)	1
Chapter 2: Why Sales?	15
Chapter 3: Interviews.....	27
Chapter 4: How to Get Started	54
Chapter 5: Landing Your First Job	65
Chapter 6: Prospecting.....	81
Chapter 7: How to Blow Up a Sales Career.....	92
Chapter 8: In Closing	96
Chapter 9: For Sales Managers Only	103
Chapter 10: Resources and Plan of Action	106

Chapter 1: Introduction (Why this book)

“Lack of will power has caused more failure than lack of intelligence or ability.”

Rev. Flower A. Newhouse

Before I tell you why I wrote this book, let me make a pretty bold statement. This book might be one of the most important books you will ever read! I have spent the better part of my adult life working on career-development issues such as recruiting, training, and personal development. The message that I have developed and preach concerning sales careers is revolutionary, and it is extremely important to two groups of people!

The first group is obviously individuals who are having trouble finding a GOOD job. There are plenty of work opportunities for someone who has been laid off or downsized from a well-paying job. Unfortunately, those jobs don't always offer the pay and benefits those people have enjoyed in their past jobs. There are all kinds of stories out there about someone who was making \$80,000 a year and is now working in customer service or temporary work. This is not the situation those people dreamt about when they got out of school.

The second group of people who can benefit from my message are individuals who currently have a job, but they are tired of grueling work conditions or rumblings of possible staff cuts in the near future. My message is important because jobs define who we are; how we feel about ourselves; and even how we act around family and friends.

One of the most surprising points I discovered in my book research is not only the length of time that it can take to get another job (an average of six months or more), but that many people ultimately give up looking for work altogether. Some start their own business, others try to get by on their spouse's salary, and still others have to resort to moving back in with their parents.

While sales is not for everybody — just like being an accountant or welder isn't for everyone — many individuals could discover the wonderful attributes of a sales career ... if they were told the truth about the job and the career.

Presented in the right way ... my message can get people past their preconceived notions about sales and sales careers. It can make them understand that sales is a field that can give someone the pay, benefits, and self-respect that they used to enjoy.

Before I move on, there's actually a third group of people who could be impacted by my message: the business owners and sales managers who are savvy enough to understand what is going on in the national employment scene and take advantage of this opportunity to tap into a talent pool that has never before been available to sales organizations. These new candidates have been successful in other fields and have developed skills like a great work ethic, time-management skills, and the ability to listen and carry on a meaningful conversation — skills that easily transfer to sales!

I devoted an entire chapter later in the book to sales managers to show them how they can use my message to recruit top-notch salespeople.

My Journey

I have had an interesting ride the past few years. Originally, I started out in “traditional” radio sales — calling on car dealers, furniture stores, and other retail businesses. I then moved exclusively into job recruitment advertising sales where I dealt specifically with human resource managers and recruiters.

I was able to help my clients by showcasing the attributes of using radio to recruit “passive” jobseekers — those not actively looking to change jobs and not reading the help-wanted ads but who could be reached through radio’s intrusiveness. I designed several unique recruiting events including a “drive-through” job fair and a public-referral contest. Now, head to July 2000, where I’ve moved into the technology sector and computer training.

I loved the idea of selling a service that could change the lives of individuals by leveling the playing field for people looking for a better life. I saw waitresses become web designers and truck drivers get into computer networking. Times were very good ... until September 11, 2001. Shortly thereafter, the accounting scandals hit and things looked bleak. Tulsa, Oklahoma — the city I call home — was the hardest hit city for layoffs in the country after San Jose, CA.

Massive layoffs came — first from the travel industries and then just about every other field. I worked with hundreds of individuals who came through our computer school funded by

workforce grants. I made a lot of money selling training to these dislocated workers. Some of these people got retrained and found a new job, but quite a few did not.

Unlike a doctor-patient relationship, I could not avoid becoming emotionally involved in the lives of these people. The individuals who came to me via the Workforce Oklahoma program spent a lot of time at our facility, almost becoming family. I became very close to many of them and felt the emotional pain they felt when these people, through no fault of their own, could not find a job in spite of their new knowledge. The economy was simply hit too hard.

My Epiphany

At some point, I asked myself a question: *“Why don’t some of these people check out a sales job?”* My job was never in jeopardy. In fact, I did very well during both the boom times as well as the bust. I actually felt a little guilty about my job. So I started thinking a little more. *“What keeps people from considering sales as a career alternative?”* It’s the one field that can give people the money, benefits, and self-respect they once experienced in their previous career. Well *“my epiphany”* as I like to call it came very quickly — *“Nobody sets out on their own to become a salesperson!”*

No one went to college for four years, pulling “all-nighters” cramming for finals so they could graduate with honors in hopes of signing on with the sales force of their dreams! The vast majority of people in sales today, including myself, “backed into it” because something happened in our lives that caused us to question our current career choice.

Salesperson Profile

Being a salesperson never occurred to Darla Mitchell. She was divorced with two small children: John was eleven years old and Karen was seven. She cleaned houses to provide for her growing family and heard about a sales opportunity with AFLAC insurance through a friend. She backed into it but that move really pushed her career and life forward. That was many years ago. Today, she is a district manager and can afford to have someone else clean her house!

I started talking to career counselors, Workforce Oklahoma officers, and other career professionals and discovered there was no information being given to dislocated workers about sales careers. While the local workforce offices could steer individuals into a variety of job-training opportunities ranging from dog grooming school to the local state university, there were no sales-training providers.

This was the point of my epiphany. Assuming there was a school to go to for sales training, who would have gone? Nobody! Let's face it, who in their right mind would want to become a salesperson?

What did you want to be growing up?

I wanted to be a veterinarian. I remember writing to Iowa State University in grade school asking about their College of Veterinary medicine. Along the way, my love of animals was overruled by my lack of enthusiasm for chemistry and attending seven years or more of college. Instead, I turned my love of music into a dream of becoming a disc jockey!

Alas, my love of vinyl turned sour when I learned just how much a DJ earned. I still wanted to be in the radio business, so I decided the next best thing was radio SALES. After all, I still got to hang out in a radio station and got to be friends with some of the most well known people in the city.

I have five sons now. Buzz, Benjamin, Baylor, Bryce, and Brook are starting to think about what they want to do with their lives. Their first choice was to be trust-fund babies or the only child of rich parents. However, they discovered they could not adopt themselves out like some free-agent sports star. So now, Benjamin and Bryce are thinking about becoming engineers. Brook and Baylor want to be video game developers. Buzz is in college now studying economics and political science — his first economics lesson was that you buy a textbook for \$120 and sell it for \$40!

Here is my point — I never dreamed of becoming a salesperson and no one else does either! For me, it was an opportunity to earn a living doing two things I love — making money and being in the entertainment business.

My hope is that you will learn from my experiences and learn from the people profiled here that sales is a GREAT career!

I have interviewed hundreds of salespeople over the years — people like AFLAC district manager Darla Mitchell. You know what I found out? They were no different from you or me. They never dreamed of being in sales growing up. In school, they had other career plans. At some point, they contemplated a sales career, and it led to wonderful things for themselves and their families!

Here is the first thing you need to understand: A sales career is almost always a person's second career! Sales was a career they never planned for but a career that ended up giving them the financial security and quite possibly the dignity that was lacking in their lives.

Sales Myths

The perception of sales careers is not always good due to a couple of myths that have perpetuated over the years about salespeople. Let me tackle these myths and expose the fraud.

Myth #1: Salespeople Are Born, Not Made.

You may have heard someone referred to as a "natural-born salesperson." Even though this term is often used to describe someone very successful in sales, no one is a born salesperson. Selling is a learned skill just like anything else, be it sports, welding, or surgery. An individual may possess some of the attributes of a good salesperson (being a great listener, for instance) but it takes training and practice to become successful.

This poses the question, "Is there one particular personality type that is better suited for a sales career?" Simply put — no. People want to purchase from individuals they can trust. When you are selling, regardless of the product or service, you are selling yourself first. Isn't that what you do in a job interview? Remember that because it will provide "food for thought" later on in this book.

Customers do not care about the background or history of the person who calls on them. They DO CARE that whoever they

are dealing with can demonstrate the ability to take care of them. Quite often, introverts are better than extroverts at listening to what the customer wants and/or needs — and listening is vital to sales success.

Myth #2: Salespeople Are Pushy

Professional selling is not about persuasion. Selling is about understanding the customer's problems and solving them; uncovering their needs and helping them get them. In the past, salespeople achieved success just by communicating to customers the value of their product or service. If you had an amazing mousetrap and you communicated what makes your mousetrap so great, you made the sale.

This doesn't work anymore for two reasons. First, products are no longer unique. Your mousetrap has become one of seventeen different ways to kill mice. The customer is no longer interested in hearing about how your mousetrap is different — all they want to know is "Can you give me dead mice?"

The other reason the old way of selling does not work anymore is the Internet. If all you are doing is communicating to customers the value of what you have — a talking brochure — you're outdated. Customers who want to know about products can pull information off the Internet more quickly and easily than having a salesperson tell them.

One of the most important functions that a salesperson does is to help customers deal with the fear of making a mistake. Let me tell you about a sales situation that I went through that almost everyone deals with in their lifetime: purchasing a

home. This is probably the biggest potential financial mistake people can make in their lifetime.

When we bought our first home, I originally said no to the house even though both my wife and I loved it. I just could not get past the math that went with this home. I was afraid of making a HUGE mistake financially.

The builder who was selling the house called me a couple days after we said no and simply reminded me of the initial conversation when we had first met. He repeated back several of the comments that I had shared with him (proving the importance of being a great listener). There was no pressure; no manipulative techniques — just a simple conversation that led to a several hundred thousand dollar sale!

This chain of events highlights the very basic DNA of sales — people do not want to be sold, but do want to buy! The builder didn't sell us a house — he helped us make the purchase of a lifetime! Great salespeople do not sell; they help people buy. That is the difference between those who make the big bucks, and those who do not succeed.

Let me share with you how it works in my field of selling computer training. We do not try to convince anyone that they need training. Instead, we focus our time finding people who have already decided that they need training or realized that they have a technology problem. From there, we help them determine what kind training they need. We ask questions: *“What technology changes do you have planned?” “What level of knowledge or experience does your staff have with that particular technology?” “What’s the timing associated*

with acquiring this new technology and the training you need?" We take this information and present solutions — possibly a regularly scheduled course, a custom class, or even hourly consulting. Nowhere is there a need to push product features down the throats of our clients.

Ask questions, find a problem to help solve, and position your product or service as a way to help them. That is what today's salespeople do!

How is this book different?

There are thousands of books out there to teach you “how” to be a salesperson. Many of them are not that good. I'll share the names of a few I feel are the best ones. The purpose of this book is not to show you HOW to sell — but rather to shed some light on the sales profession itself and the reasons you should consider this wonderful career track.

You will also read about quite a few people just like you — people who never dreamt about becoming a salesperson but found a way to care for their family, create job stability, and have a career that they could be proud of.

I have interviewed many different salespeople and sales managers for this book from many different industries. You will learn what these people did before they got into sales; how they got their first sales job; what they like and dislike about sales; and the single most-important piece of advice they have for sales “newbies.”

I have also added worksheets for you to use to help guide and prod you to create a “plan of action” for researching the kind

of sales career you are best suited for; help you decide which companies to target; and help you design a game plan to land your first sales job.

By the end of this book, you will be able to:

- Get past your preconceived notions about the sales process in general and salespeople specifically!
- Research different industries and specific companies concerning their sales positions and what it's like to work there!
- Learn from real-life salespeople what it's like to be someone who sells for a living and what it takes to be successful!
- Go after a sales position with a company that isn't actually hiring!
- Know how to utilize one of the most important job-hunting tools!
- Get a jump start on your new career by using the techniques I personally use every month in my own sales job!
- If you are a sales manager or business owner, you will learn how to use **"The Job Nobody Dreams Of"** message to recruit better salespeople!

If you are currently unemployed or just unhappy or unfulfilled in your present job, you want to check out EVERY career alternative. The power of regret is far more powerful for motivation than the fear of failure. I'll talk more about the fear of failure at the end of the book. Your fear of regret in years to come might very well be more powerful than your current fear of failure in a completely new job.

Think about this: most peddlers of get-rich-quick schemes ask you to visualize a mansion or boat or some other pie-in-the-sky reward to get you to join their organization. Think about last week. Think about last month. Think about how unhappy or scared you have been concerning your future. That fear is far more motivating to do something different — like considering a career you've never thought of before.

Changing jobs is stressful, especially when you have been *forced* to change jobs or careers. The stress comes from the unknown. This book's purpose is to show you that you shouldn't be scared of a sales career. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women all over the world enjoying **"The Job Nobody Dreams Of!"**

Good luck and happy selling!

Put It To Work!

1. Write down how you feel **RIGHT NOW** about sales as a career and salespeople in general. This is important because you will have to face these preconceived notions (objections) as you dive deeper into the book.

2. Describe the characteristics of an individual who is self-motivated. Write down an example from your own life where you have had to motivate yourself.

Chapter 2: Why Sales?

“The greatest mistake you can make in life is to continually be afraid you will make one.”

Elbert Hubbard, Philosopher

“Why sales?” That pretty much sums up what you want to know, doesn’t it? Well, let’s start out with a little pop quiz: **Name a career field that doesn’t involve sales.** Fine arts? Social service? Health care?

Does an artist sell his or her work? Yep, or they at least have an agent or gallery market their work for them. Don’t think social service involves sales? Well, you have not seen them during their fund-raising activities! I recently became involved in helping out an organization called Citizens CPR. They offer free CPR classes throughout the Tulsa metro area but are always in need of funding and getting their story out. By the way, if you have kids, you know all too well about fund-raising! Sports, band, and scouts are all organizations that turn parents and kids into part-time salespeople!

What about health care providers? Don’t they “sell” their patients, convincing them on recommended treatments? Sometimes they have limited success — like my doctor trying to sell me on the idea of giving up Pop Tarts!

What about everyday life? With apologies to Jeff Foxworthy (“*You Might Be a Redneck If ...*”), here are some signs that “You might be a salesperson if...”

- You've tried to convince your wife that watching *The Godfather* on A&E for the ninety-seventh time is a better movie choice than the latest "chick flick" on Lifetime ... you're a salesman.
- When you were a kid and tried to convince your mom that her favorite crystal ornament was not broken during an unauthorized battle with your brother, but actually broken years before you were even born ... you have your start in sales. By the way, I didn't close that particular sale!.
- If you are a woman who talked your best friend into dumping her boyfriend ... only to call the guy up the very next week and offer to buy him lunch to help ease his pain ... well, you're evil ... but you have a great concept of the basics of selling!
- If you have ever been on a job interview, you have already "sold!" You were "selling yourself."
- Finally, if you have ever asked for a pay raise or promotion, you were selling your abilities to your employer! Bottom line, sales is everywhere.

What Does It Take To Get a Great Job?

Let's look at what's required to land a great-paying job. In the past, you needed a college education and several years of experience in a particular field to command a great-paying job and benefits.

What if you find yourself in the position of needing to look for a new job? Maybe you possess these particular attributes right now, but there are no openings where you live.

You are then forced to choose from two rather bleak options:

- Stay in your profession and move to another city. You uproot your family from their friends and social support circle and incur the cost of thousands of dollars to move to another city.
- Stay in your present city, change professions, and start from scratch. I know a lot of people who were laid off and decided to go back to school. In addition to not having an income, they had to use up their savings for living expenses while they worked on a degree — an activity in itself that doesn't guarantee anything! How many people do you know with a college degree who are presently working in a field or job that has NOTHING TO DO with their sheepskin — assuming of course that they are still working? Worker retraining (or “retooling the labor force” as the experts like to call it) isn't always the answer for those people who need to start generating a respectable income again **today** — not in six months, a year, or two years.

Unemployment in later years can devastate workers.

If you are changing industries and you are over the age of thirty-five, not only do you have to find a job, you'll be forced to deal with an unspoken age bias. There is a particular cruelty that joblessness inflicts on Baby Boomers. Many are hunting for work for the first time in decades, but are limited in their flexibility to move because they are pressured to provide for their children or elderly parents. Even if they find

employment, many times they end up with a starting wage appropriate for someone in their early twenties.

So, we have gone over the negative aspects of finding a new job. Why not jump into fantasyland and design the absolute perfect job to pursue.

Attributes of the Perfect Job

If we were to list the attributes of our fantasy job, what would we write down?

No experience necessary. You are not going to be disqualified for consideration because you don't have five years of experience. How often have you come across an exciting career opportunity only to be shot down because you lack experience? Remember when we first started our job hunt in our early twenties and always wondered, *"How can you get experience if you can't get the job to get the experience?"*

No education requirements. You are not going to have to spend thousands of dollars and several years training for a new career. We touched upon this earlier in the chapter. Many people do not have the time or money for worker retraining. They need to generate an income NOW!

Great pay. Are you tired of living paycheck-to-paycheck or living off your savings? You want a job where you can earn great money TODAY and not wait for annual pay raises, promotions, or stock options to vest.

Little competition for positions. You do not want to go up against three hundred people for one opening. The whole process of searching for employment and trying to simply get an interview can quite often rob someone of their dignity.

No layoffs. You do not want to go through THAT again! If you have never experienced a layoff, let me clue you in on an important fact: the layoff itself is not the only horrible experience someone goes through. It's the dread and fear for months when you sweat the possibility of looming staff cuts.

Your age isn't important. We discussed this as well. You think it's tough out there landing a job? Try adding ten or fifteen years to your age!

Okay, let us be clear about one thing. There is no such thing as a perfect job. There is, however, a career with attributes that are about as close as you can get to being perfect. Now let's go back over our list and look at it through the eyes of someone considering a sales career.

Why Sales Is the Perfect Second Career!

No experience necessary. Since the "no experience" issue is the biggest attribute of "**The Job Nobody Dreams Of**" philosophy, we will spend some time on the subject. Sure, companies like to hire salespeople with previous sales experience, but the attributes that make a great salesperson do not have to be honed in a previous sales job. Being a great listener, possessing a tenacious attitude, and having the ability to ask questions are attributes that can be developed in any background.

Tough economies require better salespeople and “better” does not necessarily mean more experienced. An individual with ten years of “order taking” experience is far less valuable to a company than a brand new person who can produce in tough times. Let me give you a specific example:

Salesperson Profile

Jamie Strong was a twenty-three-year-old insurance “newbie” from a little town in Oklahoma and had just joined a nationally recognized company. Not having sales experience actually helped him because he didn’t have any biases on what he thought worked or didn’t work. He did exactly what his boss told him to do and four years later, he became the head of his own agency!

No education requirements. Last time I looked, there wasn’t an undergraduate or graduate degree in sales. Sales education comes from just “doing it” — studying on your own and learning from the training that employers provide.

Great pay. Have you always earned the same paycheck no matter how hard you worked or how creative you were? Wouldn’t it be great to finally earn the kind of money you always wanted without the before-mentioned barriers such as education and experience? I have seen sales “newbies” become top salespeople for their firm in their first or second month.

Little competition for positions. In good times or bad, sales positions are the most plentiful positions. Notice I went out of my way NOT to say “openings.” Just because a company is not actively recruiting or advertising an open position, does

not mean you can't get hired. I will share my personal story on how I did it in just a minute.

No layoffs. Am I saying that salespeople NEVER get laid off? Of course not. Those individuals that do not produce or become "order takers" when times are good, could be let go when things get tight but only because they are not producing. Do you really think a company is going to let go of an individual who is bringing in revenue?

Your age isn't important. Guess what! Sales managers don't care how old you are. All they want to know is if you can help sell their product or service. If you are young and have a killer attitude, you'll get noticed. If you are older and need to generate sales to help feed your family, they will understand your motivation.

Three More Reasons Why Sales is the Best Career!

More sales positions available than in any other field!

Look at the classifieds in your local paper. Most ads fall into three categories: entry-level, medical, or sales. If you are like most people: the first two categories are out because you can't survive on an entry-level pay scale and the last time you checked, you didn't have a medical degree. Even in the toughest job markets, there are sales positions being advertised.

Here is something else you should know: many sales openings are never published! Sales managers would rather hire referrals recommended by their sales staff or someone else

they know. To replenish the pool of candidates, they'll occasionally run an ad in the paper or post a position online.

Get a job even if they are not hiring! Just because a company is not actively recruiting or advertising an open sales position does not mean you can't get hired. Almost all sales managers I know will give someone who impresses them a shot, even if they are not hiring at that particular moment. Believe me, I know!

That's how I got my very first radio job back in my hometown of Kearney, Nebraska. Like many kids, I worked in a grocery store during high school and college. After I realized that being a disc jockey wasn't ever going to pay enough, I decided I wanted to be a radio salesperson. It took me four tries to land the job.

I was young and was not smart enough at that time to get the attention of the sales manager. Finally, I sent the guy a postdated check for \$500 and told him to give me the junk accounts and a quota to hit within ninety days. Well, he didn't take the check but he did give me a job and he did take me up on the offer to handle the junk accounts. I worked my tail off and built up a successful account list. I created my own opportunity, and I will show you how you can too!

What all this means is between the jobs that are published, the positions that never get publicized, and the opportunities you create for yourself, there are more sales job opportunities at any given moment than in any other single career! If you are unemployed or in a job with no future, doesn't it make sense

to check out a career where the most opportunities exist? I thought so!

Sales is the highest-paying job! A sales job is the only job that routinely offers the opportunity to make more money than your boss does! Most sales managers are paid on a combination of salary and bonus.

The bonus is usually predicated on meeting team sales goals. Individual salespeople are paid on some sort of combination of salary and/or commission with no cap on earnings! The more you sell, the more you earn. In the two fields I've spent most of my life — radio and computer training — every company I worked for had a salesperson making more money than the sales manager.

Let me end this chapter with a few important points. First, selling is hard! ANYTHING worthwhile in life doesn't come easy. You must have a strong desire to achieve and be self-motivated.

Of all careers, selling has the most quantifiable results. There is no daily wondering, *"How am I doing?"* You do not have to wait for your annual performance review with your supervisor to learn where you stand. Because of this accountability, you have the power to determine the outcome of your own career. This control simply does not exist in any other field!

Take time to reflect on your past career or careers. Think about what you liked and did not like about each of your previous jobs. Knowing what you know now (isn't hindsight great?), would you have gone down the same career path

today? So let me take you back to the very beginning of the chapter —“Why sales?” I say, **“Why Not Sales!”**

Put It To Work!

1. Think of examples where you were trying to “sell.” Write down at least one example from your personal life and one from your professional life.

2. Make a list of the attributes for your perfect job. How do these compare with the job you currently have in or just came from?

Chapter 3: Interviews

*“Soylent Green is people!”
Charleston Heston in 1973 Sci-Fi Movie*

As I stated at the beginning of this book, my purpose here is not to teach you HOW to sell. My intent is to help you understand WHY you should consider a sales career. One of the most important things I can do in this pursuit is to tear down the walls of misconceptions and misunderstandings that you and many others have about salespeople.

I learned a long time ago that one of the fundamentals of selling was to answer the unspoken two-part question that every client has:

- Part 1: *“What can you do for me?”* (which you can’t answer until you discover a problem to help solve)
- Part 2: *“Who else says so?”*

This is the power of testimonials — the *“Who else says so?”* Just like the mysterious food items in the 1960s sci-fi flick were actually people, salespeople, as the word implies, are people too — maybe just not as yummy as Soylent Green is!

Here are my testimonials. We have gone over why you should consider a sales career. Now let’s hear from people who are glad they moved into sales.

Brent Willis, Account Manager for Hilti

What did you do before sales?

I was a service technician for a recreational vehicle dealership.

How did you land your sales job?

I moved from the service department to selling financing and extended warranties for the same recreational vehicle dealer.

What do you like most about your job?

Working with people and building relationships. I see myself as a problem solver, not a salesperson.

What don't you like about the job?

Sometimes commissioned sales can be stressful, and your pay fluctuates from month to month.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Work hard and be a problem solver not a salesperson. Take interest in the person you are dealing with to build relationships. Keep God first in your life and He will bless you!

James Clark, Account Executive for KRMG Radio

What did you do before sales?

My job was an inventory control and pricing clerk in a branch of a national company that specialized in non-ferrous and stainless steel products.

I began my business life just looking for a job and sales was not even a consideration. I did not finish college; actually I only finished one semester then off to the military, so I really had no direction.

What do you like most about your job?

The autonomy. The sales position that I have held for the last seventeen years gives me the entire burden for my success. I have complete control of my income and whom I can develop as a client, and I get to sell the ultimate intangible — air. It's more correct to say “broadcast airtime” or “radio commercials,” but my job is now more marketing than it is sales.

What don't you like about the job?

The worse part of what I do is overcoming all the previous competitors who have called on a given client and left them with a bad experience. This industry (broadcast sales) has a churn rate of 70 percent so there is a constant turnover of young, attractive salespeople who are lost in the glamour of broadcasting but cannot sell. They will get the appointment and maybe even the first buy, but cannot stand the test of time.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Ask others in the industry how they like what they're doing and what the downsides are, and then decide if you can put up with it. The more difficult or technical the sales, the better the rewards, but it's not for everybody. You must be able to take rejection, go back, and ask for more. Tenacity is a key ingredient.

Darla Mitchell, AFLAC Insurance

What did you do before sales?

After a divorce, I sold my business, then went into housecleaning. I was introduced to AFLAC through a business friend and have been with AFLAC since 1997.

In your industry, what is the difference between the people who barely make it and the superstars?

The difference between the people who barely make it and the superstars is a drive and ambition to set and achieve goals!

Aaron Dotson, Account Executive for RBI Bearing, Inc.

What did you do before sales?

I was a carpenter for three years and then held odd jobs after that.

What do you like most about your job?

I love meeting new people, and I get a huge rush from selling our company as well as our product. There are very few feelings better than getting the purchase order.

What don't you like about the job?

There is too much politics sometimes. As with a lot of things in life, it's who you know.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Sell a product you have experience with or get as much experience as you can early on. I would also say you should

meet as many people as possible. That is why networking is so important. In addition, never feel you don't deserve the order and never be afraid to ask for help. People love to help others; it gives them a feeling of worth.

Mary Lemmon, Home Real Estate

What did you do before sales?

I worked in advertising at a telecommunications company for sixteen years, and then tried part-time work while also trying to make a website profitable.

How did you land your sales job?

My very first sales job was working at an upscale clothing store when I was in the eighth grade. The owners actually asked me to work for them, and I worked there all through high school. My next sales position was selling Mary Kay for fifteen years and I also tried some other network marketing companies. Several years later, I went to work for a one-man company selling advertising and discovered how much I liked sales. When that job did not pan out, I finally decided to get my real estate license.

What do you like most about your job?

I really like the fact that I am my own boss. No one can tell me what to do or what hours to work, and no one can fire me (unless I do something really bad and lose my license).

I love the fact that I set my own hours after working in an office for so many years from 8:00 to 5:00. I work more hours but it makes it easier to know that I choose to work those hours. This is a great job because my success depends **solely**

upon me and if I work hard, I know I can make a very good income.

What don't you like about the job?

It can get discouraging when I work with a client for many, many hours and they do not make a decision or they decide to buy a FSBO (For Sale by Owner) instead of using me. It's also scary not having a regular paycheck and no benefits.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

A lot of people think that realtors all make tons of money and that we get the whole commission when in reality, it is split at least two ways, and many times, four ways. People do not realize that we pay almost all of our own advertising and expenses. Keep a positive attitude even when you get discouraged. When times get tough, read something positive, and don't listen to negative people. Whatever you do, do not give up!

**Rachael Myers,
JD Young Office Equipment Solutions**

What did you do before sales?

After I graduated from college, I worked for about three months at David's Bridal.

How did you land your sales job?

Jennifer, one of the ladies in sales was engaged to be married, and she came in looking for a wedding dress. I was her consultant, and we just really hit it off and had a great time. As we were talking, she told me what she did and mentioned that

there was a position open at her company. We kept chatting, and by the time she was ready to leave, she had given me the number for her sales manager. I made an appointment to interview, and I got the job. In my case, I really did not have to do too much to sell myself. I had a great recommendation from Jennifer and the activities in college made my resume look really good. I presented myself well with my dress and mannerisms, but I feel it was a comfortable fit of personalities that landed me the job. I get along well with everyone who works here.

I have to admit that I was skeptical at first about selling copiers, but I wanted some outside sales experience. I like the autonomy the job has. In sales, you are not micromanaged for every little thing. The ability to control how much I made based on the amount of effort I put forth was attractive. It has been a great fit.

What do you like most about your job?

The best part is that I am in control of my day. If I want to schedule eight appointments in one day and then go easy the rest of the week, I can. As long as I am selling and meeting my quota, I am pretty much left alone.

A typical day involves checking my e-mail when I arrive in the morning. Then, I make a few phone calls or work on proposals for customers. I try to get out by 10:00 a.m. and go to appointments or cold call.

Cold calling in person is so much better for me than on the phone. You can actually get a feel for an office or particular contact person when you are face to face. Most times, **people**

are pretty friendly and willing to talk. The rest of my days are spent on appointments with customers, delivering new equipment, training customers, working on paperwork, and scheduling new appointments. Selling is a numbers game, so the more contacts you make, the better your chances of making a new sale. You just have to keep pressing on when you hear "no" because you hear it a lot in this field. If you cannot move on after you hear "no," you will not make it in this job.

What don't you like about the job?

The job requires a lot of driving. Occasionally, I encounter people who do not take me seriously. They act like, "Oh, it's just a copier sales rep; we don't have to be nice to her." Or, you get the secretary who thinks she is the Queen of the Office and won't even give you a contact name! I especially hate that! They don't even know ANYTHING about my company or what I am trying to speak with the contact about. They just try to pass me off. Those are the offices with which I try extra hard to get appointments.

It is also frustrating when prospects will not tell me who my competition is or who their current vendor is. There is no point to this practice — it is not a national secret!

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Sales is not for the faint of heart. You have to be tough, proactive, organized, and tenacious. You have to hear "no" and be able to deal with it. If you can do that, you can succeed in any sales arena. I think some people imagine that all salespeople are like that tacky, used-car-salesperson image.

We are not all like that! I usually approach people with a very mild sales demeanor and focus on helping them find a solution. Most people respond much better if they feel like you have their best interests in mind when you are working with them.

Sandy Carter, Mathis Brothers Furniture

What did you do before sales?

I started out as an accountant.

How did you land your sales job?

I got tired of earning just \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year while the salespeople for the company I worked for made a lot more money, were held in higher esteem, and had more control over their lives.

This company didn't have any female salespeople so I was asked if I would like to enter sales. I said yes and found myself selling meat byproducts! After twenty years in several different jobs, I decided I really wanted to get into the furniture business because I would rather be in retail sales and I love furniture.

What do you like most about your job?

Working and helping people — from assisting them in finding the right single piece of furniture to complete redecorating jobs. One of the more satisfying sales I ever made (which did not earn me that much in commission) was when I helped a family whose house had just burned down. They needed to replace a lot of stuff but they did not have much money.

What don't you like about the job?

I don't like the hours. Retail hours are not great. You are required to work every Saturday and Sunday. However, that is when a great deal of business occurs which allows me to earn the kind of money I do.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Learn your product! There are so many manufacturers in our business, and you need to learn the features of each one. Also, do not go for the quick sale. Learn to feel out the customer. Many times, someone will enter our showroom and just wants to be left alone (*"I'm just looking"*). There are others that NEED our help because they have no idea what they want or need — like trying to match furniture with the colors in their homes. I have had older people come in and buy a single piece and then send in their daughters and granddaughters who bought whole rooms of furniture.

Harold Jones, Jim Glover Chevrolet

What did you do before sales?

I was a college athlete. I thought I would go into physical therapy.

How did you land your sales job?

I saw an ad in the paper. I was counting up my bills and realized my \$8 an hour job wasn't cutting it. I later realized that my college degree did not have a bearing on my success in sales.

What do you like most about your job?

I get to “minister” to people’s lives when people come in who have been told “no” all their lives. Then they come in here and I get them approved. To look into their eyes and see how happy they are — that is the best part of selling cars! I know that day I helped someone; I helped a family and made a friend. The money is obviously great too. You can make \$3,000 in one day — my brother has an eighth-grade education and is making \$90,000 a year selling cars.

What don’t you like about the job?

I could say the hours, but when I get my check, it just does not bother me because I have security for my family.

What is the most important thing you’d tell someone new to sales?

There is not a job I know of — that is legal — where you can earn this kind of money! If you have a game plan, you can retire in ten years.

Josh Jones, TNT Security

What did you do before sales?

I am originally from Arizona. I worked at a tire store before moving to Oklahoma to pursue a career with the fire department. When that didn’t work out, I decided to look at other careers. We had just bought a new house and were a customer with TNT Security. I already had a very positive impression of the company. When I learned they were hiring sales reps, it was an easy decision to join them.

What do you like most about your job?

The job is very fulfilling financially. It is a very easy product to sell, and the company stands behind the service we offer. As a customer myself before working for the company, I can relate to my customers and prospects and their desire to make their home secure. The flexibility in the schedule is a plus.

What don't you like about the job?

The uncertainty that can come with being on commission. I've had ten sales in a day and other times, three sales in a single week. There is not always an immediate, direct correlation between the hours I put in this week and the income I earned for the past five days.

What's different about the job from what you expected going in?

I did not know what to expect. I watched and listened to the reps that were already there. I was concerned about generating the leads myself. I quickly learned that the top producers receive the most leads handed out by management. I soon found out that if people liked me, they would refer their friends, which is the easiest sale in the world to close.

Describe a typical day.

I usually start with a 9:00 a.m. inspection of a prospect's home on which they are about to close. I normally have two inspections a day. In between, I have other appointments with prospects. Since I meet with people at their homes, I need to work around their schedules so the day can run between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. The appointments and calls can range from three to eleven per day.

What's the strangest incident you've had in your career?

I called on a prospect, who was an ex-con, and getting ready to go back to jail. He was drunk at 9:30 in the morning! The gate to the house was makeshift, but he wanted his home protected.

What's the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

Crime unfortunately is not slowing down. Security systems have come down in price and now more people are incorporating fire protection and motion detection. In addition, the systems are helping customers gain greater discounts from their insurance company.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Keep the attitude positive all the time! If I am sick — which rarely happens — or it's a slow week, it helps to go on and get a "lay down" (an easy sale) to help perk your attitude and keep the momentum going. Also, don't get lazy during the good times.

**Pete Holcombe,
Regional Sales Manager, Falcon Jet**

What did you do before sales?

I went into the Army after a year of college and then went back to college. After graduation, I joined my first aerospace firm where I stayed for seventeen years. I've been with Falcon Jet for twenty-two years.

What do you like most about your job?

The money! The product is super. I love aviation (I'm a pilot) and enjoy the people. My passion for airplanes is what initially led me to aviation sales.

What don't you like about the job?

Paperwork! We have a contracts department that handles quite a bit of the detailed paperwork as the sale comes close to being closed, so that helps. I also don't enjoy the perception that is out there between new airplane sales (which I do) and used aircraft brokers. Just as in car sales, there is a different perception between new aircraft salespeople and used aircraft brokers.

What's different about the job from what you expected going in?

The details and the paperwork. In the beginning, it was almost a single-page transaction with very little input from the legal department. Now it's a two-pronged sales process. First, I need to get through a company's flight department and then go to the executives.

Describe a typical day.

Paperwork and phone calls. We have a computer program that the entire company uses to track all aspects of customer contacts. I am on the phone most of the day. If we do a demo, the corporate office will fly in a plane and flight crew.

What's the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

Jet fuel, but it's less about the price and more about availability. Most CEOs do not know what they pay for fuel, but if they can't get access to it, that's a problem.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

You need perseverance. Small airplanes can be a relative quick sale. Larger plane sales that I sell can take up to five years!

**Kim Harrison,
Account Executive, Clear Channel Radio**

What did you do before sales?

I was a Journalism/Marketing major in college. I didn't know what I was going to do with that when I got out. My first entry-level job was as a sales assistant at a radio station. The job did not pay very well at all. I had a lot of student loans and was barely making it. Assisting the sales team, I learned a lot about how they did their job. I watched them make good money as I struggled! Tired of being broke, I told myself, "I'm going into sales. If I fail, I can always get another job that pays what this one pays!" It turns out I am still in sales twenty years later.

What do you like most about your job?

I love being in charge of my own income! I know if I grow my business, I grow my income. In advertising sales, we call on such a variety of businesses: car dealers, casinos, restaurants, banks, and brands. I love getting to work with all these people and learn about their businesses! It keeps it interesting!

What's different about the job from what you expected going in?

As an outsider, I thought "sales" meant you had to pressure or trick someone into buying something they didn't need or want — the "snake oil salesman" image. As an insider, I see that I

am providing a service or product that helps my clients to be more successful in their businesses. That feels good. I'm a resource to them.

What don't you like about the job?

Changes in commission structures take the ball out of the seller's hands some. If the company cuts the commission plan by a percent or two, this sounds like a small adjustment, but it can hit the bigger billers big-time!

Describe a typical day.

My job is a combination of **prospecting** for businesses that I think would benefit from advertising on my stations, **presenting** advertising opportunities and ideas to these new contacts along with my current clients, and **executing and servicing** these advertising plans so the clients grow their business and becomes on-going clients for me!

What's the strangest incident you've had in your career?

Early in my sales career, I walked into a jewelry store to introduce myself and try to schedule an appointment. The owner tore my business card in half and handed it back to me. I didn't take it personal. I laugh about it to this day. Obviously, someone somewhere had oversold him and under delivered. I let this be my lesson to never do that.

What is the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

The growing importance of the Internet in how consumers do business and use it for research and/or the actual purchase or business transaction.

Advertisers need their traditional advertising, but they also need ways to effectively integrate their websites as an important tool for doing business. Clear Channel now has great radio stations and great station websites. It's exciting to see how the two work together to better serve our advertisers' needs!

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Sell something you believe in and feel good about. Then, you are not really selling at all.

**Steve Duren,
Territory Sales Representative, FW Murphy**

What did you do before sales?

I grew up in Oklahoma. I went to business school at the University of Tulsa, started an accounting degree, but I ultimately got a marketing degree. After college, I was in the oil business working offshore for an oil field service company before I began a sales career at a pump and valve manufacturer in Tulsa at an inside sales desk.

How did you land your sales job?

I got my current job from the help wanted ad in the paper. I had bought FW Murphy products in an earlier job. I didn't have an engineering degree like they wanted but mentioned my sales experience in my cover letter. My first sale for the company was me!

What do you like most about your job?

I love the freedom – I set my own hours. I do not like desk jobs. I enjoy being in the field with customers instead.

What don't you like about the job?

What I do not like about the job is dealing with people back at work who do not understand the customer's point of view. Some people in the office forget that. They are never in the field and don't think outside the box. The focus of the company must be on the customer and their needs.

Describe a typical day.

On a typical day, I get up at 5:15 a.m. to get ready for the day. I do a couple hours of prep work and shoot out e-mails. About 8:00 a.m., I head into the field for client calls and training sessions. I knock off about 3:30, work out, have dinner, and spend a couple hours answering e-mails. I hit the bed about 10:00 pm.

What's the strangest incident you've had in your career?

During my first sales job with a pump manufacturer, I flew into North Dakota. I was all pumped up and ready to go. I tried to get onto the interstate for a client visit seventy miles away and it was padlocked – it saved my life! I learned a valuable lesson: plan ahead and check the weather!

What is the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

The most important trend is technology. It is growing by leaps and bounds — remote access and monitoring of equipment by modem, radio, and satellite – we can't keep up!

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Learn your product more than anyone else knows. Understand the market better than anyone else does and find a mentor.

Trena Zickefoos, Farmers Insurance

What did you do before sales?

I am originally from McAlester, Oklahoma. Growing up, we were never allowed to say, "I don't know how." You figured it out or you asked how. I married young, had three children in less than four years. I did odd jobs while they were younger so I could stay home with them. Then my husband was in a bad wreck about fifteen years ago, and I had to go to work. I worked at a car dealership in the accounts payable department. I later worked at a carpet store and then at Indian Electric Co-Op. I worked delinquent accounts, tampering, and customer service.

How did you land your sales job?

I had finished my degree and knew it was time to do something different. Farmers Insurance had an ad in the paper. I called and talked to them. After an interview and with much prayer, I changed careers.

What do you like most about your job?

The independence. I am a very independent person. I do not have to be told how and when to work. This also gives me more control over my future and it is a family-oriented business. My children can buy my agency, or I can give it to them as long as they meet certain standards.

What don't you like about the job?

Sometimes you have to break down and cold call. I am always trying to find better ways of reaching people. I have also learned it is seasonally driven. The month school starts and the holidays (December and January) tend to be slower.

Describe a typical day.

My schedule is not consistent from day to day. I like to be in the office by 9:00 a.m. If I work at the house, I start between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. I market to apartment complexes one morning a week from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and to car dealerships one or two afternoons a week. On Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, I usually work until about 9:00 p.m. Most Fridays and Saturdays, I work till 7:00 p.m. I do paper work early in the day such as scanning, data entry, and quotes. I make phone calls afterwards. I make cold calls three nights a week.

What is the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

Being more competitive with the online insurance companies requires offering conveniences such as choices of billing and payment possibilities. In addition, customers want hours that are more convenient. We are a nation of time and convenience. If agents do not make that possible to clients, we will lose them to Internet sales.

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Be willing to invest a lot of time. Do not think it is a nine-to-five job, especially starting out. Read lots of books or articles. One easy-to-read good book is *The E-myth Revisited*. You have to wear all the hats — especially in sales.

Lisa Palmer, Microsoft

What did you do before sales?

I had spent my whole career on the operations side of information technology (IT). My first job was in an engineering group. Over time, I learned about the systems that supported the IT group and grew in the support side.

How did you land your sales job?

It's all about who you know! In the job just before Microsoft, I worked with the account representative from Microsoft who called on my group. They [Microsoft] knew I didn't like the long drive I made every day and let me know when a position came up that they thought I would be interested in.

What do you like most about your job?

I am a huge advocate of great customer service. In this job, I basically run my own business and can "practice what I preach." From a personal perspective, I get to run my own calendar. I do a lot of work late at night after my kids have gone to bed so I do not suffer from "mommy guilt."

What don't you like about the job?

The lack of process and structure increases my administrative work and decreases my time with customers.

Describe a typical day.

I get up at 5:30 a.m. I do thirty minutes of e-mail and check my calendar; make my kids breakfast, and take them to school. Starting at 8:30, I am either on my way to visit a customer or doing paperwork. We have internal meetings on Mondays so Mondays are usually one giant conference call

where I listen to phone meetings and multi-task doing administrative work and e-mailing clients. I work a split shift and job share with another representative. Technically, I don't work Thursday or Fridays but I have my cell phone on and will return customer e-mails right away. Internal e-mails might wait until I come back to work on Monday.

What is the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

The economy of course. IT budgets can get slashed when things get tight. In addition, we need to help IT departments show how they provide value to their business units — their internal customers (the departments that they support). Outsourcing is evil! It never works, the service is spotty at best, and it always ends up costing more than if they did it themselves. This will continue unless company leaders are shown how the IT departments add value and even become profit centers for the corporation.

IT departments should market their products! They need to sell their service to the internal clients. The employees can't see what they offer so IT departments need to showcase how they help the company save money & improve productivity!

What is the most important thing you'd tell someone new to sales?

Listen! Stop talking and listen. The customer will tell you what their issue is. If you spend all your time talking and selling, you will likely irritate them and not sell anything.

Bonus Interview!

Bill Becker, OakTree Software

What did you do before sales?

I grew up wanting to be a veterinarian. I participated in dog shows and 4-H and wrote to Iowa State University for enrollment information in the third grade. Ultimately, I choose not to go to college and worked in the grocery business for several years. I wanted to be a disc jockey, but decided on a radio sales career as a compromise.

How did you land your sales job?

I was referred by a former coworker who had moved to OakTree Software. They needed a salesperson, and he told them to go get me.

What do you like most about your job?

I am going to contradict myself here. I'm a creature of habit and enjoy routines (eating the same lunch each day or listening to the same songs over and over), but I love the opportunity to come up with creative ways to help clients. I have figured out ways to train thousands of employees in one day when it should have taken a week; I have found training resources in The Netherlands and Australia and I have made 150 phone calls in one day — whatever it takes! I also love that I can come in earlier than the rest of the staff and leave earlier.

What's different about the job from what you expected going in?

Since I worked in the IT industry, I already knew a lot. Probably the biggest shock was the dedication and resources the company would provide to grow the training division. We had one training room when I started at OakTree, and now there are some weeks we have five classes going on.

What don't you like about the job?

Making the training schedule. I have to update the OakTree website and Microsoft's website, and it's tedious. I also hate that vendors make us purchase a minimum number of course books each quarter regardless if we need them. I get paid on commission, based on profit, and it is an expense we should not have to incur.

Describe a typical day.

I get in at 7:30 a.m. and return any e-mails that came in overnight that I didn't answer on my BlackBerry®. I will review the calls I need to make and then usually talk to the instructors about the classes going on that day or brainstorm with them about some opportunity we have. I'll spend the rest of the day e-mailing and making calls. I will also do client lunches and host free seminars where I can talk face-to-face with clients and prospects. At least once a day, I head down to the recruiter's office and shoot free throws, betting \$1 for best out of five!

What's the strangest incident you've had in your career?

Mmmhow do I explain this? I occasionally hire contract instructors to come to our home office in Tulsa and teach specialty classes. We had this one instructor in and I met him Monday morning before class and had a pleasant conversation. Later that day, my boss came in and asked why I

had an instructor with both male and female features. I never noticed! The good news is that “he” received great evaluations for the class, but I have never lived that down.

What is the most important trend in your industry over the next eighteen months?

I love when Microsoft releases new technologies because that means people have to be trained! They are releasing new versions of their networking, programming, and database software in 2008, in addition to the new operating systems and Microsoft Office Suite. Since 95 percent of the world’s computers have Microsoft products on them, it is a huge deal!

What is the most important thing you’d tell someone new to sales?

Any problem you encounter and any objection you get can be overcome with persistence. As the late Jim Valvano said, *“Don’t give up — don’t ever give up.”*

Put It To Work!

1. List five to ten items (tips, insights, etc.) you read in these interviews that were the most helpful.

2. Name three salespeople who were profiled that you feel had a background similar to yours. How did their experience help you in your thought process to determine whether you want to pursue a sales career?

Chapter 4: How to Get Started

*“If you want something you’ve never had,
you must do something you’ve never done.”*
Dua Elayan Obeidallah, Palestinian immigrant

So, now that I have you at least interested in pursuing a career in sales, just how do you go about landing a job you have never dreamt about?

Sell Something You Love!

First things first: you need to start out with “what” you want to sell. You don’t want to sell something that doesn’t excite you, so make an inventory of your interests. If you enjoy computers, think about selling computer systems or software to businesses. If you are into home improvement, check out sales positions at places like Lowe’s or Home Depot. If you enjoy decorating, check out a position in furniture sales. A love of autos doesn’t necessarily mean car sales. You could sell auto parts or auto aftermarket and performance accessories. Another idea might be the staffing industry. You could use your previous industry experience to become a salesperson or recruiter for that industry. Don’t forget advertising sales for a magazine that covers your hobby or for your favorite radio station!

One of the first areas to check for in a sales career is your current industry. If you are unemployed, consider the industry you just left. Think about all the things that your company purchases from raw materials to specialized software. Your

knowledge of your industry can be a great start to sell products and services to similar companies.

Customers buy from people they like and trust. If you do not have a passion for what you are selling, you cannot be successful. I know that is why I have been successful. I loved the radio industry and everything about it! When I sold radio advertising, I always went after businesses that had never tried radio before. My thought was, “Why compete with twenty other advertising reps for the same car dealer when I can have hardware stores to myself?”. My love and enthusiasm for the attributes of radio got me more sales than ratings or other radio propaganda I may have had at my disposal.

It is the same thing with technology services in my current job. My love of training and technology is instrumental in getting a potential client excited about my services.

What selling method is right for you?

There are different types of selling. One of the first things you must decide on is this: Do you want to look for a job that entails face-face selling, business-to-business selling, or telephone sales?

I have done both face-to-face and phone sales in my career and I would much rather earn my living via the phone and e-mail. I can make dozens more contacts each day and I don't have to wear a suit! I still meet people for lunch and talk to clients when they come in for class. There are others, who just have to talk with prospects face-to-face. Give this area careful

consideration, talk to salespeople from both camps, and ask them for their opinions.

What product or service is right for you?

Another thing to think about is the product or service you want to sell. Do you want to sell big-ticket items or less-expensive items? Here are characteristics of each:

Big-Ticket Sales

- ✓ Higher dollar-figure sales
- ✓ Sales cycle can be weeks or months
- ✓ Fewer sales over a given time period
- ✓ Usually detail oriented which require more paperwork
- ✓ Often involves more than one decision maker

Examples of big-ticket sales include real estate, group insurance, office or medical equipment, manufacturing or computer systems. Big-ticket sales require someone who is patient and extremely detailed-oriented (not me!). It can involve multiple meetings with several different decision makers, and you might have to wait a considerable amount of time to hear whether or not you got the sale.

Smaller Ticket Sales

- ✓ Smaller dollar-amount sales
- ✓ Sales cycle can be a week or quicker
- ✓ Multiple sales over a given time compared to fewer big-ticket sales

- ✓ Usually less detail-oriented which means less paperwork
- ✓ Many times only one decision maker is involved

Examples of smaller ticket sales include advertising, life insurance, retail sales such as jewelry, furniture, and auto parts just to name a few. With smaller ticket sales, the decision is made relatively quickly. You'll hear "no" a lot more often but you will also hear "yes" a great deal more.

How to Research Companies and Industries

It is very easy to research a particular company or industry using the Internet. Many companies have a career section on their website. You can also go to Hoovers.com to find a wealth of information about a specific company. The best site I have seen for researching both companies and industries is Rileyguide.com. Another comprehensive site for researching companies and industries is Vault.com. Finally, Monster.com has a very good section dedicated to sales careers at sales.monster.com.

Custom Industry Searches

Using your favorite search engine (like Google, Yahoo, etc.), type "industry" and "sales careers" in the search field. Be sure to use quotation marks around the industry you are researching and the words "sales careers" to uncover useful information about selling in a particular industry.

You will also want to do a search of associations for specific industries. Just type in "industry associations," substituting

“industry” for whichever category that you are researching. You can also go to a site that catalogs industries such as the American Society of Association Executives association directory listing. Go to:

<http://www.asaecenter.com/directories/associationsearch.cfm> to search for associations by name, interest area, or geographic location.

Industry publications are another great resource to use to learn about a specific industry. Most libraries carry dozens of different industry magazines and you can ask local companies for back issues.

In addition to their paid Insider Guides, Wetfeet.com has a wonderful section called “Real People Profiles” that feature salespeople and real-life stories about what it is like to work in their industry.

Both Hotjobs.com and Monster.com have a community section for dozens of different industries, including sales, where you can read and post questions and answers from other salespeople.

Using the same search technique as above, type in “industry” and “message boards” (“real estate” and “message boards” or use “blogs” instead of message boards) to uncover a wide range of industry-specific message boards and blogs. Most of these sites are authored by seasoned pros who are sharing ideas and opinions. You can get some very good insight from a particular industry by reading different blogs.

☒ One place I recommend staying away from is the message boards at places like Yahoo. Disgruntled former employees who have an “ax to grind” inhabit most of these posting areas along with short-sellers looking to create negative news about a company in hopes of driving its stock down.

Finally, if you REALLY want to get an in-depth look of a particular industry and/or company, take a sales representative or sales manager to lunch or breakfast. Most would be flattered to be asked and would love to talk about themselves and their career. Get the name of a sales rep or manager and write a quick note or send them an e-mail. I found that most companies will give out a salesperson’s e-mail address. Ask for an hour of their time to talk about a career in their field. Follow up in a day or so with a phone call to schedule your meeting.

Ask them some of the same questions I asked people in my interviews:

- 1) Tell me about your job and how you got it?
- 2) What do you like and dislike about your job
- 3) What is a typical day like?
- 4) What are the biggest trends in your industry over the next eighteen months?
- 5) What advice would you give to someone considering a job in your industry?

You will get great feedback and build a contact in the industry! If you are currently employed, spend some time with the sales reps in your company.

How Salespeople Make Their Incomes

There are numerous methods that employers use to compensate their salespeople. You'll probably want to add a question about compensation when interview the salespeople. In the next chapter, I will show you how to forecast your potential income with an employer. Some employers may use different methods for different sales reps within the same company. Most sales representatives earn a portion of the sales price in the form of a commission. This is one of the great benefits of having a sales job! If you need or want more money, all you have to do is work harder and smarter to make more sales!

Some sales jobs are straight salary or hourly-based. You are paid so much per hour, week, or year like much of the rest of a business' employees. If you are compensated in this manner, you can easily project what your earning will be over a period of time. You can also pretty well bet it will be less than what you would be making if there were some form of commission awarded for sales you made.

Sometimes employers put new sales reps on a straight wage during the training and orientation phase. Many employers offer their sales reps a compensation package that is a blend of a base wage plus a percentage of their sales. Sometimes there might even be the offer of a bonus that would be paid when certain pre-determined performance milestones are achieved such as exceeding your assigned quota by 10 percent, generating new accounts, or entering a new market. Again, you have the unusual benefit of sales positions paying for performance instead of simply putting hours into a job.

There are many sales positions that do not receive a base wage, but only earn commissions on the sales they generate. This is referred to as one-hundred-percent commission or “straight” commission. Realtors and insurance representatives are commonly compensated in this manner.

Generally, once someone is established and fully confident in their sales ability, this is where the REALLY big money is made in sales.

Earnings in the upper six-figures are not at all unusual in this category. These folks are the big whales in the world of sales when it comes to making money.

In a straight commission pay scheme (no base salary), it is not unusual for many sales reps to take a “draw” or advance against future commissions. The amount of the draw is usually just enough for them to cover basic monthly living necessities and no more. To “make it” financially, they have to sell, and that is clearly understood by all involved.

The reason and basis for the draw is usually highly personalized and individually negotiated between the sales rep and his or her sales manager.

For example, if the sales rep is selling a fairly high-ticket (expensive) item or service, there may be an uncertain and lengthy time period between sales. However, when they do close the order, they make a ton of commission money. The draw is then subtracted from the paid commission (as an advance against future commissions). This allows the sales rep

to bridge the gap between commission checks so they can pay the light bill if their last commission check has been spent.

Just stating that you are going to get a sales job involves a little more thought and planning. With any job in any career, the fit with your personality and temperament is very important — even more so with a career in sales since the product or service you are selling in reality is you!

Happy hunting!

Put It To Work!

1. Make a list of the things you enjoy. What are you passionate about?

2. Write down some of the terms from above and use them in a web search? For example: If you chose auto repair, search **using “auto repair” and “sales career” as your key words**. Make sure you use the quotation marks around the key words. List the sites you came up with for further research.

3. Make a list of companies you want to research.

4. Make a list of three salespeople you will take to lunch or talk with over coffee. After each name, write down a couple of specific questions you want to ask them (in addition to the questions I listed earlier in this chapter).

Chapter 5: Landing Your First Job

“There are two ways of doing things. You can do it the way everyone else does it, which means you’ve got to do it much better than them or you can do it differently. So if you want to be better, why don’t you try to be a little different?”

Football Coach Steve Spurrier

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, you have already sold. You sold yourself when you interviewed for a job, proposed to your spouse, or applied for a loan. You sold your experience, your education, your creative thinking, your earning power, and more.

Landing a sales job, especially your first sales job, will be a little different from what you normally experienced in hunting for other jobs. Resumes are out. Why? You do not have any sales experience to list! The process of landing your very first sales job is simple — find the company you want to work for and plan your assault!

The two things you must show in the pursuit of your first sales job are:

- ✓ **Persistence.** Keep after the sales manager to give you an interview and then keep after him or her until you get the job! Persistence can overcome everything else.

I’ve often said that I could never make any money off my looks or personality, but I do have a “black belt” in

persistence, which is why I've been so successful as a salesman.

- ✓ **Passion.** Talk about your love of their product or service and how that passion will help make you a great salesperson!

Smart sales managers often treat the hiring process like a trial run. They want to see the tenaciousness and creativity (a result of passion) of job applicants. The same strategy an applicant uses to land a job is a precursor to how they will land customers. I cannot tell you how important these two attributes are in proving your worthiness to be hired!

Also, do not forget that one of the most important things in landing your first sales job is to ask for it! If you cannot ask for the job, you cannot ask for the sale!

How to get the job even if they are not hiring!

Remember earlier when I told you that most sales positions are never advertised in the paper or posted online? You've heard that it's not "*what you know*" but "*who you know*" It is even truer in landing a sales job. What if you could get a referral from the owner or general manager of the company you want to work for? You can, and here is why!

Companies exist for one simple reason — to make a profit selling products or services. Why do firms go out of business? It is very simple: lack of sales. In a cold hard world, "human assets" are divided up into two separate categories: those that produce income and those that only show up on the expense ledger. Every single person — business owner, manager,

board member, etc. — is VERY interested in talking to anyone who can help increase their bottom line revenue. They have cut all the expenses they can, so the only way to increase profits now is by increasing revenue by selling more stuff!

Here is your plan to get a referral from the boss:

1. When you are contacting potential employers, start at the top. Go to the owner or general manager. Write a short note ahead of your initial call to tell them that you are a current customer and spending ten minutes with you could have a drastic impact on their bottom line during the next six months! Not too many people are going to ignore a bold statement like that! If you are not a current customer, buy something — even if it just costs \$10. If you cannot truthfully state that you are a customer, then tell them you have been talking to his or her customers and have important information you want to share with them. That will get their attention!

If you want to make sure they see your pre-call note, send it in a priority envelope. It might be the best five bucks you ever spent!

2. Follow up your pre-call note with a phone call asking to meet with them for ten minutes. When you meet with them, the most important thing you can show them is confidence — confidence in yourself! Tell them about your passion for their business and how you can use that passion to create sales for them. Tell them that you also know you do not have any experience but you are sure that many of the top salespeople in their

company started out with little or no sales experience. You have already showed your creativity and determination by landing a meeting with “a top-level decision maker” (them), didn’t you!

These “business heads of state” are not used to dealing with someone like this. The audacity you showed to get that ten-minute meeting will get you the referral to the sales manager if they don’t hire you on the spot!

You will still be asked about your background. Point out what I have been saying all along. You, like every single other person in history, grew up dreaming of a particular job and that is where you’ve been spending the last “X” number of years until you realized that “sales” offers everything you’ve ever wanted in a job. List some of the attributes I went over earlier in this chapter.

Keep reminding them about your passion for their business. Passion is contagious and you want them infected!

Sample Dialog

Here is some sample dialogue to give you an idea of what to say if they ask you, “Why Sales?”

"Bill, why at this point in your life are you interested in a career in sales?"

"Jim, I'm excited (**much better than “interested”**) about a career in sales because the skills that are required, and rewarded, are my strongest skills.

I talked to several salespeople in your industry, even a couple with your company (**your earlier face-to-face research shows your passion**). My love of “X” (**X is the product or service the company sells**) and my desire to control my own destiny led me to the only field that would satisfy these needs — sales!

In terms of skills, I feel the most important are tenacity, an ability to relate to people, and problem solving. These skills have marked me since my time in high school, (**they are looking for patterns of behavior, which is why it's often helpful to go back in time**) and have been constants through all areas of my life. In high school, I wanted to be a starter for the basketball team even though I never even made the team my sophomore year. I practiced on my own during the off-season and found a local college player to help me improve my game. I made the team as a junior and was selected as a co-captain my senior year.

During college, I headed a project to help a local homeless shelter find a new location. It was a challenge (**here is where your problem-solving skills came into play**) because not only did we have only sixty days to complete the project, the shelter had little funding. We found an old building that had been closed up for over five years and pushed through the necessary permits. We literally sat in the city hall offices to expedite the process. Then, we went out and got the necessary supplies and materials through a combination of donations. We set up minor work assignments for the shelter clients in exchange for the funds that were needed.

I am excited about sales because after ten years as a front-line supervisor, I know this is the right career for me. No one grows up dreaming of becoming a salesperson — you know that as well as I do — but I realize I now have the opportunity to take care of my family and have true job satisfaction; this is where I need to be.”

Wow! Pretty powerful, huh? There was no discussion about “previous sales experience.” Instead, you pointed out what you feel are the important attributes of a successful salesperson and highlighted those attributes with your personal experiences.

Another interview example comes from when I was in prison ... let me explain! For several summers, I taught a class at the Tulsa County Jail to inmates about why they should consider a sales career when they got out. I had read about “Prison School” in the newspaper and thought that if there was ever a group that needed my message, these men and women were it.

I could always count on a couple of things at every session (a different group came through each week for the one-hour program). First, someone would make a joke like, “*Sales is what got me in here!*”

That would get a laugh but later on, someone in a more serious mood would ask, “*How am I going to get hired with my criminal record?*”

When I told them that I was ready to answer that particular question, the room got quiet. I asked them to write their “pre-

call” note to the owner or top manager asking for ten minutes of their time (obviously going through the human resources manager is NOT an option for someone who had done time). Once they were in front of the owner or top manager, they would need to have their “*Come to Jesus*” meeting where they would bear their soul.

I instructed them to explain their past mistakes and explain how important a good job is to helping them rebuild their lives. They will say many of the same things from the “make believe” conversation I shared with you earlier in this chapter. They should talk about never before thinking of a sales career, but they should explain how they possess the skills which can easily be transferred to selling a product or service.

Most importantly they must “*humanize*” their message by owning up to their past. Part of that message will include stating their desire to improve their lives by helping the business grow by selling their product or service.

I pointed out to them they don’t need eleven different jobs — they just needed one. I also pointed out that they probably will come across people who just cannot get past the fact that they did time in prison.

Eventually, they will come across a manager or owner who understands that this particular individual sitting in front of them is an absolute gift! This person who is asking for a job will be more motivated than most people the manager currently employs. The manager will understand that for this person to rebuild their life, it will require putting money into his or her pocket, i.e. help sell more product or service.

I have shared these conversation examples to show that everyone, regardless of their background, can come up with a compelling story to create a job offer from scratch!

Questioning the Questioner

There is one other thing you should do during your conversation with the boss — “turn the tables” during the interview process.

Most people think that a job interview is a one-way street where the job hunter only fields’ questions, but that is not the case! Questions are a big part of selling and you are selling yourself, right? Let’s deal with a couple of questions you need to be ready to ask during an interview.

At some point, the owner or manager is going to ask, *“Do you have any questions?”* That is when you intelligently ask:

1. *“Of all the salespeople you’ve hired, who was the best and why?”*
2. *“What’s your organization’s biggest challenge?”*

The first question shows your willingness to learn from others and adopt best practices. Question number two proves you want to dig deep into the company’s future by wanting to learn about possible non-sales issues. Both questions show initiative and will set you apart from all the other people they have interviewed in the past.

A Point about Money and Motivation

One of the things you are going to have to understand and “get behind” is the fact that all successful salespeople are motivated by money to some degree. Anyone hiring salespeople wants to hear that making money motivates their sales candidates.

During your initial interview, tell them you are tired of someone else dictating how much money you earn. Say you are equally tired of having your annual earnings tied to things outside your control, like whether or not your boss likes you, the overall health of your firm, and the lack of effort by coworkers who do not work as hard as you do.

You can work it in your favor even more if you have a socioeconomic motivation such as being older or a single parent. Humanizing your desire to make more money (for instance, **you want to build your retirement nest egg or provide more things for your family**) is a powerful way to convince someone to hire you. Your personal motivation and drive means you will require less time from management to motivate you to sell!

Forecasting Your Income

At some point either during your initial research of a particular company or after an interview, you will have to decide whether you want that particular job. While work atmosphere and support are important, you also need to determine if this is a job you can financially excel in.

You need to learn the pay plan: Is there a starting salary or base or is it a draw against future commissions? More than likely, it will be a combination. What you need to find out is the commission structure.

- What is the commission rate? Is it on gross or net sales?
- Does the commission rate go up as your monthly sales increase?
- What is the amount of the average sale? When talking to the owner, manager, or other salespeople, ask them the amount of the average sale and the average number of sales made every month by each salesperson. Of course, you do not plan to be average, but you need a point of reference.

Now you can do some math. You know the amount of the average sale. Let's say it is \$1,500. The average number of sales each month is 22 (one per work day). That is \$33,000 in sales for the month.

Let's say the commission rate is 17%. That means your gross commission (before taxes) is \$5,610 or roughly \$67,000 a year. This does not include any base salary, monthly, or quarterly bonuses.

Ask yourself, "*Could I sell 22 widgets per month after a ninety-day ramp up period?*" Ask how many people (prospects) does it normally take to get 22 sales a month. Maybe it's 100, which means a closing ratio of roughly one out of five (in this case, specifically 22%). Remember this is average. What if you could increase that closing ratio just a tad to 25%? That is an extra \$765 a month (25 sales x \$1,500 average sale x 17%

commission = \$6,375 gross monthly commission). Now you are talking about a \$76,000 a year job!

Using Your Personal Network to Find a Job

Ever heard of "*Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon*?" It's the game that challenges players to trace a famous person's connection to actor Kevin Bacon in six steps or less. If you haven't tried it, you can visit the site (be careful it's addicting!) at

<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/oracle>

While playing the game probably will not put you into a paying job, the premise behind it can. What if, for example, your uncle's secretary's spouse is a recruiter for a Fortune 500 company or your friend's brother runs a sales department that has several openings? It would be a shame to have those connections and not take advantage of them. Don't forget to tell everyone you know about your exciting decision to enter sales. Everyone knows someone.

Two blogs you should check out concerning networking and building contacts are:

Never Eat Alone: <http://nevereatalone.typepad.com/blog>

The Virtual Handshake: <http://thevirtualhandshake.com/blog>.

Both blogs, named after books by the same title, contain some of the most compelling ideas on networking and building "social capital." In any business, both are extremely important and in sales careers, they are vital for success.

One of the Most Important Job-Hunting Tools

Thank-you notes are paramount! Send one to every single person you come into contact with in your job search. Why? How often do you receive a thank-you note? Not too often, right? That is why HANDWRITTEN (no e-mails) thank-you notes are so effective! Make sure you mail it the same day of each interview. I have even written one in my car right after an interview and taken the thank-you note back inside and handed it to the receptionist.

Even if you are not trying to land a new job, sending out thank-you notes is a good routine to start. Purchase a box of blanks and send out at least three a day. In a month, there will be one hundred people who will REMEMBER you!

Some Crazy Ideas to Land an Initial Interview

- ✓ Send a letter asking for an interview with the definition of “persistence” highlighted from the dictionary along with your picture. Remember I told you the two things you need to show potential employers were passion and persistence).
- ✓ Send a plant with a note about being able to help cultivate customers.
- ✓ Send a business management or marketing book with an inscription about developing customers being the single most-important attribute of successful companies. Remind them that you have important information to share with them in a ten-minute meeting. When you call for the appointment, tell the receptionist that you’re the one who sent the book.

- ✓ Send them a menu of the restaurant where you would like to buy them breakfast or lunch. Include a note touting “*Today’s Special*” is important information concerning the future of their company!

As I said at the beginning of the chapter, landing your first sales job will take a completely different approach from your past job-hunting exploits. Successful salespeople are persistent and use their passion to get creative in their hunt for sales. It is those same attributes you need to bring to the table in landing your first sales job.

Put It To Work!

1. List three to five companies where you would like to pursue a sales job. Call and ask for the owner or general manager's name.

2. Start to practice writing your "pre-call" note. Be passionate about WHY they should meet with you. Remember, owners and general managers are interested in anything that will result in additional business. In your own words, state how important it is for them to meet with you. Do not tell them you are asking for a sales job in your note, simply state that you can help them improve their bottom line.

3. Think of an example where you showed persistence. Why was it important for you to be persistent in that instance?

4. Think of “the speech” I used in this chapter. Make a list of your previous life experiences – instances where you showed passion, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Chapter 6: Prospecting

“What I point out to people is that it's silly to be afraid that you're not going to get what you want if you ask because you are already not getting what you want. They always laugh about that because they realize it's so true. Without asking, you already have failed; you already have nothing. What are you afraid of? You're afraid of getting what you already have! It's ridiculous! Who cares if you don't get it when you ask for it, because, before you ask for it, you don't have it anyway? So there's really nothing to be afraid of.”

Novelist Marcia Martin

I love that quote! You just cannot argue with Ms. Martin's logic ... and I love to argue! Well here is the mini how-to portion of my book. I am going to break down a part of the sales process in this chapter to show you it's not that complicated. Once you understand, you will no longer be scared or intimidated. You will say to yourself, “I can do THAT!” This will give you a guide to becoming a successful salesperson.

Everyone has his or her own take on “how to sell,” and that is not the purpose of this book. However, I do feel that if I dissect part of the sales process and share some of my techniques, you will be able to understand the process better and then be able to fine-tune your own approach.

Where to Get Prospects

Developing leads or “prospecting” is the key to success for all new salespeople. Find more people to talk to about your product or service and you will make more money!

Most companies do some marketing to develop leads for their salespeople, but you will want to develop your own leads — prospects that you don't have to share with your colleagues.

The single best source for prospects is your current customers. People or businesses that have already spent money with your firm are always the best place to start. If you are selling “business to business” (BTB), then ask your contact (penetrate the account), *“Who else in the company should I talk to about our product or service?”*

Even if you already have a contact with a particular company, you should also cold call the account and ask the receptionist who makes the purchasing decision for your product or service. Many times, you will get a completely different name than the current contact with whom your company has been working.

Being new is a great opportunity to go through old records — customers who purchased last year or two years ago. I have done this at every company where I worked, and it is surprising how many sales I come up with from these “forgotten” accounts.

Ask for the Difficult, Hard-to-Crack Accounts

Ask your manager for the name of the most difficult prospect they have. You want the account no one else wants to deal with because the prospect is so mean!

I remember when I was in Texas signing up hotels for our in-room video service. There was one general manager who was

borderline evil. It got to be a matter of pride that I wasn't going to let this guy beat me. I just wanted to show him I had won! But I didn't and guess what? He became the single best resource I had to signing up other hotels in his chain. All I had to do is call and say, *"Mr. X in Houston won't take my calls."* He would tell me to call him back later, and he would already have the person sold, waiting on a contract!

The point here is that many times you WANT to work with prospects that no one else wants. There is less competition and usually these prospects are golden once you have won them over. My hotel general manager was not used to people standing up to him — at the very least, he was used to people giving up easily. I earned his respect, and he paid me back with a boatload of business that he sent my way!

Referrals

Asking current customers for names of prospects is a VERY valuable tool. It is much easier to call someone when you can drop the name of his or her friend or business associate. You can even run a referral contest to generate dozens of referrals. Offer your current customers a nominal prize or gift for the names of three individuals who might be interested in your product or service. All those that respond are thrown into the pool for a major prize drawing at the end of the contest period.

Should you purchase leads? My overall answer is no. I have not had a lot of luck personally and haven't heard from others who had good success in purchasing leads. Problems range

from the information being outdated to the list of leads being obscenely overworked.

Tips clubs are the same thing. They are great for networking but I have never seen tip clubs offer much value in uncovering real good prospects. You end up paying for an expensive lunch without coming away with much in terms of hot prospects.

The only time I suggest investing hard-earned money to actually purchase leads is at the very beginning of a new job when you are still developing your confidence and practicing your sales skills. Check out Goleads.com. They offer unlimited leads for just ten bucks a month. Also, check out Hoovers.com for a free trial.

Peer Roundtable

Once you have a few weeks under your belt in your new job, you need to start building a “peer roundtable” of other salespeople in your industry. This is one of the most important resources you can develop for your future sales success! Contact out- of-town reps within your company and tell them you are developing a monthly “idea exchange” via e-mail.

Once a month, send your idea out to everyone and they, in turn, contribute their own ideas. The peer roundtable is also a wonderful resource for last-minute questions for a particular sales challenge. Just fire off your question or problem and within a few minutes, you’ll have several answers from different perspectives.

I built large peer roundtables in both the radio and computer-training industries. I even had a battle with a former employer as to the “ownership” of the roundtable — it was that valuable! Day in and day out, they have been my biggest source of sales help. It makes sense, doesn’t it? What works in Omaha probably would work in Tulsa or Miami.

Newsletter

Having your own personal newsletter is one of the single most important things you can do to build your business! I remember back in the 1990s when I did a paper newsletter each month. I did the work myself and incurred the expense of printing it. My employer paid to have it mailed out. Now, it is so much easier because you can do an e-mail newsletter for virtually no cost at all.

You will want to send your newsletter to your current customers, old customers, and maybe the most important group — those who told you “no.”

Anytime I talk to a prospect who says they are not interested or are not in the market for my service right now, I ask them if they would like to receive my newsletter. I tell them it’s a monthly compilation of industry news and training tips. They know it will also include some “propaganda” in the form of training specials that we are running. Nine out of ten people say “yes” to being added to my list. Maybe they are just being nice since they already told me “no” to purchasing anything right now, but I have built my business by hitting everyone once a month with my newsletter. Remember, “no” just means “no today.” Situations change daily and the person

who said “no” today could very well call you tomorrow. It happens to me all the time!

Your newsletter keeps your name in front of prospects every month and is a great platform for advertising special offers or even running contests.

Initially, you can do your e-mail list from Outlook or Outlook Express but once you exceed three hundred names, you will want to automate it. There are dozens of companies offering bulk e-mail programs. Probably the easiest one to use is by Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com). They offer a free sixty-day trial so you can get your feet wet learning the keys to e-mail marketing.

Your Own Website

To really set yourself apart from the competition (including the other salespeople on your own staff), you will want to think about putting up your own simple website. Yahoo, GoDaddy.com, and most Internet service providers (ISPs) offer a very low-cost way to get a simple website set up. Check with your local high school for names of individuals who can help build you a more advanced site.

Having your own website allows you to look like an authority. You will want to include industry information (even guest articles from industry experts), and you can post your newsletter there (along with an archive of past issues). As your business grows, you will want to automate your newsletter sign-up process at your website as well.

Seminars

Offering free information is a great way to develop relationships with prospective customers. You don't even have to host it yourself. Get the experts from your company to host it. You just put it together and promote it. Host seminars on the new trends in your industry; offer advice on how to get more out of your product or service. Bring someone from one of your out-of-town offices to showcase best practices from around the country. For some reason, if your guest is from fifty miles away, their expertise quotient goes way up!

Contests

Just like the referral contest I mentioned earlier, host a contest to build prospects. The most logical choice is to give away your product or service. Most people are not going to take the trouble to enter a contest for a free product or service if they are not interested in the actual prize. Sure, you will get a few "prize pigs" who enter every contest without even knowing what the prize really is. However, if you ask the right questions on the entry form, you can develop some great leads without much work.

Cold Calling

Okay, I knew you were not going to like this one and that is why I saved it for last. Cold calling is the single most effective way to uncover prospects. This is the area that separates professional salespeople who make \$100,000 or more a year from everyone else.

Let me point out something very important here — cold calling is NOT selling. You are not trying to “sell” your product or service. You are calling to find people who could be interested in your product or service and set an appointment. Cold calling is the fastest way to increase the number of prospects, your company’s revenue, and your personal income. Can you earn a nice living without cold calling? Yes, but why would you want to limit your earnings just because you don’t want to pick up the phone?

Cold calling isn’t rocket science and it certainly isn’t mysterious. What is the big deal? You pick up the phone, call a prospective business, find the decision maker, and ask them if they have a need. So what if they say “no” (remember the quote at the beginning of this chapter). Big deal! Every single salesperson that makes six figures hears “no” dozens of times a week. People who cold call are always better salespeople. Why? Because they set more appointments and that provides them more opportunities to practice their sales presentations, and, ultimately, generate more sales.

Final Thoughts

Get creative in your search for prospects. Find or create lead sources that your colleagues and your competitors do not have. Use your network (peer roundtable) for leads. For example, a salesperson with your company in Cleveland made a sale to Acme Corporation. That would make a great opening statement during the initial call to Acme Corporation in your town: *“Hi, I’m Bill Becker with XYZ Company and our firm just put together an important deal with your firm in*

Cleveland. I think you should hear how that program would be good for you here in Tulsa.”

Read marketing books and articles. There is plenty of free information on the web. Developing your own leads is the best way to increase your sales and take control of your income.

Now that I have told you how to find customers, let's move on to what NOT to do as a salesperson!

Put It To Work!

1. Make a list of some of the newsletters you currently read. What do you like about them? List some of the attributes you want to add to your own newsletter (page layout, color, article titles, etc.).

2. Think about your current industry or the industry you were previously employed in. Where did your company get their leads? Where would you go for prospects?

3. When you are researching specific companies or industries, especially when you are talking to current salespeople — even if it is on a chat board — ask them where they get their leads. Write down every single source!

Chapter 7: How to Blow Up a Sales Career

“Why do I do this? Because the money's good, the scenery changes, and they let me use explosives, okay?”

Steve Buscemi, from the movie Armageddon

So far, I have shared why you should consider a sales career and how to research potential employers. I gave you a strategy to land your first sales job and even provided you with insight and tips from the street from current sales professionals.

Since most people do not make a conscious effort to derail their employment chances, it is probably a good time to share some sure-fire ways to royally screw up your chances at developing a successful sales career so you can avoid them.

- 1. They fail to prospect.** This is number one for a reason. I have seen super successful salespeople crash and burn because they got comfortable with existing customers and started thinking they no longer needed to prospect. VERY bad idea! Review Chapter 6 again.
- 2. They do not become a student of their craft.** Too many people have studied their company and its product or service but then never continued studying the sales process.

Make a point to find new ways to sell each day whether it is a new prospecting technique, customer service idea, or question to uncover a new opportunity. You never graduate from the “school of sales!”

3. **They get in front of the wrong people.** You have to make sure you are in front of qualified prospects that have the power to say “yes!” Use qualifying questions to determine if this person is someone you should spend time with.
4. **They fail to manage their time well.** The only inventory you have is time. It is pretty simple. If you do not plan your activities and organize your time, you will fail. Remember the saying, *“Those that fail to plan can plan to fail”*.
5. **They fail to match their product or service to the prospect’s stated needs.** Maybe I could have simply summed up this point by saying, “They don’t listen to the client!” Do not forget, selling is less about persuasion and more about simply finding a need and helping a client.
6. **They do not keep in touch with past clients.** This is basically the opposite from #1, but I’ve seen people concentrate so hard on finding new clients that they forgot about their current or past buyers. One of the “set-in-stone” maxims of sales is that *“it’s easier to get sales from someone who has already done business with you.”* Forgetting about referrals and repeat business will doom you.
7. **They take rejection personally.** I hope that I have made it clear that successful salespeople hear “no” much more often than salespeople who do not make it. Sales is a numbers game, and you will hear “no” much more

than you will hear “yes.” Try to learn from each “no.” I blatantly ask them, *“You know, I try to learn something from everyone who doesn’t buy from me — what could I have done differently?”* More times than not, you will learn that they were not really in the market for your product or service or that it was a budget issue you had no control over — but at least you’ll learn it’s not you.

8. **They do not “narrowcast” their activity.** You cannot be all things to all prospects. Become a specialist in a particular market or industry and you will thrive.
9. **They listen to their peers.** I am not contradicting myself when I wrote about forming “peer roundtables” of similar people from around the country to share ideas. I am suggesting that you avoid listening to the people who are not successful and always have an excuse. Problems, difficulties, and reasons why things cannot be sold, often outnumber the reasons why they can be sold in some discussions.

Sales careers are not built — or ruined for that matter — in one single day. They are destroyed because of long-term, consistent activities that fly in the face of logical workflow. Keep this list handy and refer to it on a regular basis to make sure you are not developing any bad habits.

Chapter 8: In Closing

“Most people have the will to win — very few of those have the will to prepare to win.”

Coach Bobby Knight

Well, I found a prospect (that’s you in case you were wondering). Throughout this book, I posed questions for you to ask yourself. Now, I am going for the close! Just like in real life, the close should come naturally. It should be a natural progression of a chain of events. However, you need to ask for the sale, and that is what I am about to do: **I am asking you to try sales!**

Chances are good you are either currently unemployed, dissatisfied with your present job, or know someone who is at a career crossroads. Why else would you have spent time reading this book?

Do not make this book a piece of exercise equipment. You know what I am talking about — you might even have one in your own home! You had good intentions when you bought that treadmill, exercise bike, or Bowflex, but it just sits in the corner of your bedroom gathering dust. Take action TODAY to begin a new career in sales. Do not let your career gather dust.

I am sure that being a salesperson never occurred to you before, but you now know that it never occurred to the thousands of other people who currently earn a great living selling either. I guarantee that when they were in high school

talking to their friends about what they were going to do once they graduated; becoming a salesperson never came up!

If you are tired of layoffs and competing with hundreds of other people for a single opening, consider a sales career. If the job market in your current industry is stacked against you due to education, experience, or age considerations, why wouldn't you check out a career in sales?

Just like my dreams of becoming a disc jockey segued into radio sales that eventually turned into my present job of selling computer training, your employment journey has taken a turn. I could never go back to a non-sales job — unless it was being the general manager of the Dallas Mavericks!

I do not consider myself a people person. In fact, my wife and kids think I am anti-social and they are right! However, I love the control I have in sales. The control of how much money I make and whether or not I even have a job.

Obstacles to Overcome

The challenge with too many salespeople is that they decide at first to “try” selling for a while. They do not commit one hundred percent to it as a career. Those are the ones that fail. The highest paid salespeople are the ones who have “*burned the ship*” so to speak. Hundreds of years ago, the Spanish conquistador Cortez burned his ships when he landed in Mexico so his men would concentrate on making it in the new land since there was no way to go home. People who are successful in sales only look to the future.

One of the major obstacles that many sales “newbie’s” have to overcome is their own ego. Ego can be a major career destroyer. It often affects people who come into sales from another field where they have been successful. They feel they should not have to do the basics because it feels humiliating.

Let’s talk about the emotions that you may be dealing with, either as you consider a sales career or shortly after you start one:

Rejection. Rejection is a part of life. My guess is you have been turned down for several jobs in your previous field, otherwise you would not be here checking out a sales career. Well, rejection is a part of sales but it is not personal. You might get your proposal rejected but they aren’t rejecting you as a human being, so don’t sweat it.

Remember, “no” is just “no for the moment.” There are literally hundreds, if not thousands of times in my career that I sold people who initially said “no” to me. Fear and rejection are components of failure or perceived failure. Let’s spend some time on failure.

The Fear of Failure

When I first joined a Toastmasters club, I did a speech on failure. Here are some excerpts:

Our society glorifies winners and many times punishes those who fail. Failure ... it’s only a word but it carries with it so much pain and so much frustration and so little respect. But it’s our failures that actually make life better for everyone. Failure is common. Why else

would someone have come up with, “If at first you don’t succeed, _____ (I let the audience finish the sentence)? Face it. The closest we ever come to perfection is when we fill out a job application or develop our resumes! If you are afraid to fail, you will never try anything new. Cicero said, “A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials.” We learn from failure. In the course of life, we all fail many times.

You fell down the first time you walked. You may have almost drowned the first time you tried to swim. Did you hit the ball the first time you swung a bat? In baseball, the best home run hitters also strike out the most.

R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York took off. James Michener got hundreds of rejection slips before he got **South Pacific** published. Thomas Edison tried thousands of different filaments before the light bulb was invented.

Kids are great role models. Infants and young children make mistakes all the time, but they go right back to the task and repeat it until they get it right. The reason children handle failure so well is because they haven’t yet developed their “inner critic.” It’s that voice that tells you that you’ve made a mistake and should feel shame or humiliation. When you make a mistake, ignore your inner critic, and turn your failure into a learning experience. If a two-year-old can do it, you can too!

As your child grows older, one of the most important things you can do as a parent is to teach them that it’s okay to make mistakes. I am always telling my sons, “Don’t be afraid to make a mistake because that’s when you actually learn something. If you got it right, you might have just gotten lucky.” Teach them to embrace mistakes and

not worry about their failures — as long as it does not involve your car that you loaned to them!

In sales, “No” is part of our life. The word “Why” should be as well. “No, I am not interested in what you are selling” **“Why?”** “No, your product or service won’t work for us.” **“Why?”** “Help me learn from this small failure. It might benefit you later on! The next time you have a need for my product or service, I’ll be ready to help you because of the information you give me now.”

A “no” is okay, but it must always be followed by **“Why.”** How often have you heard your kids ask “Why?” when you say, “No, you can’t do that.”

Failure is not personal. Failure is a function of activity. The more times you try something, the more times you are likely to fail. But if you dissect your failures, you’ll get closer to your ultimate goal.

Failure and the education it provides can be some of the most important lessons life will give us. So do not worry about failure. Worry about the opportunities you miss when you do not even try or continue to try after your first mistake. It’s not failing when you do not reach your goal — it’s a failure to never set a goal. It is not a failure to not fulfill a dream — it is a failure when you don’t dream. Finally, failure is not falling down — failure is not getting back up or in the words of that great philosopher, Madonna, in one of her songs, “I fall down but I get up again ... over and over.”

Experience with Job Seekers

During the past few years, I have counseled and worked with dozens of displaced workers. I have read stories of other individuals who lost their jobs to no fault of their own — individuals who were making \$80,000 a year and now tend bar or work for landscaping services. It is not exactly what they were planning on ten years after they left school.

Their inability to land another job might smack of failure, but in reality, failure is only giving up. Failure is not considering other employment options! Regardless of whether you pursue a career in sales or you continue your job pursuit in your previous field, try new approaches and do not be afraid to fail!

Go back and reread the overviews of the sales professionals profiled in this book. Every one of those people was at the same crossroads that you sit at now. Their only regret — remember the power of regret at the beginning of the book? — is probably not making the switch to sales sooner!

Take this opportunity to check out a career that you never thought about before. Think about, **“The Job Nobody Dreams of!”**

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to e-mail me at bill@thejobnobodydreamsof.com.

I wish you the best!

Put It To Work!

1. What were some of the important points of this book that you want to work on or get more information about?

2. List 2 facts about a sales career or salespeople that you did not know before you read the book.

3. List any obstacles (real or in your head) that you feel you need to overcome in order to go out and get your first sales job. Are these real obstacles or just a frame of mind you need to change?

Chapter 9: For Sales Managers Only

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means.”

Albert Einstein

While this book was conceived and written for individuals seeking a better career, my message is equally important to companies who want to attract better-qualified sales candidates.

During the research for this book, I reviewed a lot of help-wanted advertising in the Sunday classifieds and online job banks. Most of them were not very good. That is why traditional recruitment ads attract the same prospects — people already in sales or those who are desperate for ANY type of a job.

If you are tired of the staggering turnover of salespeople who view sales as “the job of last resort,” and treat it as such even after they have been hired, then change the way you recruit salespeople! Fix your help-wanted ads!

“Old school” recruiting methods will not motivate the kind of individual you need to upgrade your sales staff — someone who has been successful in another field and can help you reach your sales goals.

Assuming your company provides the means for someone to come in and earn a great deal of money and build a future, the problem isn't the job you offer — it's how you are presenting it!

If you want to be able to attract quality individuals for your sales career opportunities and build a world-class sales staff, you need to remember that many of your possible future star performers will come to you with no previous sales experience.

Business owners and sales managers who are savvy enough to understand this concept can take advantage of it and tap into a pool of talent that has never before been available!

These candidates have been successful in other fields and developed a great work ethic. They have super time-management skills and the ability to ask questions — skills that can easily transfer to sales! Do the people on your current staff excel at all these skills?

You cannot recruit this pool of talent the same way you have recruited in the past! You are not going to get their attention simply by listing five-day workweeks, paid vacations, and promotions from within.

To attract quality individuals, you must explain the benefits of a sales career in general and then list the details about your specific job opportunity!

Develop a recruiting program that allows people to learn more about sales in general and your specific career opportunity from the comfort of their home or office. Create a “virtual job fair” on your website where people can visit any time for more information.

Include profiles of your salespeople and their picture in your help-wanted advertising! Post recorded audio-testimonials on your website from your current sales staff!

Let them explain what they did before they joined your company and why they love working for you! Set up a job hotline that people can call 24/7 for more information about careers.

Think about what it would mean to your bottom line in the next six to twelve months if you could add two, three, or more new members to your sales staff — people who are true professionals! They are out there. You just need to change your tactics and get them to consider a job they have never dreamt about before — a job NOBODY dreams of — sales!

If you would like to learn more about recruiting better-qualified sales candidates, visit my website at www.thejobnobodydreamsof.com/salesmanagers.htm

Chapter 10: Resources and Plan of Action

*“Formal education will make you a living –
self-education will make you a fortune.”*
Jim Rohn, Noted Business Philosopher

This chapter contains the names of websites, books, and newsletters that I have used to help further my career. Remember the opening quote from Bobby Knight in the previous chapter? *“Preparing to win”* is what separates winners from losers; good salespeople from great salespeople; and average earners from six-figure earners! Set aside some time each day and every week to learn something new.

Job Hunting Resource Sites

Hoovers Online (www.hoovers.com). This is one of the most popular websites for researching companies. Company overviews are free but you’ll need to subscribe for more in-depth coverage.

WetFeet (www.wetfeet.com). This is a super website for researching companies. It is famous for its well written “insider guides” that profile specific companies. It also features personal profiles of hundreds of different people in dozens of different career categories including sales.

Rileyguide.com (www.rileyguide.com). This is the Yahoo of job-search gateways. It is probably the best of the job-hunting websites out there. It has tons of resources.

Vault.com (www.vault.com). This website offers insider career information including industry and interview guides,

employer profiles, employee message boards, and industry-specific job boards.

Careerjournal.com (www.careerjournal.com) This website is brought to you by the folks at the *Wall Street Journal*. It's a great website for career advice regardless of your job.

Sales Training Sites

Jeffrey Gitomer (www.jeffreygitomer.com). I love this guy! He shoots straight and has what I call great "from the street" advice.

Closebiz (www.closebiz.org). This is a new website from Oracle and the *Wall Street Journal*. It could soon be the single best website for sales professionals.

Business by Phone (www.businessbyphone.com). This is a great website with tips, articles, a free newsletter, and a discussion forum. If you want to improve your cold calling, this website is a must!

Selling Power (www.sellingpower.com). This is one of the most-respected websites in the industry. It's geared towards managers but offers a wealth of information to help you to manage your sales career.

Rain Today (www.raintoday.com). This is a wonderful website with articles, advice, and case studies for rainmakers (people who sell professional services).

Toastmasters (www.toastmasters.org). Joining a Toastmasters club is the best way to improve your communication skills, lose your fear of public speaking, and learn skills that will help you be more successful.

Industry-Specific Sites

About.com (www.about.com/industry). This is one of the very best reference sites on the web regardless of what you are researching! It has a separate section on industries that features in-depth articles from industry pros.

Cafepharma.com (www.cafepharma.com). This detailed site dedicated to pharmaceutical sales professionals.

Corey Nahman.com (www.coreynahman.com) This website features tons of information on the pharmaceutical industry including sales careers.

GMDC.com (www.gmdc.com) This website is dedicated to general merchandise, pharmacy, and some food marketing. It is a good clearinghouse for resources covering these industries.

Insurance News Net (www.insurancenewsnet.com). This website is a wonderful clearinghouse of information on the insurance agency. It features online interviews with industry experts!

Life Insurance Selling (www.lifeinsuranceselling.com). This is one of the top magazines for the insurance industry.

NADA.org (www.nada.org) This is the home of the National Automobile Dealers Association. Check out the section on salesperson certification.

WardsAuto (www.wardsauto.com) This is probably the most comprehensive website for the auto business. The best feature is the forum section where you can ask and read answers about any aspect of the auto dealer business.

Realtor.org (www.realtor.org) This comprehensive website covers everything about the real estate industry from the National Association of Realtors. You can also read a review of the book *21 Things I Wish My Broker Had Told Me* which is probably the greatest book written about starting a real estate career.

Internet Advertising Bureau (www.iab.net). The most important site for the interactive web advertising industry.

Radio Advertising Bureau (www.rab.com). This is a great website for media salespeople as well as those who sell radio time.

Food Service Sales and Marketing (www.fsmaonline.com). This very detailed website focuses on the food broker industry.

National Association of Manufacturers (www.nam.org). This comprehensive site focuses on the manufacturing industry.

Manufacturers' Agent National Association (www.manaonline.org). If you are interested in industrial or manufacturing sales, this site is a must.

BDM News (www.bdmnews.com). This is my favorite site for resources and tips on selling information technology (IT) services.

Electronic Recruiting Exchange (www.ere.net). This is one of the most-respected sites in the recruiting industry. Whether you call on companies for recruiting orders or recruit individuals (they are both salespeople), this is the one site to keep bookmarked and visit daily.

Medical Sales Career.com (www.medicalsalescareer.com).

This is the site for the National Association of Medical Sales Representatives. It is a nice clearinghouse of information on any type of sales career in the medical field.

AfterMarketBusiness.com

(www.aftermarketbusiness.search-autoparts.com). This is one of the most complete sites on any industry I've seen. It covers the auto parts and after-market performance parts industry. It also includes videos from conference events.

Furniture Today (www.furnituretoday.com). This is the industry bible for the home furnishing and decorating fields.

Investopedia.com

(www.investopedia.com/articles/financialcareers). This is the best site I've seen on the stockbroker and trader fields. It is put together by *Forbes Magazine*.

Recommended Books

I told you earlier that Amazon.com had over half a million books about selling and most of them (in my opinion) were not that good. Here are four books that are VERY good:

1. ***The Sales Bible: The Ultimate Sales Resource* by Jeffrey Gitomer.** This is a fantastic book and probably should be your first choice if you are new to sales. The advice that Gitomer offers is absolutely first class! His *Little Green Book on Getting Your Way* and *Little Red Book of Selling* complete the triple play of books that should be in your personal library.

2. ***Spin Selling* by Neil Rackham.** This may be my all-time favorite sales book! It is backed up by years of research, watching salespeople during sales calls. The logic behind the principles in this book is superb! It might be a little too detailed at first glance, but if you plan to be a success in sales, you need to read this book.

Putting Your Goal of Landing a Sales Job into a Plan of Action

Less than 5 percent of the population will ever write down a goal they want to achieve. In order to achieve your goal of landing your first sales job, you must begin planning NOW! You will need to break down your goal into objectives, then break your objectives into individual tactics and finally give those tactics specific due dates for actions.

Your goal for deciding what kind of job to seek might be broken down like this:

Objective 1: Decide on What Kind of Sales Job to Seek

Tactic 1.1: Online Research

Action 1.11: Visit the website of each company on your list..

Due Date: 9/15

Action 1.12: Review Hoovers.com profiles for your list of target companies. **Due Date:** 9/25

Action 1.13: Read profiles on websites to learn about other companies and industries. **Due Date:** 9/30

Tactic 1.2: Face-to-Face Research

Action 1.21: Make a list of companies from which to invite a rep to lunch. **Due Date:** 9/15

Action 1.22: Obtain copies of trade magazines from associations and libraries. **Due Date:** 9/15

This format breaks down an overall goal into logical steps. First identifying your individual objectives and then creating a battle plan of actions to be taken within specific dates. Play with this a little and take time every

week (I do mine on Sundays) to review the plan and fine tune as needed.