

Proven, Practical Secrets for Creating EPIC Sales Improvement

By Larry Lewis



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1. You must believe in what you sell.

At its essence, selling is about the transfer of beliefs. Before a customer decides to buy your product or service, they must first buy your belief that you can solve their problems or capture an opportunity. In order to transfer that belief, you must believe it yourself. Your customers will never come to believe in the value of your products or services any more strongly than you do. If you don't believe in yourself, your organization or your organization's ability to solve your customers' problems, you might as well quit trying. Only con artists can sell something they don't believe in.

When they first start, new business owners and salespeople are brimming with the belief that their company and the products or services they sell are the best in the business. If, early on, we were to measure these beliefs on a scale from one to ten (with ten being the highest), most salespeople and business owners would rank their belief in what they have to offer at a nine or a ten. But over time, reality intervenes – orders get lost, products fail and mistakes happen. Their personal belief in their company and its products and services begins to decline.

Over time, competitors challenge your claims. Prospects who are loyal to your competitors tell you that your products or services are no better than the competition's. Over time, business owners and their salespeople begin to buy into the belief that their products are merely average – no worse, but no better than the competition. They begin to see their products and services as mere commodities. Their belief begins to backslide from

a nine or ten down to a five or six. As this belief drops, the motivation to sell declines along with it.

If you're a business owner and you see this happening, you need to make some changes fast. Assess your beliefs and determine whether there is any truth to them. If there is, you must find a way to improve your service or otherwise differentiate your company from the competition. If your assessment serves to remind you that you are, in fact, superior to your competition, you must reinforce these positive, constructive beliefs on a daily basis. The chapter on "Improving Your Mental Game" will show you how to do this.

If you're a salesperson whose beliefs begin to falter, you need to make the same assessment and either strive to fix the problems within your company or, put the blinders on, and fix your belief system. If you cannot do either, it's time to look for a new job.

Research conducted by the late Bill Brooks of the Brooks Group shows that fear of rejection is not as big an issue for salespeople as fear of embarrassment.¹ Salespeople must believe that the product or service they sell is exactly what they say it is and that it will perform exactly as they say it will. If they don't believe it, they won't say it, for fear of being embarrassed. And if they can't say it, they certainly can't sell it.

Smart companies ensure that the products or services they sell exceed the standards they promise. They spend a great deal of time proving to their salespeople, as well as customers, that the

¹Bill Brooks, *Sales Techniques* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004) p. 16

claims they make are true. It makes no difference what the product or service is. Salespeople must believe in the value and validity of what they sell. Once their belief is gone, their power to sell evaporates along with it.

2. Keep your focus on your prospect at all times.

Most salespeople focus too much on themselves, their product or service, or their organization, instead of putting the focus where it belongs – on their prospects and customers. You can only focus on one thing at a time, and where you place that singular focus will determine your sales success. Regardless of whatever other challenges you are facing at the moment, when you are on the phone or in front of a prospect with the intention of selling something, you must be able to set aside those challenges, and give your prospect your undivided attention.

Companies often exacerbate this problem by sponsoring contests designed to reduce their inventories of old products or by providing incentives that drive salespeople to sell things that are not necessarily in their customers' best interests. The minute a company offers a "spiff" or some other incentive to sell a certain product, their salespeople will begin to do things that fly in the face of this principle. A spiff automatically causes salespeople to shift their focus away from their customers and onto the product they are selling or the prize they'll win for selling it.

This principle is also violated when salespeople give standardized PowerPoint presentations that start with a history of their company. Presentations like these are the equivalent of showing home movies. The only people who enjoy these movies are the people in them or the person who took them. (If you have ever been forced to sit through someone's slideshow of their most recent family vacation, you know this to be true!) In the context of a sales presentation,

neither of those two people is your prospect. You should only present your company's history if your prospect asks for it. Your prospect and their challenges should be the center of attention, not you.

One of the best techniques you can use to keep your focus on your prospect is to repeat the following affirmation before every sales call: "I am financially independent, and I don't need this business." It not only raises your confidence; it keeps you calm. It reminds you that you are there for the customer and not for yourself. Everything you do throughout the sales process should be expressed from your prospect's point of view and for your customer's benefit; it should never be about you.

3. The better you are at prospecting; the better you'll be at selling.

If you aren't prospecting on a regular basis so that you have a pipeline full of potential opportunities, your ability to sell will be compromised. The reason lies in your mindset. If you only have a handful of opportunities with which to meet your business objectives, every deal becomes a make-or-break situation. With loads of pressure riding on each deal, you'll have the tendency to do everything wrong.

When you desperately need to make a sale, your focus naturally shifts from your prospect's needs and desires to yourself and your needs. As a result, you fail to listen carefully and you don't qualify an opportunity properly. You end up with something I call "happy ears." You hear what you want to hear and ignore anything that indicates that a deal may be in jeopardy.

When you desperately need to make a sale, your tendency is to push too hard and, in the end, you often choke. When you have plenty of prospects in your pipeline, you can afford to make a few mistakes. You can relax a little. You don't feel desperate and your focus naturally stays on your

prospect. As a result, you do a much better job of selling the right way.

No matter how much business you currently have, you should never stop looking for new customers. In today's dynamic business climate, you will always lose customers through no fault of your own. Companies go out of business every day, and consumer's budgets are often pinched by the current state of the economy. Even if you simply want to maintain your current level of business, you'll need a steady stream of new prospects just to take the place of the customers you lose. Of course, if you are planning to grow, you'll need to add even more prospects to your pipeline on a regular basis.

Allocate a part of your time to prospecting each and every week to ensure a steady stream of new sales opportunities entering your sales pipeline. Not only will it improve your prospecting, it will improve your ability to convert those opportunities into new sales.

4. Seek to be respected, instead of being liked.

Conventional wisdom has long held that selling is about relationships and that relationships are the underpinning of sales success. For years, salespeople have been taught to build relationships first and the sales would follow. This led to a generation of salespeople who became professional visitors armed with nothing more than a good joke and box of donuts. However, recent research conducted by the Corporate Executive Board has shown that relationships are not as important as everyone thinks. In most B2B sales, the relationship and the purchasing decision have become decoupled. Today, strong relationships are the result, not the cause of

successful selling.² I believe the same this is true in B2C sales, as well.

All things being equal, people tend to do business with people they like. However, value trumps relationship every time. Salespeople should seek to be respected for the insight they bring and the value they provide to their customers instead of trying to get their customers to like them.

Salespeople who seek to be liked by winning their prospects' approval rarely succeed in the long run. Let's face it, the easiest way to win a prospect's approval is to give them whatever they want, at the price they want it. While your customers will love you for it in the short term, this is not a winning proposition for you or your company over the long run. Giving your customers whatever they want at the lowest possible price will cause your margins to erode and your company to become unprofitable. If you seek to be liked, you're only going to be able to sell on price. If you seek to gain your prospects respect, you will ultimately gain their trust, and you'll be in a far better position to sell value.

In addition, salespeople who seek approval tend to hang onto sketchy sales opportunities long after these deals should have been disqualified and removed from their pipeline. They often confuse the question of whether a buyer is qualified with whether the buyer likes them. When a prospect says "no", the approval-seeking salesperson takes the rejection personally and feels hurt. They erroneously believe that their prospect is rejecting them, instead of their company or its products and services. This fear of rejection causes them to avoid asking for a final decision out of fear that it will be a "no", a word they hate to hear. Successful salespeople get their emotional needs met through their friends and family, not from their prospects and customers. Besides, once a prospect

² Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson, *The Challenger Sale* (New York, NY: Portfolio/Penguin, 2011) p. xv

respects you, they will often come to like you. So seek to be respected and the “like” will follow.

5. Collaboration, not competition, is the appropriate mindset for selling

Too many salespeople look upon the sales process as a contest. They see it as a game in which one party is trying to win at the expense of another or where the object is to “get” your prospect before they “get” you. Jeff Thull of the Prime Resource Group refers to this as the “adversarial” mindset, and it permeates many of the old-school sales training programs that have long grown stale or been discredited.³

The adversarial mindset is a carryover from the old paradigm of transactional selling, and it is incredibly counterproductive in today’s business environment. It was illustrated by the outdated adage that salespeople should “always be closing”, a mindset personified by the very worst caricatures of salespeople on display in movies like “Glengarry Glen Ross” and “Boiler Room.” In the late ‘80s, behavioral scientist and sales guru, Neil Rackham, disproved the notion that salespeople should “always be closing” once and for all, when he scientifically proved that the more times a salesperson attempts to close a sale, the less likely he is to get the deal.⁴

An adversarial mindset makes it harder for your prospects to let down their guard and share the information you need from them to conduct an effective diagnosis. Even if you “win” the sale, the adversarial mindset slows down the acceptance and implementation of your new product or service, thereby delaying the benefit your new customer hopes to derive from the sale. While top salespeople are naturally competitive, they should

save this competitive instinct for exceeding quotas and winning sales contests. When it comes to interaction between salespeople and their prospects, the mindset should be one of collaboration, not competition.

6. People buy emotionally; they only justify their decisions rationally.

Dale Carnegie may have been the first person to articulate this fundamental truth about selling when he said: *“When dealing with people, let us remember, we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity.”*⁵

Similarly, Dan Sullivan of the Strategic Coach explains selling this way: *“Humans are emotional beings first and foremost, who use reason to make sense of their emotions. You may use every rational argument to demonstrate why it makes sense for someone to do business with you, but if you don’t appeal to your customers on an emotional level, you’re just another salesperson – and you may be missing a big part of what’s influencing their buying decisions.”*⁶

When you ask someone to buy something, you are asking them to change. You are asking them to change their supplier or their method of doing something. People change when the consequences of staying put are worse than the consequences associated with changing. However, it’s not what they *think* about the notion of changing; it’s how they *feel* about it that matters.

One of my early mentors, Guru Ganesha Khalsa, defines selling as *“the art of inspiring people to do what is in their best interest by helping them get in*

³ Jeff Thull, *Mastering the Complex Sale* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2003) p. 34

⁴ Neil Rackham, *SPIN Selling* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988)

⁵ Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (New York: Pocket Books, 1936) p. 14

⁶ Dan Sullivan, *The D.O.S. Conversation* (Toronto: The Strategic Coach, 1994)

touch with what's important to them on a personal, emotional level." Successful salespeople know to focus on the consequences associated with action or inaction and the feelings and emotions associated with those consequences.

While selling experts have been making this claim for decades, it wasn't until recently that experts in the relatively new field of behavioral economics have proven this concept scientifically. In a national study conducted at the University of Florida, researchers found that emotions are nearly twice as important as knowledge when making buying decisions.⁷ In his book, Predictable Irrationality, MIT behavioral economist Dan Ariely, explains the profound effect our emotions play in the decisions we make on a daily basis and how expectations, emotions, social norms and other invisible, seemingly illogical forces skew our reasoning abilities. Similarly, in his book titled How We Decide, author Jonah Lehrer discusses the research being conducted on how people make buying decisions in the field of neuroscience. He cites numerous examples of how people make decisions using their brains' emotional centers, as opposed to the area of the brain that deals with reason. He even points out that when it comes to making complex decisions, our emotional brain is superior to our rational brain.

Many salespeople are uncomfortable with the notion that in order to sell effectively they must address people's emotions. They even question the ethics of appealing to a person's emotions when selling, as if there is something underhanded about it. Like it or not, this is how people buy. People buy emotionally; they only justify their decisions rationally. Ignore this at your peril. If you want to get someone to buy your stuff, you've got to make it personal and create an

emotional connection between the challenges they face and the solutions you offer.

7. People buy when they have "pain."

Negative emotions, in particular, are often what drive people to seek solutions and buy your products and services. Behavioral studies show that about 65 to 70 percent of human motivation comes from avoiding negative consequences, while only 30 to 35 percent comes from seeking positive outcomes. For lack of a better word, these negative emotions are what we call "pain." While we all enjoy experiencing positive emotions, they pale in comparison to the power of "pain" to bring about change.

"Pain" is the gap between a prospect's current situation and what they would like their situation to be. According to sales expert Michael Bosworth, *"if the buyer has what we call pain – discomfort or dissatisfaction with the current situation – he will be motivated to seek a solution if he thinks a solution is possible."*⁸ Jeff Thull of the Prime Resource Group explains it this way: *"The process of buying goods and services is all about making a decision to change. People change when they feel dissatisfied, fearful, and/or pressured by their current problems. Pain causes people to change. Without pain a person is unlikely to change. Without change there is no sale."*⁹ Marketers often refer to this as the "FUD factor" – fear, uncertainty and doubt. FUD is what motivates most people to buy.

A few of my clients hate the word pain. Instead of conjuring up images of a helpful doctor trying to diagnose a patient's problems, the concept of pain makes them think of former president Bill Clinton, speaking at a town hall meeting where he repeatedly told the audience *"I feel your pain."* If

⁷ University Of Florida Study: Americans More Likely To Let Their Emotions Do The Buying, *University of Florida News* (August 1, 2002)

⁸ Michael T. Bosworth, *Solution Selling* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995) pp. 35-36

⁹ Thull, p. 48

you have a hard time with the word pain, think of it in these terms: pain is nothing more than a compelling, personal reason for someone to change how they do things or who they buy from. Regardless of whether you sell a product or a service, tangible or intangible, to consumers or businesses, in the end, we all sell the same thing – solutions to people’s pain.

8. Use systems for prospecting and selling.

Although the Client Builder Selling process is a great system, and one that I obviously believe superior to other selling systems, any system for selling is better than no system at all. Without a system you’ll be doomed to making the same selling mistakes over and over. Without a system you have no method of identifying and replicating the things that bring about success. Without a system for selling you’ll be inconsistent and so will your results.

You need systems for both prospecting and selling. Your prospecting system should consist of at least four different methods for filling your sales pipeline with strong sales opportunities. Your selling system is designed to convert these opportunities into sales. It should guide the opportunities in your pipeline through the buying process to the point of having your prospect make a final decision quickly and easily. In addition, your system for selling should be aboveboard and completely straightforward – such that you feel comfortable sharing it with your prospect at the very start of the sales process. Your prospect should know what to expect at each and every step along the way.

The Client Builder Selling process enables you to properly diagnose the challenges and opportunities facing your prospects, uncover the parameters of what they are able and willing to invest along with their decision criteria and their process for making a final decision so that when you finally present your proposal, it hits the mark.

This system ensures that you’ll only present your solutions to prospects that are qualified. This means that they have a problem you can help solve or an opportunity you can help capture. It means that they recognize and acknowledge the problem/opportunity and are committed to seeking a solution. It means that they are willing and able to invest the resources necessary to gain your help and implement a solution. It means that they are willing to give you access to the people who have the authority to make a final decision so that you can present them with a proposal and whatever else they need to make that decision. By using my selling system faithfully, you’ll have the ability to shorten your selling cycle and increase your odds of closing every deal. Most importantly, you’ll be able to conserve your most precious resource – your time.

9. You can’t “convince” anybody of anything.

Traditionally, salespeople have been led to believe that they must “convince” someone to buy their product or service. This idea of “convincing” conjures up images of a great orator with the power to change anybody’s mind with a handful of well-chosen words; or the coach whose halftime speech spurs his players on to victory. It puts the spotlight on the salesperson to deliver a compelling argument that nobody can deny. While this might make for a great scene in a Hollywood movie, it doesn’t work in sales. The truth is that you can’t convince anybody of anything. All you can do is facilitate the decision process of your prospects so that they are motivated to make up their own minds.

For example, salespeople have traditionally been taught that when a prospect raises an objection it is a buying signal that shows the prospect is interested. Not true. Questions are buying signals, but objections aren’t. Objections are obstacles that your prospect must overcome before a sale can be made. When a prospect has an objection, you can’t

overcome it, only your prospect can overcome it. All you can do is facilitate that process.

Too often I see salespeople counter objections with arguments that make a great deal of sense to the salespeople themselves. However, their prospects remain unmoved by their explanations. In fact, counterarguments offered by salespeople will often make their prospects even more emphatic about their objections and more deeply entrenched in opposition to buying – the exact opposite of what salespeople are hoping to accomplish. When a prospect has an objection, instead of trying to prove to them that they shouldn't be concerned about whatever their objection is, help them come up with answers of their own.

The easiest way to illustrate this technique is with a true story. At one time I was part of a sales training franchise. While most prospects expected the pricing between franchisees to be similar, there was actually little consistency across the franchise organization. As a result, one day I found myself in front of a prospect who had sought my help based on the recommendation of a friend who was working with a fellow franchisee in a different state. I thought the sale was going to be a slam dunk until my prospect discovered that my consulting fees were almost twice as high as what my colleague was charging for similar services.

When confronted by this objection, I was tempted to try and overcome it by suggesting that my services were superior. Had I done this, I would have elicited a debate that would have been very difficult for me to win. Instead, I acknowledged his concern and empathized with him. I asked him why he thought I charged more. After thinking about it for a minute, he suggested that my colleague might be less experienced than I was. I politely affirmed that he might be right. He went on to suggest that my colleague must have needed the business more than I did and was therefore more willing to negotiate. Once again, I politely

confirmed his suggestion and explained that I had sufficient business such that I didn't need to negotiate my fees. But he didn't stop there; he kept going. He actually suggested that my training program and my method of delivery was superior to that of my lower-priced colleague. After all, you get what you pay for. Every time he came up with an explanation that made sense, I reinforced it.

I could have given him the same explanations on my own; but he would have been far less likely to agree. People always like their own answers better than someone else's. Because he came up with answers to his own objections, he was far more comfortable with the conclusions he drew from those answers.

In short, you can't convince anybody of anything. They have to convince themselves. Your job is to facilitate that process. It is your responsibility to help your prospects come up with their own reasons for buying your stuff without putting words in their mouths. It takes skill and patience, but the results are always better this way, and the sale almost never unravels once a final decision is made.

10. Selling is a process of disqualification.

Not everybody is a prospect for your product or service. If a prospect doesn't have a problem you can help solve or an opportunity you can help capture, he is not a viable prospect. He is disqualified from becoming your customer. He is not a good fit. There is no point in pursuing this opportunity any further, for now.

As you work your way through the Client Builder Selling process, you should constantly be asking yourself whether the opportunity in front of you is a good fit. If a prospect doesn't have pain, or refuses to acknowledge it, they are not a good fit. If a prospect has pain, but doesn't have or isn't willing to invest the resources needed to fix it they are disqualified. If a prospect does not have the

authority to make a final decision and will not give you access to the person who does; it's over. That prospect is disqualified.

As the late Bill Brooks said, *"the secret to selling is to be in front of qualified prospects when they are ready to buy, not when you need to make a sale."*¹⁰ The most important resource you have is your time. Allocate it wisely. Smart salespeople spend their time with the opportunities that are most likely to close. They don't waste their time with prospects that are not qualified. Using the Client Builder Selling process, you will know how and when to disqualify a prospect. When you discover that a prospect is not qualified, move on and find someone who is. Let it go. Your prospect will be better off and so will you.

11. Give your prospect the freedom to say "no."

It may sound simplistic, but the secret to increasing sales rests in your ability to get prospects to tell you "no." Great salespeople get their share of yes's, but they also hear a lot of no's. What they don't accept are "maybes" or "think-it-overs."

Maybes and think-it-overs waste your time. They cause you to follow up on deals that should have been removed from your pipeline. They give you false hope. They discourage you from dedicating more of your time and energy to prospecting. In short, they are poison to your sales career. Eliminate think-it-overs and you'll blow through quotas faster than Usain Bolt in the 100-meter dash.

Traditionally, salespeople have always pushed their prospects to say yes. We've all heard the line *"What's it going to take for you to buy from me today,"* or the ubiquitous *"If I can show you a way, will you buy from me?"* People love to buy, but

they hate to be sold. In pushing for a yes, the old-school salesperson makes his prospects feel like they are being sold, and they naturally resist.

Instead, tell your prospects up front that it is okay to say no and then push for a no (instead of a yes) whenever your prospects show ambivalence about becoming your customer. When it's time to ask for their business, instead of pushing prospects to buy from you using some outdated closing tactic or trick, tell them in advance that at the end of your meeting they will need to make a final decision. Obviously a decision to buy from you would be wonderful, but make sure they understand that a no is also acceptable. As you move through the sales process, seek agreement at the end of each step in the process and at the end of each sales call about whether you and your prospect should take the next step together. When you reach the end of the sales process, your prospects should already know that they will be expected to make a final decision.

If upon reaching the end of the sales process, your prospect is still uncertain whether to buy from you, don't back down and accept a "think-it-over." Explain that while you'd love to have them as a customer, if they aren't comfortable saying "yes," you'll happily accept their "no" and close their file. Let them know that if they still need to think about it, after all you've discussed, you have to assume that, in their mind, it really isn't a good fit. We call this "going for the no."

You don't want to sound arrogant and you don't want to act tough. The wrong tone will sound like sour grapes. Be sincere and nurturing, but be firm. The best part of "going for no" is that your prospects will never feel threatened or manipulated into doing something they don't want to do.

Now, before you sound the alarm, let me quell a few fears. I know that you don't really want a "no" from your prospect. That's the best part of "going

¹⁰ Brooks, p. 16

for the no.” You rarely get it. When you “go for the no,” one of two things will happen. A prospect who isn’t really interested in buying your product or service will admit it’s over, thereby freeing up your time to spend with prospects that are truly interested. That’s not a bad thing. It saves you the time and aggravation of chasing a dead deal.

However, prospects that are interested but still aren’t convinced will not want you to go away. By “going for the no,” you will shake out the hidden concerns and obstacles preventing the sale. Once these concerns are out in the open, you can discuss them and give your prospect another opportunity to make a final decision.

“Going for the no” is designed to uncover the truth. When you push for a “yes,” you put pressure on your prospects. You encourage them to lie to you. Sometimes they lie to avoid hurting your feelings. Sometimes they lie in order to get rid of you. Sometimes they lie because they are afraid of you.

This fear is justified. Salespeople that sell to consumers in their homes have been taught that they shouldn’t leave until they get the sale. Sometimes the only way to get rid of a salesperson in these situations is to give in to the salesperson’s high pressure demands to buy. It’s the reason why most states have enacted legislation that gives a consumer three days after signing a contract to back out of a deal.

Don’t be afraid of “going for the no.” While most salespeople say they would like to hear the truth, in reality “they can’t handle the truth” when it means they aren’t going to win. Weak salespeople would rather hang on to a familiar prospect long after a deal is dead rather than pursue a stranger who might actually buy. Don’t let your fear of rejection or need for approval get in the way.

Successful salespeople are never afraid of a “no.” They have plenty of other deals in their pipeline to

work on. They understand that for every deal that doesn’t close they are one step closer to reaching a deal that does. By getting rid of the deadwood in their pipeline they have more time to focus on opportunities that are likely to result in sales.

By the way, when you get a “no,” be sure to clarify whether it is a “no forever” or a “no for now.” Just because a prospect isn’t qualified today doesn’t mean they won’t be qualified in the future. Ask your prospect if they want to hear from you again. If they do, ask them what needs to change for it to make sense to revisit this issue with them at a later date and when it would be appropriate for you to follow up. Ask if they would like to stay on your mailing list, so you can continue to send relevant articles and case studies on the problems you’ve solved for other companies or individuals like them. Just because they aren’t ready to buy today, doesn’t mean they won’t be ready to buy someday.

12. Give yourself permission to fail.

Many of the strategies and techniques you read about in these pages or learn in one of my training programs will be new to you. Because of this, you are bound to fail the first few times you try them. After all, learning how to sell is no different than learning any new skill, be it baseball, golf, skiing, or whitewater kayaking. And while you are learning, you will make mistakes and you may embarrass yourself. So what? Who cares? As I’ve been telling my kids for the last 17 years, the only time you ever truly fail is when you give up. Push aside the need for approval that’s holding you back, and go for it.

When I was in my 20s, I decided to take up the sport of whitewater kayaking. With no experience or knowledge, I joined a kayaking club and began taking lessons in the calm environment of a local swimming pool. Soon thereafter I could do an Eskimo roll in the pool, and I was ready to hit the river (or so I believed.)

Wow! Was I in for a surprise! I quickly learned that it's a heck of a lot easier to perform an Eskimo roll in the warm, calm water of a swimming pool than in the middle of Class 4 rapids with water temperatures in the 50s. On my first trip down the Lower Youghiogheny River outside my hometown of Pittsburgh, I flipped upside down in the very first rapid. As my head plunged into the icy water, my brain swirled in panic and the air rushed out of my lungs. Gasping for breath I struggled to swim in the turbulent water while my legs were pummeled by rocks below the surface.

By the time I dragged myself ashore, my knees and shins were bruised and bleeding. I was exhausted – and I still had another eight miles of whitewater to go. I flipped again in the very next rapid and I began questioning my judgment for taking up the sport. I played it safe for the rest of the river, avoiding the trouble spots and even walking around a couple of the more dangerous rapids. By the time I reached the end, I thought about giving up the sport altogether and learning how to play golf instead.

My first try wasn't the success I had hoped for, but I went back to the pool sessions and tried harder. I knew I had to train my body to react without thinking about the dangers. I needed to perfect my Eskimo roll to the point where it was automatic.

My second river attempt produced the same results as the first. I flipped my kayak in the same spot and once again found myself gasping for breath as I tried to swim ashore. Later that weekend, my parents and friends encouraged me to give up the sport. I thought about it, but I was determined.

My breakthrough came on my third attempt down the river. As I approached Cucumber Falls, I shut out my fear. Like "The Little Engine That Could," I chanted under my breath "I can do it, I can do it." Once again, I flipped my boat. But this time I controlled my panic, set up, and rolled my kayak.

From that point forward, I started to enjoy the sport. No more bloody shins. No more experiments in drowning. While I've flipped my kayak more than a hundred times in the 30 years since, I've almost never come out of my boat.

Owning a business or making a career in sales is not unlike kayaking down a river for the first time. You don't always know what's ahead of you. There will be challenges you are unprepared for and times when you are afraid – not for your life, but for your livelihood. Selling looks easy until you have to do it. Without training, it is often more difficult than you imagined.

As you apply the strategies presented in this book and in our training courses, there will be times when you are not sure you can do it. You can. It just takes time and practice. Don't give up. We learn more from our failures than we do from our successes. If you're not making mistakes, you're not pushing yourself. And if you aren't willing to push yourself, you won't grow as a professional or as a person. Push past your discomfort. Work at it. Consider your failures steppingstones on the path to success.

This same principle applies to the people who work for you. As a business owner or sales manager, you should never punish failure; you should only punish a lack of effort. Failure is often the first step toward becoming successful. It takes hundreds of hours to master the art and science of selling. If you punish failure, your salespeople will give up long before they have the chance to become really good at it. Don't allow yourself or your salespeople to go back to doing things the traditional way. Although it might appear easier or feel more comfortable, it no longer works today.

The selling environment has changed dramatically over the past decade. If you are planning to succeed, your process for selling must also change. Change is never easy; but it is worth it in the end. In time, you will find yourself and your

salespeople doing things on sales calls that you never thought possible. The process outlined in this book works. Trust in it. Like any new skill, it

will take time to master. On this road to mastery, give yourself and your people permission to fail.

About Client Builder Selling

For a more in depth look at the Client Builder Selling process we strongly recommend that you purchase the book titled Client Builder Selling by Larry Lewis. You can find it on Amazon.com or through our e-store located at: <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3759929>.

About Larry Lewis and Client Builder Sales & Marketing

Larry Lewis is the founder and president of Client Builder Sales & Marketing LLC, a sales development firm that helps companies and professional service firms achieve EPIC improvement in sales performance.

Larry's practical, street-smart approach to prospecting and selling has helped hundreds of sales executives, business owners, and independent professionals increase their sales and profits with more control, greater confidence and less effort.

To learn more about Larry Lewis, Client Builder Sales & Marketing and their process for achieving EPIC improvement in sales performance visit the website at www.ClientBuilderSelling.com and download the free reports on:

"How to Increase Your Selling Horsepower"

"The Power of a Process for Increasing Sales"



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