

BARE KNUCKLE SELLING

**KNOCKOUT SALES TACTICS THEY WON'T
TEACH YOU AT BUSINESS SCHOOL**

SIMON HAZELDINE

LEANMARKETING™
★ P R E S S ★

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Foreword

Let's take off the gloves.

Let's get in the street.

Let's do business where the rules don't matter: In the real world.

After all, isn't there where all the selling takes place?

Selling doesn't take place in a lab. Or in a class room. Or in a weekend seminar where everything is controlled. Selling -- real world selling -- takes place in *real* time, with *real* people, in *real* situations.

If you don't know how to street fight in the raw world of right now reality, you won't sell anything to anybody.

And you and your family will starve.

Thank goodness this book is in your hands. Once you absorb the principles and methods in it, you'll have the skills integrated within you to do battle in the streets and make the cash register ring loud and clear.

You won't actually be fighting anyone, of course. But you'll be winning in the game of life where the only thing that counts is the thing you want the most: the sale.

Read this book. Become one with this book. Share it with coworkers (but not your competition).

And then go out and profit.

Expect miracles.

Dr. Joe Vitale
Author of way too many books to list here
www.MrFire.com

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Preface

Hello and welcome to the wonderful world of selling!

"The wonderful world of selling!" I hear you cry in disbelief. "What is so wonderful about selling these days? It's tough out there!" I hear you moan. "And it's getting more competitive and cut-throat every day! People are far better informed, and they can spot a sales pitch a mile off!"

I didn't say that selling isn't challenging at times. I didn't say that the modern commercial world isn't tough sometimes. What I am saying is that selling does not have to be that difficult. Far too many people make the process of selling very difficult for themselves. They follow the herd, and use the same worn out techniques that they have seen most other sales people use - whether effective or not.

Unfortunately, for people using these selling approaches, times have changed and they just don't work anymore - if they ever really did. You need to stop following the herd and *use what really works*.

If you are looking for a guaranteed way to improve your sales in a demanding commercial world then here it is: If you want to improve your sales rate then you have to improve your selling ability. It's that simple. The good news is that you *can* improve your selling ability. Bare Knuckle Selling is going to help you to do just that!

So why write a book entitled Bare Knuckle Selling? Bare knuckle fighters have to strip down various fighting techniques and only use what really works. In a bare knuckle fight there is no room for flashy techniques and showmanship. In the same way, Bare Knuckle Sellers use only the hard-hitting selling techniques. They use simple, effective and efficient techniques that have been stripped back to *what really works*. They use these techniques to beat their competitors.

Bare Knuckle Selling has been created by brutally stripping all the mystery out of the selling process (and there is a vitally important process that you *must* follow if you want to sell successfully) back to what really works. Bare Knuckle Selling is a highly effective, street-tested, selling process that will enable you to sell more, to

more people, more often. And it will make the whole process far easier and far more rewarding.

Bare Knuckle Selling is not just a theoretical model dreamt up in an ivory tower. It has been developed from years of hard won experience, pounding the pavement, beating the competition and winning the respect of the customer. Every single element of the process is tried and tested and proven to ensure you get what you want - more sales and very happy customers.

It is a simple, logical and highly effective process that is easy to follow. Perhaps the most important thing about Bare Knuckle Selling is that the customer is the most important person. Your customers will love the Bare Knuckle Selling process. In fact they won't think they have been sold to. They will think that they have made a wise decision to buy!

Your customer will be right. When a customer buys something as a result of the Bare Knuckle Selling process you can be certain that they will be delighted with it. That means you get happy customers. Happy customers buy from you again and again. They will also recommend you to their contacts, friends and acquaintances. This means more sales for you. This is the wonderful world of selling! A world that is exciting and satisfying. The only people who won't like Bare Knuckle Selling are your competitors!

Good Luck and Good Selling!

Simon Hazeldine, MSc, FInstSMM
August 2005

Selling Makes The World Go Round

If you ask the average man or woman on the street to describe a salesperson, what do you think they would say? “Slimy”, “Rip-off merchant”, “Shyster”, “Con Artist”, “Pushy”, “Fast talking”, “Flashy”, “Manipulative”, “Snake-oil salesman”, “Dave the dodgy double glazing guy”, “Arthur Daley style used car merchants”, “Liars”, “Deceitful” - and they’re just the more polite comments!

With that stereotype floating around our society, is it any wonder that the world of selling is regarded with suspicion?

I am prepared to place a bet that very few people reading this book were encouraged by their parents to pursue a career in selling! It is not exactly the career most parents have in mind for their children.

Be a doctor, solicitor, manager, shop assistant, perhaps even a bank robber but not a salesperson! Is it any wonder that parents would feel like this with the stereotypical salesperson being so mistrusted?

So, if selling isn’t top of most people’s career choices then how do people become sales people? Perhaps people end up in selling because they just aren’t good at anything else. Perhaps selling is what you do if you can’t find a ‘proper job’.

After all who would choose to manipulate people for a living?

This erroneous view of sales people annoys me. I am not surprised by it, just annoyed by it. And why do people have this view of sales people? Because in many cases, it is true! There are just too many sales people who use manipulative tactics. There are too many commission-hungry bandits in the field. So, is it any wonder that people are suspicious of sales people?

But in order to understand selling we need to go further than these all-too-common stereotypes. Because I believe, and so will you by the time you have finished reading this chapter, that selling makes the world go round.

According to the song, money makes the world go round. A catchy song, but factually incorrect. It is selling - not money - that makes the world go round.

Nothing Happens Until Someone Sells Something

Pause for a moment while reading this book and take a look around you. Take a good look around the environment you are in. Apart from very few items, everything will have been sold.

As I am writing these words:

I am using my laptop - which was sold to me by a very helpful salesperson at the computer shop.

I am using Microsoft Word - a salesperson from Microsoft will be involved somewhere along the way. Yes, even the mighty Microsoft has sales people!

My laptop is plugged into the mains - I signed up for my current electricity supplier when a salesperson knocked on my front door and told me that I could save money by switching suppliers.

My laptop is sitting on my desk - sold to me by the salesperson at the office suppliers.

I am sitting on my chair also sold to me by the same salesperson at the same office suppliers! A great example of selling, I was buying a desk so they sold me a chair to go with it. And come to think of it, a filing cabinet and a desk lamp too! Now that's what I call selling!

My office is in my house - which was sold to me by an estate agent. I could carry on!

And indeed I shall...

Even if you go to buy a pint of milk from your local shop you can be certain that selling was responsible for it... someone from a wholesaler sold the shop the milk to sell to you... someone sold the shop owner the till to put your money in... someone sold the owner of the shop the fridge your milk is stored in... someone sold the owner the sticky price labels to put on the milk... someone sold the shopkeeper the system he or she uses to organise the wages to pay the person who is taking your money and putting it into the till and so on and so forth.

The very reason that you are reading this book is that I sold the idea to my publisher, Lean Marketing Press, and convinced them to publish it. I had to sell them the concept that it was a good idea for a book. If I had not sold them on the idea, you would not be reading this!

Any company or organisation needs a variety of people so that it can operate effectively. So let's hear it for all the great people from accounts, marketing, warehousing, delivery, customer service, manufacturing, research and development, IT, human resources, training and so on! And if you are a one-person business then give yourself a big pat on the back because you deserve it!

However, all of these people rely on the sales people. If the sales people don't sell, then the rest of the company falls over. Everyone, yes everyone, in a company relies upon the sales people.

Nothing happens - no deliveries, no marketing budget, no accounts receivable, no customers to provide service to - until someone sells something.

I want to impress on you how vitally important selling is. Nothing happens until someone sells something. So if you want to make things happen for your company then you need to get good, really damn good, at selling.

Selling Is The Oldest Profession In The World

The entire commercial history of mankind has revolved around selling. Business from its earliest form to today's commercial world has revolved around the essential selling process.

Therefore, if nothing happens until someone sells something, then it has to be the oldest profession in the world! I do appreciate that some of you reading this may consider something else to be the oldest profession in the world. However, that is just a subset of selling, isn't it?

But I'm Not A Salesperson!

You may or may not consider yourself to be a "salesperson". I am guessing the fact that you are reading this book means you have an interest in selling. Perhaps you don't like to consider yourself as a

salesperson because of the stereotypes that exist about the selling profession.

However, even if you have never been in a selling role you have still been involved in selling. You see, when you succeeded at getting a job after an interview, you sold yourself. When you convinced someone that you were right about something, that your idea was a good one, you were selling. You may not have thought that you were selling, but that is what you were doing!

I firmly believe that anyone can become good at selling. The Bare Knuckle Selling process will enable you to sell, and sell well.

Why Selling Should Be A Reputable & Honest Profession

Let us leave the stereotypical salesperson concept and really understand what selling is about. There are, and probably always will be, people who manipulate and con people who may be referred to as "sales people". They are not, in my book, sales people.

Sales people, and the process of selling, is the essential process that keeps the modern commercial world turning. Nothing happens until someone sells something!

Selling involves helping people to understand what they need and then, if your product or service can genuinely help them, convincing them to buy it. Please note the "if" in that last sentence. The "if" is very important!

The Bare Knuckle Selling Mirror Test

This test is very simple and very powerful. If you want to be really successful at selling then you need to do it. Go and stand in front of a mirror. Look yourself straight in the eyes and ask yourself if your products and services, and how you sell them, genuinely helps people and adds value to their lives or businesses.

If the answer is a resounding "yes" then you will be able to give yourself fully to selling. If there is any hesitation, then you need to examine what it is you sell and how you sell it.

When you sell properly you don't need to con, manipulate, bamboozle or rip anyone off. You simply make sure you understand what someone really needs and then help them to get it. That is what selling is about. That is something you can be proud of. If the person does not need, and will not benefit from, your product or service then just move onto someone who will. In this way selling just becomes easier and easier, as you build up a larger and larger base of clients and customers who will recommend your products and services to others.

In this way, selling can be regarded as an honest and reputable profession. It is a profession that you can be proud to be a part of.

The 3 Rules of Bare Knuckle Selling

Here are three simple rules. If you follow them then your success in selling is guaranteed.

Rule 1: Your customers (and customers to be) are not stupid.

In today's world people are more educated and informed than ever before. People are more sophisticated and discerning. People just don't fall for blatant and manipulative tactics. I get a little frustrated when I am told that, "the sale ends on Friday". *I* know, and *you* know, that it is immediately replaced with a new sale that starts on Saturday!

People know that there is no such thing as a free lunch. No-one is very surprised (or excited) when they get selected to enter the Reader's Digest free prize draw. So, the successful salesperson treats their customers and customers to be with the respect they deserve.

Rule 2: Sell how you like to be sold to.

When I ask people how they like to be sold to, I always get some very similar responses. People like to be treated with respect and courtesy. People like to be listened to. People like the salesperson to be really interested in finding out what they want. People want the salesperson to put *their* interests first. People want to be helped to make a decision that is right for them. Why then would anyone attempt to sell any differently? To a certain extent you already know what good selling is!

Rule 3: Sell only to people who need what you've got.

People are convinced that sales people want to sell them something. They are right, so tell them what 'you're up to'...

Perhaps because of previous encounters, people can be rather suspicious of sales people. In the back of their mind they are worried that the salesperson will try to push them into buying something they don't want. To overcome this fear, just tell people what you are doing.

Tell them that your company exists by engaging in commercial transactions or relationships with customers. You provide products and/or services to customers and they pay money for them. However, what you do first is to understand what is important to the prospective customer. When you understand this, you will see *if* your products and/or services can help them. And, if they can, then you will recommend an appropriate solution. The customer can then decide to say "yes" or "no" to the proposal. By being up front with the customer you remove any fears they may have and establish trust with them.

The Bare Knuckle Selling Process

When people first encounter the concept of a process or a structure for selling, they sometimes worry that this will make them into some sort of selling robot. The Bare Knuckle Selling process does exactly the opposite!

When you have internalised a robust selling process, this allows you to respond instinctively and automatically when you are in front of a customer. The process acts as a guideline or as a handrail to guide you through the sale.

In order to be successful at selling, you must have a structure. If you do not have a robust selling structure then you can lose track of where you are during the sales call. In the to and fro of the conversation with the customer you may drift off track and lose the plot - and the sale. You may forget to cover some important areas which may later jeopardise the sale.

There are no slick sales scripts to follow with Bare Knuckle Selling. There is no "one size fits all" approach with Bare Knuckle Selling. We will be treating all of our customers as unique individuals, with

a unique set of needs. We will be treating each and every one of our customers with respect. We will remain flexible and yet disciplined in our approach.

With Bare Knuckle Selling, you will have a robust and reliable process that will guide you through the essential steps of a good sales call. The process is a guide - not a cage. You will be able to be yourself, to use *your* style, *your* personality and *your* words. In this way you will come across as natural and authentic to your customers. You will be able to combine your own unique personal style with a robust and reliable process to guide you through the sales call. This is an unbeatable combination.

The Ten Steps of Bare Knuckle Selling

Here are the ten steps that we will be covering in detail as you read further:

Before the sales call

Step 1: Plan and Prepare

Step 2: Set SMASH objectives and get into a "Top Ten State"

During the sales call

Step 3: Introduce, Hook and get Rapport

Step 4: Understand customer needs and criteria

Step 5: Understand the customer's budget

Step 6: Get the agreement to proceed

Step 7: Propose and Present

Step 8: Reinforce needs, criteria and solutions

Step 9: Secure the result

After the sales call

Step 10: Follow Up

When followed correctly, these ten steps will take you to new heights of selling success.

Please note that throughout the book I will be referring to the people you are selling to as customers. I appreciate that some of

the people you will be selling to will be prospective customers (or prospects as they are known in the selling profession) but for ease I have referred to all of these people as customers. Who knows, perhaps if you act as if all of your prospects already are customers then more of them will be!

So without any delay, please join me in the next chapter where we will look at the first step of the Bare Knuckle Selling process...

The 2P Principle

This stage in the Bare Knuckle Selling process, if mastered, will immediately catapult you to the top 10% of the selling profession. This is the step that is often overlooked by many sales “professionals”. I would be so bold as to suggest that if they are overlooking this step then they are not all that professional anyway.

Step I of the Bare Knuckle Selling process: “Plan and Prepare”

I am sure that you have been told about the importance of planning and preparing before. You will probably have heard the saying: “If you fail to plan you plan to fail.”

I have a saying that I use when running seminars on selling. It is: “I know you *know it*, but do you *do it*?” I know full well that some of the things I will mention people will have heard of before. I also know that you already know about the importance of planning and preparation. If you were in the Boy Scouts you will have been told to “Be prepared.” Due to my gender I’m not sure what they told the Girl Guides, but I’m willing to guess it was something similar!

Many of the things I suggest people do if they want to be more successful at selling are common sense. However what is common *sense* is not always common *practice*.

That’s why I say to people on my seminars, “I know you know it. That’s not really that important. What is really important is - *do you do it*?”

By the time you have finished reading this chapter, you will fully understand why you must do your planning and preparation every single time! It really can make the difference between success and failure.

A common objection (or rather excuse) that I am given is that people don’t have enough time to prepare. People will tell me that they don’t have the time to plan and prepare their sales calls. They just need to get on and do them.

It would appear however, that they do have the time to waste on making sales calls that are unproductive and unsuccessful. Calls that are not planned and prepared are far less likely to be successful. You can also waste a potential customer's time as well as your own. Hardly a tactic that will build a strong commercial relationship is it?

To illustrate the value of investing time (and I do see it as an investment that delivers a return) into planning and preparation, allow me to tell a personal story.

Many years ago I was working as the sales manager of a telephone selling department. Although I was the manager, the company was relatively small and the pay was not too wonderful. I had taken the job initially to get selling experience as I wanted to develop a career in sales. But now it was time for a change.

I applied for a sales job with a major blue chip company. I knew that this company had an enviable reputation for the quality of its sales people. I was determined to secure a sales position as I knew I would get some of the very best sales training available in the country and possibly even the world.

I succeeded in getting an initial interview and knew that I had to make a good impression if I wanted to go to the next stage - an assessment centre.

I knew that I had to plan and be prepared.

So, after work one evening, I went to my local business library. I spent several hours researching and reading up on the company I wanted to work for. I photocopied pages and pages of information on the company and took them home. At home I spent several hours reading through the information and capturing the key points.

I then typed these up into a small dossier on the company. By the time I had finished I knew who the directors were, the history of the company, the brands and products they sold, their key locations around the world and so on.

I then paid a visit to local companies that used their products. I explained that I was going for a job interview, and would they tell me about the company's products, and what they thought about them from a customer's point of view. I collated their feedback and comments and added them to my dossier.

On the day of the initial interview I was faced with a very tough-looking sales director. He was conducting a very demanding interview and was really putting me through the mill!

After about ten minutes he asked me what I knew about the company. This was my big moment! For the following five minutes I told him everything I knew about the organisation. His face, that was up until this stage fierce and frowning, started to look somewhat amazed. He interrupted my flow of information and said, "You seem to know a lot about our company!"

I opened my briefcase and took out my dossier and all of the photocopies I had made. I said, "I have spent many hours researching your company. I am very serious about wanting to work for you. Would you like to know what your customers think of your products and your current sales people?"

He stared at me open-mouthed for a moment, and then indicated that indeed he was interested in hearing what his customers thought.

At the end of the interview he said, "You will definitely be hearing from us!" And I did. I succeeded in passing the assessment centre and was offered a job. The job immediately doubled my current salary. I also got a brand new company car, which meant that I could sell my current car and bank the money.

I calculated that each hour of time I had spent in research and preparation was worth over £1000 to me in financial gain in the first year alone. I also benefited from an in-depth induction into the company which included a four week residential sales training programme.

Four weeks sales training from one of the most professional and highly regarded companies in the country!

I cannot begin to calculate what the training alone has been worth to me in salary, commissions and bonuses over the years. Those hours of planning and preparation have made a massive contribution to my finances!

You can't always predict what life-long value a customer will bring to you in terms of business and profit. You can't always predict how

many other potential customers a customer will introduce you to. It pays to plan. It pays to prepare.

How To Plan

Know who is buying your (or similar) products and services

You need to identify the market sectors of current buyers of your product or service. Learn about the industries of these customers. What kind of customers are buying? Who might be buying in the future?

If you specialise in a particular market, industry or sector then you need to understand it! You need to understand who *is* buying and who *might* be buying so that you can target them. You must identify your 'best fit' customer market and concentrate on it.

Know who the big fish are

It is important to plan who to target. Many sales people are put off targeting large companies and wealthy individuals. They assume that these organisations and individuals will already be well targeted by other sales people. Sometimes, nothing is further from the truth! In the same way that some supermodels never get approached by men because everyone assumes they can pick and choose, large companies and wealthy people are often under-prospected. Rich, powerful people are still just people. Don't assume that the biggest prospects are already taken.

If you sell executive coaching services, you would find it more lucrative to work with an organisation with an executive coaching budget of £200k (which is not uncommon), rather than targeting a smaller company with a £5k budget.

As the famous speaker and writer Brian Tracy says, "If you go fishing for minnows you need a thousand of them to fill a bucket. If you go fishing for whales and you catch one, it fills the boat."

There is a principle known as the Pareto Principle. It is named after an Italian economist called Vilfredo Pareto who observed that 80% of the wealth in Italy was in the hands of 20% of the population. Although the exact percentages may vary, this principle seems to apply, almost uncannily, to many areas of life. 80% of your profits

will come from 20% of your products, 80% of your turnover will come from 20% of your customers and so on.

It is not that smaller customers are not important. It is a very good thing to have a balanced customer portfolio, and not to become over reliant on a small group of customers. However the potential rewards from bigger and wealthier customers can be so much greater. Or to re-word the famous line from George Orwell's book 'Animal Farm', "All customers are equal, but some are more equal than others."

Know your customer's businesses

In the same way that I researched the company I wanted to work for, you need to research the companies that you want as customers. The level of detail will depend upon the level of contact and the potential size or value of the customer to you. It would not be practical to spend hours researching a long list of companies that you are making an initial cold call to. However, it is necessary if you want to secure significant business from a large company or organisation.

If you are going fishing for whales then you must do your research. For many organisations you can find out a lot about them before you have any contact with them. Potential sources of data include anyone who has contact or involvement with them, their competitors, sales people from other companies who may deal with them, the internet, the national, local or trade press, Yellow Pages, directories from your local business library (including Kompass, Kelly's, Dun & Bradstreet), lists of members from trade associations, recruitment advertisements in the press and catalogues from trade fairs or exhibitions.

Some of the information you may wish to keep in your customer profile includes:

- Name of company and subsidiaries, addresses of offices, factories, shops, outlets. Telephone numbers, fax numbers, mobile numbers, website details etc.
- Financial information such as turnover, shareholders etc.
- Key personnel such as board of directors, senior management, buyers etc.
- Management or organisational structure.

- Number of employees.
- Details of their brands, products and services.
- Major competitors.
- Current suppliers.
- Press cuttings featuring the customer.

Devise a format (paper based or electronic customer record card) for storing this information that works for you and keep it updated. All professional sales people keep up-to-date information on their prospects and customers in this way.

Information on the individual prospect/customer contact

Professional sales people also keep up-to-date information on the individuals that they do business with or aim to do business with. As well as the more obvious things like name (with phonetic spelling also to ensure correct pronunciation), address, direct telephone number, fax number, email address and mobile phone - you may like to add other personal information.

This can include partner's names, children's names, birthdays, hobbies outside of work, areas of personal interest both inside and outside of work, membership of professional and business associations, favourite sports, favourite football teams, favourite food and so on. It is also a good idea to know their secretary or PA's name. Saying, "Hello, is that Chris?" when the secretary answers your phone call builds rapport. It pays to have a good relationship with someone's secretary or PA! Far too many sales people underestimate the amount of influence these people have and how much they can help or hinder your success depending upon your relationship with them.

Obviously, if you are selling direct to members of the public and not organisations, then the type and amount of information you are going to be able to collect and use will be less detailed.

However, you must keep organised and up-to-date information on each and every customer.

Read in your chosen field

It is important to keep up-to-date in your chosen industry or field. Professional sales people make a point of regular reading in their

chosen field or in the industry sector of the customers they have selected to target.

If you are selling financial services then you will need to read the relevant trade magazines and press in this area on a regular and on-going basis. If you are selling financial services to the motor industry then you would also want to add relevant motor industry magazines and journals to your regular reading.

Many industries or publications that cover these industries have email newsletters to which you can subscribe to. This makes it very easy to keep up to speed.

It is not difficult to keep up-to-date in any area. The ability to knowledgably discuss the latest news or trends with your prospects and customers makes you look like the selling professional that you are.

What To Prepare

My own personal rule is to prepare anything that I may need when I am face to face with the customer. It is very professional to be able to answer any question your prospect or customer may have on the spot. This communicates a professional and business-like message to your customers.

Some suggestions for things to prepare are:

- Know your products and services in detail.
- Know your competitor's products and services in detail.
- Know your prices
- Know your competitor's prices
- Have a range of sales aids to help your sales presentation - these could include brochures, press clippings, samples, testimonials from existing customers etc.
- Have a simple presentation on your product and service in a presentation folder or on your laptop.
- If you need to use your laptop in a sales call make sure it is clean and the battery is fully charged. Take your power cable also, as you can plug it in if the customer is happy with you doing this.

- If you need to present to more than one person in a call, either take multiple copies of your presentation or take a data projector with you.
- Make sure your mobile 'phone is fully charged each day.
- Make sure you have directions or a map to your customer's offices/home.
- Have a smart briefcase or bag that contains all you may need including pens, pencils, notepad, business cards, diary and organiser.

It is very important that you practice any sales presentation that you may make to a prospect or customer. As you will discover later you will not be making scripted presentations, but you must know the elements of your presentation inside out so that you can flex and adapt it to suit each individual. Practice, practice, practice.

Finally, make sure you prepare yourself personally. Make sure your appearance is appropriate. You may choose to wear a suit if that is appropriate. Sometimes I wear a suit, sometimes I do not. If I am calling on a customer who is very casual I will take a different approach. I once looked after a very large customer who dressed informally in the office. It was not unusual to see the Managing Director walking around the office in a t-shirt, trainers and tracksuit bottoms. And that was when he was dressing smartly! So I followed his lead and would often turn up in an open necked shirt and trousers, which helped me to be seen more like him than the other sales people who looked over-dressed in their suits and ties.

Although society is gradually becoming more liberated, people are still judged on how they look. If you have an unusual hairstyle, facial piercing, pierced ears if you are a man, tattoos, a moustache or beard (particularly striking if you are female!), unusual clothes and so on, then people will make judgements about you. I'm not saying this is right, I am just telling you how it is. It is your choice about how appropriate your appearance is in relation to the prospects and customers you are targeting. Just be aware that people make very fast judgements based upon appearance. Get

your appearance wrong and you could lose sales before you even get started.

Please don't smoke or drink alcohol before meeting prospects and customers. More and more people are now non-smokers and find the smell off-putting. If you do smoke then do it well before seeing a prospect or customer and take some mints or mouthwash with you.

By getting your planning and preparation done thoroughly, you are maximising your chances of being in front of the very best customers and prospects with all the ammunition you need to sign up some profitable business. Get this wrong and the more professional sales people will run rings around you!

As a Bare Knuckle Seller it should be your competitors who are feeling the pain - not you!

SMASH Your Way To Success

In this chapter we are going to look at the vitally important area of setting very specific objectives for your sales calls. Far too many sales people have a very poor idea of what they want to achieve from each sales call.

Step 2 of the Bare Knuckle Selling process: “Set SMASH objectives and get into a ‘Top Ten State’”

A weak objective (if indeed there is any objective at all) results in weak selling.

Sales people with weak objectives can annoy customers. They are the sales people who pay a visit to a customer to ‘maintain the relationship’.

Sales calls like this are sometimes referred to as ‘cappuccino calls’. The salesperson and the customer achieve absolutely nothing of value other than having a cup of coffee together.

Please don’t misunderstand me, I am not saying that developing and maintaining a good relationship with your customers is not important. It is very important. However, I am going to show you ways to do this that are far more effective than simply having coffee together.

Cappuccino calls can also have exactly the opposite effect! You can annoy your customer by wasting his time. He may have lots to do but is just being polite to you. All the way through the coffee and chat he is thinking of all the things he has to do, and he is hoping that you will hurry up and go away so that he can get on with them!

If you want to be one of the very best sales people around and make your competitors quake in their boots at the very mention of your name, then you simply must set powerful selling objectives.

The Power of Setting Goals and Objectives

It is not possible to read any self-improvement book or attend any motivation seminar without the subject of goals being mentioned. By the way, my books and seminars are no different!

As I have been a passionate advocate of goal and objective setting for many years, I became interested in understanding what psychological research had been conducted into goal setting, and what proven, scientific conclusions had been reached.

To discover the answer I spent many months wading through huge volumes of psychological research. I have a deep interest in this area (perhaps I need to get out a bit more often) and left no stone unturned.

One of the strongest pieces of research I discovered was a review of well over one hundred psychological studies on goal setting. It concluded that, "the beneficial effect of goal setting on task performance is one of the most robust and replicable findings in psychological literature. Furthermore, these effects are found just as reliable in field settings as in the laboratory."

In layman's language this means that if you want to improve your performance then you must set goals. Goals set out specific standards that will motivate you to take direct action by focusing attention, increasing effort and intensity, prompting the development of new problem-solving strategies and encouraging persistence in the face of failure. This is a proven, scientific fact.

If you want to improve your selling then you must set strong selling objectives. So let's find out exactly how to do this.

S.M.A.S.H. Your Selling Objectives!

The process that follows is strongly recommended when setting your selling objective.

The mnemonic S.M.A.S.H. stands for:

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

ACHIEVEABLE

STRETCHING

HOLISTIC

SPECIFIC

It is important to know specifically what it is that you want. Your selling objective must be stated in the positive: What you *do* want rather than what you *do not* want.

Research demonstrates that explicit, specific and numerical (where appropriate) objectives are more effective in facilitating behavioural change. If you want to see improvements in your selling ability, then you must set specific and measurable goals.

You do not go shopping in a supermarket by making a list of all the things you don't want. You make a list of the things you *do* want to get. Do the same when setting your selling objectives. It is understood that the unconscious mind (everything you are not thinking about with your conscious mind at this moment) cannot process negative commands. In order to think of something you do not want, you have to think and focus your attention upon that very thing.

It is also theorised that the information flows into the unconscious mind almost instantly, whereas the conscious mind will take a few seconds longer to process something. So by the time your conscious mind has processed your goal to stop doing something (e.g. smoking) your unconscious mind has already processed the concept of smoking in order to make sense of the goal. Your unconscious mind is now focused on the very thing you consciously want to stop doing!

The 'specific' step defines the result you want in a clear and unambiguous way.

MEASURABLE

How will you know when you have achieved your goal?

What will it look, sound and feel (taste and smell) like?

If, for example, you set a selling objective to “get more sales” and someone gave you a very small order would you have achieved your goal? You wouldn’t know! Exactly how much “more sales” is meant by “get more sales”?

Create a sensory-rich, specific goal. The more sensory specific data you can include, the more your brain has to lock onto.

It is also important to set specific dates by which you will achieve your sales objectives. These dates will provide a reminder and create a sense of positive urgency.

The ‘measured’ step provides clear success criteria.

ACHIEVEABLE

Is the achievement of your selling objective realistic for your circumstances and those of your customer or prospect?

Firstly, if you are selling computers to a small business owner who has an annual turnover of £50,000 per year, it is rather unlikely that he will be prepared to spend £100,000 on a new networked computer system.

Secondly, are you capable of delivering the products or services that you are selling?

Providing a network of trainers around the world to meet the needs of a multi-national corporation might be a tad challenging if you have a staff of just you and your Mum who helps out with the typing every Friday.

The ‘achievable’ step provides “can do” motivation.

STRETCHING

Is your selling objective challenging enough?

Research demonstrates that specific and challenging goals lead to a higher level of performance than easy goals.

There is a direct relationship between goal difficulty and task performance. The more difficult a goal, the better the performance.

While care should be taken to ensure that your selling objectives are challenging though not unrealistic, laboratory based studies have shown positive relationships between goal difficulty and performance, even in the case of unattainable goals!

The 'stretching' step provides the inspiration to become bolder and more ambitious in your selling.

HOLISTIC

Will the achievement of your selling objective be good for your customer and for you?

It is very important that your selling objective has considered the potential needs of the customer as well as the benefit to you. Far too many sales people have only got their own commission in mind when selling.

If the achievement of your selling objective will benefit the customer then you stand the greatest chance of achieving it. It needs to be holistic for both parties concerned.

The 'holistic' step provides a good win/win outcome for your selling efforts.

The Power of Writing Down Your Objectives

I had the privilege of meeting Tony Buzan recently. Tony is the creator of the Mind Mapping concept and an expert in the ability of the human brain. Tony told me that he has been reviewing research that concludes that the mere act of writing your objectives down increases your likelihood of achieving them by 25%!

So always, always, always write your selling objectives down.

Here is the SMASH objective that I wrote down before approaching Lean Marketing Press with the idea for my book:

SPECIFIC

Lean Marketing Press will accept my book "Bare Knuckle Selling" for publication.

MEASUREABLE

A signed contract by 30th February 2005.

ACHIEVEABLE

Yes. I can write the book, Lean Marketing Press can publish the book.

STRETCHING

I have sold many things but never an idea for a book before!

HOLISTIC

Lean Marketing Press secure a good book for their 'selling' list which will enhance their portfolio. I get publicity and author's royalties. Win-Win!

Once you have completed your planning and preparation and written down your SMASH objective, you will be almost ready to make you sales call. There is however, one very important thing you need to do just before you call on the customer.

The Inner Game: Your 'Top Ten State'

When top sports people prepare for competitions they warm up physically. They do this to ensure that their muscles and joints are ready to compete at the highest level. What is becoming more and more common is for these athletes to also warm up mentally.

Almost every single elite athlete will now have a sports psychologist who will train them how to mentally prepare to win.

As someone who wants to become one of the selling elite, you will also benefit from a mental warm up prior to making your sales calls.

Are You In a Bit of a State?

Have you ever had the misfortune of meeting someone who has 'got out of bed on the wrong side'? Perhaps you have even experienced this sort of feeling yourself!

When people are emotionally and/or physically at a low ebb, we may describe them as being in 'a bit of a state'. We also know that in order to perform, or even to begin certain tasks successfully, we need to be in 'the right state of mind'.

So let us define 'state'. State can be described as the total ongoing mental and physical conditions from which a person is acting. It is a combination of all of the thoughts, emotions and physiology that are expressed at any given moment - our mental pictures, feelings, sounds, physical energy, posture and breathing.

Your state changes on an on-going basis. Some states feel better than others and some are better states to be in if you wish to perform certain tasks successfully. Generalised states that might enable you to sell effectively could include 'confident', 'happy', 'calm' or 'powerful'. Generalised states that may not be so helpful could include 'confused', 'fearful', 'anxious' or 'frustrated'.

Psyching Up and Psyching Down

Athletes are trained by sports psychologists to get themselves into an appropriate state of activation (readiness to perform) for the specific events in which they are competing. They may 'psych up' or 'psych down' as appropriate.

Your performance is affected by the state you are in. Have you ever tried to perform a delicate and complex task when feeling angry? It be useful to be able to exercise some choice over the states you experience wouldn't it?

What Is State Management?

State Management is the ability to choose the most appropriate state at any given moment. State Management gives you the choice about the state you want to be in.

In order to perform to the best of your ability, the facility to choose and manage your own state, to be in the optimal mental, emotional and physical state for the specific task at hand is a useful skill.

By using a series of specific techniques you can alter your state at will, maintain positive states for longer periods and change negative states into more empowering ones. You will take control. When you are in an appropriate and resourceful state, your selling performance can improve.

What Creates The State We're In?

There are two main components that affect and (are affected by) our state:

- 1) Your internal representations
- 2) Your physiology

Internal Representations

What you picture and how you picture things inside your mind, plus what you say to yourself and how you say it contribute towards the state you are in. How you perceive and represent the world to yourself powerfully affects your state. Your beliefs, values, attitudes and past experiences all affect the kinds of internal representations you make.

Physiology

In terms of our physiology, factors such as what we eat, drink and how tired we are will all have an influence on our state. What is less well recognised is that other physiological factors can also affect your state positively or negatively.

These include how you are breathing, your levels of muscular tension and your posture.

The Body-Mind System

What is not always fully appreciated is that the body and the mind are not two separate parts or divisions. They are one unified system. The body affects the mind and the mind affects the body.

In order to demonstrate this, I would like to invite you to take part in an exercise. Vividly imagine the following scene as it is described...

Imagine that you are sitting at a table. On the table in front of you is a bowl of crushed ice. Sitting on top of the crushed ice is a very large and very juicy lemon that has been cut into quarters. Pick up one of the quarters of lemon. Notice how when you squeeze it, drops of lemon juice ooze out of it. Lift up the quarter of lemon to your nose and smell the sharp scent of the lemon. Now place the quarter of lemon into your mouth and bite it, feeling the lemon juice burst all over your tongue!

If you have imagined this scene vividly you will find that your mouth is now full of saliva! Merely biting the lemon in your imagination has resulted in a physical response from your body. What you have imagined in your mind has affected your body.

In a similar way, we will all have experienced our body affecting our mind. Feeling physically tired, for example, can affect how we are thinking and feeling. If we are experiencing any form of physical pain from an injury or illness, this may also affect how we are feeling mentally. Conversely, feeling well rested and healthy can help us to experience a more positive and happy state of mind.

Although we will all be able to identify with these influences, what is not always appreciated is that we can consciously use our physiology to change our state. It is literally possible to *choose and change your state*.

How to Use Your Physiology To Change Your State

To demonstrate how physiology affects our state, imagine for a moment that you are feeling very negative and unhappy. Now move your body into the sort of posture it would be in if you felt like this. How would you sit or stand if you were feeling like this? Would you be slumped in your chair? How would your face look? Would you be frowning? How would your breathing be if you were feeling negative? Would it be low and shallow? There will be a specific physiology that goes along with these negative thoughts.

Now let us change our state! Sit or stand in the posture you would be in if you were feeling very positive, confident and happy! How

would you be sitting or standing? Would you be upright with your shoulders back? How would your face look? Would you have a big smile on your face? How would you be breathing? Would it be deep and full? Again, there will be a specific physiology that goes along with these positive thoughts.

You will find it almost impossible to feel negative if you have a positive body posture. One way to change how you are feeling, very quickly, is to change your physiology.

If you want to feel more positive, upbeat and confident sit, stand and move like you are feeling positive, upbeat and confident. Because the body and mind are one unified system, your physiology will affect your mind and change the state you are in.

This powerful technique is deceptively simple. Please experiment with it and notice how you can change your state at will.

Mental Rehearsal

Mental rehearsal is the process of practicing mentally. For example, you could imagine in your mind the selling process you will go through with your customer with all the various directions it may take. You could imagine potential sticking points ahead of time and rehearse ways in which you'd be able to keep the meeting on track and emerge with a new contract. Although this sounds very simple, mental rehearsal is a very powerful method of performance enhancement.

There is a famous story about an American army officer who was held captive for several years during the Vietnam war. In order to keep himself occupied he would play a game of golf in his imagination every day. When he was finally released from captivity, he went to play an actual game of golf for the first time in many years. He played one of the best games of golf in his life - the many years of *mental* rehearsal had resulted in a huge improvement in his *physical* golfing performance!

Almost 100% of Olympic athletes surveyed by sports psychologist reported the use of mental rehearsal. Elite

athletes use this technique for one reason and one reason only - it works. Mental rehearsal is a powerful performance enhancement method.

How To Talk To Yourself!

Relax - there is no need to be alarmed! Talking to yourself, despite common misconceptions, is not a sign of mental illness!

Talking to yourself, or 'Self Talk' as it is referred to by sports psychologists, is a powerful method of controlling your thinking and therefore your performance.

You are engaging in self-talk any time you carry on dialogue with yourself. This could be giving yourself instructions and encouragement, or interpreting what you are feeling about a situation. This dialogue can occur out loud or inside your head.

Self-talk is a powerful technique of mental control and as such can be an asset when it enhances feelings of self-worth and performance.

However, it can equally be a dangerous liability when it is negative, or if it distracts you from the task you are engaged in. In my experience, many people will say derogatory things about themselves, or to themselves, that they would never dream about saying to another person.

According to research, the average person in Britain will use *fourteen* times more negative references than positive references when talking about themselves and the job that they do. I consider this to be a concerning statistic.

The use of negative self-talk affects not only performance. It can affect people's overall self-esteem. In extreme cases this could lead to depression. Certain forms of depression have been described as nothing more than a disorder of conscious thought, and not a matter of brain chemistry or anger turned inwards, as other theories maintain. Some depressed people simply think awful things about themselves and their future. Their symptom, negative self-talk, is their dis-ease!

Researchers have found that good self-talk can produce significant changes in performance. For example, it has been found that

runners who say words to themselves such as 'quick' or 'fast' do indeed increase their running speed!

So how does this work? We have already explored that the mind and the body are not separate, but two aspects of an integrated system. The mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. What appears to happen is that the act of repeating a negative word causes the body to respond in a negative (or weaker) manner, and the repeating of a positive word causes the body to respond in a positive (or stronger) manner.

The Triple Grand Slam!

By combining state management, mental rehearsal and self-talk together you can prepare yourself to maximise your chances of selling success.

When you meet the customer you will be feeling calm, relaxed, confident and assured of success. This will make a powerful impact on the customer not only when they first meet you but also during the entire sales process.

This process can be completed in a matter of a few minutes before you go to meet your customer. Much of it can be done as you walk from your car to the customer's offices for example. The process to follow is:

1. Mentally rehearse a highly successful sales call
2. See yourself having achieved your SMASH objective
3. Make your posture powerful and upright. Walk and move like you do when you feel calm, powerful and confident.
4. Breathe as you would when you feel calm, powerful and confident.
5. Say to yourself, "I'm the best", "I am superb at selling", "I am the greatest salesperson ever". Say it with passion and feeling.
6. Meet your customer and achieve your SMASH objective!

As the cliché goes, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” A salesperson who has done their planning and preparation, has set a strong SMASH objective, who has mentally rehearsed and who has said positive things to themselves is going to make a strong impression as a calm, relaxed professional who is here to do business. Your customers will respond very positively when you make that sort of an impression! And we haven’t even started to talk to them yet!

Mining For Gold!

Step 4 of the Bare Knuckle Selling process: “Understanding Customer Needs and Criteria”

If I had to emphasise one step in the sales call to sales people, it would be this - understanding customer needs and criteria. Your first job as a salesperson is to understand *exactly* what it is that a customer needs. Once you have done that you can ascertain if your product or service can satisfy those needs. If it can, then you explain to the customer how their needs are met by the unique characteristics of your product or service. That, in a nutshell is what selling *should* be about.

As simple and straightforward as this concept is, it is surprisingly rare to find many sales people who follow its principles. Most sales people get it the wrong way around. They tell prospects and customers all about their products and services in the hope that they'll like it. Their focus is on *their* products and services rather than the customer's *needs*. This is a big mistake to make.

As a sales person your job is to focus your attention on the customer. You must focus on what is important to them. By doing this you can gather information on what they need, and then you can help them to get it. It helps to think about it as the selling equivalent of a very thorough medical examination! You examine the customer's situation thoroughly and carefully and then make a considered recommendation.

Selling this way makes the whole process so much easier. It is also makes it a more pleasant experience for the person being sold to. When you have been sold to by a professional, you feel great about your decision!

Perhaps you can recall a time when a salesperson talked *at* you about their products or services? Can you remember how annoying and frustrating it was? Perhaps you can recall a time when a sales person droned on and on about their product without pausing for feedback? They probably told you a lot of information you just didn't need to know.

I was recently buying a computer and endured a twenty minute monologue from a sales person in a well known computer store. I didn't get the chance to speak once! He droned on and on about all the technical data that wasn't of the slightest interest to me. Not once did he even think to ask me what I wanted to do with the computer!

Towards the end of his presentation I wasn't just starting to lose the will to buy a computer, I was starting to lose the will to live!

Contrast this with the highly professional salesman who separated my wife and I from several thousand pounds in return for a state of the art home cinema system. He asked us a lot of questions about what we were looking for, provided relevant advice and continued to ask questions throughout our conversation. We knew we wanted to buy a home cinema system (I'm a big movie fan), and he helped us to buy the one that was exactly right for us. End result? We have a home cinema system we absolutely love and he has earned a sizeable chunk of commission. A win-win outcome.

I often refer to this stage of the selling process as 'mining for gold'. Through a structured conversation with the customer you uncover their exact needs. These are like precious nuggets of gold. Collect enough of them and you will close the sale easily!

What Are Needs?

Needs are things that people and businesses require. We can think about needs in a commercial context as being structured as a pyramid. At the top of the pyramid is what could be called the primary or ultimate business need.



The Primary Or Ultimate Business Need

The primary function of any commercial organisation is to make a profit. Profit therefore, is top of the pyramid.

Supporting Needs

Supporting the achievement of profit are the three drivers of profit. These are:

1. The number or volume of items you sell
2. The price you sell the items at
3. The margin you make when you sell them

No matter what business you are in this formula will apply. Profit will always be a result of how many things you sell (be that hours of work or product units), the price you sell them at and the margin you make (fundamentally this is the difference between what you sell it for and what it cost you to supply it to the customer).

So for example, in order to increase profits a customer may have a need to sell more of their products, increase the price they sell

them for, or to enhance their margin through things like improving their buying price or operating their business more efficiently.

Customer-Specific Needs

The primary need and the supporting need are supported further down the pyramid with unique business needs. Every business is different and as a result will have unique needs. These are often the needs that will, if satisfied, result in enhancements to volume, price and margin and ultimately profit.

These could include: enhancements to the range of products stocked, greater efficiency, reducing the number of employees required, the ability to be competitive on price, increased customer footfall, promotional activity, enhanced customer loyalty, lower marketing and promotional cost etc.

It is said that there are only really four ways to grow a business:

1. Find new customers for your products and services
2. Get existing customers to buy more frequently
3. Get customers to spend more on each transaction
4. Reduce the cost of supplying the goods and services

Therefore, many of the needs that you will uncover will fall into one of these four categories. Uncovering how these specifically apply to your prospect or customer gives you highly valuable information that you can use to further focus your benefits on your customer's situation. Without this knowledge you will be shooting in the dark.

Personal Needs

The base of our needs pyramid are the personal needs of the people involved. Although there are many theories of personal needs a useful framework is:

Survival Needs

The need to have food, water and shelter is a fundamental and powerful need that people have. It is thankfully rare for people to starve to death in the developed world and this can perhaps cause

people to dismiss these survival needs as being of little importance in a sales situation.

However, socio-analytical theory states that a deep driver at an unconscious level is the desire to achieve some status and therefore some control over these resources. This desire may be driven by deep-seated unconscious needs.

It would therefore be a mistake to dismiss the effect that these needs have on people. These needs can make themselves apparent in all sorts of selling situations. It may not be as extreme as the need to get food in order to survive, but if you consider it from the need to gain control over important resources it can help to explain what drives some people's behaviour.

Emotional Needs

There are some common emotional needs that most people have. Building on the previous comments around exerting some control over resources there is the need for:

Certainty

People need a certain amount of the familiar and predictable in their lives.

This may be linked to the certainty over controlling resources. The need for the familiar exerts a powerful effect over people and can be a powerful need to tap into. Perhaps driven by this need people can have a fear of the unknown and of making mistakes.

Variety

Conversely, people also need a certain amount of variety in their lives. Without some degree of change and diversity life could be pretty dull. This need is more pronounced in some people than others, but it is a useful one to tap into!

Significance

Once again, perhaps linked to being able to control resources, people have a need to become significant. This need manifests itself in the purchase of goods such as luxury cars, designer clothing, expensive property and so on. Linked to this, people may also have a need to feel clever or

superior, and the need to make smart moves. This need also manifests when people fear feeling stupid or being seen to make a mistake.

Connection and Love

The final area of emotional need is that of social contact. Connection with others and receiving affection and love is very important to nearly all of us. You can observe this powerful need manifesting when people shop for attractive clothes, make-up, dating agencies, diets, networking with others and so on.

Fulfilment Needs

Finally, people have a need to gain meaning and purpose in their lives. They have a need to grow as an individual. In addition, many people have a need to contribute beyond themselves. They need to make a difference to other people's lives and perhaps to leave a legacy. These needs can manifest themselves as charitable work, self-development, mentoring, coaching, 'giving something back', parenting and so on.

Needs are a very powerful and essential thing to uncover as part of the selling process. At this stage it is important to discuss a distinction.

The Difference Between Wants And Needs

To be a highly effective salesperson you need to understand the difference between a want and a need. A want is something a prospect or customer desires. A need is something, that if truly satisfied will bring genuine benefit to them.

To return to my story where Martin advised us on our mortgage options, what we *wanted* was to change our mortgage. What we *needed* in order to get the most financial benefit was to wait for several months, allow our current agreement to expire and then to sign up for a new mortgage.

In the same way, your customers may have an idea about what they want to purchase. Your job as a salesperson is to find out if what they *want* is, in fact, what they *need*. Will what they want really bring them the maximum benefit?

We will return to this concept later. The full process that you will learn is to understand what a customer wants, make sure that this is what they really need and then sell them on *wanting* what they need. This is called the 'wants - needs - wants' process. When done effectively this is a very powerful process that will result in many sales.

To really close sales consistently your customers must not only need your product or service, they must want it and they must be motivated to buy it.

Bring On The Pain!

Human beings can be thought of as being motivated by two things:

1. The desire to gain pleasure
2. The desire to avoid pain

While the desire to gain pleasure can be a powerful motivating factor, in my experience, people (in general) are even more motivated to avoid pain. Pain (or at least the fear of pain) can often be the thing that motivates people to take action, to move out of inertia, to actually do something!

Many people have a tendency to procrastinate. Focusing the prospect or customer on their pain can be just the thing to get them to take action. Nobody really wants to procrastinate and a good selling process can help people to overcome their procrastination.

Pain, in this context, does not necessarily refer to avoiding physical pain. Pain can be thought of as a more general discomfort that may manifest itself mentally, emotionally or financially. Another way of framing pain is as the problems that your customers might experience.

Examples could be:

- Advertising that doesn't get the desired response
- Losing customers to the competition
- Struggling to find new customers
- Too much work to do

- Working too many hours
- Big tax bills that eat into profits
- New competitors appearing on the scene
- and so on...

Problems like these can motivate your customers to take action. Your job as a sales person is, by skilful questioning and effective listening, to uncover the problems your prospects and customers are experiencing. You can then demonstrate how your products and services can help to overcome the issues they are facing.

When this 'pain/problem', or as it is sometimes described 'away from' motivation is combined with pleasurable, 'towards' motivation, you will have created a powerful motivating force that gets people eager to buy from you.

When a customer really needs your product or service both of you will benefit from your ability to convince him to buy it.

The process is as follows:

1. Understand the current context for your customer. You need to understand the ins and outs of their business or life.
2. Ask questions to elicit the problems and/or pain the customer is currently experiencing.
3. Ask questions to ensure the customer fully appreciates the longer term consequences of not doing something about their current situation. For example, not making adequate pension arrangements before your forties, makes it highly unlikely that when you retire your pension will allow you to enjoy a comfortable retirement.

To add impact you can explore current problems and future consequences. In my experience it is usually the pain that the person is currently experiencing that are the greatest motivator.

4. Ask question to elicit the positive or pleasurable outcomes the customer wants to enjoy instead.

5. Demonstrate how your product or service will help to solve their problems *and* deliver the pleasure (positive outcome) they desire.

If you master this process you will be amazed at how easily you can close so many more sales than you did before. So don't be squeamish: bring on the pain and then show them the pleasure.

The Power Of Criteria

As well as having needs, people also have other things that are important to them. At a high level, these are referred to as 'values' (freedom, security, achievement, adventure etc).

At a more specific level, people also have 'values' within a given context. These values are called 'criteria'. Criteria are context dependant. They can be elicited by asking, "What is important to you..." For example, "What is important to you when choosing a supplier?", "What is important to you in a new car?", "What is important to you about a holiday?"

The answers that you get (reliability, flexibility, responsiveness, excitement, fun, performance etc.) are valuable things to know, as in a situation where you wish to influence someone, they can be a person's 'hot buttons'.

Press these 'hot buttons' and you will get a powerful response!

So if you asked a potential customer what was important to them when choosing a new supplier, and they replied, "reliability, flexibility and responsiveness" you would be strongly advised to weave the fact that you are 'reliable, flexible and responsive' into your sales presentation!

Compare the power of this approach of establishing needs and criteria with the amateur salesperson who drones on and on about how amazing their product or service is before understanding anything about what is important to the customer.

By following the Bare Knuckle Selling approach you will leave these amateur sales people choking in your dust!

So what does it take to understand your customer's needs? Here are a selection of tools...

Two Vital Skills of The Sales Professional

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of *asking really good questions* and then *listening carefully* to your customer's responses. The ability to question and listen is so very important. Despite this fact, it is very rare to find anyone who was taught how to do this in school! Perhaps this is the reason why so many people are bad at it. Please take plenty of time to focus on this area, as it is so very important.

Listening

The good news is that from my experience of training more sales people than I care to remember, I have never found anyone who cannot listen well. Perhaps I should qualify that - I have never found anyone who cannot listen well, when they focus their attention and concentration upon listening.

Too many sales people are so busy talking about their products and services, and thinking about what they're going to say next, that they never get around to doing any listening at all. It is very difficult to listen to what someone is saying if you are blathering.

Subtle hint: Shut your mouth and open your ears!

It is interesting to note that the very same letters that make up the word listen - L-I-S-T-E-N also make up the word silent - S-I-L-E-N-T.

L - I - S - T - E - N

S - I - L - E - N - T

So, if you want to be a good listener you need to learn to close your mouth. However, there is a little bit more to it than just keeping your mouth shut.

You need to be concentrating and focusing your attention on what the other person is saying. One of the things that can really interfere with this is if you are busy chattering away to yourself inside your own head. If, while the other person is talking, you are busy thinking about what you are going to say next, then you aren't really listening are you?

It is sometimes said that a salesperson's definition of listening is, "what you do while you are waiting to say something else!" This is

not what the salesperson's definition of listening should be. Your definition of listening is ensuring you fully understand what is important to the other person.

Blocks To Good Listening

Let us now explore some of the reasons for poor listening:

Lack of Attention

Your focus and concentration are not on the person speaking but on something else.

Jumping to Conclusions

As the other person is speaking, you make an assumption about what the person needs before you fully understand. This is a major fault of many sales people. I once witnessed this in a BMW garage. I was about to place an order for a brand new BMW. I knew exactly the model I wanted but I also wanted to check out some options for the interior. My wife and I had been clearing some junk out of our garage and on the way back from the rubbish tip we dropped in to ask a few questions. Karen and I were standing by the car in the showroom looking inside it when the sales man walked up. Catching sight of our rather scruffy attire (we don't usually wear our smartest clothes when cleaning out the garage and going to the tip) he said in an arrogant and superior tone of voice, "Just looking, right?" Wrong! Just about to hand over a big chunk of cash on a brand new BMW actually. But due to your condescending and arrogant attitude not with you, you (expletive deleted)! One conclusion jumped to, one big sale and accompanying commission lost. I eventually placed the order with another dealer.

Perhaps we have just had unfortunate encounters with car sales people, but a further example of jumping to conclusions was when Karen was buying a new car and I went along for the ride. I take every opportunity to see sales people in action - I am always interested to learn new ways of improving my selling.

Karen was really interested in buying a Volkswagen Golf, and the salesperson at the dealership was showing us a few options. The mistake he made was to look at Karen when he mentioned anything to do with colour, interior, the CD player etc and towards me when he mentioned anything 'technical' such as details about the engine.

This was a big mistake. Firstly, I was only along for the ride. Karen was the one making the decision, not me. Secondly, my technical knowledge of cars is limited to where to stick the fuel. I once took a car back to the garage complaining that the dipstick was too short to reach the oil!

Before she met me, Karen had a partner who was an expert on cars. He was a racing driver in his spare time and Karen was often roped in to do work on his racing car. My wife can strip down a car engine faster than most people can eat their breakfast! There isn't a lot she doesn't know about car engines, so to treat her as if she is ignorant of such things, just because she is a woman is a rather stupid thing for a salesperson to do. If he had avoided jumping to conclusions he could have enjoyed spending the commissions he made on the sale. However, it was another sale down the drain! The amount of money sales people are losing through this sort of behaviour must run into hundreds of millions of pounds a year!

Assuming People Think Like You Do

If you make the mistake of assuming other people think like you do, you make many, many mistakes and lose too many sales. A 'boy racer' car salesman will not sell many cars to safety conscious people if all he talks about is how amazingly fast the car can accelerate.

Excessive Talking

As discussed above, this is when you are so busy broadcasting when you should be receiving. Stop it - it annoys customers!

Lack of Humility

This is when a touch of over confidence rears its ugly head and you assume you have the answer to all of your customer's problems, without really understanding them in the first place. If a sales person who does not understand what I want starts to use phrases such as, "I can tell you this is what you want" or, "What you want is...", I mentally line them up for a sharp right hook!

Fear

Sometimes sales people are so scared that the customer might say something that will be unhelpful to them selling something, that they don't give the customer the chance to talk! If they were to shut up and listen then they would discover valuable information that could help them sell effectively. If someone has no need of your product or service then find out quickly and move onto someone who does.

Please don't make these mistakes - they will cost you money!

A Powerful Technique To Help Your Listening

A simple, but powerful method of improving your listening is called 'rapid repeat'. With rapid repeat you simply repeat what the other person has said to yourself, inside your own head a fraction of a second after they have said it.

In this way you actually get to hear what is being said twice - once when the prospect or customer actually says the words and secondly as you repeat them to yourself. In addition, the act of focusing your attention upon the words and repeating them prevents you from distracting yourself with your own internal dialogue and thoughts.

This is a deceptively simple technique and I would recommend that you practice it and use it.

Questions

The partner to effective listening is effective questioning. The two go together like a hand in a glove!

You use questions to understand your customer's situation. You use questions to elicit your customer's needs, wants and criteria. You use questions to get your customer to appreciate the implications of not taking action.

Compare this approach to the amateur sales person who just *tells* the customer about their products.

Telling is not selling!

Asking questions and listening carefully to the answers is selling.

The Four Types Of Questions

Broadly speaking there are four types of questions that you can use in a selling situation. These are:

- Closed
- Open
- Probing
- Summarising

These can be remembered by way of the handy mnemonic C.O.P.S.

CLOSED QUESTIONS

These are used to obtain a specific answer and to check facts. Examples would include:

“Was it a success?”

“Is that important to you?”

“Does anyone else need to approve this?”

Closed questions usually result in a “yes” or “no” answer.

OPEN QUESTIONS

These are broad, diagnostic questions that encourage the customer to talk about their situation. Open questions usually start with words such as what, when, why, how, where, who, which and usually result in a multi-word or sentence answer.

Examples would include:

“What do you want to change or improve about your business?”

“What don’t you like about your current supplier?”

“How do you currently handle customer complaints?”

“Why are you considering a new car?”

It is important to stress that open questions usually result in a multi-word/sentence answer and closed questions usually result in a single word answer. However, in many cases you can get a “yes” or “no” to a good open question and a long reply to a closed question!

Some sales trainers place so much emphasis on 'open questions' (which we'll cover next) that using 'closed questions' appears to be one of the seven deadly sins. This is utter rubbish. Both open and closed questions have their place in the selling process.

Open questions are used to gather information and closed questions are used to clarify what you discover and get specific answers and commitments.

PROBING QUESTIONS

These are used to explore a point a customer has made. They allow you to drill further into what the customer has said so that you can understand it in more detail.

Examples include:

"What makes you say that?"

"In what way do you think...?"

"Give me an example of...?"

"How do you mean?"

"Why did you bring that up?"

A useful probing technique is to use 'echo questions'. An echo question is where you use the last word or few words of what the customer says as a probing question.

An example:

"We need a supplier who is reliable."

"Reliable?"

In this example, you are probing further to discover how the customer defines 'reliable'. If you did not probe, you could make some assumptions about what 'reliable' means to you.

SUMMARISING QUESTIONS

These are used to sum up the conversation you have had with the customer and to confirm the discussion you have had so far. This helps to keep the sales call on track and to check and clarify understanding.

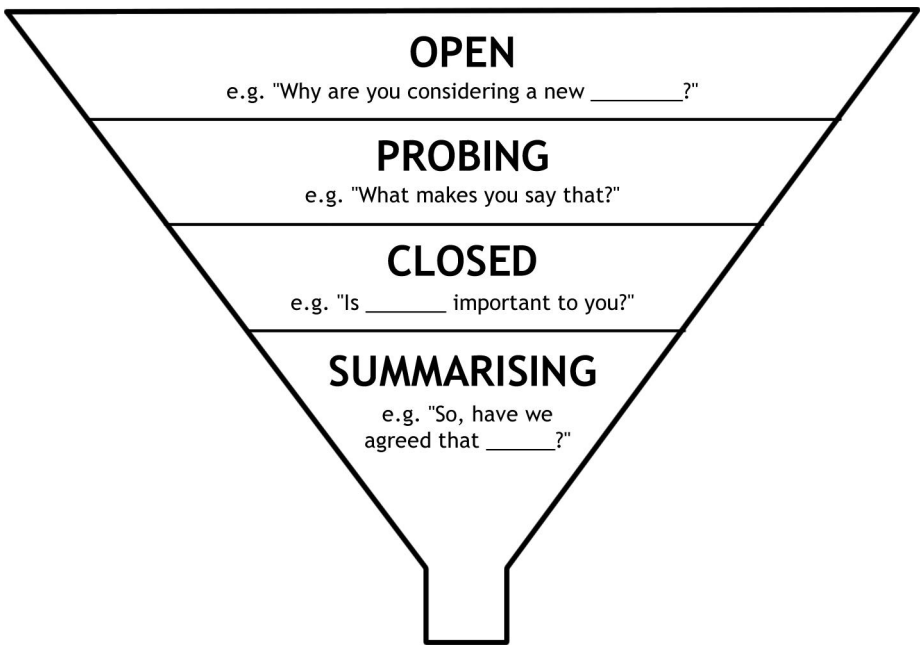
Examples include:

“So if I understand correctly, what you are saying is...?”

“So have we agreed that...?”

Combining Your Questions Into A Funnel

A very elegant method of really understanding what your customer wants, needs and values is to combine questions in a funnel. You start with broad information at the top of the funnel and using a combination of open, probing, summarising and closed questions you get very specific information at the bottom.



At the broad, top of the funnel you ask lots of ‘open questions’ that encourage the customer to tell you about their situation and what is important to them.

You then use ‘probing questions’ to gather more information about specific areas.

You can use ‘closed questions’ to clarify information and check specific facts and ‘summarising questions’ to wrap up the questioning process.

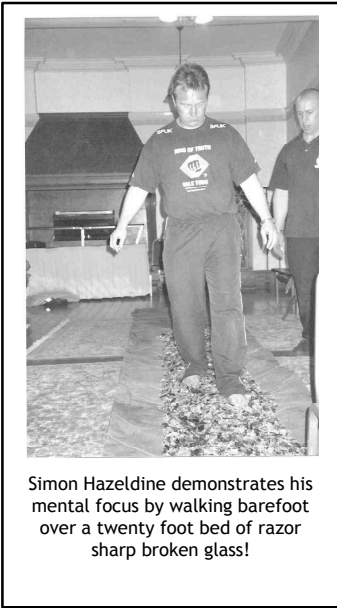
You can use a series of funnels to gather all of the information you need to fully understand the customer's needs, wants and criteria.

Once you have done this you are in a position to move to the next stage of the selling process.

The art of asking questions and listening carefully is what separates the professional sales people from the amateurs. I cannot emphasise enough the difference between a professional Bare Knuckle Seller and the amateur seller:

- Amateur sellers give their customers a good *talking* to.
- Professional Bare Knuckle Sellers give their customers a good *listening* to!

About The Author



Simon Hazeldine demonstrates his mental focus by walking barefoot over a twenty foot bed of razor sharp broken glass!

Simon Hazeldine MSc, FInstSMM

"...a hard hitting speaker who will give you a wake up call that you'll never forget!"

Simon Hazeldine is a recognised expert in the fields of:

- The Psychology of Performance
- The Psychology of Influence
- Selling and Negotiation

Simon writes a monthly column on the psychology of performance in four national magazines and is the author of:

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Simon works internationally as a speaker, trainer, coach and facilitator in the areas of performance, leadership, sales, negotiation and influential

communication.

His "High Performance Coaching Skills", "Group Training Techniques" and "Negotiation Skills" programmes are currently being used in 28 countries around the world.

Simon has a Masters Degree in the psychology and management of performance. In addition he is Certified as a Master Practitioner and Trainer of NLP, and is a Fellow of the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management.

Simon has extensive experience in sales both in the UK and abroad and has been responsible for numerous client accounts each worth in excess of £20 million in sales. Prior to his career as a trainer and speaker Simon provided event security and personal protection services to celebrities in the television and music industry.

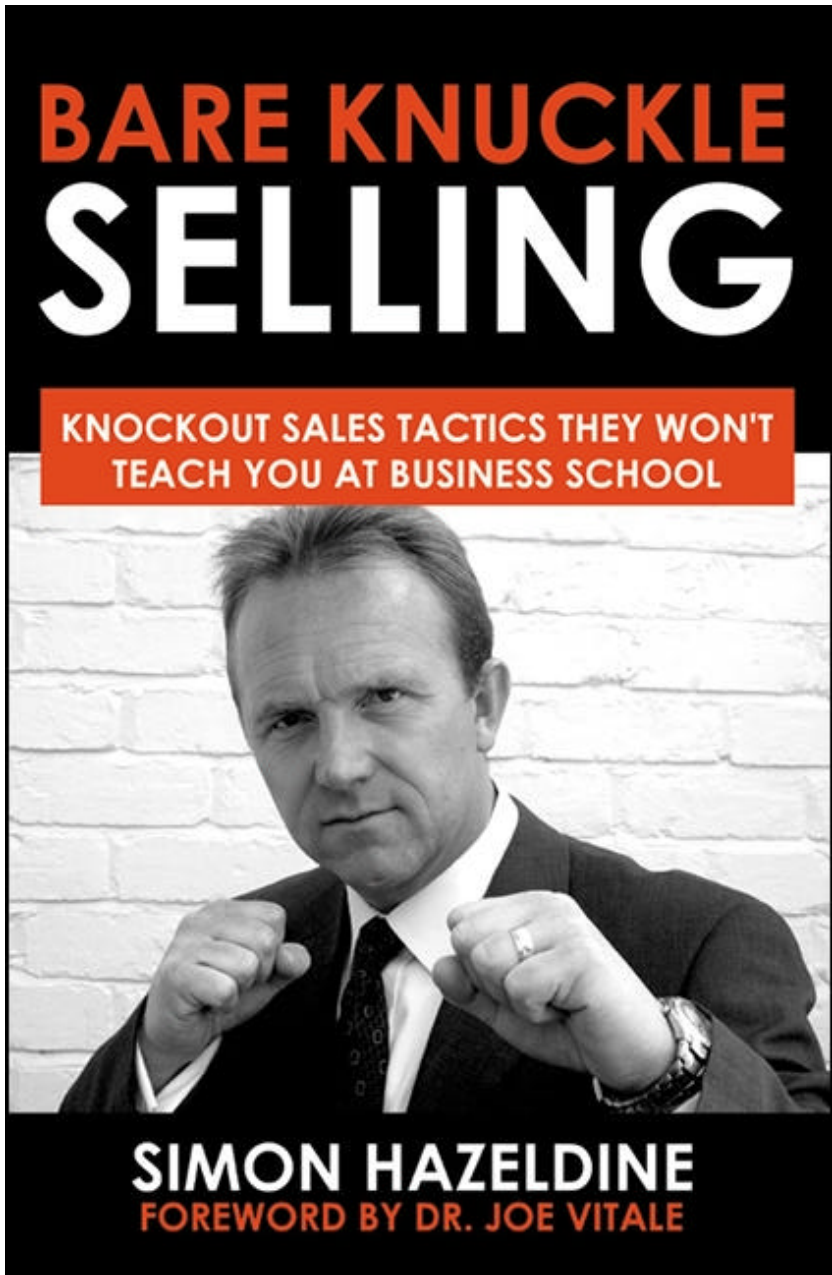
Simon Hazeldine's acclaimed keynote speeches include:

"How To Raise Your Game", "How To Get What You Want By Being Selfish and Unreasonable", "Are You Tough Enough? - The 7 Secrets of Mental Toughness", "How To Find Your Customers G-Spot", "How To Hurt Your Competitors Using Bare Knuckle Selling"

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