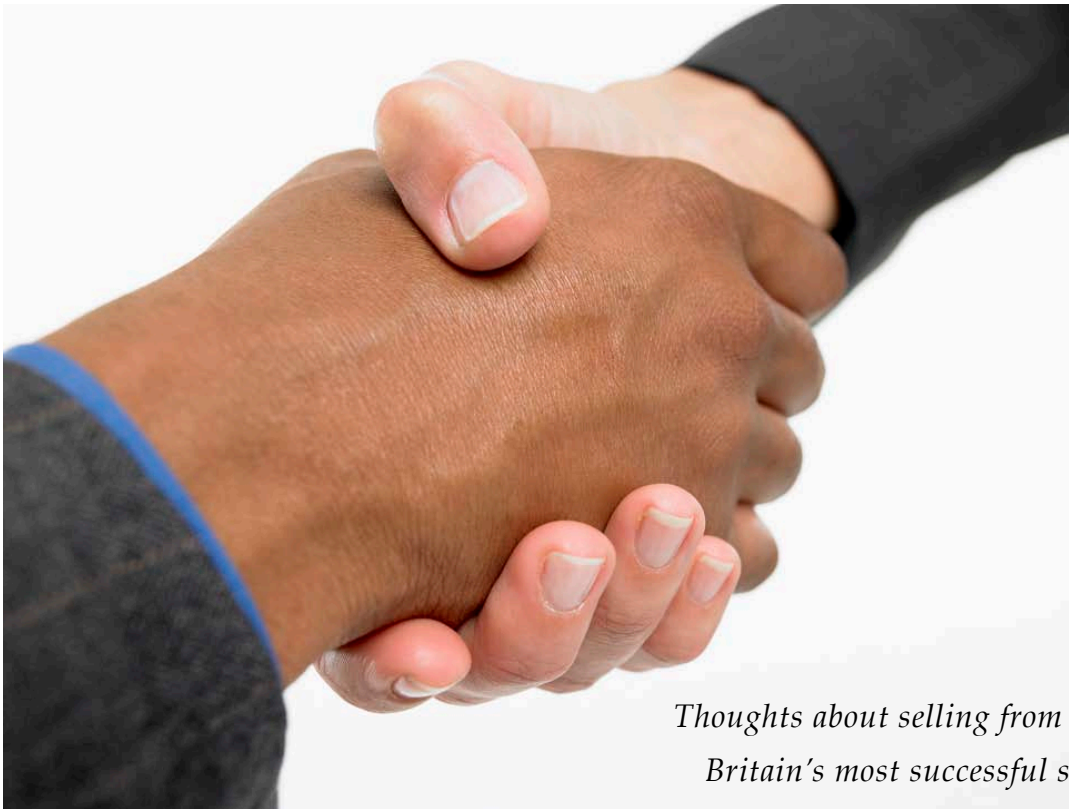




Developing People > Advancing Business



Thoughts about selling from one of Great Britain's most successful salespeople

THE OPENING ... GETTING ATTENTION OF THE BUYER

WHITE PAPER

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THE OPENING...GETTING THE ATTENTION OF THE BUYER

The hand of the speedometer wavers around ninety miles an hour. Automatically the driver glances at the rear mirror to check whether or not a police car is on his tail; silently he curses the howling, crackling, useless car radio signal. The agony of not knowing is unbearable, but if he can average eighty he may still make home in time to see the last quarter in the Monday night football game.

With screaming brakes the car bucks to a halt. He leaps out, races up the garden path and digs his finger again and again in the bell bell. "Come on, come on!" he urges, regretting now more than ever the loss of his front door key.

His wife eventually opens up the door with a frown beginning to form on her face. Pecking at her cheek and just

missing, he is about to hurry to the family room when he hears her saying, "You've got to do something about your mother. She was on the phone three times again today complaining . . ."

He mumbles comforting words as he edges his way to the television set. She trails alongside him, mumbling about her problem with her mother-in-law. Suddenly he realizes the enormity of his problem. If he turns on the television she will be ticked off for his lack of interest in her troubles, and she will sulk all night. If he doesn't turn on the game immediately, he may miss a touchdown . . . He decides to use one of his standard ploys. Holding his head in his hand he murmurs, "It's been a helluva day, and I've got a stinking head — I can hardly hold it up."

Immediately his wife breaks off her monologue saying sympathetically, "I'll get you some aspirin and a beer." No sooner does she leave the room than he switches on the television and flops into his chair. When she returns, he interrupts her renewed diatribe about his mother with a periodic, "Oh dear!" or, "I'm so sorry!" or, "You poor thing."

Later his wife says, "So what are you going to do?" "About what?"

"Your mother.

"What about mother?" And that, of course, starts the fight to end all fights, a fight that never needed to happen.

The mistake his wife made was in not finding the appropriate moment to raise her mother-in-law problem. She tried to influence him to take a line of action when his mind was concentrating on something else. She was selling under adverse conditions, and if the conditions are wrong we can rarely persuade anyone to do anything. The mistake the man made was not hearing that his "customer" needed his attention — right now.

Self-Made Adverse Conditions

Salespeople can create adverse conditions for themselves during the first few seconds of an interview:

1. *By looking hopelessly around the buyer's office for somewhere to park a soaking wet coat or umbrella.* Salespeople should always leave their coat or umbrella outside the buyer's office, whenever possible.
2. *By slamming the door behind him.* A slammed door can cause intense annoyance to a buyer.
3. *By jabbering.* When salespeople speak too quickly or slur their opening words, a buyer will not strain to hear what is being said. The buyer's attention will wander, and they may cut the interview short.



Many salespeople let their words literally pour out when they meet a buyer for the first time, or when hoping to close a big order. This is due to nervousness, from which even the most experienced salesperson is not immune.

Not every word needs to be enunciated as if the buyer were a moron, but neither should words be rapid bullets. Good advice: speak a little more slowly, a little more clearly than usual in opening remarks

4. *By using weak or insulting sentences.* "Nonsense," you may exclaim. "No salesperson begins by insulting a buyer." To this reasonable assumption, we should add the word knowingly.

Here are some examples of insulting openings:

"I was just passing by and thought you would want to see me about . . ."

"I thought I'd just pop in to ask if. . ."

To the minds of buyers these remarks imply that their business, in the view of the salesperson, does not warrant a special call. Also, this type of sentence undermines the self-importance of the buyer.

Neither should salespeople use semi-apologetic openings:

"If I'm not troubling you too much . . ."

"I wonder if you would mind . . ."

"Forgive me if I'm intruding on your time, but . . ."

Weak openings only diminish the salesperson in the mind of the buyer.

Never, never make adverse conditions for yourself. Selling is hard enough without make it more difficult than it is.

BUYER-GENERATED ADVERSE CONDITIONS

A *buyer-generated adverse condition* is any situation in which salespeople, *through no fault of their own*, find it impossible to obtain the undivided attention of the buyer.

For example, you might say hello to a retail shop owner while they are inspecting a display window that is the process of being dressed. Your approach will fall on deaf ears. The prospect is much more interested in the display than in you. You may well find yourself standing on the pavement having missed your opportunity, with the shopkeeper closing the store door in your face. In this case, before beginning any selling, you must first get the shopkeeper back into the shop.

If the store owner is high up a ladder checking stock, don't begin to sell until your potential customer has climbed down to floor level. When a production manager is helping staff with a problem, stand aside until the advice has been given. Then suggest you go back to the manager's office for your meeting.

Here are other examples — problems and solutions that have been provided by delegates at our Pro-Payback courses.

Selling on the Factory Floor

The reason for your visit is to finalize the details of an order. You have an appointment to see the production director, Emily Woods. You arrive five minutes before your scheduled meeting to be told by the receptionist that Ms. Woods is in the assembly shop. As you are well-known to her, the receptionist suggests that it would save time, if you went upstairs and waited for Woods outside her office.

There, you meet one of the other production managers who tells you that Emily will be at least another thirty minutes, and adds, "Would you rather make another appointment? Or, if you care to, you can go down to the assembly shop . . ."

You decide to go to the factory floor. On arrival at the assembly shop, you see Ms. Woods in conversation with three machine operators. Approaching them, you realize that they are having a heated argument, you back away and ask a fitter standing nearby if there is a crisis.

The fitter tells you there is trouble because a machine has broken down. Pending repairs, the shop foreperson wants the machine operators to do other work. Backed by their union shop steward, they refuse to do, claiming that it might put a production bonus at risk. Ms. Woods is trying to sort things out . . .

Emily sees you and calls out, "This will take just a few minutes, and then I'll be with you . . ."

What do you do?

1. Wait for Emily to be free?
2. Return to her office and wait for her there?
3. Make an appointment for another occasion?



The decision of the delegate who provided the example was to return to Emily's office and leave a short note. The salesperson wrote:

I appreciate your willingness to keep our appointment, but realize you have to give priority to the problems on the shop floor. I thought, therefore, you would prefer me to call again and see you later in the week. Sam Howell looked at your calendar and suggested that Friday at 11 a.m. may be convenient for you. I'll telephone you later this afternoon to confirm that this works for you.

The delegate believed that if he had attempted to finalize details of the new installation on the shop floor he would have failed. He also believed that even if Emily Woods had accompanied him to her office, the buyer would still have been thinking about whether or not she had settled the problem in the assembly shop.

The delegate said he'll never know whether he would have gotten the order if he had stayed, but that he did get it when he called the following Friday.

Selling in the Office Cafeteria

The competition has been intense, but you are confident that you have won a very large order for paper shredders. When you call on Bill Roberts, the managing director, for final approval, he keeps you waiting for some time, then apologizes and invites you to have lunch with him. "Over lunch," he says, "you can answer the few remaining questions still in my mind."

Roberts, in his early thirties, is a self-made entrepreneur, strong-minded, determined, but a very friendly person. You have met him twice previously, and although he made it clear on each occasion that he was not prepared to have his time wasted and that he wanted direct answers to direct questions, you felt sure you had impressed him.

Instead of taking you to a private restaurant, he conducts you to the staff cafeteria on the top floor. In one corner of the cafeteria-cum-restaurant the tables are occupied by the company executives. He says, "We're all workers here — I don't believe in executives eating in lavishly decorated rooms. Actually, it's very good of our staff to allow us to eat with them."

He guides you to a table with seating for eight. Six of the seats are already occupied. After shaking hands with the six men, three of whom you have already met, you are led to the self-service counter to choose your meal.



Soon after returning to the table, bantering among the executives begins. They rib each other, and then gently pull your leg about the ethics of salespeople.

After a while Roberts says, "I want you to tell me again why you think your shredders are better than those made by Only Shredders, that cost 15 per cent less."

One of the executives says, "Your machines and theirs both shred papers. Five per cent I could understand, but how can you possibly justify 15 per cent more?"

Do you immediately answer the question raised by the executive?

Do you again sell Roberts and all his colleagues on the benefits of your shredders?

Do you talk to the table in general?

Do you concentrate on the executive who emphasized the difference in cost of the two machines? or,

Do you make an attempt to get away from the group?

The course delegate told us that she knew that if she became involved in a defensive discussion with the executives they would do their best to pull her benefit

story to pieces, if only to prove to Bill Roberts what keen minds they had.

The delegate said to the managing director, "Mr. Roberts, it would not be helpful to you or your colleagues if I were to detail the value and benefits of our shredders to you now. I left my case in your office and in that case is back-up evidence to justify your buying our quality shredder. Without that evidence you could come to the wrong decision, and that would be unfair to you. When I called previously, Mr. Roberts, you insisted that you only wanted to hear facts. I promise you that when we return to your office I can give you all the facts you require, to prove that we can offer you the best value on the market."

To the delegate's delight Mr. Roberts said, "I agree," and then switched the conversation, and other matters were discussed. On returning to the managing director's office, the order was signed.

Never in the Corridor

You call to see a financial director, Suzanne Hardy, to move the sale of a new type of accounting machine in which Hardy is interested. Suzanne is a difficult person to sell to because on each occasion you have seen her, she has thought of new applications for the machine.

On your way to her office you meet her in a corridor and she says, 'You're the very person I want to see. I'm concerned about the input of'

What do you do?

Do you listen to her question and deal with it on the spot?

Do you suggest that it is very difficult to show her the necessary schemata while standing in the corridor, and it would be better if you both went to her office?

The delegate told us that he took the first course and dealt with the problem. Hardy then raised another point. The discussion lasted some fifteen minutes, after which Hardy made an excuse about attending another meeting, shook hands with the delegate, and walked quickly away.

Eventually, the order went to a competitor.

The delegate believed that one of the reasons he lost the sale was because he was at a distinct disadvantage while selling in the corridor. The interview had been cut short just when he was about to press home some of the strongest benefits of his machine. If they had been in Hardy's office the delegate would not have been summarily dismissed and could have found out Hardy's real objection to placing the order.



Buyers often make a point of seeing a salesperson in a waiting room, entrance hall, or corridor, because they know that they can always walk away. This is the most common of all buyer-generated adverse conditions.

There are many other examples of adverse conditions: when a buyer is about to leave for home, when the cafeteria manager is extremely busy, between twelve noon and two p.m., when the warehouse manager is involved with an awkward delivery problem...

If you consider the conditions for selling are adverse it is better not to begin to sell,

BUT

it isn't always easy to decide whether or not the conditions are adverse. A salesperson must not always believe a buyer who says "I'm very busy," or "I can only spare five minutes," or "I have another appointment coming right up." The buyer may just be seeking an excuse to get rid of a salesperson before hearing the sales proposition. Buyers delight in creating adverse conditions, but they can be overcome by a salesperson's ability to sell well and to create *immediate* interest in the sales offer.

When in doubt, stay put. When you know that the odds are really against your being able to explain your proposition, or that it is impossible to hold the buyer's attention because of his real preoccupation with other matters, then leave the potential customer, and try again another day.

THE FIRST CALL

All salespeople have to make first time calls at some time or another, but whether a salesperson meets a buyer for the first time or the one hundredth time, they still have to gain, and hold, the buyer's attention during the first minutes of the interview. On the majority of occasions a busy buyer wants a salesperson to explain quickly the purpose of the visit, but there is a friendly type of buyer who doesn't mind a few pleasantries before learning of the salesperson's offer. These pleasantries, whether lasting seconds or minutes, can be called the *chat gap*.

Sometimes a courteous and friendly type of buyer, when first meeting a salesperson, will offer a seat and make an opening comment — such as, "What a day! Did you get wet walking from the parking lot? It's too far away from the factory block.. ."

This is an invitation for the salesperson to reassure the buyer, in the fewest possible words, that all is well. They didn't really get wet because they had an umbrella, which was left in the waiting room/

hall/corridor/ . . . But the buyer's friendly greeting is not an invitation for the salesperson to relate what happened on another occasion when calling at a factory whose car park was even further away from the factory block . . .

At a first call, except when a buyer indulges in a few pleasant words, the salesperson should determine to gain the buyer's undivided attention with the opening sentence. The chat gap, however, may lengthen when the salesman calls back regularly on the buyer.

Over the years a friendship may develop that would make it ridiculous for the salesperson to attempt to grip the buyer's immediate attention. The buyer may have been ill, away on holiday, or at a conference. This customer may have been honored in some way, or they may have a new baby. It is, then, only natural for the salesperson to begin by saying, "How are you feeling now?" or, "Was it a boy?" or, "You were excellent on tv last Wednesday; I caught it. . ."

There is nothing wrong with such friendly remarks, but again, the objective of the salesperson is to keep them short. By keeping to one simple rule a salesperson can always be sure of reducing the length of the *chat gap*. The rule is:

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Never, never talk about yourself — your interests — your hobbies — your holidays — your family — your car — your accident — your health . . .

Never give your uninvited opinion on the current political situation — the election — or world affairs . . .

If you do, the *chat gap* will lengthen and you will, inevitably, bore the buyer. Even if the buyer asks you about yourself out of politeness — your hobbies, children, etc. — answer in as few words as possible. "They're fine, thank you," is quite enough. Customers don't really want to hear more. They are only being polite.



If a salesperson is foolish enough to talk about him or herself, they can be certain of one fact: the buyer won't listen and will, possibly, cut short the interview saying, "I'm so sorry but I have to leave you, I have another appointment . . ."

Because it is so difficult for anybody to believe that lessons in human relations apply to them, many salesmen will say, 'But in my case it is different — my buyers like to hear about my . . .'

They do not.

GETTING ATTENTION

Whether the *chat gap* lasts five seconds or five minutes, as soon as it ends it is vital for the salesperson to gain the buyer's attention by interesting them in the opening of the sales offer. There are five proven techniques, all of which can enable a salesperson to hold the buyer's attention time and time again. These techniques can be used at the first call or at the tenth call.

Here they are:

- the factual opening
- the question opening
- the reference opening

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- the sales aid opening
- the demonstration opening

And for those who call back regularly on their clients, there is an additional technique that can be used:

- the link opening

Factual Opening

All of us have an insatiable desire to learn facts about subjects that interest us. What other reason is there for the Guinness Book of Records being a perennial world best-seller? If we are sending one of our children to a new school, all the facts we can gather about that school are read avidly. People considering emigrating to another country they will read every fact they can about the country in which they hope, eventually to live. Just think of the brochures or Internet information we study when we plan a holiday abroad. We lap up the facts . . . six miles of sand, a hundred and fifty-two restaurants, eight golf courses, four swimming pools . . .

Why should buyers be any different in their thinking? We know they are no different, that they are motivated in the same way as all of us. A customer's attention can always be held by a fact, or a series of facts, if they are directly connected with the buyer's business. This attention is just as likely to be held by a fact that concerns the business on the fiftieth call as the fact that was of interest on the first call.

Here are some examples of factual openings:

"Mr. Jackson, it is a fact that oil fuels contain more energy in a given volume than any other fuel, but not all fuels are consistent and dependable. With our product we guarantee . . ."

"Very few companies need a huge hardware investment. It is a fact that many businesses only

need day-to-day assistance for productive work in factory or office. Our new . . ."

"There is now a way of fixing very heavy objects to a cavity wall without having to use special plugs or studding . . ."

"In a recent report from the World Health Organization it was stated that noise was a main cause of stress in

most business offices. Our triple glazing will ..."

"You can now have up to 1,500 internal telephone extensions. As your plant covers so many acres I am sure you will be interested in our new ..."

"It is an unfortunate fact, Ms. Johnson, as you know, that vandals are continually breaking factory windows on this property. It need not happen to your factory any more, because we have a new glass ..."

"It is not generally known, Mr Jennings, but one of our electric convection ovens can cook eight hundred meals in eight minutes..."

"With every expanding watch-bracelet you sell there is a hidden extra 5 per cent profit for you. I am from the Golden Jewelry Corporation . . ."

"Good morning, Mr Jones. I have been outside your shop for five minutes. During that time seventy-four people passed by — that is eight hundred and eighty-eight an hour. Do you know that many more of them could be induced to stop and look in your window? I am from Window Display and we have . . ."

"It is a major expense, as you know, to send back faulty shirts to the manufacturers. At our factory, returns are negligible because of the great care we take in manufacturing and testing. I'm, with the Best Shirt Co... ."

"Good morning, Mrs. Office Manager. You can now have just one printer, not only for all office duplicating, but also to handle multiple runs and special systems which used to require very expensive printers. I am from . . ."

"One of the difficulties of handling frozen food is that the limited amount of storage space often



restricts the variety you can handle. My company, XYZ Ltd, has set up a daily delivery scheme using insulated vans with every variety of frozen product . . .”

“Scaffolding equipment is usually required at short notice in the building trade, but only the larger builders can afford to buy adequate stocks. My company, XYZ Scaffolding, operates an extremely attractive rental plan with depots strategically placed throughout the country to supply your needs within hours . . .”

The Question Opening

Ask a silly question and you’ll get a silly answer is an old line, but conversely, and equally true is: ask a sensible or serious question, and you will always get a sensible answer.

Only those facing police interrogation refuse to answer questions. The rest of us do so with pleasure, either instantly, or after some thought.

When we are in a furniture shop and the assistant says, “What are the present colors in your bedroom?” we are eager to tell the salesperson about the design of our curtains, the coloring of the carpet, the matching tones of the upholstery and the wallpaper. . .

One simple question involves us immediately in the sales offer.

If a car salesperson asks us, “Will you be using the car for cross country trips?” we can hardly wait to talk about our projected tour across the United States and up into Canada.

Buyers always react to a question by becoming involved in the sale. Whether you have to influence the



mind of a purchasing manager, personnel officer, shop supervisor, design engineer, project engineer — if you ask any of them a question you will immediately obtain their undivided attention. Don’t be concerned, however, at the brevity of their replies. Someone asked a question is definitely involved in the sale. The buyer might answer at length, but even if they only say, Yes or No, it still allows you to elaborate, and you will have achieved your objective.

Here are some examples:

“Mr Smith, is it right that from this factory you export to nearly every part of the world?”

“Yes, we’re very proud of our exporting achievements.”

“Then you will be interested to hear of our new daily world wide cargo flights . . .”

* * * * *

“Ms. Kendall, am I right in saying that it is essential for you to use refrigerated vans for delivery?”

“Yes.”

“Then you will be interested in our . . .”

* * * * *

“Mr. Laurie, do you agree that everyone, these days, should consider ways of reducing pollution?”

“Yes, I certainly agree with that.”

“Well, we have designed a revolutionary exhaust system to eliminate completely those intensely choking diesel fumes. Our new . . .”

* * * * *

“Mr. Jackson, is it right that one of your main problems is the risk of water getting into the bearings?”

“Yes, that’s a problem we always have.”

“Well, Mr. Jackson, our new plastic covered bearings can relieve you of that worry, because . . .”

* * * * *

"Ms. King, can your present photocopier copy right up to the spine of a ledger?"

"No, it doesn't."

"Would be helpful to you if it did?"

"Yes, on occasion perhaps."

"Well, our new Fotoit will . . ."

* * * * *

"Mr. Staples, do you agree that when your business is in an expansion mode like yours, up-to-the-minute information at very short notice becomes very critical?"

"Of course, it is essential."

"Well, Mr. Staples, providing up-to-the-minute systems is our business . . ."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mrs. Electrical Dealer. Has your shelf space become more and more valuable to you over the past two or three years?"

"Yes."

"If then," the salesperson continues, "you could display the same products and still have 20 per cent space available for other goods, you would think it worth while, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Our new lamps are 20 per cent smaller than those we used to make, but they have the same output and last just as long. You will not only find that they sell quickly, but as they take up so much less space on your shelves you will have more room to display more products.. ."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mr. Jones, can you sell high-quality power drills in your shop?"

This question prompts two thoughts in the prospect's mind. First, this fellow doesn't think I can sell high-quality products — I'll show him I *can*. Second, he must be very certain of the quality of his products to ask me such a question.

When he answers "Yes" the salesperson continues:

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"Then sir, I can show you how you can make extra profit by selling the most expensive but the finest quality drill on the market today. I am from. . ."

* * * * *

"Good morning Dr. Brown. Isn't it true, doctor, that more and more patients visit you with migraine complaints?"

"Yes it is a growing twenty-first-century complaint."

"Well, sir my company, XYZ has developed a new treatment about which an article appeared in *Lancet* recently and I'd like to show you a couple of the points made in it based on latest research . . ."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mr. Giles. Would you agree that one of the biggest overheads in farming today is labor costs?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, sir, my company, Better Fertilizers, has produced a new fertilizer that is so concentrated that much less labor is needed to spread it, but it is more effective than the normal type of fertilizer . . ."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Ms. Twani. Do you find that your job as a retailer is made much easier by manufacturers who go all out to stimulate public demand for their products?"

"Yes, that is so."

"My company, Tissues Inc., conducts the biggest advertising campaign in the trade, and I would like to give you details of our new program for the next three months."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mr. Smith. Is it your experience that a very large proportion of men's toiletries are purchased by women?"

"Yes, that is true."

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"It is because of this that my company, ABC, Inc., has designed its products for men, but with women in mind.

Let me show you an example of the new type of pack we have produced . . ."

* * * * *

There is, of course, some similarity between stating a fact and asking a question. A fact can be turned into a question, in the same way as many questions can be changed into facts. But there is one difference in these openings: with the Question Opening the salesperson expects, and gets, a reply. With the Factual Opening a fact is stated, the buyer's interest is aroused, but the sales person but does not pause for an answer. The sales offer is continued.

The Reference Opening

What is the ideal attention-getting technique? If used properly, it can be the Reference Opening.

Let us think again of what immediately interests us. When considering a holiday in some sun-baked Caribbean resort, we cannot make up our minds which of the hotels in the packaged deal we find on the Internet to choose; and then a friend says to us, "You must stay at the Capitol Hotel, it's absolutely marvelous. The food is wonderful and the service can't be beaten. Do you know they even . . ."

Do we hesitate? Not for a moment! We book up at the Capitol and tell everyone we meet that we are staying at a highly recommended hotel.

If we need dental treatment and a friend says, "You should go to Dr. Williams down on Main Street — she is the most sensitive dentist I've ever known. She hates causing pain. You know how nervous I am generally . . ."

Off we go to meet Dr. Williams.

And what do we do when a business acquaintance says, "Why don't you go and see Mr. Lake of Kerr Brothers about this? It seems just right for him. He's a friend of mine — mention my name." We very quickly telephone Mr Lake for an appointment, and Mr. Lake

will, undoubtedly, see us, because he knows his friend wouldn't waste his time.

The mind of the buyer is always influenced by a recommendation from someone they know. It can also be influenced if the buyer is shown, very early in the interview, a letter stressing the benefits of your products, written by an executive of a company of repute.



But never use a letter written by a buyer's competitor. That could antagonize him. Also, be careful about showing a letter from a giant organization to the managing director employing some fifty people. The response could be, "It's all right for them with their hundreds of thousands of employees, but we're not big enough."

The Sales Aid Opening

Scene I. The father of the family is in the kitchen studying football results. The Mother enters, accompanied by a daughter. The daughter places a large irregular-shaped parcel on the table. Father glances at it, then returns to the football statics. He glances again. No one says anything. Eventually, even the report on a key game involving his favorite team cannot hold him. "What's in that?" he demands, pointing at the parcel.

Scene II. The managing director is reading through important documents. A secretary enters and places a registered envelope on the desk. The managing director doesn't even pretend not to be interested. Turning away from the important documents the director asks, "What's in that?"

What is it that makes husbands put down newspapers and tycoons turn away from important matters?

Curiosity!

When a buyer sees a salesperson unwrapping a small parcel, or opening a case in which something

gleams brightly, or taking a plastic container from a pocket, that buyer will not want the salesperson to leave before finding out what it is that is gleaming in the leather case — what new concept is in the plastic container — what is so special about that parcel . . .

The Sales Aid Opening psychology being based on the natural curiosity of most people will always get a buyer's undivided

attention. When the buyer sees a salesman taking a well designed leaflet or an appealing brochure from a briefcase, curiosity and interest are aroused.

When the buyer is handed a piece of material, that buyer is curious to discover its benefits. If purchasing industrial perfume for

use in a new product, a sense of small will quickly involve the buyer in the sales offer. A salesperson selling food items to an industrial cafeteria manager will find that tasting allows the buyer to sell him or herself on the flavor. A buyer will strain to hear if a salesman shows apparatus claimed to be almost silent in operation.

If by using a sales aid that covers all the prospect's five senses — sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing — you will grab a lot of attention in your opening. This can rarely be achieved, but your objective should be to appeal to as many of the senses as possible.

Catalogues, descriptions or specifications of equipment, photographs of installations, independent test reports, performance graphs, reproductions of testimonial letters from well-known companies can all be used as a Sales Aid Opener.

Salespeople selling to retailers and wholesalers will have samples of their range — especially new products — that would obviously be shown.

Also used currently by salespeople at the opening are:



A sample six-inch square showing the formation of the joint of the tongue-and-groove flooring chipboard

Example of use of paper, e.g. airline tickets, event tickets

Photograph of new cafeteria equipment on location

Small length of hose and coupling to show construction and quality

Sample of special weld blending

Fabrics

All types of components

Moldings

You do not want your buyer to read through a brochure line by line while you are attempting to open the sales conversation. The buyer would only pretend to do so anyway. When using any type of marketing collateral as a Sales Aid Opening, the salesperson must pinpoint one particular feature applicable to the buyer's business. The salesperson should always maintain control of the interview by holding the leaflet and pointing out the features. The leaflet shouldn't be handed over for the buyer to study, enabling the buyer to glance casually at each page. The buyer's own half-hearted interest could lead to a decision of "Not interested."

The Sales Aid Opening can be most effective if linked with a Factual or Question opening.

The Demonstration Opening

Pen and paper can provide an excellent Demonstration Opening, immediately involving a buyer in the sales offer.

A salesperson's opening sentence could be:

"We can move ten of your crates in ten minutes. Overall, this will mean a saving in time of. . ."

The salesperson then writes down the total number of crates handled in a week and begins working out the overall saving in time. And from time

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saving on to cost reduction (continually involving the buyer in the calculations).

If, however, you are able to demonstrate equipment, the buyer will be quickly involved so there is very little need for attention getting sentences.

Here are examples currently used by salespeople:

Cut-away model of electronic solenoid control valves

Booster amplifiers to simulate operation

Scale-model motorized sweeper

Working model of ultrasonic level control

Single booth tape recorder for buyer to test quality and versatility (language laboratory)

Internal bathroom / toilet air extractor unit with timing device

Model for demonstrating a layout of warehouses, showing racking systems, etc

Small-scale working model of generator plant to show different areas that could need monitoring

When demonstrating at the opening of a sale, remember these points :

1. Never demonstrate with an imperfect unit.
2. Whenever possible, let buyers sell themselves on the unit by allowing them to work the model.
3. Demonstrate very slowly. Make sure that your prospect is following each point, by asking questions.

Sometimes it is better to list features/benefits of a unit before the demonstration takes place. On other occasions, however, a Demonstration Opening can be most effective, with each benefit being stressed as the demonstration progresses.

CALLING BACK

There are many reasons for business to business salespeople to call back on prospective buyers or customers, but whatever the objective, they can all be termed *Development Calls*. At every contact, high or

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low, a salesperson must attempt to develop the worth and profitability of the relationship.

Here are some examples:

To negotiate long-term business

To get products or services specified

To get repeat orders

To close orders after days, weeks, months, of negotiation

To carry out a survey

To see those who can influence decisions

To try once more to open an account

To introduce new units in a range

To handle a complaint

To discover the real reason why a competitor is obtaining business (buyers rarely give the real reason for changing)

To maintain goodwill by showing operators how to get the best out of equipment already sold

To get an introduction to another buyer

To make certain that customers know all the benefits of products and the full range of company's services, when taking over a new territory

To gain knowledge of production conditions

To get agreement to visit a factory or stage a demonstration of equipment

To establish further needs with design department

To introduce new lines

To get agreement from production manager to allow a visit to production unit by prospective buyer

To present quotation, specification, pricing, changes in schedule

Let us consider three of these objectives, and how they can be tackled by people in sales.

The Opening ... Getting Attention of the Buyer

1. *To maintain goodwill and keep out competition by showing machine operators (or any other employees) how to get the best out of the equipment.*

Does the salesperson approach the machine operators (having first, of course, obtained permission) and say, "I know you're all a bit slow, so I thought I'd call to show you how to obtain the best results from the equipment . . ." or, "It hardly seems possible, but even now some of you don't know the full capabilities of the equipment !"

You can imagine what would be the results if a salesperson were to use these openings. Salespeople have to take great care to plan in advance what they are going to say to ensure there is no risk of antagonizing anyone. The sales rep's objective is to make sure that all the operators are well sold on the equipment, so that when new orders are placed they will speak highly of the equipment.

The salesperson could use any of the standard openings — asking a question, or stating a fact:

"Have any of you found any difficulty using the threaded . . .?"

"I have found on some calls that operators have not been told initially that by using the barlock at No 10 frequency there is no risk of. . ."

In neither of these openings does the salesperson risk upsetting the operators, and he is using exactly the same form of opening as he would use if his objective was selling the equipment, instead of **calling back** to maintain goodwill and increase product knowledge.

2. *To get an introduction to another buyer.*

In exactly the same way as if selling, the salesperson can plan how to phrase the opening sentence. The salesperson might ask a question :

"Mr. Remington, do you know if Ms. Kenton in your Parts Division uses block struts as you do here?"

"I'm not certain."

"Then would you mind introducing me to her so that I can see if we can be as

helpful to her division as we always try to be to yours?"

3. *To discover the real reason why a competitor is obtaining business (buyers rarely give the real reason).*

To achieve this objective can be difficult. Would it be achieved by trying to wheedle the information out of an employee who is not your direct buyer? This form of ferreting out information can border on the unethical depending on how it is done.

The salesman might, therefore, decide to use a Fact-plus-Question Opening when talking to a friendly buyer:

"John, as you know we supply over 60 per cent of the Cyclatones in the United States and that percentage increases every year. But we still don't want to lose any of it. Can you tell me, therefore, if there is any reason why Mr Johnson, your procurement officer, has decided to use Cyclatones supplied by XYZ?"

Most people will react to a direct question, and John will probably be no different from others.

Although the objectives of a salesperson may be varied and may cover a wide area, the majority call to negotiate or obtain orders.

Sometimes a salesperson can call on a buyer twenty times or more, attempting to open the account. Salespeople supplying customers with component parts may call every four weeks on a buyer; others may call two or three times a year,

BUT

following the *chat gap*, a salesperson must still obtain the undivided attention of the buyer — assistant buyer — research and development manager — accountant . . . whoever it is whose mind the salesperson has to influence.

Every salesperson, at every call then, must have an objective, that will determine the opening technique to be used. Without an objective a salesperson risks using a colorless, cliché-ridden opening, making it very easy for a buyer to end the interview quickly.

Here are examples of weak call-back openings:

"Any news for me, yet?"

The Opening ... Getting Attention of the Buyer

"Have you heard from the Board yet?"

"Have you had a chance yet of discussing the matter with the contractors?"

"I hope you have some good news for me today."

"Have you arrived at a decision yet?"

"Were you able to check the stock?"

Following this type of weak opening it is so easy for a buyer to reply negatively: "No, the Board hasn't yet decided;" "No, I haven't studied the quotation yet;" "No, I haven't had the stock checked since you last called; come back again in four weeks' time..."

As much care must be taken with a Call-Back Opening as with a first call. All of the standard techniques can be used when calling back.

Here are examples:

Factual Opening:

"Because of the world-shortage of Salycotes we shall shortly be changing to a synthetic. I felt sure you would want to place a large order now, while the Salycotes are still available . . ."

Factual Opening:

"Mr Smith, you are using approximately 120,000 yards of Dylet a month. An analysis of your orders over the past year shows a steady growth, which means that within three months you will be needing 150,000 yards regularly. Deliveries are getting tighter and I don't want to let you down so if you order now . . ."

* * * * *

Both of these openings can lead to a quick close:

Question Opening:

"The trend seems to be to switch from transistors to minitors. How is that going to affect your production lines?"

"It could cause problems."

"Well, here is a way we can help you . . ."

Question Opening:

"How are you being affected by the labor shortage in this area, Ms. Thomsen?"

"It's getting worse every day."

"Here is a way we can help you: since I last called we have devised a pre-pack that will save you . . ."

* * * * *

Reference Opening:

"I called on your friend Brian Walker yesterday. He suggested that I should tell you about the results he is getting with Gripit. You haven't used it for some time now, Mr. Wallace, so maybe it's time to consider it again . . ."

* * * * *

Sales Aid Opening :

"I've brought you our latest catalog, Ms. Cooper. It now gives a complete range of spare parts which is in line with the suggestion you made a year ago. I'd like to show you.. ."

* * * * *

When salespeople call regularly on retail or wholesale customers, they should dispense with stock phrases such as:

"How are you?"

"Has the stock been moving?"

"Is your business any better?"

"Were the goods delivered on time?"

"Did the display arrive?"

"Anything for me today?"

These are time-wasters. No matter how frequently salespeople see a customer they can find something new to say about their products. Before each visit the salesperson should decide on a factual sentence, or a question or a term of reference that will put fresh life into the sale. For example:

“Good morning, Mr. Bachhus. When I was here last month I told you about our new advertising campaign. I have some facts for you now that should help you to decide on your stock requirements.”

“Good morning, Ms. Polanski. Have you noticed that over the past five weeks there has been a sudden demand for reds and greens? We have added some variations of these colors to our range.”

“Mr. Sampson, after I left you last time I thought of an idea that would help you to sell more of. . .”

“Good morning, Ms. Clayman. I must apologize to you. When I was here five weeks ago I didn't really explain in detail what a link to our promotional campaign means. But you will remember that you were very busy at the time. Do forgive me. This is how it can help you . . .”

The order-takers use hackneyed approaches. The professional salesperson thinks of something new at every call.

Most salespeople use the factual, question, or reference approach. These additional forms of approach can, however, be used occasionally :

The Curiosity Approach:

“Good morning, Mr. Lansing. Have you ever seen a metal plate like this before? It can save you a lot of money. It is an accessory used in our new DVD Label machine . . .”

The Fear Approach :

“Mr. Peters, what would happen to your house if a fire broke out while you and your children were asleep in bed? Our fire alarm . . .”

The Gift Approach:

“Mrs. Franklin? Good morning, will you please accept this cleaning powder with our compliments? We want you to try it and I also want to show you . . .”

The Personal Interest Approach:

“Good morning, Ms. Johnson. I was very interested to read your excellent letter in this morning's *Daily Gazette*. Every statement you made was quite justified in my opinion, but naturally, I was sorry to hear of the bad service you had received from the X Car Company. This need never happen to you again. I am from the ABC Garages. We are sole distributors in the area for Y cars, and I have called to ask you to let us show you a model of. . .”

THE LINK OPENING

Have you seen any TV thriller serials lately? If so, you've probably noticed the regular use of the technique of showing a flashback from the final scene of the previous episode. It is this link with the past that immediately involves the viewer in the new episode.

The *Link Opening* in selling uses the same technique as the flashback on TV. A point discussed at one call becomes the link to hold the buyer's attention at the beginning of the next call.

Although the link technique can be used whatever the objective of the call back, it is most useful to those business-to-business salespeople whose products are repeatable and who, therefore, call on their buyers every four to six weeks, year in and year out.

“What can I say that is new,” they ask, “when we have nothing exciting to offer for periods of six or nine months, or more?”

To these salespeople, the link helps maintain a continuing dialogue, the salesperson probing, questioning, reminding, with the objective of selling



strongly at every call to get the maximum business *at every call*. Sometimes only a few words are needed — words most pleasing to a buyer: “You will remember when last I called, you said . . .” We are all anxious to hear our words of wisdom repeated.

If this link is not feasible, the salesperson can refer to a question left unanswered, a statement made by a third party, or a point made previously in which the buyer has shown interest.

For example:

“Mr. Gunderson, you will remember last month you said that the problem of off-cuts was becoming acute. I have been thinking very deeply about this point, and I want to suggest that . . .”

“Ms. Malloy, when I was here last week you told me of your plan to . . . This is how we can help your plan along . . .”

“Mr. Washington, when I brought in your quotation last week I showed you the drawings, but forgot to mention . . .”

There is one DON'T that every salesperson should remember when working out a *Link Opening*. If, at a previous call, you dealt with a complaint and settled that complaint, DON'T bring the matter up again by saying, “Is the machine working all right now?” This most likely will begin a trend of negative thoughts in the buyer's mind. If anything is wrong the buyer will tell you, quickly enough.

Always recall *positive* points:

“Ms. Ulrich, last month you told me that it was essential for you to have the motors by 24th. Well, they left for the site yesterday, on the 17th. As I promised, I was determined to give your order priority. But, deliveries will get progressively worse as we move into the holiday season, and I feel sure that you will now want to . . .”

“I really appreciated the confidence you showed in me when I called last month and you told me of what was happening. *The Times* only published the news yesterday, but those

three weeks have enabled us to draw up a new plan for you . . .”

“There was one point we touched on last week, Mr. Saperstein, when I called, and that was the noise factor. You said you were going to look into the question and, of course, with some embossing machines the noise can, sometimes, be deafening. Now with our machines there is less noise than that of a typewriter . . .”

“Ms. Bright, when I was here last week I promised to bring you a photograph of some of our non-ferrous castings, to give you some indication of how our experience can help you. I had this photograph taken specially for you . . .”

GETTING ATTENTION: SUMMARY

1. Never sell under adverse conditions.
2. Don't jabber; always speak slowly so that the buyer can hear every word.
3. Keep the *chat gap* as short as possible.
4. Make certain that you have worked out the best possible opening sentence, based on :
 - a. Factual Opening
 - b. Question Opening
 - c. Reference Opening
 - d. Sales Aid Opening
 - e. Demonstration Opening
5. When calling back, make sure that you get attention by using any of the standard openings, or a Link Opening.
6. Always remember, the objective of the opening is to obtain the undivided attention of the buyer.

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