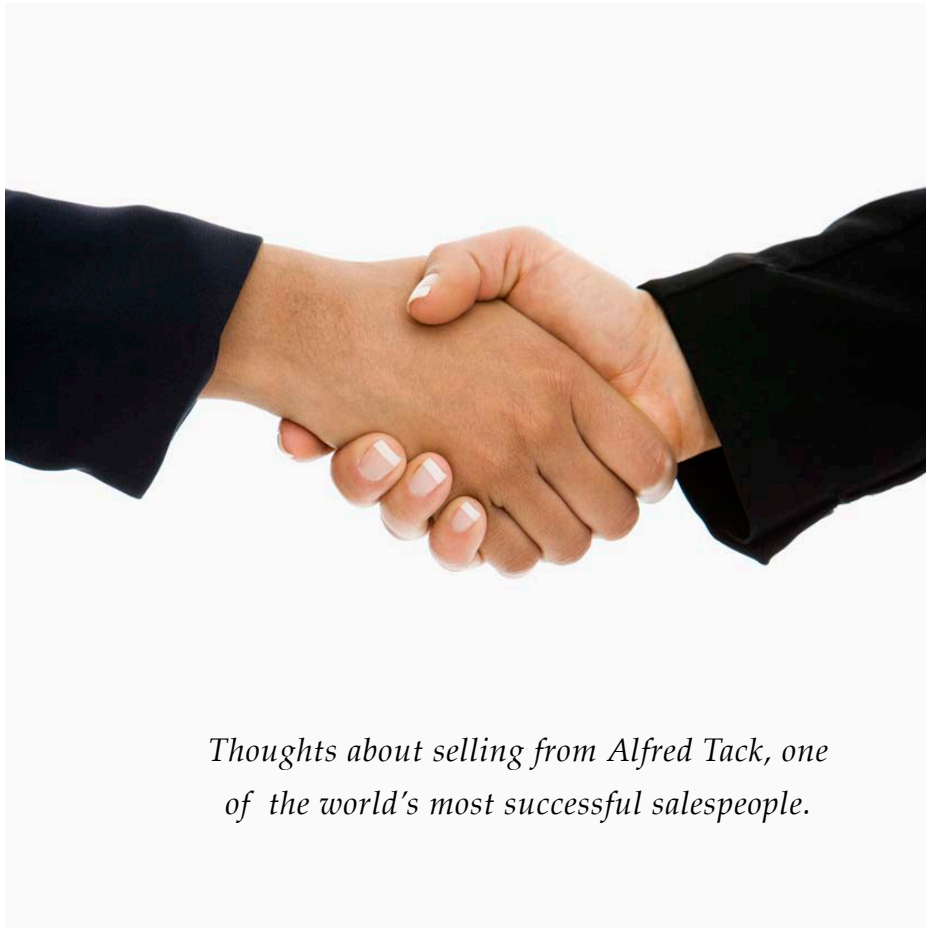




**Developing People > Advancing Business**



*Thoughts about selling from Alfred Tack, one  
of the world's most successful salespeople.*

## SELLING BY OBJECTIVES

WHITE PAPER

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One of the most dynamic influences in commercial and industrial growth occurred with the introduction of Management by Objectives.

MBO as it has known, emphasizes the need for each member within a working group to be given his or her own objective or goals that, added to those of colleagues, leads to the achievement of the group objective.

The MBO concept is based on the fact that people work more effectively when they know precisely what they are trying to achieve. We have always known, at Tack, that this applies particularly to salespeople. For years, every salesperson in the Tack Group was given set targets — call targets, sales targets, targets for the number of appointments made by telephone, number of orders per quotation . . . Those attending our courses were given targets according to the specific requirements of their work.

When MBO emerged as a major factor in management techniques we realized that target setting was not precise enough. Targets, or objectives, should not relate alone to sales revenue. Goals should be segmented so each day a salesperson should have a number of clearly defined objectives, ranging from knowing the best possible selling or demonstration kit to the closing of an order.

With the advent of MBO, we changed the title of Target Selling to Selling by Objectives.

Salespeople went from strength to strength as they appreciated the part each minor objective played in the reaching of the final objective — the order. Although the list of selling objectives is lengthy (preplanning itself is an objective), in the main salespeople are concerned with call objectives.

Before every call salespeople must always have in their mind a clear objective, otherwise they will lack purpose, arouse no interest, and influence no one.

Here are examples of call objectives other than the closing of orders:

### *Visiting a Factory*

John Wilson, a salesman for Lancing and Sons decided that he would achieve a major step towards finalizing an order if he could persuade Mr. Brown, a production manager and a potential buyer, to visit the Lancing factory.

What, then, is the objective?

On the face of it, it is simply to arrange a visit by Mr. Brown to the factory.

But is that the true objective? John Wilson is not offering Mr. Brown a conducted tour of the factory, but John could place the emphasis on the *visit* rather than on the reason for the visit when seeing Mr. Brown, and that could lose him the order.

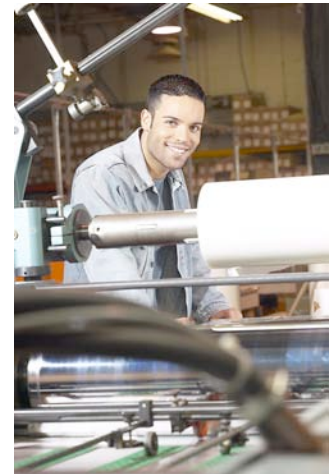
At the interview John might say something like this:

“You could see the Acme line for yourself if you visited our factory, Mr. Brown. Of course, I would pick you up in the car, take you to the airport and accompany you to our site. One of our executives will meet the plane, you could have lunch with our directors, and this would give you the opportunity . . .”

Would that travelog necessarily persuade Mr. Brown to visit the factory? Maybe. But possibly he might be concerned about the excessive hospitality and feel that if he made the journey he might be committing himself to buy.

The emphasis, then, should not be on the visit, but the benefits Mr. Brown will derive from making that visit.

What, then, is John's objective? First he must ask himself these questions :



Q. What is the reason for inviting Mr. Brown to the factory?

A. Not to see the Acme line being produced, but to see for himself the special features of the Acme line — features that will be of direct interest and benefit to Mr. Brown.

Q. Why should Mr. Brown give up his time to make the long journey to Lancing factory?

A. Because at Brown's factory they have a labor problem, and the Acme line can be operated by one person only. Also, Acme operators can be taught in three hours how to use the machine to the best advantage. Mr. Brown would be able to satisfy himself on this point because training schools are in progress all the time.

John Wilson now has a clear idea of his objective:

*That Mr Brown should prove for himself the benefits offered by the Acme line.*

You will see how the emphasis has changed. No longer is John deeply concerned about travel arrangements or the hospitality at the factory. His objective is to persuade Brown that it is worth while putting himself out to see the Acme line. *It is incidental that the Acme is at the Lancing factory — it could be anywhere.*

Wilson, knowing his true call objective, will be much more convincing in his arguments, and Mr. Brown will be motivated to travel for the right reasons.

### *Dealing with a Complaint*

One of your customers may be upset because they feel they have been let down (late delivery, wrong demand for settlement of an account, bad service). You have to call on this customer to straighten things out.

At first you might consider that the objective is to deal with an objection, but on



reflection you may decide that a more correct objective would be to restore confidence and to make sure of continuity of business.

Your next task would be to set down minor objectives, which could be:

1. To discover the true reason for the complaint and whether or not it is justified. Many complaints are wrapped up in side issues, generalizations, and reminders by buyers of what happened some years ago — all to confuse the issue. On the company side, staff often try to justify their own mistakes.
2. To find out how far you can go to make things right. Is a company policy involved? Can extra credit be given? Can free service be given?
3. To consider ways of ensuring that a similar complaint does not arise again.
4. To rebuild the buyer's confidence in the company.

The final proof that all minor objectives and the call objective are achieved will be evident when the buyer places further orders with you.

Here are some more typical call objectives:

- to obtain payment of an overdue account, and retain goodwill of the customer
- when taking a quotation to a buyer, to pinpoint special features that cannot be offered by competitors
- to obtain information before seeking an interview with the buyer to discover the true reason why an order is being held up
- to survey premises prior to quoting
- to obtain co-operation for new merchandising offers — sales promotions — local advertising

Selling by objectives enables salespeople to focus their minds on the real purpose of a call. Once that has been determined, the interview with the buyer is not clouded by side issues, making it easier for the customer to arrive at a positive buying decision.

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