

Introduction: The Truth About Selling

“I’m no good at selling!” Have you ever heard someone say that, or perhaps said it yourself? We hear it all the time. Everyone who is not in sales thinks, “I could *never* sell.”

Truth is, most people who *are* in sales secretly think the same thing.

There is a reason people feel this way: most of us look at sales *backward*. We may see it as convincing people to do something they don’t want to do. But it isn’t; it’s about learning what people *do* want to do and helping them do that. Or, we may think it’s about taking advantage of others—while in fact, it’s about giving other people *more* advantage.

But the biggest inversion of all, the great upside-down misconception about sales, is that it is an effort to *get* something from others. The truth is that sales at its best—that is, at its most effective—is precisely the opposite: it is about *giving*.

Selling is giving: giving time, attention, counsel, education, empathy, and *value*. In fact, the word *sell* comes from the Old English word *sellan*, which means—you guessed it—“to give.”

This is not how most of us have come to think about

sales. Typically, sales is taught as a set of specific skills, reinforced by a range of techniques, aimed at putting your product into someone else's hands and their dollar into your pocket. From the *prospecting dialogue* and *qualifying questions* to *overcoming objections* and *closing the sale*, every step of the process is mapped out and nailed down. All you have to do, so the idea goes, is thoroughly learn and carefully practice everything in the salesman's bag of tricks, and *you too will become a sales success!*

At least, that's the theory. But it often doesn't work out that way.

Here is the reality: of the hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs, small business owners, corporate salespeople, independent reps, and others in business who find themselves fulfilling any sort of sales function, *most are having a hard time with sales and selling.*

This difficulty does not typically come from a lack of belief. Most people who are involved in sales genuinely believe in what they're selling. They are excited about the value they can add to other people's lives while making a healthy living for themselves and providing for their families.

But when it comes to the actual selling part? Most of us don't believe we're any good at it. We get performance anxiety or don't feel comfortable with the idea of "pitching." We don't like having things pushed on us, and don't really expect others to like it either.

We want to sell—we just don't want to be in *selling mode*.

If this describes you, even a little bit, then much of what you're about to read may surprise you. The approach in

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this book may even seem backward compared to what you have learned before about sales. For example:

- Instead of “adding value” *after* the sale or as an incentive to close a difficult deal, our model *starts* with adding value and makes that its principal goal throughout.
- The classic sales process culminates in the “close.” Ours focuses on the “open.”
- People typically think of sales as a *talking* business. Our approach is to spend less time talking and more time *listening*.
- Conventional sales training focuses on *the presentation*: how you talk about your product. Ours focuses on asking *great questions* and keeping the conversation focused on others.
- The classic sales process succeeds if you “make a sale” and fails if you get a “no.” Our sales process starts with the understanding that it is impossible to “make a sale”—yet it is designed so that you will have a positive outcome 100 percent of the time, whether or not a sale happens.

Perhaps the biggest difference in what we describe here has to do with the concept of *control*. The traditional approach to sales, reinforced and fine-tuned by dozens of carefully honed techniques, aims to choreograph the process by putting control firmly in the hands of the salesperson—which is probably why neither party really enjoys it: it’s not much fun to have someone try to control you.

GO-GIVERS SELL MORE

For that matter, it's not much fun to be the one doing the controlling, either.

The traditional sales process is typically viewed as a sequence of specific, controlled events:

prospect → qualify → present →
overcome objections → close →
follow up → provide customer service

Go-Givers Sell More takes a different approach. In our view, the sales process goes something like this:

create value → touch people's lives →
build networks → be real → stay open

These five steps correspond to what in *The Go-Giver* we called the Five Laws of Stratospheric Success, which also form the five parts of this book. We'll refer to those five laws often in these pages and even quote the characters from *The Go-Giver*—Pindar, Joe, Nicole, Ernesto, Sam, Debra Davenport, and others.

In fact, this book is based squarely on the premise at the heart of *The Go-Giver*:

Shifting your focus from *getting* to *giving* is not only a nice way to live life and conduct business, but a very *profitable* way as well.

Put another way: living with generosity creates a swelling tide that raises all ships. Not just yours; not just the other person's; *everyone's*.

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Being a giving person, as it turns out, is not just an agreeable idea; it's also quite practical. People who grasp and live the principles of giving not only live happier and more fulfilled lives, they are also among the most successful people we know. Go-givers really do sell more.

Now, we have a confession to make: these ideas did not really originate with us. In fact, what we're describing in this book is simply how every truly great salesperson operates.

When you spend time with a genuinely successful salesperson, pay close attention and you'll find something surprising: none of the hundreds of standard sales techniques are what makes them excel at what they do. Oh, they know about them, and when it will serve their customer, they may utilize some of them. But what makes a great salesperson great at sales is that he or she is wholeheartedly interested in *the other person*.

The truth about selling is that it's not about your product, and it's not about you—it's about the other person.

Genuinely great salespeople are not great because they have mastered "the close," or because they give a dazzling presentation, or because they could shoot holes in any customer objection from fifty paces. They are great because they create a vast and spreading sphere of goodwill wherever they go. They enrich, enhance, and add value to people's lives. They make people happier.

But the most remarkable thing about these consummate salespeople is that they are not as rare as you might think. In fact, you can find them everywhere. This is because be-

ing adept at sales does not require mastery of complex or elaborate skills. As Debra Davenport says in *The Go-Giver*, “You want people skills? Then be a *person*.”

This is very good news, because it means that anyone can be great in sales. It means *you* can be great in sales.

You might think that to do so, you need to have an outgoing, naturally jovial, gregarious personality. Not true. Shy people create relationships and get married. Introverts make great friends. You don’t need to be a “people person,” or *any* specific type of person, to be great at selling. In fact, the idea itself—that *you* might have to be a certain sort of person to be great in sales—precisely misses the point:

It’s not about you; it’s about *them*.

If you take away nothing from *Go-Givers Sell More* but those seven words, it will have been worth the effort for us to write it and for you to read it—because your life in sales will transform. Focus on the quality of the relationship and on providing value to the other person, regardless of “making the sale,” and you will create an exchange that is both more satisfying *and* more profitable.

That in a nutshell is the message of this book: *it’s not about you—it’s about them*.

“I loved the story about Pindar and Joe,” said one reader of *The Go-Giver*, “and how everything came together at the end of the book. But I can’t help wondering, does this stuff really work—I mean, in real life?”

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This book is our answer to that question.

It's easy to get distracted by daily headlines and nightly newscasts that focus on the exploits of the well-heeled corrupt in high places. But far from the TV camera's glare, the great majority of genuinely successful people quietly carry on with their lives in ways that bear a surprising resemblance to Pindar, Ernesto, Nicole, and Sam.

But don't take our word for it. Our fondest hope is that as you read *Go-Givers Sell More*, you'll put its ideas to the test and find out for yourself. And as you do, we invite you to share your experiences with our growing Go-Giver community in the Scrapbook section of the Go-Giver blog: www.thegogiver.com/scrapbook.

And not only your experiences with sales. Because *Go-Givers Sell More* is not just about selling more: it's also about *living* more. As Pindar tells Joe in *The Go-Giver*, "These lessons don't apply only to business, Joe. A genuinely sound business principle will apply anywhere in life—in your friendships, in your marriage, *anywhere*."

If you are in sales in any form—as an account exec at a large firm, an independent rep working out of your home, a retail clerk, a professional marketing your own services—then this book is for you.

And if you're not in sales? Then this book is for you, too. It's for anyone and everyone who at any point in the course of everyday life finds themselves dealing with other human beings. Why? Because studying sales is really studying *humanity*. Understanding selling means understanding how people work.

Writing about *The Go-Giver*, one reviewer added this at the end of his column:

As a side note, I handed *The Go-Giver* to my thirteen-year-old son and made it a required read. Even if he never touches a sales job or owns his own business, I do believe he will be a much better person because of it.

The five principles explored in this book govern success in sales; they also govern successful friendships and partnerships, marriages and families, and organizations large and small. This is because the laws that govern good salesmanship are the laws that govern good relationships. Selling is not at its core a business transaction; it is first and foremost the forging of a human connection.

If your goal is to make a living through sales, then we'd like to challenge you to set your sights higher. The idea of "making a living" has the sense of breaking even, of keeping your head above water. But you can do more than tread water—why not *soar*?

Most often a goal of keeping your head above water will only end up sinking you. Approaching your work with the attitude, "I hope I make enough to get by" is deadly for sales—because attitudes are contagious. Regardless of what your particular product or service is, people are drawn to you (or not) because of *how you make them feel*. They don't simply want to buy your product, they want to be uplifted, encouraged, changed in some way.

Our purpose in this little book is to help you not simply survive but *thrive*—through your encounters with other people, to enrich their lives on every level, and in so doing, to enrich your own life and the lives of everyone around you as well. The goal is not only to make a good living, but to create a *great life*.

THE FIVE LAWS OF STRATOSPHERIC SUCCESS

THE LAW OF VALUE

*Your true worth is determined by
how much more you give in value than
you take in payment.*

THE LAW OF COMPENSATION

*Your income is determined by
how many people you serve and how well
you serve them.*

THE LAW OF INFLUENCE

*Your influence is determined by
how abundantly you place other
people's interests first.*

THE LAW OF AUTHENTICITY

The most valuable gift you have to offer is yourself.

THE LAW OF RECEPTIVITY

*The key to effective giving is to stay
open to receiving.*



I. The Law of Value

*Your true worth is determined by
how much more you give in value
than you take in payment.*



1. Create Value

I mean, no offense, but how does a hot dog stand manage to outrank the swanky sidewalk cafés in this neighborhood? —JOE*

If you are hoping to learn how to *make a sale*, we need to make a disclaimer right here and now: in this book we are not going to teach you how to make a sale. We're not going to do this for the simple reason that *you can't* make a sale. No one can. It's impossible to *make* a sale, because you cannot really make other people do what you want them to do.

If you cannot make a sale, then what *can* you do? You can provide the context that allows a sale to happen when the other person makes a purchase. This is not semantics; this is the secret of all great salespeople.

Your job is not to make a sale but to create something else: *value*. In fact, as a salesperson you can define your job description in three words: *I create value*.

*The brief excerpts that open every chapter in this book are all drawn from *The Go-Giver*.

Value is the relative worth or desirability of a thing to the user or beholder. It is those qualities or characteristics in a thing or experience that give it worth, importance, or preciousness—especially as compared to its cost, whether in dollars or other terms.

Four-fifths of selling is creating value. The final one-fifth involves the sale itself; however, even when the sale happens, you don't *make* that sale—you *receive* it. We'll get to the receiving piece of it in part V. For now, let's look at the creating part.

If your goal—as a salesperson or any kind of person—is to create value for other people, how do you do that? There are a thousand ways. Here we'll look at just five: excellence, consistency, attention, empathy, and appreciation.

Excellence

There's nothing like doing what you do well. When you see your work as exchanging hours for dollars, it's easy to slip into a mindset of doing a task just well enough to get by. When you see your work as *creating value*, something shifts.

According to the Law of Value, the point is not to do just enough to get paid, it's to see how much more value you can create than what you are paid for. That translates into *excellence*.

How do you greet people on the phone? How do you manage your correspondence and email? How do you dress? How do you pronounce the other person's name?

You can create value for others by applying the principle of excellence to all the tasks of your trade. If you run

a hot dog stand, it means using the best ingredients (never a stale bun, the crispest freshest pickles, only premium all-beef franks), keeping the cart immaculately clean, and keeping yourself that way, too.

The point is not to hold yourself to an impossible standard of perfection. It is to invest yourself consciously in everything you do, with an intention of bringing to bear your greatest abilities to the task at hand. It is to create a habit of excellence.

When you stay at a Ritz-Carlton, you are never greeted with a “Hey,” a “What’s up?” or a “How ya’ doin’?” Depending on the time of day, it will be “Good morning,” “Good afternoon,” or “Good evening.” When you thank an employee for something, the response will not be “No problem” but “My *pleasure*.” They say it like they mean it—and they do mean it. Simple. Impressive. What does it cost? Nothing. What does it create? *Excellence*. Any other hotel or motel in the world could do the same thing and position themselves above the competition. But most don’t.

Excellent, by the way, does not mean *expensive*. The ability to provide exceptional value is not limited to high-end businesses or those with luxury product lines. You can have a great food experience at an expensive fine dining establishment, a family deli, a neighborhood coffee shop—or a hot dog stand. Price and value are not necessarily the same thing. In fact, when following this law, they *never* are.

Consistency

The world is full of uncertainty. When people know they can always count on you to deliver the same quality of ex-

perience, no matter what, you become an oasis of stability within their personal sandstorm of change.

There is a restaurant in John's area that serves pretty good food—sometimes. And sometimes not. John and his wife, Ana, have been there three or four times. There's another place that's about twice as far away and in about the same price range, but their food is *always* good. You can guess where John and Ana eat—and where they don't. It's worth the extra drive not to have to wonder how dinner will turn out.

When you can combine both—excellence plus consistency—you create truly exceptional value.

Attention

Bob uses a travel agent in Florida named Jim Hurlburt. In the Internet age, when we can all make our own reservations, you'd think travel agents would be obsolete—but Bob would never dream of traveling without using Jim's service. Why? Because of the phenomenal value Jim creates through his attention to detail. He gets Bob exactly the flights he wants at the times he wants and for the best prices possible (and saves him a ton of time). He knows Bob's seating preferences, he calls to let him know he got the upgrade—and if he couldn't get it, he'll keep trying till he does. He calls the airline to make sure everything is running on schedule and keeps Bob up to date on any changes.

Before Bob leaves, Jim emails to wish him a good trip and make sure he has Jim's cell phone number in case of emergencies. When Bob returns, there's an email waiting to

welcome him home, make sure he had a good trip, and ask if anything came up that would have made the trip easier or better for him.

Not surprisingly, Bob has referred a lot of business his way. The value Jim has created has made him worth a great deal to Bob and has paid Jim back in dividends many times over.

Empathy

Empathy means putting yourself in the other person's shoes.

This is what happened to John and Ana a few years ago when Ana broke her knee. It was a complex fracture and took two full years to heal completely. During that time they traveled a good amount and flew five different airlines, quite a few times each.

When they flew Southwest, Ana was always taken onto the plane first; wheelchairs were always ready for her when they got off the plane; and because she had to keep her leg up for long flights, the flight attendants took care to make sure they got three seats across, with the empty seat in the middle so she could put her leg up—even on flights that were practically full.

Of the other four airlines, none came anywhere close to this level of attentiveness; on one flight they were actually shuffled to the very *back* of the plane. The other airlines gave decent service overall, but they missed so many simple opportunities to add more value. They just didn't get it. They were neither trained nor inclined to put themselves in the passenger's place.

Appreciation

Adding value to people's lives often costs little or nothing financially. In fact, most of the greatest ways we can create value for other people have nothing at all to do with spending money.

One of the most powerful ways you can create value for people is simply to appreciate them. Notice the things they do that make a difference, no matter how small, and point them out. Say thank you, and mean it. Write thank-you notes—not just emails, but actual handwritten notes. (Who does *that* anymore?)

At Marie Jakubiak's accounting firm in Michigan, new clients are not simply greeted by name the first time they walk into the office; they are also greeted by a sign that says, "Welcome to our new client, Mary Jones!" with their name surrounded by fresh flowers.

The word *appreciate* comes from the Latin *appretiare*, which means "to set a price to." Over the centuries it came to mean both "an expression of one's estimate of something, usually favorable" and "to rise in value."

Interesting: when you appreciate people, *you appreciate*. And when you don't, you *depreciate*.

You want to increase your own worth? *Appreciate*.