

# Chapter 1

## Selling Is All Around You

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining selling
- ▶ Recognizing some common methods salespeople use to get their messages across
- ▶ Improving your life by improving your selling

**S**elling is happening everywhere around you, and most people (even those who aren't pros) do it every day, in one form or another. In fact, selling affects every waking moment of your day. So in this chapter, I let you know what exactly this thing called *selling* is, how it's done, and how you can use selling skills to make your life and your career better.

### *Understanding What Selling Is*



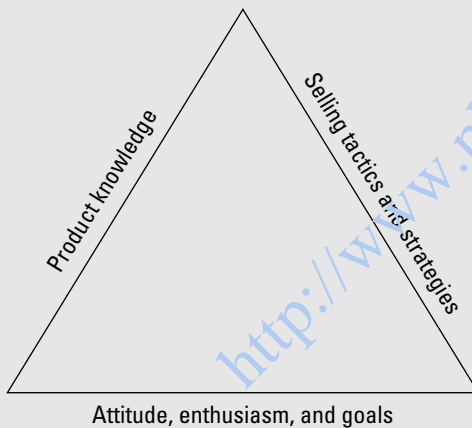
In the strictest sense of the word, *selling* is a process of communication in which the seller imparts knowledge and information to the buyer in order to win the buyer over to the seller's ideas, concepts, products, or services. In the traditional sense of the word, *selling* is the process of moving goods and services from the hands of those who produce them into the hands of those who will benefit most from their use. Selling involves both educational and persuasive skills on the part of the person doing the talking. It's supported by print, audio, video, and online messages that sell either the particular item or the brand name as being something the customer would want to have.

It's been said that nothing ever happens unless someone sells something to someone else. Without selling, products that have been manufactured would sit in warehouses for eternity, people working for those manufacturers would become unemployed, transportation and freight services wouldn't be needed, and all of us would be living isolated little lives, striving to eke out livings from whatever bits of land we owned. Or would we even own land if no one were there to sell it to us? Think about it.

## The selling triangle

When I give seminars about mastering the fundamentals of selling, I use a triangle with equal sides, like the one here, to illustrate the three main elements of selling:

- ✓ On one side is product knowledge, which I cover in Chapter 5.
- ✓ On the other side are selling tactics and strategies — the people skills — that I cover in Part III.
- ✓ And on the base of the triangle are attitude, enthusiasm, and goals, which I cover in Part V.



The three sides of the selling triangle are equally important. If product knowledge was all that mattered, then technical designers,

manufacturers, or assemblers of products would make the best salespeople. Of course, these folks often know the products quite literally from the inside out. But until they are trained in selling skills and understand how much of a role attitude plays in sales, their sales approach is often 99 percent description of product and 1 percent relation of the product to the needs of the individual clients — and that rarely results in a sale.

Great selling skills without product knowledge and enthusiasm won't get you far either. Even if you're comfortable talking with practically anyone, and you've invested a tremendous amount of time mastering the best words for creating positive pictures in the minds of your prospects, if you don't have a clear picture in your own mind of what your product, service, or idea will do for your customers, how can you paint the right pictures in someone else's mind?

And if you're excited about selling, but you have little knowledge or experience with selling tactics and strategies, your enthusiasm will open the doors a crack. But you'll get your fingers slammed when you start pushing product (because *pushing product* isn't how you sell anything).

**Remember:** A professional who hasn't developed any one side of the triangle is failing to reach his full potential and letting down clients, who expect to work with a competent person. Do your best to develop all three areas of your selling life in order to reap the rewards.

Look around you right now. You can probably spot hundreds, if not thousands, of things that were sold to get where they are right now. Even if you're totally naked, sitting in the woods, you had to be involved in some sort of selling process to have this book with you. If you choose to ignore material possessions, take stock of yourself internally. What do you believe? Why

do you believe what you do? Did someone — like your parents or your peers — sell you a set of values as you were growing up? Did your teachers persuade you to believe, through demonstration, that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? Or did you figure that one out on your own? Odds are that whether you're living in a material world or you've forsaken nearly all possessions, you've been involved in selling one way or another.



The preceding paragraph should have persuaded you to at least look at selling a bit differently than you have in the past. It was done, too, without pushing facts and figures on you. Good selling isn't pushing; it's gently pulling with questions and getting people to think a bit differently than they have before.

## *Getting a Grip on How Selling Is Done*

Although the definition of selling may be fairly straightforward, the approaches to selling are virtually endless. In this section, I cover the primary ways that products and services are sold (in order from most direct contact to least), and I give you some important tips for using them.

### *Face-to-face*

On an average day, many sales are concluded in a face-to-face fashion. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are purchased in person at favorite restaurants. People physically register into hotels or check in at airport counters. Retail stores abound with sales opportunities, and millions of salespeople sit across desks, conference tables, or kitchen tables turning prospects into clients. Person-to-person selling is the single largest type of selling that is conducted worldwide. Because of this, much of the content in the balance of this book is aimed at person-to-person selling.



The fun part about person-to-person selling is that you can watch prospects' body language and speak with yours. You can hand them information. Have them handle your product or experience the service firsthand. Involve all their senses. Have them taste, touch, smell, hear, and see just how cool your widget is. (I cover methods for doing this in Chapter 10.)

### *Telemarketing*

With a telephone, salespeople have the potential to reach nearly any other person on the planet. And what you say when your prospective client answers the phone, if he answers at all, is critical. In some industries, you

actually try to sell the product on the first call (referred to as a *one-time close*). In other industries, you're selling interest — enough interest that the person to whom you speak gets out of his home and down to your store or lets you visit him in his home or place of business. Either way, you're selling what your business is all about, leaving the person on the other end with a very distinct impression of you and your company — good or bad.



Although telemarketing is a thriving method for reaching potential clients, many telemarketers are finding it more and more difficult to reach a live person when they place their calls. If you plan to use this method of approach, be prepared to leave curiosity-building messages on voice mail or answering machines in order to make connections with potential clients. More and more people are screening their calls with caller ID features and voice mail than ever before. So unless you have your number listed in the phone book as “Sweepstakes Winner Announcement,” plan on reaching a lot of answering devices. (I cover telephone strategies in more detail in Chapter 7.)

If you hear a real person say “Hello” on the other end of the line, you almost have cause for rejoicing — and you'll have to be just as prepared for that happening. Be clear about what you're selling, whether it's a product, a meeting, or simply getting permission to send the person information.

Despite the difficulty telemarketers often have in getting through to people who are willing to listen to them, telemarketing is widely accepted and recognized as a true sales profession. It requires tact, training, and the ability to articulate a compelling message in a very brief amount of time, as well as the skill of helping others recognize you as a warm, caring individual who has their needs at heart. Companies across many industries realize that gifted telemarketers can help bring a product or service to market in a much more efficient and cost-effective manner than face-to-face selling.

## ***E-mail***

Many companies are doing less telemarketing and direct-mail selling (I discuss direct mail later in this chapter); they are instead sending more e-mail solicitations. In fact, an entire industry revolves around writing copy specific to e-mail marketing and strategies to get your messages through the many spam filters employed by individuals and companies alike.

Why has e-mail become so popular? Because even though direct mail allows to you get your message to the proper address, that doesn't necessarily mean it will make it into the appropriate hands. Well-intentioned secretaries, receptionists, spouses, or children often take the liberty of tossing what they deem “junk mail” addressed to the recipient. If you send your message via

e-mail, however, you're more likely to get it directly to the person you want to reach. And the cost of sending e-mail messages is minimal compared to the cost of printing a mail piece and adding the postage to it.

So far, business e-mail appears to be deemed "hands-off." Secretaries and receptionists may receive copies of e-mails, but they aren't likely to delete e-mail messages from their bosses' computers. Home e-mail, on the other hand, may not be thought of as quite so sacred. In fact, some couples share an e-mail address. In that case, your message may be seen and deleted by one party when it was intended for the other, but it still has a good chance of being seen by the person you want to reach.



To make sure that your intended recipient receives the message you're sending, I suggest putting the recipient's name in the subject line (for example, "Personal Message for John Doe").

If you use e-mail to connect with prospective clients, you can include your message in the body of the e-mail itself, or you can send it in an attachment that looks like one of your ads or printed pieces or that contains a link to your Web site. Another alternative may be to include an attached PowerPoint slide presentation customized for the potential client you're targeting. Just beware that once again, spam filters are often set to block e-mail that contains attachments. It may be wise to send a first e-mail without an attachment but include a link to a Web page with the information you want to deliver.

## The computer revolution — and your role in it

If you plan to have a successful career in sales, you need to become somewhat computer-savvy. Even if you're still selling something as simple as buggy whips, you need to track your client contacts in the most efficient manner possible to maximize your sales. You also need to have access to the phenomenal volume and quality of information available on the Internet. Not becoming familiar with the basics of computers and what they can do for you is like locking yourself outside your place of business with nothing more than a business card.

Understanding the basics of today's technology is also crucial so you can converse with clients

who are in tune with it. Nothing ruins your credibility faster than pulling out your 3-x-5-inch index cards to jot down a client's contact information when she's using the latest notebook computer or Web-enabled phone. Take advantage of contact management software (CMS) or sales force automation (SFA), both of which allow you to maintain customer lists, prospect information, schedules, contact information, and a variety of other sales-related tasks. Talk with others in your particular field to determine which software has the features you'll benefit from the most, or see whether your company has made arrangements to use a certain program in-house.



E-mail, when used properly, is an extraordinary vehicle for getting your message out. However, you need to be aware of the laws governing the use of e-mail. Sending follow-up e-mails or proposals and presentation materials is fine, but if you're planning to use e-mail as part of a larger sales campaign (similar to the way you would use direct mail), you must first get the permission of the recipient of the message, or what is commonly referred to as an *opt-in e-mail list*. I discuss e-mail lists in more depth in Chapter 7.

## Online

Imagine that you're a customer, and you really, really want a new widget in a razzle-dazzle raspberry color. If you want to see it right away to be sure the color matches or complements your other widgets, what's the best solution? You can place a call to a physical widget manufacturer and wait for a salesperson to contact you and then send you a brochure or catalog. Or you can visit the manufacturer's Web site and, within a few minutes, see the actual widget in all its razzle-dazzleness. As a busy customer, what's the best use of your time? To go online and visit the Web site, of course. This way, you haven't wasted your time or the time of the salesperson if it turns out that the color wasn't what you had in mind.

Wouldn't your customers want to take advantage of the same opportunity? Yes, and if you don't offer your customers that opportunity, your competitors will.



Efficiency is the name of the game when it comes to technology. And you have to take advantage of every method possible to increase your efficiency while remaining easily accessible to your client base. The key is not to invest so much time in mastering the technology that you have no time remaining to do what you're paid for — and that is to sell products and services.

The Internet is like the library. You can find just about any piece of information you want there — and so can your potential clients. Not too many people will invest a lot of time trotting down to their local library to look up information. They will, however, click on over to the Internet and search for information on your product or service and that of your competition.



The people you approach to do business will likely have a great deal of knowledge about your product or service, so you better know those products and services better than they do (see Chapter 5 for more on this important topic). Look at the same resource information that your customers see. In fact, add to your repertoire a question about where they did their research on your product. Find out where your customers are going for information. If you have any impact on what's put there, make sure it's positive.

## *Direct mail*

Every piece of mail you receive, whether it's a letter of solicitation, a coupon, or a catalog, is devised for a single purpose — to sell you something. Companies play the odds that enough people will stop long enough to look at and actually order their products before the direct mail hits the trash.

Believe it or not, a 1-percent response rate for direct mail is considered average. That means only 1 out of 100 catalogs may actually have an order placed from it. Ninety-nine of those catalogs are tossed into the trash without ever generating a penny for the company that sent it. Plus, each of those catalogs may cost a good bit to produce and distribute, especially if they contain a lot of full-color photos. So if that's the case, why is direct mail still so prevalent? The reason is simple: When you order from a company, you'll probably order something else from that company in the future. You've become a customer, and good companies work very hard to keep you coming back for more.

## *Recognizing What Selling Skills Can Do for You*

Selling skills can do for you what a way with words did for William Shakespeare. They can do for you what sex appeal did for Marilyn Monroe. They can do for you what powerful communication skills did for Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Selling skills can make or break you in whatever endeavor you choose. They can mean the difference between getting the promotion or job, landing the girl or guy of your dreams, or having to settle for less in life than you deserve.

If you're good at selling, you probably earn a satisfactory income and have rewarding personal relationships. If you're not completely satisfied with your income level or with the quality of your personal relationships, make the development of selling skills a priority, and you'll reap the rewards.

Having a strong set of selling skills is like having an inside track on what the next batch of winning lottery numbers will be. All you have to do is invest a bit of your time and effort to understand and apply this book's tried-and-true, proven-effective skills to your everyday life. Before you know it, they'll be such a natural part of you that no one, including yourself, will even recognize them as selling skills. People around you will just see you as a really nice, competent person instead of the stereotypical, cigar-chomping, back-slapping, plaid-coated, hand-mashing, used-car salesman that most people associate with selling. And, believe me, you'll then be in the class of people who make the world go 'round.

## Salespeople are everywhere — even where you least expect them

The person who isn't selling isn't living. Think about that: At some point nearly every day, you're involved in a selling situation of some sort. You may call it by a different name or not even recognize it as an act of selling, but, all the same, selling it is. Here's just a short list of the people who sell things and whose "products" you buy:

- ✔ **Actors and actresses:** If you've ever watched a TV show, movie, or play and been caught up in the story, you've been a part of a selling situation. The actress has given a believable performance — she's sold you on her portrayal of a character.
- ✔ **Waiters and waitresses:** The wise waiter gives you choices of drinks, appetizers, meals, and desserts. He doesn't just ask to take your order. Why? Because when he employs a bit of salesmanship, he's almost guaranteed to receive a higher tip.
- ✔ **Doctors:** Doctors get tremendous rewards when they know — and use — selling skills. Not only is your doctor better prepared to convince you to follow her professional advice, but she's also building her practice because you're so happy with her advice that you tell your friends and family how great your doctor is, thus sending her referral business.
- ✔ **Lawyers:** Lawyers need selling skills in every aspect of their profession. Lawyers have to sell not only to get business but also to persuade judges and juries that their clients are in the right.
- ✔ **Politicians:** How does the public develop its expectations about political candidates? How do politicians get elected? They persuade the most people that, if they're elected, they can and will do the job the voters want done.
- ✔ **Parents:** Whether by words or example, parents constantly sell their children values and beliefs. They convince or persuade their kids on what to wear or eat, how to act, who to have as friends, how to be a friend, and thousands of other things children need to learn to grow into happy, well-adjusted adults.
- ✔ **Kids:** Few children can go into a store and resist the things shopkeepers purposefully place on the lower shelves to tempt the young. (Consider a rate of those shopkeepers, isn't it?) Get ready: You're about to observe master sellers at work. Notice what kids say and how they act when they try to persuade Mom or Dad to get them what they want. It's selling at its best.
- ✔ **Spouses-to-be:** If you get married someday, you'll put forth one of the most important sales presentations of your life in persuading your significant other of the value of spending the rest of his or her life with you. And if you're already married, the trick is to keep persuading your significant other to stay with you.
- ✔ **Friends:** If your friends enjoy a movie, they'll probably want to tell you about it — and sell you on going to see it yourself. Your friends may recommend a place to eat or persuade you to go to concerts or sporting events with them. All of these are examples of selling — but they're also examples of ways your friends build relationships with you. The more memories you share, the closer you'll continue to be — and so it is with the art of selling.

You're not immune from selling situations in your daily life — even if you don't come into contact with professional salespeople — and you may not even be aware that selling has occurred. We had a saying in our household when my children were young: "You've got to sell to survive." If this list hasn't convinced you of that, nothing will. (And if it has, then I've sold you on my ideas.)