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**Defy the Rules
Drive Change
Deliver More**



OUTLAW

**FIGHT FOR YOUR
CUSTOMERS &
SELL WITHOUT FEAR**

TRENT LEYSHAN



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Introduction

The winds of change are howling more violently than ever. World money-making markets resemble the Wild West, with ethics being cast aside in the name of self-preservation and personal gain. The dotcom bubble at the turn of last century, and more recently the global financial crises and European debt crisis, provide a damning case in point. Our commercial world is now interconnected, forever changing, making it more volatile and unpredictable. Today, sales professionals are faced with novel and obscure demands on their skills, resources and time. Marketing is now considered a jargon term used by old-schoolers, as social media sweeps us all off our feet. Genuine customer loyalty appears to be a token gesture from a distant past, as amplified competition across industries ensures the customer's bottom line is now constantly top-of-mind.

The internet has spectacularly changed the way we all conduct business. Customers can now find whatever they need with speed and precision. So much information and choice is readily available, and it's only a click away. As our business world spins faster and faster, we are all showered with the debris of outdated beliefs and redundant modes of operating. Most of us are left dizzy and out of breath. For others, the incessant battle with rejection leaves them downright nauseated. The business landscape is now a cold

and confusing place, with the dazed players not knowing how to act, which way to go, or what approach to trust.

Who can predict what will happen three months from now, let alone in three years? 'Slash costs and discount!' is bellowed from the lofty heights of senior management, or 'How about we try this social media stuff?' Both approaches will end in frustration (enter the eerie strings of a sad violin), especially when you apply them from a place of desperation instead of inspiration. In these challenging times you need to do more of what works, not less. Innovate? Hell yes! Just remember the worst time to try something untested is when you most need to try something new, as the stakes are higher, the pressures intensified and the risks greater. It's time to get urgent now, before you really need to.

The sheriff is dead

The skills, strategies and behaviours required to succeed in sales many decades ago are noticeably different from those needed today. For the most part, customers were ill-informed, if not utterly ignorant, about the conniving ways of manipulative salespeople who directed their attention towards the unsophisticated. Sleazy cold-calling, ruthless closing techniques and slithering snake-oil salesmen thrived in this era. Towards the seventies and into the eighties competition had intensified and markets had begun to expand exponentially as mass media took hold. Sales professionals needed to evolve and invent new tactics to win customers. They soon realised that to be successful they had to embellish their relationships. Customers loved this treatment, and so they were easily seduced. Long lunches, promotions, discounts and free holidays were met with delight. Added to this, customers got a new sense of how they wanted to be treated, even though they were ultimately paying for it.

Just before the turn of this century — *kaboom!* The technology revolution and information age exploded into our lives. The

internet propelled a distinct shift in consumer behaviour. Customers began to emerge from the dark ages. Buyers began to educate themselves, as a myriad of web and e-commerce sites sprouted up, and over time steadily began to change the way we all consume and buy things. Customers could now research and compare offers, and in many ways take back control of the buying process. They were also no longer willing to suffer fools or be treated like fools. The internet empowered and informed: the customer struck back and was no longer solely influenced by the salesperson.

We chart forward to today as the tempo of changes continues to accelerate. Business is even more complicated than it was a decade ago. True differentiation (to really stand out) is becoming increasingly challenging, if not impossible to assert. Markets such as property and real estate are stagnating on a global scale. The financial services space is morphing drastically while, sadly, industries like traditional retail that were too slow to adapt are now disintegrating.

A new force of influence is born

Despite these trying times and shifts in buyer behaviour, a specific type of sales professional is thriving. We are seeing a new force of influence emerge. These people are noticeably different from other sales professionals. They don't just sell a product or service: what they stand for, communicate and demonstrate transcends buying and selling, and influences their customers as if they were fighting for a worthy cause. They defy the rules and adopt a distinctive selling approach and apply it to forge ahead of their contemporaries. These extraordinarily influential sales leaders are called Outlaws.

Deeply passionate, and at times evangelistic, Outlaws know how to inspire and develop customer relationships, but they also recognise that's not nearly enough in the modern economy. Outlaws work by a set of insight-driven operating principles, seven to be exact, all neatly set out in this book.

Outlaw

These principles enable sales professionals to promote *outwardly* instead of being self-directed. The benefits of this approach are measured by customers no longer seeing the Outlaw as a salesperson: the Outlaw becomes instead a trusted ally—a person of influence they call on for critical advice to *lead* them through challenges and uncertainty. Think of some of the most trusted advisers you currently surround yourself with, such as doctors, mentors or accountants. None of these advisers need to sell you anything—instead, they inform and empower you with critical information that enhances your situation or wellbeing.

Outlaws put their customers first. They resist the urge to be the centre of attention. When you meet an Outlaw, it becomes clear that the engagement is all about you, not them. They will probe and ask meaningful questions that drill deep into your challenges and connect with your higher goals, desires and aspirations. They don't labour to be all things to all people: they are focused on and deeply committed to their field of endeavour, and willing to burrow underground to regroup, find and develop fresh impactful strategies. They are comfortable dwelling among real people, the crowd, to get a clear sense of what their customers really need. They are always listening, forever seeking an advantage to help their customers. Never content with what is, they search for what can and ultimately should be.

Outlaws don't possess endless budgets; they are forced to innovate, invent and try new things; and they don't just harness change—they drive it! Sure they take risks, and of course they get it wrong sometimes, but that never deters them from achieving their goals. They are not shy of calling in favours either, putting their ego aside to be vulnerable. They understand the power in collaborating with like-minded people, explicitly other Outlaws who are just as prepared to fight for their customers and deliver more! More choice, more service and more value are just some of the menu changes inspired by Outlaws.

As brazen and disruptive as Outlaws can be at times, they are equally conscious of how they impact others. They honour the little things, the simple stuff that is easy to do—yet easier to forget. Things that aren't at all strenuous to attain: all it takes is a genuine effort to make other people feel important and included. Oddly enough, it's these relatively easy things in life and business that are most challenging to master, like a smile for a stranger, a 'leave it to me' when something goes wrong, or a thoughtful ear when the time is right. Of course, we know all this stuff, but there's a proverbial grand canyon between knowing and demonstrating. This book aims to bridge this chasm.

Why you should keep reading

This book sets out in clear terms, in seven chapters, practical advice, tested strategies and activities to help harness the most critical skills, tools and behaviours to help you become a *real* person of influence in a manic-paced, ever-morphing commercial world. Whether you're a dogged sales veteran, a manager leading a team, an entrepreneur, a corporate high-flyer or simply a person who wants to be heard and taken seriously, this book speaks to the salesperson in you—a person that seeks to influence and make a difference. The insights and tools contained in this book, if applied correctly, will dramatically improve your individual and team performance. They are drawn from personal experiences and a career in selling at the coalface in some of the world's most dynamic and demanding industries. They come from collaborating with thousands of high-performing sales professionals over my career and hundreds of salespeople every year. They come from interviewing industry leaders and game changers. All these strategies are tested. All these methods are practical. Ready for you to learn, aim and fire! Make no mistake: when you finish reading this book you will be armed and dangerous—Most Wanted by your competitors and your peers, and, most importantly, by your customers.

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To truly influence your customers you will need to know them more intimately, more deeply, than your competitors do. This type of personal engagement can only come about by genuinely caring about your customer and their best interests. It will mean defying rules to set fresh standards of excellence that guide your customers into new markets and possibilities. The Outlaw spirit is especially inspired when you transform key business functions and accelerate growth to create additional revenue streams and profit pathways. Outlaws understand that being chased by ‘the popular opinion’ and flying in the face of industry standards comes with the territory and is indeed part of the thrill.

Businesspeople often take their customer relationships for granted—to be precise, they don’t always make the effort to evolve their customer relationships and move forward. Yet in a world that is now spinning faster than ever, they absolutely must. The relationship was once a sacred cow—now it’s a given. Customers want *more* than just a shoulder to cry on; they also crave a trusted ally to help them successfully navigate the murky fog and burst through! This book contains powerful insights and case studies of the habits of some of today’s most daring and successful businesspeople. These people are different, in fact, wonderfully so. It’s their story and willingness to fight for what they truly believe in that makes them so influential and such inspiring role models.

CHAPTER 1

DARE TO PREPARE

Chance favours the prepared mind.

Louis Pasteur, 18th century French scientist

This timeless maxim is just as relevant today, perhaps even more so, given our busy lifestyles. When you are stressed, under constant pressure to meet deadlines and running late to meetings, chances are you're failing to prepare effectively, and in this state, your results will always correlate with your lack of preparation.

If it's not worth preparing for, why do it at all?

The old saying, perfect preparation is paramount for perfect performance, is accurate. How you prepare for each project or pitch will largely determine the goals you and your team set out to achieve. Let's be frank, admitting that your business is really not too dissimilar to most of your competitors is confronting. One, often overlooked, area in which you can differentiate yourself and move ahead of the other players,

is how much time and thought you invest into what you do. Through well thought-out and habitual preparation, you can edge ahead of the pack by showing your customers just how much you care about creating the right outcomes for them. You also demonstrate that you take your time and theirs seriously.

The ancient Greek saying ‘know thyself’ has had a variety of meanings attributed to it in literature. The Suda, a 10th century AD dictionary of the ancient Greek lexicon, says: ‘the proverb is applied to those whose boasts exceed what they are, and that “know thyself” is a warning to pay no attention to the opinion of the multitude’. Knowing your strengths and limitations is a key step in your preparation process. How you prepare yourself for each new business pitch, particularly when you are up against a worthy foe, will come down to how successfully you position your strengths in the mind of your client, and in a way that counteracts and overcomes your competitors.

Outlaws prepare diligently because they have to—they know just how strenuous it is to carry a sack loaded full with rejection over mountainous terrain every day. In many cases less is more, but when it comes to preparation more is more. Businesspeople often prepare ineffectively because they are time poor. In doing so they are erroneously judging their preparation time to be a luxury, preferring instead to hope for the best and wing it. A lack of preparation will breed incompetence. Similarly, a lack of preparation diminishes your credibility with peers and customers, and reduces your ability to execute at the highest level.

If you’re stuck in a creative rut because you have been in the same role for too long, the best way forward is to keep pushing the boundaries for ways to improve, challenge and change things. This is where preparation comes in. You need to rethink what you’re doing and come up with ways of seeing things from a fresh perspective and reframing old views into new and compelling strategies for your customers.

You can only achieve this by taking time out habitually and working on how your business or the entire industry can change and adapt or improve.

Save yourself first

Every time I take a domestic or international flight I am mildly entertained by the pre-flight safety spiel, which contains a statement that I believe transcends the aviation industry: 'In the event of an emergency, first place the oxygen mask over your own face, and only then over your child's.' To do so may initially appear as a selfish act, but it expresses the need to save yourself first in order to stay conscious and alert to save your most cherished. There is no shortage of people out there striving to save the world, and that's an admirable ambition—just make sure you put food on your own table first. You will need your strength if you are going to truly fight for your customers and create a business you are proud of. Over the years, I have met plenty of business professionals who are competent in their craft, yet they fail to demonstrate their own unique skills for their own commercial purposes. Think of a landscape gardener with a house surrounded with feral foliage, a dentist with pungent breath, or a search engine marketer who is not first page on Google. If these people fail to demonstrate their skills for themselves, what does that say about their commitment to their customers?

Where preparation meets opportunity

You are more influential and vastly more potent when you can successfully demonstrate how you personally benefit from the product or services you promote. You need to understand implicitly the value and benefits of those products or services. You may not be the most skilled and experienced at your company, or in your industry for that matter, but you can be the most prepared. If you develop a reputation for being prepared—that your ability to prepare for each

opportunity exceeds that of your peers—it will only be a matter of time before success follows.

Here's an example of what not to do. I met with a web company that claimed to specialise in social media marketing, but a quick review of the strategy they had implemented for their own business revealed they were barely qualified to even talk about the subject. Cash flow aside, it is often a lack of credibility that cripples a business. No proven track record and limited relevant experience in a supplier are all risks for a potential customer—investing money in your product or service is too risky. To help combat this, you must demonstrate your competence at every opportunity. Dare to prepare! If you're a realtor, own your own properties—start as small as you need to. If this suburb really is the next boom town, why aren't you in this market already? Dare to prepare and speak from experience. If you're a web developer, show me a world class website and strategy—all that should cost is your own creativity, resources and some time. Mr Financial Planner, I want to know about your asset portfolio and the risks you took and overcame to achieve personal wealth. If you can't save yourself, don't expect others to pay you to save them.

Unlocking your inner game

Preparation is an activity but, more importantly, it's also a mindset. When you find yourself preparing for your next big pitch or planning a meeting with your manager for your performance review, ask yourself, 'Why should the person I am talking with trust and buy from me and believe in what I'm saying?' You then connect that response in your head to what you want to achieve.

If you're really honest, a sincere response to this question is often a slight pause, followed by a blank stare. Okay, I will ask this question in a slightly different way.

'Other than making money, why are you in business?' That question will invariably be greeted with another ponderous

look, or it might trigger a passionate reply, such as, ‘I just love helping people!’ or ‘I really enjoy the culture here, just look around us: you can almost smell the passion in the air!’ *Eureka!* These insights, and others like them, are clues to help you to understand the ‘why’ for doing what you do, or desire to do. It also helps you to start to clarify why someone will ultimately buy from you. From here you can start to form your ‘why frame’, which shapes the initial step of your customer engagement process. This is the moment and place where all relevant communication should start or finish.

At my sales development company, *BOOM!*, we use an intelligent method for breaking down how salespeople communicate word by word and then aligning their communication to their customer’s emotional drivers, that is, the things that really turn their customers on and influence their behaviour. If a word or statement doesn’t support the customer’s ‘why’, it’s swiftly removed from their vocabulary or reframed in a more meaningful way and acutely aligned to the customer’s needs or desires. Omit needless words, of course. Next is taking some time out to see things from the client perspective.

Activity: developing your ‘why frame’

First, round up your teammates, especially those who have a role engaging and influencing customers. Fetch a whiteboard or an easel with butcher’s paper and marker pens. If you don’t have a board, then simply pin the paper to the wall. Next, elect a team leader to lead and facilitate the group discussion. The facilitator’s objective is to write down all the key emotional drivers that relate to your most valuable customers. Namely, what are they fearful about when buying from your company or others in your industry? What frustrates the pants off them when it comes to your product, service or industry (this is always the longest list). And what do they really want and need from you, and why?

Think practically and think broadly. But most of all, be brutally honest. The output of this activity is to then drill down to the most critical insights and then craft and design your communication around the customer, not you. You will also need to cut out certain areas of focus to free up your time to zero in on communicating the right message to the right customers, more often. And remember, have fun with it!

It's also important to remember that if a potential customer contacts you, consider 'why' they have gone to the effort of seeking you out? Don't disregard this information. And don't make the error of assuming that every customer that initiates contact with you already has a compelling and reserved 'why' in their mind. It's always up to you to help them unlock and emphasise their 'why' in your initial sales conversation as you set the tone, build rapport and establish fit with the customer. Likewise, if you conduct outbound marketing activities, your success rates will dramatically improve when you demonstrate you have taken time to really think about your 'why' for calling by communicating your insight-driven and critical piece of information that moves the customer to a place of safe and purposeful action. Failure to do so will typically result in a swift and cold 'Goodbye!' We will explore this concept more in chapter 2 when we discuss the Red Phone principle.

To see things in the seed, that is genius.

Lao Tzu, author of *Tao Te Ching*

What can we learn from a bushranger?

Ned Kelly was a shameless horse thief and bank robber, who admitted to gunning down policemen. The son of an Irish convict, Kelly became Australia's most infamous leader of a gang of Outlaws. There's much to learn from

Outlaws and the lengths they go to prepare for battle and fight for their cause. Getting things wrong could result in their paying the ultimate price or spending the rest of their life behind bars. Outlaws like Kelly communicate and survive through underground networks made up of like-minded people. They rely on trusted sources for their intelligence and information to aid them in their mission or project. What was most intriguing about Ned Kelly was his penchant for innovation, not just his iron will but also the iron armour he wore, concealed under his coat, in his last stand against police.

Kelly may not be a poster boy for moral purity, but he defied the rules, he became an innovator and game changer, and folk hero. The armour Kelly wore was half his body weight. During the siege at Glenrowan, in June 1880, all four members of the Kelly gang (Ned and Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart) wore suits of armour made of plate metal. Kelly was an inventor. Body armour in Australia is not only outrageous given the rugged conditions, in this case it was absurdly heavy, making the energy required to wear it immense. But it was real genius. Kelly showed a capacity to think creatively and a willingness and resilience to fight for what he believed in, that is, the unjust and corrupt way the police operated and enforced the law of the land.

Genuine innovation can be game-changing. But only when you are genuinely prepared to go to all and extreme lengths to see your vision manifest. A strong measure of how committed you really are can be observed in the time and thought you invest in preparing for each battle. I'm not suggesting you become a rum swilling, bearded bandit and decorate yourself in heavy metal. I'm encouraging you to periodically take the time out with your colleagues to challenge what is not working and what is working, so it can be improved upon. Most importantly, think about how you can radically change your situation, environment or client

outcomes. This is achieved not just by thinking outside the box, but by creating a completely new box.

*I do not wish to give the order full force without giving timely warning
but I am a widow's son outlawed and must be obeyed.*

Ned Kelly, bushranger

De-risking your value proposition

You have to be prepared to take a risk or two to succeed. But don't expect your customers to have the same level of zest for risk-taking. Particularly when they know they will ultimately pay for it when the risk turns sour, or you, as the salesperson, under-deliver. For the most part, taking risks is a tense and uncomfortable experience for a customer. Each customer will have a different risk threshold: a level of perceived risk they are willing to move towards but never cross over. As sales professionals we can at times underestimate the inherent risks relating to what we sell. These risks can seem immaterial to us, but they can be debilitating for customers—particularly if we have never purchased a similar product or taken time out to assess the risks from the consumer's point of view.

Customers are cautious creatures and even more so when the economy is flat. This can be frustrating for both the vendor and customer. The customer laments, 'I really want to buy, but I just don't trust my ability to pay or receive the required value leverage, it's too risky.' And the salesperson grumbles, 'I know you need my help, but what else do I need to demonstrate to gain your trust?' These stalemates play out habitually in challenging markets. The best way to cut through the customer's fear is to remove all traces of perceived risk. In addition, provide them with critical information that takes them to a place of new knowledge and clarity. To really drive change, or change the customer's point of view, you will need to completely commit to your commercial

cause and be willing to fight for it, because ultimately you're fighting for the customer. Giving up at the first sign of rejection from a customer tells them how committed you really are and it validates their lack of belief in you. When you apply the right de-risking strategy and communicate from a place of belief, the customer will be transformed from frozen and confused to willing and motivated.

Tips to leverage risk and help the customer see more value

- Reduce risk by demonstrating how much time and energy you have invested in preparation.
- Acknowledge the customer's risks and propose to evaluate the importance of each risk.
- Identify the most serious risks and introduce your new critical piece of information that helps them to overcome it and confidently move forward.
- Add more value by introducing added complimentary products or services (high perceived value/low cost) at the appropriate time.
- Share case studies or personal stories about how you or your customers successfully overcame similar risks and their related benefits.
- Offer longer payment terms that activate your product's value immediately.
- Always be empathetic, and remember it's much easier to give risk advice than to live the risk.
- Be willing to say 'no' if you genuinely feel the risk outweighs the value for the customer (trade the short-term for the long-term gain or credibility).

The risks will vary for each customer. Presuming the risks are only attached to losing money is folly. The investment side is always important, but it's not often the most significant risk. Be sure to consider how getting the purchase wrong will impact a customer's reputation; again draw reference to the insight you collated in the 'why frame' activity. Similarly, consider how a past negative experience as it relates to your company or industry may now be determining their behaviour and risk profile. Risk is powerful when you harness it correctly and help your customers see through it.

Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is.

Mark Twain, American author and humourist

Hunt and herd your competition

The next step in your preparation is getting up close and personal with your competitors. Don't be scared: they won't bite. Hmm, some might, so proceed carefully. Sales is a contact sport and when it comes to competitors it should be full body contact! Most markets are saturated with competitors manoeuvring themselves in their most attractive guises to lure the affection of would-be customers. Competition serves the collective as merchants are kept on their toes. Customers are able to select a provider that best meets their needs or desires. Many businesspeople underestimate their competitors—pretending they don't exist or that what they do is somehow irrelevant or somehow inferior in comparison. Don't make that mistake.

By default, we often frame our competitors as the enemy. We have never met them, and don't have the desire to. If they're flying a flag with a different brand, they spell evil! This belief is not only ignorant, it's also limiting and ultimately self-defeating. Call me mad, but I recommend meeting with competitors periodically. Invite them for coffee or chat

over the phone. Learn what they are up to. How do they communicate and what do they really stand for? What's their story and where are they headed? Are they arrogant and aloof, or polished or coarse? This is important information to know. Here's why: if you know what's really beneath your competitor's facade, it helps you understand how to position yourself in either a contrasting or a more meaningful light.

Understanding competitors

Competitors commonly fall into three distinct categories:

- 1 closed and aggressive
- 2 passive and indifferent
- 3 open and collaborative.

Misguided by tradition, we can be guilty of herding all competitors into category 1. Competitors in this class generally come from a place of fear and scarcity, and many are overtly self-righteous. You will be able to establish this when you make contact and receive no response or a negative retort. Leave these competitors to fester in their own ignorance, or hunt and destroy them—it's up to you. If you are willing to make the effort and initiate contact with competitors, you will find that most fall into category 2. These people are somewhat short-sighted, but they are rarely sinister. They are not competitors to think too much about or deal with strategically. Safely share your innermost secrets with them: they won't use them against you. They are frequently content and quite happy where they are in the pecking order.

Category 3 is not only a characterisation, it's a way of being. Usually competitors in this group have realised there is enough for everyone. They also know how competition serves them and their customers. My own research over the past 10 years reveals that less than 10 per cent of companies fall into this category. Most of the others aren't capable of understanding

how collaborating and sharing knowledge with a perceived enemy can serve them and others. Doctors and medical specialists are skilled proponents of this approach. They don't take on a procedure if it's not their area of expertise and habitually refer patients to someone more qualified. What's more, they regularly seek expert counsel from other specialists. Their resolve is to always create the right outcome for the patient. People's health and lives are at stake. What a powerful way of operating. Aren't your customers that important? If not, they should be.

I regularly make contact with competitors, and when appropriate refer business to them. I have learned some interesting things from some of them, and from others I have learned what not to do. Establishing connections with competitors in different markets or geographic regions you're not active in also enables you to cross-pollinate best practice and leverage intellectual property (IP); ultimately this mutually enhances knowledge and capability and serves the best interests of customers.

Time for action!

I encourage you to make contact with no fewer than three key competitors you respect, and ask for a catch-up over the phone or, better, in person. When you meet, come from a place of contribution, commonality and, if possible, try to help them in some way. You will invariably find your competitors are facing the same challenges as you, and you have a lot more in common with them than you think. Going into a new business meeting armed with fresh insights and intelligence about your competitors and how you can provide a contrasting or superior offer to them is not only the act of a virtuous salesperson but a sign of a person who has come prepared.

I destroy my enemies when I make them my friend.

Abraham Lincoln, 16th US President

The Fat Duck: Heston Blumenthal

Preparation extremist Heston Blumenthal is an English chef. This culinary maestro makes his dishes sing to an unfamiliar tune. He is entirely self-taught and had never had a paying job as a chef until he opened his own restaurant, The Fat Duck. Blumenthal is one of only three British chefs to have received three Michelin stars.

What you will notice about Heston if you flick onto his many celebrated television shows, such as *Heston's Feasts*, is how much effort and thought he invests in creating his astonishingly innovative and outrageous dishes. Each dish, dripping with intense flavour, is formulated by a process he applies to theme his dishes to a historic period. You won't just see Heston wielding a deadly meat cleaver, you will more frequently observe him fiddling with test tubes as dry ice whooshes into the ceiling fans. Heston has made his mark not just by creating a world-class menu: he transforms the molecular structure of food so it looks like one thing and tastes like another. Exotic pig stomach and truffle mimics a lush navel orange you would pluck straight off a tree. Or how about some worm pizza?

Blumenthal serves worm pizza to kids in hospital. He believes the worms are loaded with protein and can bring a healthy spice and improvement to the hospital menu. Others may think differently, but I am not sure it would make much difference. This guy was brought in to make a difference and that is what he is doing. Blumenthal spends hours every week researching and testing new recipes in his elaborate kitchen-cum-science lab. Many dishes don't fly, but that doesn't deter him, and the ones that do leave his patrons gobsmacked. He is a masterful chef who sees his craft as more than cooking: for him, it's about creating a completely new dining experience and taking his patrons on a culinary adventure. Every dish is an opportunity for Heston to defy the rules, drive change and deliver more, and set new standards of excellence.

It was quite a challenge to make people eat crab ice-cream.

Heston Blumenthal, chef

Attack of the time-wasters

Every year your sales target mysteriously spikes up. It's as if the target fairy sneaks into the CFO's bedroom on 30 June at the stroke of midnight and sprinkles the new target underneath his pillow. Damn your fairy: another 10 per cent increase—why? With no rhyme, reason or justification, that's just how it is, so it's best you prepare for it.

Costs go up? Of course they do. Competition increases? You bet. Every year you are asked to achieve more but you aren't provided with any additional time or resources. To hit your new target each year, you need to learn how to do more with less. Here's how—not only do you need to be more efficient and spend more time on high-value activities, you must, without hesitation, attack the time-wasters before they attack you!

Such seductive creatures they are! But don't be fooled by their allure: their impact on your business is costly and must be eradicated immediately. Make no mistake: time-wasters are the enemy! Forget about your competitors for a moment—they're the least of your concerns. Particularly, when you are chasing your tail or failing to spend your valuable time on core tasks that deliver the greatest level of output, and the business is being eaten alive at both ends. Every salesperson is forced to deal regularly with time-wasters, if not daily: time-wasters talk too much, ask too many questions, and fail to make a decision, but keep contacting you for more free information. So why is this type of customer still so vexing and alluring to most sales professionals? Immature salespeople rarely possess the skills and confidence to successfully deal with time-wasters: they will often follow a standard process, or no process, that applies to all, rather than adapting their approach and focusing on the right customers.

More experienced sales professionals can fall victim to their own egos. Believing in their own hype and overestimating their ability to sell anything to anyone—they broaden their focus, look for short cuts, and get lazy. Others are simply desperate. They live in hope, ignoring their intuition and pouring their precious time into a vacuum.

To overcome time-wasters, as a sales leader you need to get deadly serious about educating and training the right salespeople to work according to a tested and targeted sales process and adapt it when necessary. As a salesperson, simply read on. Salespeople in any company, irrespective of industry, must learn to be confident and comfortable saying 'no'. You must do the following:

- Say 'no' to customers who are not defined as enablers, critical influencers or decision makers—see the section on the Red Phone on pages 32–38 for more information on this concept.
- Say 'no' to companies or people who are way outside your target market—review your 'why frame' and the people and companies you are most qualified to help.
- Say 'no' to customers that take you beyond the parameters of what you know works.
- Say 'no' to demanding, self-righteous and unprofitable customers.
- Say 'no' to salespeople who give managers endless excuses for underperformance.
- Say 'no' to sales managers who won't get their hands dirty when it's required.

'No' is such a purposeful word when you apply it to time-wasters with sincerity. The best defence is attack. Get on the front foot by mapping your stakeholders (an activity we will explore in the next chapter) and by being crystal clear on

what customers you can successfully contribute most to. The rest can go to your competitors or spend their time filling someone else's vacuum.

We must use time wisely and forever realise that the time is always ripe to do right.

Nelson Mandela,
anti-apartheid and civil rights leader

Choose a mentor wisely

If you want to change the game you will need a strong support network. Working with a mentor is one of most productive things you can do for yourself in life and in business. It is also a key element in your preparation. Being able to share your fears and frustrations, desires and aspirations with someone you trust and respect, in a safe environment, is invaluable. I have only one rule of thumb when it comes to working with a mentor—choose them wisely. Over the years I have had several mentors. The mentors who haven't contributed any lasting value have always been what I call wounded bulls, or people who project an image of success but who are really concealing a personal agenda. Unfortunately, I met a couple of wounded bulls early in my career who not only gave me poor advice, but also vanished when I most needed help.

I have also been fortunate enough to have had a mentor in my life who was literally life-changing. He was Big Kev (Kevin McQuay), and for those who don't live in Australia, he was one of Australia's most flamboyant TV salesmen. He built a multimillion-dollar cleaning-product company, listed it on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and became a household name. Big in personality and size, Kev cut a figure that even the most self-assured of silverback gorillas would be proud of. Kev was one of a kind. He was completely original and boldly authentic, decorating himself in outrageously bright silk shirts. He had quite a wit and a tongue so sharp it

could cut you to pieces at 20 paces. Big Kev sadly passed away a number of years ago, but it's clear to me that today my life is vastly more colourful and richer because of him. We spent hours not only drinking and frequenting ritzy restaurants (his favourite pastime), but also immersed in discussions about life and business. Invaluable insights I still carry with me.

No matter what you've been through in life or are yet to endure, someone else has been there before you. A valuable mentor has been there, so they will also help you navigate the murky fog of ambiguity and offer practical advice to help you get towards your destination, wherever that may be. Your customer should consider you, in part, a mentor too. Why wouldn't they? After all, you are the expert at what you do. They rely on you.

A mentor can be used to develop most areas in business, but will be particularly useful in planning and developing areas that are not your natural strong suit. You don't need to meet your mentor in person every day or week: the arrangement can simply be ad hoc, for when you need advice or on the fly. Just remember a mentor's time is invaluable and they are often in demand, so don't abuse their time and generosity. And always, without compromise, offer to help your mentor in some way in return if you can. Just because they are successful doesn't mean they don't need help too.

Mentors are all around us: in my experience they have always materialised through people that I know and trust, making them a safer bet, but not guaranteed. Just remember to always be wary of a wounded bull. Working with a mentor that you don't know very well can be perilous, so proceed cautiously and do your due diligence. This principle also applies if your mentor is charging a fee for their time. In my experience successful mentors are older, but that's not always the case; depending on their areas of skill, and level of experience and industry, they could indeed be younger. And not all successful people are effective mentors; this will depend on their natural instinct for coaching. Working with a mentor

shouldn't cost you more than a coffee or odd lunch here and there, but if you find the right one, your small investment could pay off handsomely.

You need to be surrounded by good advisers, but you also have to trust your instincts.

Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook

Rules and records are made to be broken

Each generation strives to be more than their ancestors: more opulent, more enlightened, more successful, smarter, faster! To achieve this you will need to overcome ignorance, abolish inhibiting beliefs, and embrace and harness change. This path can be risky, but ultimately, it will serve you by moving you forward and upward. To evolve, your own records need to be broken and new rules established. We all live in a world of flux and ceaseless movement, and if you're standing still, in reality, you're moving backwards.

Genuine game-changing innovation can be challenging to achieve, because initially only you believe in it. Without others buying into your vision, who will embrace and run with it? Not many—which usually spells the death of a great idea or grand ideal. True innovators live on the edge, blazing away with original ideas and brazen beliefs. To defy a long-held record or tradition set by others, you will need a stomach full of courage, a thick skin and unyielding commitment to your cause. Never succumb to other people's ignorance or take unconstructive feedback as a reason to quit your dream. Guard it with your life. Fight for it. You are unstoppable when your vision sings to your determination and inspires you to work through adversity. Keep driving! Sticking your neck out is not for the faint hearted, especially if what you believe in runs contrary to the majority. Be prepared to work. Be prepared to stick. Take on feedback, but don't listen to the naysayers.

Dare to prepare

At some point, much of what you believe in and take for granted today will evolve or change, so be open to change. Why not drive it? But what shouldn't change are your values, your self-belief and desire keep on improving. And if you genuinely believe something needs to be broken—smash it! The default setting for most people is to under-prepare. Not surprisingly, these are people who are only scratching the surface of their full potential. Whenever I speak with an audience, large or small, a single glaring area for improvement is always apparent. I recall speaking to an audience of more than 200 sales consultants. I quizzed them to each raise their hand if they believed they could prepare more effectively on a day-to-day basis? In a nanosecond 200 hands reached for the sky in unison. 'Hallelujah!' I celebrated. Awareness is one thing, but taking action is quite another. Dare to prepare!

Luck is preparation meeting opportunity.

Oprah Winfrey, media mogul and philanthropist

Action points

- Develop your 'why frame' with teammates to craft and align your communication to your customers and their emotional drivers.
- Establish your competitor profiles—closed and aggressive, passive and indifferent or open and collaborative—to learn more about them and develop strategies to deal with them.
- Attack your time-wasters before they attack you. Just say no! Get clear about who your high-value customers are, and free up your time to focus on and find more of them.
- The most successful salespeople are always the best prepared. Dare to prepare!

About the author



Trent Leyshan is the founder and CEO of international sales training and development company *BOOM!* As the lead consultant and facilitator, he partners with some of the world's most dynamic sales and service-driven companies. Clients include the National Australia Bank, Symbion Health, American Banknote, CSR and Crown Casino, to name a few.

Trent combines his unique experiences in business, rigorous research and new insights with fresh, interactive delivery methods that inspire action and lasting change in behaviour. He works with hundreds of salespeople across a broad range of industries every year. He designs and delivers sales seminars and in-house training programs across Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

Early in his career, Trent was the head spruiker and national sales manager at Big Kev's. Under the guidance of mentor Kevin McQuay (Big Kev), Australia's most flamboyant TV sales personality, he learned and developed his sales and presentation skills.

He has since led sales teams in award-winning advertising and online marketing agencies. He has transformed two companies from lounge-room operations into industry leaders. He is the

Outlaw

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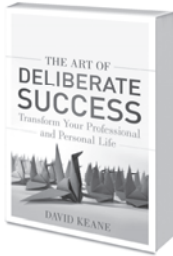
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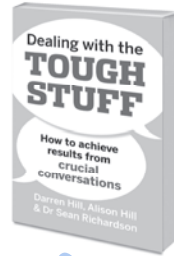
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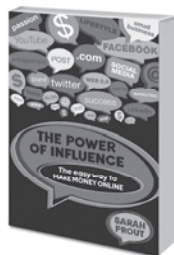
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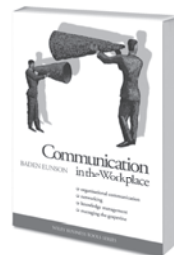
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