

THE SALES EXCELLENCE POCKETBOOK

By Patrick Forsyth

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

“Thoroughly entertaining, thoughtful and well-presented. Will encourage would-be salespeople to view selling in a different light.”

David Horchover, Principal, Chase International Marketing

“I have read several of Patrick’s books but I must say this is probably the best. Invest just an hour in reading this book and you will find a mine of practical advice, usable from day one.”

Phillippa Bourne, Head of Non-Accredited Programmes, The Institute of Management

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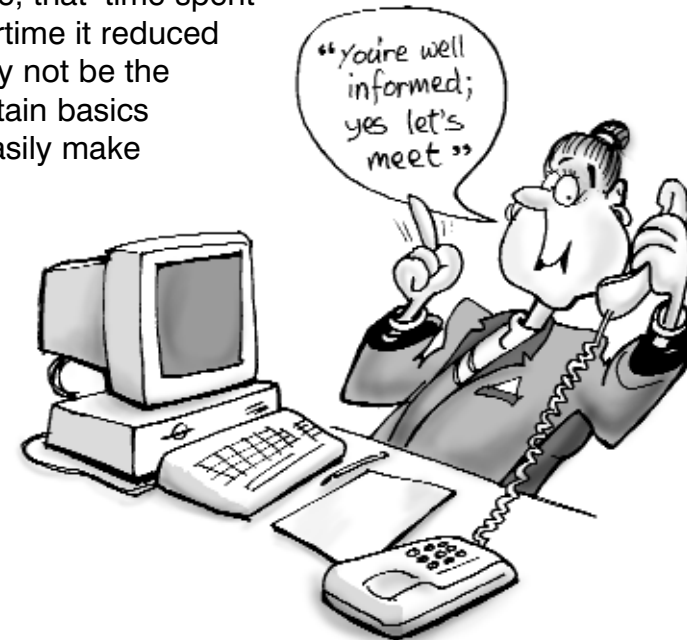
BEFORE THE SALES MEETING

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESS



There is an old saying, originating in wartime, that 'time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted'. In wartime it reduced the chances of getting shot. In selling, it may not be the most exciting part of the job to tie down certain basics **before** speaking to a prospect, but it can easily make the difference between a 'yes' and a 'no'.

Sales excellence comes, in part, from careful groundwork.



BEFORE THE SALES MEETING

PROSPECTING



Most businesses need the life blood of new prospects; whether you need a few occasionally, or many on a regular basis, finding enough - and finding appropriate ones - is a matter of some importance.

Some prospects come through promotional activity, others - perhaps the majority - must be found by salespeople as part of their core tasks.

Some people avoid prospecting because of a distaste for 'cold calling'. The trick is to adopt the right attitude - some see opportunities everywhere - and make obtaining new prospects a matter of system and routine.

The age old question: 'Is the glass half empty, or half full?'

BEFORE THE SALES MEETING



PROSPECTING

EXAMPLES

Here are a few examples of methods that can create new business contacts on an ongoing basis:

- **Endless chain:** making one thing lead to another, by asking: 'Do you know anyone else who might be interested ...?'; by analysing: 'If this banker is interested, which others can I contact?'
- **Centres of influence:** these are contacts who, while they might be customers themselves, can recommend others (eg: a trade association or professional body)
- **Personal observation:** keep your eyes open, opportunities are all around; watch the trade press, find out who is moving into those new offices you drive past every day, walk downstairs in office blocks and see who else is on other floors
- **Chance contacts:** all sorts of people might be potential customers, eg: on a plane, find out who you are sitting next to (a good opening is to ask how much they paid for their ticket!)
- **Cold canvass:** knocking, uninvited, on doors hardly ever has a good rate of strike, but it may be a good way of discovering, from a receptionist, the buyer's name - making a second contact later more likely to be useful

BEFORE THE SALES MEETING



PROSPECTING

EXAMPLES (Cont'd)

- **Lists:** there are a host of sources of names, everything from 'Yellow Pages' to association membership lists or interest groups, and directories of all sorts
- **Past customers:** go back to a dormant customer, who may only be not buying out of neglect (a good tactic when you are new to a company; ask who have others given up on?)
- **Suppliers:** look at who your organisation does business with (there is probably an A-Z list in accounts) and consider whether there are any potential customers here; they are likely to give you a hearing
- **Extra curricular activities:** it is worth analysing what committees you should sit on, what conferences you should attend, etc; share the list you produce with colleagues to make actioning it manageable

Sales excellence is enhanced by a systematic approach to prospecting; find the approaches that work for you, action them, and give it regular time.

BEFORE THE SALES MEETING

PROSPECTING

LOOK FOR THE GREATEST POTENTIAL



Some prospects are more likely to be converted than others.

Match the criteria that make for the best prospects in your business against the names you identify, separate the wheat from the chaff, and go for those with the greatest potential.

Check such factors as the kind of organisation, the size, ownership, the level of the decision maker and the financial status (remember the old adage: 'It is not a sale until the money is in the bank'; customers must be able and willing to pay). Now prioritise those that best meet the criteria you set.

Sales excellence includes spending the most time on the best, that is qualified, prospects.

BEFORE THE SALES MEETING



PROSPECTING

IDENTIFYING THE TRUE BUYER

Increasingly, buying decisions are made by groups of people, committees, the Board, two people in concert. It is not always clear who 'the buyer' is. A well known mnemonic tells us to look for the **MAN** who has the:

Money
Authority
Need

You might usefully categorise people into the following groups:

- Decision makers
- Advisors
- Users
- Gatekeepers
- Administrators

Deal with each in a different way as necessary.



BEFORE THE SALES MEETING

PROSPECTING

IDENTIFYING THE TRUE BUYER



An example illustrates the various categories of people you are likely to deal with:

The Managing Director (decision maker) asks his Office Manager (advisor) to check out possible new fax machines. He involves his Secretary (user) in meetings because she uses such a machine much more than he does personally. Telephone calls are made via the Switchboard Operator (gatekeeper) who can deny or allow salespeople access to others. Finally, the order - and order number, etc - is issued by the purchasing department (administrator).

The process of identifying who you are dealing with and how the customer is organised starts before the meeting, but may continue throughout the sales process.

About the Author

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Patrick runs Touchstone Training & Consultancy, an independent firm specialising in work in marketing, sales and communications skills. He began his career in publishing – selling books – and then worked for a professional management institute before going into consultancy. He has more than twenty years' experience as a consultant working with organisations in a wide range of industries and many different parts of the world.

In addition to training he writes extensively on business matters – books, articles and training materials. As well as being the author of other Pocketbooks (see opposite) he has a number of other successful business books published. These include *Powerful Reports and Proposals*, *Marketing on a Tight Budget*, *The Management Speakers Handbook*, *Successful Time Management* and *Detox your Career*.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Forsyth'. The signature is stylized and cursive, written on a white background.