



Book

## Jeffrey Gitomer's Little Red Book of Selling

12.5 Principles of Sales Greatness: How to make sales forever

Jeffrey Gitomer  
Bard Press, 2004  
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Use 12.5 basic principles to become a sales superstar. (Thirteen would have been unlucky.)

### Recommendation

In 1966, Mao Tse-Tung published *The Little Red Book* of his quotations. Sales whiz Jeffrey Gitomer now offers its namesake: the *Little Red Book of Selling*. Like Mao's book of political orientation, Gitomer recommends that you read his book of sales instruction over and over. And yet, most of its urgings may not need so many repetitions, since they are familiar and not hard to understand: "Work hard!" "Be prepared!" "Kick yourself in the duff" (only, he doesn't say "duff"). Gitomer fans can be assured that this accessible bestseller reinforces his basic productive teachings about assertive selling attitudes and strategic preparedness, though it sometimes feeds a little too much into his star "guru" image. For instance, maybe it wasn't necessary to attribute pop-up quotes to him in his own book. *getAbstract* finds that Gitomer couches real scattered gems of sales wisdom in just enough jazzy layouts, snappy aphorisms, savvy and silly suggestions, big-type quotations, startling vulgarisms, humorous asides, quaint cartoons, red headlines, gold bullet points and free-wheeling commands to keep even the most distractible sales student alert.

### In this summary, you will learn

- Why people buy things
- How to use the 12.5 principles of "sales greatness"
- How following five more axioms can help you become a sales superstar

### Take-Aways

- No one likes being sold, but everyone loves to buy.
- You must feel passionate about your product or service to sell it.
- If you cannot conquer the fear of rejection, you have no business in sales.
- Great salespeople make their own luck by working harder than anyone else.
- Control your mind and you control everything else – your attitude, your success and your sales.
- Prospects don't care about you, your company or your product. They only care whether you can help them be more profitable.
- Being unprepared for a presentation or client call is a big mistake.

- To succeed in sales, you must be willing to work hard all the time.
- The best way to avoid arguing about price is to offer true value and to sell to the decision maker, not the staff.
- First, people buy you, then your products or services. If you can't make the first sale, you'll never make the second.

## Summary

### Why People Buy

To be successful in sales, you must learn why people purchase products and services. The answer to this vital question is far more important than learning the answer to another: "How do I sell?" People buy for numerous reasons. Here are some of the most common:

*"Find something that you love, find something that you can believe in, find an environment that's fun, and people you can respect, and jump in with both feet."*

- I have a high opinion of my sales representative.
- I have faith and confidence in my sales representative.
- I know exactly what I am buying and precisely why.
- I feel comfortable with the price.
- I think the product or service offers true value.
- I think it will enhance our productivity and increase our profits.

Apply these "12.5 principles of sales greatness" to your work:

#### Principle 1: "Kick Your Own Ass"

Are you sufficiently motivated to achieve sales success? If not, get out of sales as quickly as you can. You cannot get where you want to be in sales without inspiration, passion, hard work and self-determination. You must demand far more from yourself than any sales manager ever would. When things get slow, you must be ready, willing and able to kick your own butt, and get back on track. You alone are responsible for your success or lack of it. Never settle for anything less from yourself than your maximum effort.

*"Prospects must first believe in (and like) the messenger, or the message has no credibility."*

#### Principle 2: "Prepare to Win or Lose to Someone Who Is" Prepared

Great salespeople always ensure their success long before they make an actual call on a prospect or customer. Sales masters understand how crucial being fully prepared really is, particularly when they are visiting a potential purchaser. How do you get really ready? Learn everything about your prospect's company. This will help you understand what will truly motivate your prospect to buy what you hope to sell. Become a bona fide student of your target company. Read its annual report. Speak with its vendors, competitors, employees and customers. Check its Web site and request its marketing materials. The more information you possess about your prospects, the more successful you will be in selling to them. Just as Mom said, "Do your homework."

*"The workday starts the night before."*

Principle 3: "Personal Branding Is Sales: It's Not Who You Know, It's Who Knows You" Your company has a brand that is vital to its continued success. But what is your personal brand? Understand one basic rule of sales: The customer always buys the salesperson before buying the product or service that he or she represents. You need an individual brand that makes you stand out. So, develop and enhance your personal image. Become an expert regarding not only your product or service, but also your field or industry. Plan and conduct your own personal outreach program. Position yourself so that your local business community will learn to know and respect you. Get out in front – and stay there.

*"To make the most of a networking event, spend 75% of your time with people you don't know."*

Principle 4: "It's All About Value, It's All About Relationship, It's Not All About Price" You want your prospects to stop beating you over the head about the issue of price? The best way to achieve that goal is to offer them true value. Do that and – like a savvy politician – you can change the terms of the debate. How do you offer value? Market yourself (and thus your product or service) by communicating to your prospects how they can increase their own sales, improve their own operations, and become more productive and profitable. Clearly establish your product or service's basic "value proposition," then communicate it to your prospects. Use bylined articles, media appearances and public speaking opportunities to assume a position of expertise within your marketplace. Develop credibility in the local business community so you can begin to call on CEOs, not purchasing agents. Organize your sales presentation so it shows exactly how your product or service will help your prospects make more money.

*"All things being equal, people want to do business with their friends."*

#### **Principle 5: "It's Not Work, it's Network"**

Few salespeople get rich by cold calling. On the other hand, salespeople who use networking often create fortunes. How do you network? Attend chamber of commerce events and events sponsored by your local business journal. Join a civic association or networking club. Become involved with a high-profile charity. Participate in your trade or professional association. Begin speaking at the local Toastmaster's club. Start singing at your local karaoke joint. Woody Allen said it best: "Ninety percent of success is showing up." Not enough time to network? Maybe you should find another line of work.

#### **Principle 6: "Get in Front of the Real Decision Maker"**

Put first things first. With prospects, the first thing you must do, before worrying about a presentation or getting an order, is to secure an appointment. When you are on the phone, don't talk product. Instead, talk appointment. Organize everything during your telephone call to close for the appointment. Remember: You can't sell people anything if you can't get in front of them. Just as important, ensure that the appointment is with the ultimate decision maker. If that's the CEO, then that's who you want to meet. So qualify, qualify, qualify. Find out who makes the final purchase decision, and then push hard for an appointment with that person. Of course, sometimes you must work your way up the chain of command. But never let an intermediary tell you that he or she will speak to the decision maker, and then get back to you on a purchase decision. This is an almost certain recipe for a big "No Sale." Always insist on being present when the decision maker rules on your product. After all, how can he or she make a judgment if you are not available to answer any important questions?

*"The less time you spend in other people's business, other people's problems, and other people's drama, the more time you'll have for your own success."*

#### **Principle 7: "Engage Me and You Can Make Me Convince Myself"**

Effective salespeople know how to engage their prospects by asking intelligent questions. Ask stupid ones and you'll never sell anyone anything. Intelligent questions cover real concerns, such as company plans or goals, productivity, savings and profits. To relate to your prospects, ask "power questions" that make them stop and think. Lead into power questions with phrases such as: "What do your customers feel about...?" "What would be your most important productivity enhancement concerning...?" Avoid dumb questions, such as: "Are you the decision maker regarding...?" or "Can I provide you with a quote concerning...?"

*"Get fired up or get fired."*

#### **Principle 8: "If You Can Make Them Laugh, You Can Make Them Buy"**

Selling is a people business. If a prospect likes you, he or she is more likely to buy what you are promoting. Humor is a good way to get someone on your side. When people laugh, they become relaxed and their shields go down. Work hard to put a smile on your prospect's face. He or she will have a hard time turning you down. Avoid racy, off-color jokes, or anything concerning gender or ethnicity. In fact, don't tell jokes at all – tell humorous stories instead. Jokes are contrived but stories are real.

**Principle 9: "Use Creativity to Differentiate and Dominate"**

Muster your creativity to separate yourself from your competition. A salesperson can put creativity to work immediately in three primary areas: 1) initial sales call questions; 2) personal branding items (voice mail, business cards, fax cover sheets); and 3) "stay-in-front" of the public activities (professional Web page, promotional e-mail messages and so on). Don't think that creativity is only for a select group of people who were born artsy. You can teach yourself to become creative. Study books on the subject. Check out *Cracking Creativity* by Michael Michalko or *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward de Bono.

*"If you offer no value, all that's left is price."*

**Principle 10: "Reduce Their Risk and You'll Convert Selling to Buying"**

Prospects are always wary about making purchases because they sense inherent risk. How do you identify their perceived risks, which may be blocking your sale? Consider – and try to eliminate – these potential risk roadblocks: "Financial" (Is it affordable?); "need" (Is this something we truly require?); "performance" (What if it doesn't do the job?); "service" (Will support be available when I need it?); "obsolescence" (What if another company introduces something better?); and "poor decision" (Will the CEO be angry if I purchase this?). Erase your client's sense of risk with reassurances. Help the client see that the rewards outweigh the risk.

*"Don't sell the price.  
Don't sell the service.  
Sell the appointment."*

Principle 11: "When You Say It about Yourself It's Bragging. When Someone Else Says It, It's Proof." Everyone hates braggarts, but everyone loves testimonials. A third-party who speaks well of you and your product is credible because he or she has nothing to gain. So how do you get a satisfied customer in front of your next prospect? What if you could put that person in your briefcase and take him or her with you on your sales call? You can – through videotape! Ask a satisfied customer to recommend your product or service, and then videotape his or her statement. Be sure that your video production values are top-notch. Of course, written testimonials help, too.

**Principle 12: "Antennas Up!"**

Antennae are paired appendages that insects and some other creatures use as sensory organs. They may help the animal sense air, motion, heat, vibrations, touch, and especially smell or taste. Similarly, great salespeople must always keep their antennae up so they sense, identify and exploit new opportunities. Always be aware of your surroundings. Are you catching every opportunity to engage a new prospect? Whenever you are out among people, you have the chance to network. The person that you meet at an out-of-town airport, a sporting event or a restaurant may one day become your best customer. Remember: A sales superstar is always selling no matter where he or she may be. Keep your antennae up when you are meeting or spending time with your customers or prospects. You want to know who in the room has influence? Who might stand in the way of your closing? And, of course, who is the primary decision maker – that is, who has the power to buy? To know the answers, keep your antennae extended.

*"When you have the pressure to sell, the prospect senses it and backs off."*

**Principle 12.5: "Resign Your Position as General Manager of the Universe"**

Psychologists know that given the opportunity, most of us tend to involve ourselves too much in the affairs of others. Usually prescribing solutions for other people's problems is much easier than solving your own. Unfortunately, this human tendency can limit salespeople's effectiveness. The more time you spend trying to solve other peoples' problems, the less time you are selling. So, get out of other folks' universes. Focus on your own universe and your sales will increase.

*"Which do you think a prospect wants, answers to their problems or your sales pitch?"*

**"More Red Sales Thinking"**

To heat up your sales, incorporate five more concepts into your professional development:

*“People don't buy for your reasons – they buy for their reasons – so find their reasons (their 'why') first and sell them on that.”*

1. "The Little Salesman That Could" – For nearly 80 years, The Little Engine That Could has been a beloved children's classic. It tells the story of a small train huffing and puffing to climb a steep hill, and succeeding through sheer determination. This is the bedrock of sales. Believe in yourself, never quit, and you'll be a winner.
2. "The two most important words in selling" – They are "you" and "why." "You" because the customer must first be willing to buy you before he or she buys your product or services. And "why" because successful salespeople always strive to learn why customers are motivated to purchase something.
3. "The life-long learning formula" – Great salespeople never stop learning. Start your quest with attitude-boosting books by Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale.
4. "Implement the rule of 'The More'" – TV is a salesperson's greatest enemy. The more time you spend in front of the TV, the more your competition will clean your clock. Don't waste your time in unproductive pursuits.
5. "What does it take to become number one – and stay there?" – Be positive, confident, likable and dedicated. Always be honest and stay focused.

Now, re-read all these principles, "study each one...go back and make a game plan."

## About the Author

**Jeffrey Gitomer** is a best-selling author, columnist, sales trainer and business coach. His other books include *The Sales Bible* and *The Little Gold Book of Yes! Attitude*.

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