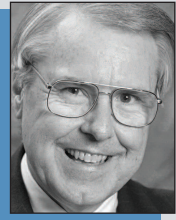


# Master Salesmanship™

The Guide to Superior Selling Techniques

“Identifying the relevant executive in the client organization may represent the most critical thing great salespeople do when pursuing a sales opportunity.”



## Identifying The Relevant Executive For The Sales Opportunity

by Dr. Steve Bistriz

One thing that great business-to-business salespeople do on a consistent basis is focus on the right deals. They seem to have a built-in GPS system that enables them to accurately and effectively assess their current sales opportunities. They don't waste their time chasing every deal that's placed in front of them. It's like they have a sixth sense about working on the right deals ... the deals they have the best chances of winning. They can quickly examine 10 deals and determine which two to three should receive their immediate attention and which ones can easily be placed on the back burner. They are masters of qualifying sales opportunities.

Most importantly — identifying the relevant executive in the client organization may represent the most critical thing great salespeople do when pursuing a sales opportunity. It certainly represents the best way to spend time in an initial approach to a sales opportunity.

When pursuing any sales opportunity, salespeople should always ask themselves these three compelling questions at multiple times in a sales campaign:

### Should We Pursue This Opportunity?

Developing an in-depth understanding of the client's business, as well as his or her key customers and competitors is an important aspect of this question.

Since time and resources are limited, it's important to determine whether the opportunity being assessed is real and represents a worthwhile investment in time and resources.

### Can We Effectively Compete For This Opportunity?

Solution fit is but one component of whether you can be competitive in a sales campaign. Are there enough internal or external resources available to compete successfully for the business? Are there existing business

relationships established with the client? Does your solution offer specific business value that enables you to differentiate yourself from your competitor(s)?

Knowing how your company, as well as your solution, relates to the specific sales opportunity can be a key ingredient to winning the deal. Being able to realistically contrast that information with that of your competitor(s) is an important factor when assessing this question.

### Can We Reasonably Expect To Win This Opportunity?

This question is the one that is most often overlooked in sales campaigns; however, it is clearly the most important one. Many opportunities are lost even if the salesperson has the best solution, the best delivery and the best terms and conditions. This question deals with how well the salesperson understands the client's organizational structure that ultimately allows him or her to identify the inside support necessary to win the deal.

The answer to this question also reveals which key executives wield the most power and influence within the client organization, as it relates to this sales opportunity. Most importantly, the salesperson must determine the relevant executive associated with the opportunity — as outlined above — the executive who stands to gain or lose the most as a result of the application or project associated with the sales opportunity.

Do the most powerful people in the client's organization want you to win? Do you have credibility with the client's key players? Most importantly, is there political alignment with the key players in the client organization who either affect or are affected by the buying decision? Finally, what facts support these assessments of your

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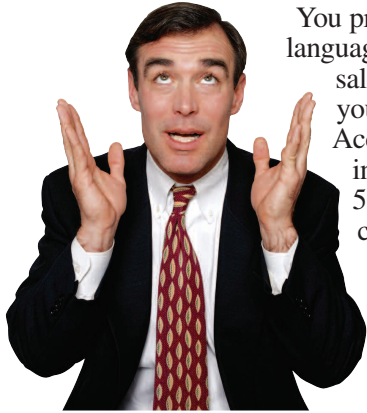
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*“A simple thank you makes the buyer feel appreciated, the plus benefit that could be the difference when a competitor tries to steal your good customer away.”*

## Is Your Body Language Driving Customers Away?



You probably know that body language plays a large role in sales presentations. But do you realize how large? According to several studies, in a two-way conversation, 55 percent of the meaning comes from nonverbal elements and 38 percent from tonality of voice. That leaves just 7 percent for the words themselves.

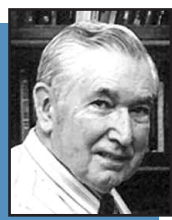
In reality, more than 700,000 combinations of body movements convey meaning. You certainly cannot expect to interpret everything a customer or prospect does, but you can pay closer attention. Consider these pointers from body language experts:

**1. Make a great first impression.** The first 10 to 15 seconds of an introduction are crucial. A firm handshake, enthusiastic attitude, energetic voice and forward-leaning stance all make a lasting impression. Each communicates belief in yourself and the product you sell.

**2. Show interest by mirroring.** Mirroring, the art of matching your body movements to your prospect's, is a great way to increase your likability quotient. People who like each other generally talk at similar speeds and gesture in similar ways. Pay attention to your customers' body movements and mimic them. If they stroke their chin while thinking, you do the same. Sounds crazy, but it works. Try it with someone you have a hard time communicating with and see if your rapport improves.

**3. Focus on your voice.** Since tone of voices carries almost 40 percent of meaning, use it to your advantage. Seminar speakers know that what makes or breaks them is not the message, but how they deliver it. Learn to adjust your volume to stress key points. Get rid of distracting habits by listening to a tape of yourself selling. And remember the power of the pause to give prospects a chance to focus on what you just said.

**4. Read your customers like a book.** Learn to check frequently on how a conversation is going. Positive cues include eye contact, slow head nods, note-taking, smiling, little body movement and holding onto paper handouts. Negative responses include looking around at others, a slouched posture, fast shaking of the head, questioning facial expressions, tapping of fingers and pushing handouts off to the side. Positive responses may mean it's time to move toward a close. Negative feedback may indicate a need to backtrack and find out a customer's key objections. ■



## Customers And VIPs: The Red-Carpet Connection

*By Homer Smith*

Everyone enjoys being treated like a VIP, and that includes customers. Unfortunately, salespeople tend to reserve their VIP treatment for only the better customers and prospects, showing only modest concern for the smaller accounts. This is understandable when the investment in VIP treatment involves considerable time and effort, since one normally invests according to expected returns, but much of the attention that makes customers feel good requires very little in the way of time or effort.

Thanking a customer for the order may seem unnecessary, especially when you get these orders regularly and routinely from steady customers. But a simple thank you

makes the buyer feel appreciated, the plus benefit that could be the difference when a competitor tries to steal your good customer away.

Meeting your customers with enthusiasm and a smile shows that you're glad to be with them and that you like their company.

Listening to the customer is one of the best ways to make him or her feel important. Let your customer talk without cutting him or her off in mid-sentence. Praise the good points and sympathize with the bad. Show respect for the customer's opinions. That's VIP treatment!

Do something extra just because you cherish the customer and respect him or her as a person and friend. There's a natural human tendency to respond to this kind of recognition in the same manner. ■



***“Identifying the relevant executive for the sales opportunity may not be an easy task. It will take time, resources and a lot of your energy.”***

## **Identifying The Relevant Executive ... (continued from page 1)**

client relationships? Contrasting these factors with that of your competitor(s) can have a significant impact on your decision to continue to pursue a sales opportunity.

### **Who Is The Relevant Executive?**

When salespeople are asked to identify the relevant executive for the sales opportunity, their responses are usually that the relevant executive is the decision-maker for the opportunity or the economic buyer. In my book, *Selling to the C-Suite*, the relevant executive is defined as the executive who stands to gain or lose the most — as a result of the application or project associated with your sales opportunity. When you think about that definition, the concept of the relevant executive becomes crystal clear.

The reason it is so critical to identify the relevant executive is because that executive can often exert his or her informal influence or power to either make or usurp the buying decision that was made as a result of the formal decision-making process. Salespeople are usually very tuned to the formal decision-making process, but in nearly every sales opportunity there is an informal decision-making process taking place behind the scenes — and salespeople eventually learn that the informal process always trumps the formal process.

If you can identify and align with the relevant executive for the sales opportunity, you can significantly reduce the time you spend trying to win the deal. If you are not aligned with the relevant executive for the sales opportunity, your competitors probably are — and you will probably lose the deal.

Identifying the relevant executive for the sales opportunity may not be an easy task. It will take time, resources and a lot of your energy. However, when you are able to identify that executive, the rewards can be great.

In order to begin identifying the relevant executive, you should constantly be aware of what’s happening in the client organization — always watching how major buying decisions are made, who wins when re-organizations take place and which executives receive special assignments that are meaningful and significant. In addition, you should be looking for who’s connected to who within the client organization and noticing which executives are tapped to lead new projects of importance. You should also be discussing these events with your supporters or mentors in the client organization and then triangulating your information to develop your conclusions.

By spending time trying to identify the relevant executive for each sales opportunity — and aligning with that executive — you will find that you have significantly improved your odds of winning key deals.

*Dr. Steve Bistriz has more than 40 years of high-tech sales, sales management and training management experience. He is a published author and lecturer in the field of sales, sales management and selling to executives. Bistriz spent more than 27 years with IBM in sales and training-related positions. He then worked for a sales training company where he led the development of sales training programs that were delivered to thousands of salespeople worldwide. He co-authored the book, *Selling to the C-Suite*, which was published by McGraw-Hill in 2009 ([www.sellingtothec-suite.com](http://www.sellingtothec-suite.com)). Bistriz holds a doctorate in human resources development from Vanderbilt University and is currently president of his own sales training and consulting firm based in Atlanta. Visit his Web site at [www.sellxl.com](http://www.sellxl.com). ■*

## **Questions And Answers**

**Q:** Twenty-five percent of my customers account for about 90 percent of my annual volume. Does that mean that I’m a poor salesperson three-fourths of the time?

**A:** No, this doesn’t mean that you are a poor salesperson at all. It just means that you are pretty close to having a normal sales record according to most types of selling involving regular customers. Typically, 20 percent of the customers contribute 80 percent of the sales volume.

More important is what you plan to do about this situation, particularly your time allocation. Should you give more time where the money is, to your higher volume customers? If so, how much can you profitably reduce your time spent with the lower grade customers?

Should you drop some customers as a waste of time? Can you substitute telephone calls for some of the personal face-to-face calls? Can you stretch the frequency of calls on the lower volume customers to give you more time with the better customers?

Many salespeople use a plan of account classification in determining call frequency. They rank every customer according to real or potential annual sales volume, as an A, B or C account. They call least often on the C accounts — who have the least potential for sales. They call most frequently and stay longer with the A accounts, where the most potential for sales justifies the greater time allocation. ■

*“The salesperson’s income comes through his or her greatest asset — time. Time spent in planning, finding prospects and making the sales presentation.”*

## SELLING SLANTS

### Power Moves To Dominate Your Territory

The popular image people have of salespeople who call on customers regularly is that they “cover the territory.” Covering the territory might be considered the routine job of the ordinary salesperson, but the difference between the ordinary and superior sales representative can usually be traced to the fact that the successful professional salesperson “manages” his or her territory, instead of just “covering” it.

Much has been written about the theory that professional salespeople are in business for themselves. This theory is based on the fact that the financial success of each salesperson is normally in direct relation to the amount of business he or she obtains from the assigned territory for the parent firm. How much business comes from the territory depends on the ability of the salesperson to manage time so that the emphasis is placed on those activities that result in

the most sales and profit for the firm.

### Seven Steps Toward Managing Efficiently

Managing your territory effectively depends on how skillfully you handle these primary functions:

1. **Planning and setting objectives that match company goals**
2. **Establishing the frequencies of calls on customers in relation to sales potential**
3. **Scheduling and routing travel to gain maximum time and cost efficiency**
4. **Developing leads and prospecting to maintain and increase sales**
5. **Serving customers in such a way that they remain loyal and contribute to increased business**
6. **Utilizing information for both territory and personal growth**
7. **Managing time in a way that permits territory management as well as a balanced and pleasant personal and family life.** ■

### Priority List: What’s The Big Secret?

“If I just had more time, I could get the work done.” “I’ll put this aside until I have more time.” Do these statements sound familiar? We have all used them at one time or another. Yet we’re just deceiving ourselves when we think we’re running out of time or that time is too short. The fact is, we have just as much time as anyone else on this planet. No one has any more or less.

The supply of time is not the problem. It’s how we use our ration of time that presents the problems.

### Time Is More Than Money

For salespeople, time is the most important asset. Businesspeople require other assets like buildings, equipment and cash to meet bills and payroll. The salesperson’s income comes through his or her greatest asset — time. Time spent in planning, finding prospects and

making the sales presentation. Anything that drains away the salesperson’s daily ration of time from these important activities robs him or her of sales and income.

How can we be sure that we get the most important things done within the time available? The one big solution is this simple formula:

1. **Make a list of things to do.**
2. **Assign priorities.** Number or list the tasks in order of importance.
3. **Do the top priority item first.** Keep at the top priority task until it is done. Then start priority item two and so on until your list is done.

You will have unavoidable interruptions, but go back to the unfinished, top priority job on your list. You may not get to all of the items, but don’t fret. You will not complete the list by any other method, and with this method you will have at least finished the most important jobs. Tomorrow is another day with another list of jobs arranged by priority for you to tackle. ■

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