High Trust Selling
by Todd M. Duncan

High Trust
BUILD A WINNING SALES CAREER

QUICK OVERVIEW

High-trust salespeople understand selling isn’t simply about closing a sale; it’s deeper than that. High Trust Selling author Todd M. Duncan lays the foundation for building a sales career based upon purpose, customer needs, and the ever-important courtship and service that lead to long-lasting, trusting business relationships.

High Trust Selling is a quick read loaded with anecdotes and actionable tips for salespeople and managers. Duncan walks readers through the broad, foundational “why” questions pertinent to every salesperson’s career, and teaches how to use personal “purpose” to accelerate long-term success. He details the hallmarks of high-trust prospect interviews and gives relatable examples of high-impact openings and broad questions aimed at gathering the right kind of information. He offers tips on how and when to ask for a prospect’s business, as well as what to say and do next, including managing objections.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

The High-Trust Interview

Step 1: A High-Impact Opening (45-60 seconds)
All effective high-impact openings have the following:
1. An appreciation for the prospect’s time
2. A statement of impact that uniquely sets you apart from your competition and foreshadows the value that the conversation will hold
3. A quick transition to the questioning process

Step 2: Values Discovery Questions (Intrinsic Needs; 3-7 minutes)
Ask questions that predictably lead you to your prospects’ greatest values as they consider life, business and a relationship with you.

• What’s important to you about being successful?
• What’s important to you about earning more money?
• What’s important to you about maximizing your image?
• What’s important to you about productivity?
• What’s important to you about profitability?

SUCCESS Points

From this book you will learn:

• Clarity allows you to become more productive in your present
• You must surround yourself with people who will push, pull, drag and drive you to greater heights
• The key to selling is providing, and the key to providing is knowing in advance what to provide
• Establishing trust may require adding value without receiving business
• Prospects close their own sales if you offer valuable solutions to their real needs and values
Jot down the prospect’s key needs and values so you can continually and accurately reference them as you interview.

**Step 3: Highest-Value Needs Questions** *(Extrinsic Needs; 3-5 Needs in Order of Importance; 10-20 minutes)*

Relational needs and expectations on which the prospect places the highest value nearly always have to do with deliverables. Learn how prospects expect you to conduct business and maintain the relationship, so you can customize a highly attractive buying strategy.

Elicit as much information about the need(s) as possible in an efficient and professional manner.

- **“How do you define...?”**
- **“How would you improve...?”**
- **“What parameters are critical to you for...?”**
- **“What have you found works best for...?”**
- **“What are your standards for...?”**

The high-trust interview is not about learning how to manipulate a prospect. It’s about learning how to serve a prospect in the best way possible and meeting real needs, not trying to manufacture phony needs. And if at any time during the interview process you recognize that the relationship can never be right on the inside, save yourself the grief and don’t pursue it any further.

If you are careful to apply the concepts of high-trust selling and the 14 “laws” described in this book that govern selling success, your sales business will do more than merely improve—it will **explode**. I can say this with a high degree of certainty because I’ve not only implemented high-trust selling in my own career with great success, but I’ve also seen it work in the lives of thousands of people to whom I’ve taught it.

**THE LAW OF THE ICEBERG SAYS...**

The truest measure of your success is invisible to your clients, because the majority of real success occurs on the inside of a salesperson, not on the outside. Your fulfillment—not your finances—should dictate whether you are truly successful. Put it this way: For you to be a truly satisfied, successful salesperson, you must first be a satisfied, successful person.

Think of yourself as an iceberg floating in a body of water. Imagine that the part of the iceberg beneath the surface of the water represents what’s on your inside: your values, your deepest desires, your mission and your purpose in life. And the part of the iceberg above the surface of the water represents what’s on the outside: your sales position, your earnings, your accolades, and your possessions. Experts estimate that, on average, only 10 percent of the entire mass of an iceberg appears above the surface. What that means is that 90 percent of the mass is beneath the surface, invisible to those above the water. In other words, what you see above the surface is not an accurate representation of an iceberg at all. It’s just the tip. And the same is true of sales success. What appears on the outside of your sales career doesn’t accurately represent how successful you are.

Like an iceberg, what’s above the surface is not reliable. Lasting (sales) success is built with the stuff on the inside—who you are and who you want to become, why you sell, and what legacy you intend to leave.

For over 20 years, I have been interviewing, training and coaching sales professionals, and the one factor I have found that prohibits salespeople from succeeding more than any other single factor is **lack of purpose**. Most haven’t answered the “Why?” question for their careers. In other words, the majority of unsatisfied salespeople become that way because their jobs aren’t aligned with a greater sense of purpose. And it shows: in their methods of doing business, in their relationships with clients and on their faces. The problem is that they’re trying to build their careers from the outside in. They’re looking for inner satisfaction from outward things. But that’s backward. And while the desire for money and material things (or anything else inferior to purpose) can keep anyone motivated early on, when the time between sales starts to grow, it’s rarely enough to keep one afloat.

There’s a remedy; it’s called “pull power.” It’s your inner accountability, your constant reminder, from the heart, of the deeper reason you are selling. You must solidify your higher purpose in your sales career so that you are strong enough to weather the rough tides of the sales profession, focused enough to leverage the best opportunities, and steadfast enough to secure the trust of your clients. With a sound purpose, you establish a firm and powerful foundation for achieving the highest and truest measure of success.

**THE LAW OF THE SUMMIT SAYS...**

To continue climbing toward higher pinnacles of success, despite past failures and the likelihood of more on the horizon, you need more than stick-to-itiveness. You need more than...
mental toughness or fervent initiative. You need to be inspired at your core. You must have the right perception of failure.

With the correct perception of failure, your purpose also acts as your compass, constantly directing and redirecting you toward the summit of success. As a result, failures don’t undermine your footing when you perceive the value inherent in your mistakes; you are able to continually improve your direction toward success with each mistake you make. In other words, with the right perception, failure should make you a stronger climber.

To establish high-trust client relationships that last a lifetime, you must be willing to learn from your mistakes. Plain and simple. You may take some knocks out of the sales starting gate while you’re learning how to build trust the right way. But over time, you will become very effective at earning and maintaining trust the right way. And when trust with clients continually reaches higher levels, so does your success.

THE LAW OF THE SHAREHOLDER SAYS...

The most successful salespeople buy stock in themselves. That begins when you stop thinking of yourself as an employee with a job and start thinking of yourself as an owner of a business with a compelling vision to help people.

It is taking responsibility for your own growth and the growth of your business. It’s understanding that what you do as a salesperson is operate a business that provides products and services, and to do that well and with integrity increases the likelihood of your success and stability. It’s knowing that you must have a business plan to succeed. Simply put, it’s acknowledging that you alone are the largest shareholder in your business.

Think about it this way: Until you can think for yourself, customers won’t trust your thinking. When you begin to build a business in which people can put their confidence, others will begin to buy stock in you and your business will reap the benefits.

THE LAW OF THE LADDER SAYS...

The success you achieve is directly related to the steps you conceive. In other words, to achieve lasting, consistent success in your sales career—to avoid the peaks and valleys—you must first conceive a successful plan. You must first determine what steps are necessary to earn and keep the trust of a customer.

At the head of every successful business plan is a vision for an ideal future, both in business and in life. A business plan will not increase your quality of living or selling unless it’s in conjunction with your greater sense of purpose. Ultimately, your vision is the filter through which you sift every business decision, from how to make sales to whom to makes sales to. Therefore, to not have a vision for the future you desire is to invite indecision, instability and inconsistency into your career.

THE LAW OF LEVERAGE SAYS...

Leverage ensues when you share your goals with the right people. That’s important for you to understand. The people with whom you share your aspirations must be the dream stokers in your life, not the dream soakers. They must be dream makers, not dream breakers. They must be people who have hearts for seeing you succeed and hands for helping you do so.

The Law of Leverage is about taking action. It requires reaching out to others who will help you succeed on a level far greater than you can by yourself and becoming more vulnerable in accountability relationships so that you can be more valuable in client relationships. The Law of Leverage is about multiplying your partners so that you can multiply your propensity for success and leveraging your best sales career so that you can live your best life.

THE LAW OF THE HOURGLASS SAYS...

To win at the game of sales, to make more sales than you lose, to earn more trust than you break, you must learn to exploit the sands of time. Time runs out on most salespeople every day, before they’ve made the right moves, before they’ve done what’s necessary to earn a client’s trust. And what results are shallow, short-term sales, if any sales at all. It is you who determines your own fate with the moves you make or don’t make.

The time allotted to each sales professional is the same—24 hours in each day—you must conclude that the most successful salespeople do something more than merely manage their time. Top-performing sales professionals who achieve the high trust of their clients consistently manage the moves they
make each day by forming a circular strategy that ensures that each move they make is connected to both their preceding and succeeding moves. They know that victory demands that every move they make builds momentum for the next move.

As a salesperson, you must ascertain the value of an hour of your time if you’re ever going to learn to exploit the clock effectively. An understanding of the 80/20 rule is fundamental to applying the Law of the Hourglass. To most effectively exploit your time and utilize your resources to execute high-trust selling, your job is to distinguish the right 20 percent from the trivial 80 percent—to determine what 20 percent of your efforts and resources are truly “worth” your time. Focus on doing what you do best for the greatest possible amount of time, and let everything else be handled by a system or a person managing a system on your behalf. Do that, and you will win more high-trust sales than you lose.

THE LAW OF THE DRESS SAYS...

To take your business up to higher and higher levels of trust and effectiveness, you must first clean it up. If you have not established clean systems and tight procedures to run your business effectively, then your business is being run by the people and activities of your days. Your sales business is reactive rather than proactive. When you take the time to clean up your business by establishing systems and procedures to effectively deal with the most common and most productive activities of your day, your business becomes proactive, and is able to continually expand.

If you experience wasted days, it’s almost certainly because you’re not running a clean sales business. Wasted days are rarely days without activity. Your days can be very full—just not fully productive, and maybe even destructive. In short, wasted days happen when you allow red-light activities to rule your day. You must find a better way to structure your time. And that begins when you create, implement and master a skill called time blocking.

Time blocking is:

• Scheduling your priorities rather than prioritizing your schedule
• Predefining your green activities that are necessary for your business to excel (e.g., making sales, booking and holding appointments)
• Incorporating green “blocks” of time into a daily schedule that helps you maintain a sense of predictability and certainty

• An efficient way for your clients and your team to remain apprised of your activities without your having to return calls and e-mails
• Initially challenging but ultimately cost-effective
  Time blocking is not:
  • Trying to not waste time
  • A rigid declaration
  • Yellow Post-It notes all over your desk
  • A to-do list
  • A quick fix

THE LAW OF THE DRESS REHEARSAL SAYS...

Sales is a live performance day in and day out—like a Broadway play, where most mistakes are noticed, and where one wrong move can jeopardize the entire performance if you’re not careful. To give a great (sales) performance, you must be well-practiced. In other words, to be highly successful, you must know what to say and do when a sales opportunity arises.

While it’s certain that you must have a trustworthy foundation within you (beneath the surface) to be highly successful, high-trust selling is still about taking action—the right action. Therefore, to become a trustworthy salesperson with a trustworthy sales business, you must not only know why you are selling, you must also know how to sell during each act of the process.

Every high-trust business is built on a foundation of prospecting; therefore, every prospecting call must establish a foundation of value and trust if it is to successfully land an appointment. You must learn that the key to selling is not selling; it is providing. And the key to providing is knowing in advance what to provide. Neither can be accomplished without mastering the art of asking value-adding questions, then listening to what your prospects tell you.

Get to thinking about the needs of your prospects. Whatever the needs may be, you must have answers, and you must be confident in how you present them. Understand that people will want to do business with you if and only if they trust you. In other words, if a prospect doesn’t trust you, she won’t buy from you, no matter what you do or how many times you ask for the business. But even if she does trust you, you will not ascertain her business if you don’t ask for it. The key is to ask for business only when you have:
• Thoroughly understood the prospect’s needs and buying strategy
• Completely answered the prospect’s needs and questions with your solutions
• Confirmed an indication that the prospect would like to proceed

THE LAW OF THE BULL’S-EYE SAYS…

Prospecting is a productivity game, not a numbers game. And to maximize your prospecting efficiency, you must replace the traditional “more is better” quantity concept with a “less is best” quality concept. This is especially critical when you consider how much time prospecting can take from your day if it doesn’t produce sales. Profitable, efficient prospecting requires that you understand that your prospects will become clients who are either time abusers or time users. The inherent value in the Law of the Bull’s-Eye is that by taking better aim at the right prospects, you can increase your earnings without increasing your hours.

THE LAW OF THE SCALE SAYS…

If you invest yourself wholly in a few key clients, you will do more business in the long run than if you try to manage the whims of every potential customer. That’s because loyal clients reap more revenue and more referrals than one-time customers ever will—even if the numbers are unbalanced.

Victory is not just in convincing a customer to do business with you once. True victory in the sales profession comes as a result of not only giving people a reason to buy from you, but also making sure they never forget you. It’s doing more for them after the sale than you did to get the sale.

Imagine an old-fashioned beam scale, with its brass base and neck, iron beam balanced across the top and two matching pans hanging off each end of the beam. Imagine that on one side of the scale are two items:

1. The monetary value of a sale
2. The endorsement value of a sale, which includes any future business from a sale—repeat or referral

On the other side of the scale are two items that counter the weight of your sales:

1. Financial obligations (personal and professional)
2. Negative sales experiences, which include any customer interaction that results in a loss of future business

If you’ve never weighed your sales success, do it now. If you’re investing your resources in juggling all the sales you can handle, the scale may or may not tip in your favor—most often not. But when you primarily invest your resources in retaining the high trust and support of your best clients, your actions will eventually tip the scale in your favor for good.

THE LAW OF COURTSHIP SAYS…

For a sales relationship to work on the outside, it must first be right on the inside. To build lasting relationships with your clients, you must take the time to know them, not just know about them. And you must allow them to know you. The Law of Courtship is about dating a prospect before you propose a sales marriage. What’s important to them about a relationship with you, what they look for in your product or service, and what they place value on.

Confidence in the future success of a relationship comes when a shared essence has been established—when both parties knowingly share the same values, expectations and desires for the relationship. It’s making sure the relationship is right on the inside first, where it matters most, and only then pursuing it further.

THE LAW OF THE HOOK SAYS…

A captivated audience stays to the end. That’s because the principle that keeps your eyes glued to a screen and your hands glued to a book is the same principle that keeps your prospects glued to you. You see, an audience is an audience, whether in a sales office or a theater; and to keep an audience around, the performance must be captivating from the get-go. To ensure that your prospects are hooked and remain hooked for the right reasons, remember the acronym “IMPACT”: Inspirational, Motivational, Professional, Applicable, Considerate, Trustworthy.

THE LAW OF INCUBATION SAYS…

The most profitable relationships mature over time. The most productive relationships are comprised of people who are committed to consistently adding value where value is most needed.
When it comes to retaining the best clients, you need to remember one simple truth: You must do more to keep a client than you did to get the client. High-trust relationships must be continuously nurtured if they are to reap a full harvest. As in any relationship, once trust is earned, it is then matured over time though consistency and integrity.

There are four steps that you should take in order to consistently add value to your clients and maximize the potential of your relationships throughout your sales career.

Incubation Step 1: Develop a three-tier ranking of your clients. Which clients are your most valuable? Which produce the highest percentage of sales? Which are more likely to refer you more business? Which clients have the most potential to you and your firm?

Incubation Step 2: Commit to a specific investment for each prospect and/or client. Come up with three investment levels to measure your return. Simply invest more where there is more high trust and more potential for business.

Incubation Step 3: For each tier, decide your annual contact plan. You must plan to have more contact with your best customers than you will with your marginal customers.

Incubation Step 4: Collaborate regularly. You must get in the habit of continually interviewing your clients through weekly or monthly partnership planning sessions in which you both ascertain existing needs and seek to discover new needs.

Becoming a highly trustworthy salesperson with a highly successful business is not anyone’s responsibility but your own.

The one thing that separates high-performing salespeople from the lion’s share of other salespeople is a burning desire to create an incredible service experience for every customer. Do whatever it takes to allow your clients to experience your unwavering commitment to providing them exactly what they need and want, plus an additional 10 percent—every time. That’s service excellence.

Recommended Reading
If you enjoyed this summary of High Trust Selling, please visit your favorite bookseller to purchase a copy for your library. You may also want to check out:

The 25 Sales Habits of Highly Successful Salespeople by Stephan Schiffman

Little Red Book of Selling by Jeffrey Gitomer

Ultimate Sales Machine by Chet Holmes

About the Author
Todd Duncan is CEO and founder of The Duncan Group, located in Atlanta, and one of America’s top sales-training companies. He is a leading expert in the areas of sales and life mastery, with many tapes, seminars and books, including the New York Times and Wall Street Journal best-sellers Time Traps and High Trust Selling, which have helped millions worldwide strive to meet their success potential. Todd and his wife, Sheryl, and their two boys live in La Jolla, Calif.