The Art of Closing the Sale

The Key to Making More Money Faster in the World of Professional Selling

by Brian Tracy

Preparing to Win

Success in sales starts before you make the first call.

QUICK OVERVIEW

Packed with “aha” and “I need to try that” moments, The Art of Closing the Sale offers proven strategies that will help you succeed in sales. Brian Tracy, one of today’s foremost sales trainers, shares his personal experiences—successes and failures—in sales. Because the book is based not on theory but on real-life experience, the lessons taught are not only inspiring but relevant and realistic as well.

In addition to the material covered in this summary, The Art of Closing the Sale examines what makes a great salesperson, offers insight on the prospect, and outlines how to make a presentation with the close in mind, as well as a number of closing techniques. Whether you are a newbie or a seasoned sales professional, this book is one to add to your success library.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

In The Art of Closing the Sale, Brian Tracy explains that all sales skills are learned and learnable. The best way to learn how to become better at presenting and closing the sale is to get out there and apply the techniques you’ve learned. Until you put a strategy into practice, it’s just a theory.

One key element of your success is having a plan for your presentation and close. Tracy recommends beginning with the end in mind. You know what you want to sell, so work toward that outcome at every step of the presentation. For example, if you want to sell a set or a system, show how each element of the set is integral to the whole.

Before meeting with a prospect, outline a presentation that works toward a logical close. That way, when you ask the question, “Does this make sense to you, so far?” your prospect can confidently answer yes.
When I began selling, cold-calling from office to office during the day, and from house to apartment during the evening, I was terrified of closing. Every day, I would sally forth to sell, unafraid to get face to face with prospects and enthusiastically deliver my sales information. Then, at the end, I would choke up and ask hesitantly, “What do you want to do now?” Invariably, the prospect would say, “Well, leave it with me and let me think about it.”

I learned later that the words, “Let me think it over” or “Let me think about it” are polite customer-speak for “Goodbye forever; we’ll never meet again.”

I convinced myself that people all over town were “thinking it over” and that my phone would soon fall off the hook with eager buyers. But no one ever called.

I finally realized that it was not the product, the price, the market, or the competition that was holding me back from making sales. It was me. More specifically, it was my fear of asking a closing question.

The biggest single obstacle to great success in selling is your ability to get a prospect to take action. The purpose of this book is to show you how to remove this obstacle so that you can make all the sales and all the money you want.

All top salespeople are good at closing. They know how to prospect professionally, identify needs, build trust, answer objections, and ask for the order in several different ways. They understand why prospects hesitate and delay, and they know how to structure their offerings to overcome these obstacles.

The best news is that all sales skills, including closing, are learned and learnable. If you can drive a car, you can learn how to close the sale. The only reason that you may be nervous about closing today is because you have not yet mastered the process. But once you learn to close, using these time-tested methods, you can use them over and over. As you do, you will get better and better.

In no time at all, you will be one of the most successful and highest-paid people in your field, and your future will be unlimited.

DEVELOPING A POWERFUL SALES PERSONALITY

Becoming excellent in closing sales is an inside job. It begins within you. In sales, your personality is more important than your product knowledge. It is more important than your sales skills. It is more important than the product or service that you are selling. In fact, your personality determines fully 80 percent of your sales success.

Become Mentally Fit

Top salespeople have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Without self-confidence, it is almost impossible to be successful in selling. If you lack confidence, you will come up with every excuse to avoid talking to prospects or taking any action where there is a possibility for failure or rejection.

Take Charge of Your Life

The biggest mistake you can make is to ever think that you work for anyone but yourself. From the time you take your first job until the day you retire, you are self-employed. You are the president of your own entrepreneurial corporation, selling your services into the marketplace at the highest price possible. You have only one employee—you yourself. Your job is to sell the highest quality and quantity of your services throughout your working life.

Top salespeople accept 100 percent responsibility for themselves and everything they do.

Be Aggresive About Learning

Take all the training you can get. Be aggressive about upgrading your knowledge. If your company offers any
Don’t Waste Time

The average salesperson today wastes a full 50 percent of his or her working time. He spends most of his working time in idle chitchat with co-workers, personal business, reading the paper, drinking coffee, and surfing the Internet.

Winners are different. They make every minute count.

Develop Empathy and Understanding

Top salespeople also have high levels of empathy, i.e., they really care about their customers. Ambition, the desire to achieve, combined with empathy, the genuine caring for the well-being of your customers, are the twin keys to top sales performance.

The very best way to express and practice empathy with a customer, or with anyone else, is to ask questions and listen intently to the answers. Dominate the listening, rather than the talking.

Keep on Keeping On

The highest-paid salespeople realize that every bit of success that they aspire to must be paid in full, in advance. There is no such thing as something for nothing, no fast, easy way to be successful. The only way to get to the top is through hard, hard work, sustained over a long period of time.

Believe in Yourself and What You Are Selling

There seems to be a direct relationship between how much you believe in your product or service and how easily you can convince a customer to believe in it. Your customer can never believe in your product any more than you do. As William James of Harvard said, “Belief creates the actual fact.”

Keep Your Word

Top-selling salespeople are impeccably honest with themselves and with others. There is no substitute for honesty in selling.

The top salesperson, because he has a combination of all these qualities, has a natural ability to turn strangers into friends wherever he goes. When you are completely honest with yourself and you practice the quality of empathy with others, you like yourself more, and your customers will, in turn, like and accept you.

There is a 1:1 relationship between being and becoming an excellent person and high levels of self-esteem. The rule is that you can never like or love anyone else more than you like yourself. So don’t expect anyone else to like you more than you like yourself. How you feel about yourself is the single most important determinant of the quality of all your relationships, both personal and business.

HOW TO HANDLE ANY OBJECTION

There are no sales without objections. Objections indicate interest. Objections are signposts that lead you step by step toward closing the sale. The fact is, if there are no objections, there is no interest. If there is no interest, there will be no sale.

In reality, successful sales have twice as many objections as unsuccessful sales. The more objections you get, the more likely it is that you are moving toward actually making the sale.

You can learn any sales skill, including closing skills, that you need to achieve any sales goal you can set for yourself. There are no limits.

The Law of Six

There is a Law of Six that applies to objections. This law says that there are never more than six objections to any offering. There may be one or two, but there are never more than six. Even if you hear fifty or one hundred objections in the course of a week or a month, all of these objections can be clustered into a small number of categories.

In working with companies, we sometimes engage in a sentence completion exercise. We ask them to complete this sentence: “We could sell to every qualified prospect we talked to as long as they just didn’t say…”
Make a list of every single objection that a qualified prospect could give you to avoid making a buying decision. Write down every question, criticism, or complaint you have heard. Once you have this list, organize it by priority. What are the most common objections? Which ones stand most in the way of your making a sale?

Once you have prioritized them, cluster the objections into categories. You may have price objections, quality objections, competitive objections, capability objections, reputation objections, or newness objections. Determine the clusters for your objections and then sort out your objections into each of these clusters. It will never be more than six separate clusters.

Your job now is to develop a bulletproof answer for each of your major objections. Determine exactly what your prospect must be convinced of for this objection to be removed as an obstacle to proceeding with the purchase. Whatever you need to do to eliminate your major objections, begin doing it immediately.

**A Few Strategies for Eliminating Objections**

**Use a testimonial.** One of the most powerful ways to eliminate objections is to present testimonial letters from satisfied customers who shared that objection at one time. A sweetheart letter answering a customer’s major concern is a potent way to demolish the objection forever.

**Interpret it as a question.** Treat the objection as a request for more information. Recognize that an objection is a natural customer response to any offering where there is some risk of purchasing. When the prospect says, “It costs too much,” you can respond by saying, “That’s a good question. Why does it seem to cost more than you expected to pay?” You then go on to answer the question that you have posed.

**Make it easy to object.** Most customers do not want to get into an argument or a debate with you over your product or service. They will be reluctant to object for fear that you will become upset or adamant. For this reason you must make it easy for the customer to object by responding in a cheerful, friendly, constructive way when he does.

**Listen carefully.** When you get an objection, hear it out completely. Don’t assume that you know what the prospect is going to say. Often the prospect will begin with an objection you’ve heard before, but then will add her own particular concern or problem at the end. Be patient. Practice your listening skills. Pause before replying. Question for clarification: “How do you mean?” Feed it back in your own words to prove to the prospect that you were listening and that you understand her real concern.

**Be polite and respectful.** Treat every objection with kindness, courtesy, and respect. Be low-keyed and sensitive. Even if you have heard the objection a thousand times, always respond as though it is a valuable and worthwhile comment on

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**The Magic Questions**

There are two great questions that you can use to accelerate your growth toward high income in sales. These are two of the best questions that I have ever learned. I have used them over the years, and they have been responsible for making or saving me many thousands of dollars.

The first question to ask yourself after each sales call is, What did I do right?

This question keeps you focused on the best parts of your performance. Even if the sales call was a complete failure, there were certain things that you did correctly. It is important that you identify the best parts of your performance so you do not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

By asking the question, What did I do right? you keep yourself continually focused on the best elements of your sales activities. By reviewing these activities immediately after a sales call, you program them into your subconscious and create a predisposition to repeat these positive behaviors at your next sales call.

The second question you must ask yourself is, What would I do differently?

This question forces you to think about the positive things that you could do to improve your performance in a similar situation. Even if the sales call has been completely successful, there were still things that you could do differently in the future to make it even better.

The advantage of these two questions is that the answers to both of them are positive. Force yourself to review and mentally rehearse the very greatest ingredients of your performance. Then, the next time you are in a similar situation, your subconscious mind will pass them back up to you and make them available to you for the sales call.
your offering. When you handle their objections with warmth and tact, prospects realize that you genuinely care about how they feel. As a result, they will begin to genuinely care about you and the product or service you represent.

WINNING CLOSING TECHNIQUES

Selling is not easy. Every day you must be up and about, prospecting, identifying needs, making presentations, overcoming objections, and closing the sale. It is hard, hard work.

The more ways you know to perform these functions, especially closing the sale, the greater success you will enjoy and the more quickly you will reach the income goals you have set for yourself.

Preparing to Ask for the Order

Before you ask a closing question, be sure that the prospect is ready. Ask a question to ensure that the customer has no lingering queries or objections: “Does this make sense to you, so far?”

If the prospect says, “Yes, this makes sense,” you can say, “Well then, how soon do you need it?”

Another question you can ask at the end of your sales presentation is, “Mr. Prospect, do you have any questions or concerns that I haven’t covered?”

This is called a negative answer question. When the prospect says no, he means yes. At this point, you can proceed and ask a closing question.

The Ascending Close

One of the best closing techniques you can learn is the ascending close, which is sometimes called the part-by-part close, or the automatic close. This technique involves a series of questions, each of which leads to the next, with all questions requiring a “yes” answer.

The reason the ascending close presentation is so effective is that it is based on the suggestive power of affirmative answers.

If you can ask six “yes” questions at the beginning of your presentation, it becomes very hard for a normal person to say no later on. If you can ask six questions that require a “yes” answer to the benefits that your product or service offers, the prospect will often be completely convinced of the goodness and value of your offer.

The Invitational Close

The invitational close is one of the most influential techniques used in modern selling. At the end of your sales presentation, you simply issue a direct invitation to buy what you have just described.

In its simplest form, you first of all ask, “Do you like what I have shown you so far?” When the prospect says, “Yes, it looks pretty good,” you immediately go into an invitational close and ask, “Well then, why don’t you give it a try?”

When you encourage a person to “give it a try,” it sounds like an easy decision to make. Prospects who are reluctant to buy the product are often at least willing to “give it a try.” Your job is to issue him an invitation.

LEARN AND APPLY

Perhaps the most important single success principle ever discovered is learn from the experts. You will never live long enough to figure it all out for yourself by living trial and error. The good news is that all the answers have already been found. Whatever you want to accomplish, especially in selling, has already been achieved thousands, if not millions, of times. And what others have done, you can do as well.

All sales skills are learnable. You can learn any sales skill, including closing skills, that you need to achieve any sales goal you can set for yourself. There are no limits.

Your job now is to take those practical, proven methods, techniques, and strategies and apply them over and over—until you become one of the greatest sales professionals of your generation.
ACTION STEPS
Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned to your life. Here are a few questions and activities to get you started.

1. Take a personal inventory. Which of the character traits that the author mentions—honesty, empathy, perseverance, belief—do you possess? Which do you need to improve upon?

2. Think about your most recent sales appointment. List all the things you did right during that call.

3. Again, thinking about your most recent sales appointment, list the things you would change about your performance.

4. Identify the major categories of objections that your prospects offer. Remember there will only be six categories. Take time to develop “bulletproof” responses to each objection. To increase your effectiveness, complete this action item with a team member or fellow salesperson.

5. Compile several real-life testimonies. Your company may provide you with a few, but be sure to ask your satisfied customers to share their experiences with you. They can send you an email or letter, or post a testimonial on your Facebook page or website.

6. Craft a list of questions that you can use in an ascending close. Remember, each time you can get your prospect to say yes, his or her interest level increases.

7. Learn from the best. In addition to reading books like The Art of Closing the Sale, make a point to learn from people who are succeeding in sales. Ask leaders in your own organization what tips they have for successful selling. If possible, accompany a top seller to a sales appointment and listen to his or her presentation and close.

About the Author
Brian Tracy is a well-respected voice in the personal and professional development industry. During his career as a motivator and trainer, Brian has addressed more than 5 million people and has consulted for more than 1,000 companies in over 80 countries.

Tracy is the author of 45 books and has produced more than 300 audio and video programs. His best-selling titles include No Excuses: The Power of Self-Discipline, Eat that Frog!, and Goals: How to Get Everything You Want... Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible.

Today, Tracy is the chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International and is the president of three companies headquartered in Solana Beach, Calif.

Recommended Reading
If you enjoyed the summary of The Art of Closing the Sale, you may also want to check out:

The Psychology of Selling by Brian Tracy
How to Master the Art of Selling by Tom Hopkins
Zig Ziglar’s Secrets of Closing the Sale by Zig Ziglar

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