



# A Different View

By Grant Leboff

To sell effectively you need to understand the sales process from your customer's point of view, explains Grant Leboff.

Salespeople will often spend years perfecting sales techniques. They learn how to give great presentations, ask pertinent questions, handle objections and close the deal and will put in considerable effort learning how to get over the fear of rejection and being told 'no' on a daily basis. Salespeople learn to be tenacious and persistent. They are told that a customer's 'no' just means 'not today' and not 'never'.

The emphasis in sales training, over many years has always been on the salesperson and never on the buyer. Yet, for all the techniques you learn, if you can just have a worthwhile conversation with a prospect, you will often be able to sell to them. Why is it so much easier to sell to someone when a recommendation has come from a friend or an existing client? It is because the introduction has already broken down barriers. Your buyer is ready to have a conversation and listen to you with an open mind.

If you can create an environment where your potential customers are always willing to engage in a conversation – with an open mind – how much more could you sell? By not focusing solely on yourself but thinking about your buyer, this is exactly what you can achieve.

## The buyer's fear of failure

Much is often made of a salesperson's fear of rejection – the worry of being told 'no'. This can often be compounded by the

number of times a salesperson hears this in a given week or month. Buyers, though, have a fear too – a concern that is rarely, if ever, mentioned. Buyers have their own fear of failure. They are worried that they will pay too much for something... they are frightened that the purchase won't do what it is meant to do and that they will be left disappointed... they fear being laughed at or derided by friends or colleagues. Finally, there is the general fear of change, trying something new or doing something differently. As a salesperson you can, no doubt, empathise with all of these emotions. Everyone has been a buyer and you may well have paid too much or been let down by a purchase at one time or another yourself.

Most people are insecure buyers. When they have made a purchase, they always show their friends and colleagues. They wait to hear approving comments: "Nice dress, it really suits you" or "that was cheap – you got a great deal." Validation from peers is a vital social issue and, when someone doesn't get it, they are left feeling like a failure.

By understanding your buyers' fears, you can become a more effective salesperson. You can try to make your prospects feel comfortable by building reassurance into your sale throughout the entire journey. How? Some form of free trial or money-back guarantee can help reassure a potential customer. A limited obligation or even no obligation to use a service can allay his fears. If you are selling a complex piece of equipment or software, the reassurance may come in the form of unlimited training and support. Testimonials from reputable companies or people they know will also help. Be aware that throughout the sale you will need to keep reminding your prospect and reassuring him. Don't rely on the prospect remembering why he should buy from you. The more you can make him feel that the risk he is taking with the purchase is limited, the more chance you have of making the sale.

## Who is in control?

Imagine it is a Saturday morning. You choose to get in your car and drive to one of your favourite clothes retailers. You have needed a new suit for a while and you have chosen today to buy. You walk into the shop you know well, when a young assistant says: "Good morning, do you need any help?" Your immediate reaction is to reply: "No thanks, I'm just looking." Why is that? Did the sales assistant ask a bad question? He could have phrased it better, but would that have made any difference?

Do you not like the shop? Of course you do – you chose to go there. Do you not intend to buy? Yes, you left home intending to buy a brand new suit. Was the young sales assistant threatening? No.

Your reaction was a standard defensive one designed to get rid of the sales assistant as quickly as possible. This is because one of the ironies of sales is that we all like to buy but we don't like being sold to. It may, of course, have been very helpful to have an employee take you round the shop. He would be able to check what was in stock, what wasn't and the sizes and colours available of anything you saw. Yet, the first thing you do is to get rid of him. Why?

A fear of failure makes most people nervous buyers. You may perceive that if you have a sales assistant with you, making suggestions and showing you items, you will lose control of the process and be forced into a decision you didn't want to make. Herein lies another irony. Many salespeople have a fear of rejection because they don't feel in control of the sales process. A potential new customer can be rude or polite, receptive or dismissive, and say 'yes' or 'no'. Yet, when salespeople are buyers, they also become very defensive because they are scared of not being in control of the process and, consequently, making a bad decision.

This is the problem: whenever a buyer is being sold to, he feels he

has lost control and will often try and get it back the only way he knows how, which is by getting rid of the salesperson. In a shop, this is by saying: "I'm just looking," on the phone it might be a request for information and at a meeting it might be to pretend his time is limited due to another pressing matter.

Naturally, the buyer has ultimate control. He can decide whether to purchase a product or service or not, despite a salesperson's best efforts. However, that is not how buyers often feel and it is a real barrier to successful selling.

### Empower prospects

Imagine you are back in the shop on Saturday morning. This time the sales assistant says: "Good Morning. I wonder if you can help me? My supervisor keeps looking at me because I am supposed to show customers round the shop. Please could I show you round today? I don't want to sell you anything. I just want to help – is that OK?"

What would you do? Most people would say 'yes' to that request. Why? Because the sales assistant has put you firmly in control. By asking for your help, being submissive and by stating that he is not looking to sell you anything, you feel no threat by walking around the shop with him. In fact, you now feel quite comfortable with the assistant. You are more likely to get into conversation and will probably be very receptive to any suggestions the assistant might make. You will probably walk out of the shop having bought more than you originally intended. Accidentally, the assistant would probably have been very successful!

This example may be far-fetched, but the principle is sound. In negotiation, you are always taught not to give something away for nothing. Whilst as a buyer you have the power, as the salesperson you don't. So, give the power to the buyer. He will start to relax and feel comfortable very quickly, and is then much more likely to listen with an open mind and buy.

You can empower prospects far more subtly than our sales assistant. Phrases like *I'm not sure this is*

*relevant for you but...* really work. In reality, what you are saying is *you tell me, you decide*. Your buyer will, of course, tell you anyway but, by stating this, he will start to relax. You will be just as effective but come across far less pushy. "What do you think of..." is another good phrase. Asking for a prospect's opinion is very empowering and is highly effective. Finally, praising a prospect will make him feel good about being involved in the sales process. For example, if he asks you something, start your reply with: "That is a good question." He is then much more likely to ask more questions and want to become more involved in the conversation.

So, give your prospects plenty of reassurance and do your best to relieve their fear of failure.

Empower your prospects so they will stop being defensive and start to feel comfortable. An environment is then created where you can have a really good, worthwhile conversation with your potential customer. Ultimately, this way you will enjoy the sales process a lot more and have greater success.

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### About the Author

Grant Leboff is one of the U.K.'s leading Sales and Marketing experts. His first book, *Sales Therapy®*, introduced businesses to a new and highly effective Sales philosophy. It made the Amazon top 10 bestseller list on publication and is one of the top selling books on Sales in the UK. It is now available worldwide. His current book, 'Sticky Marketing', provides companies with the new principles of marketing so they can thrive in a Web enabled world. On release in January of this year it immediately went straight to number 1 in the Amazon Sales and Marketing Chart and went to number 5 in the overall Business Chart.

Grant provides businesses with new Sales and Marketing strategies to be successful in this new environment. Having built a successful direct marketing company, which he started in 2002, Leboff sold it in 2008. He is now CEO of Sticky Marketing Club™ Ltd., working with businesses on effective Sales and Marketing strategies.

Grant's 2011 launch of his Sales and Marketing portal, [stickymarketing.com](http://stickymarketing.com) produces a wealth of resources and information on effective Sales and Marketing for business. He is a highly sought after speaker, and is constantly presenting at conferences and events all over the world. As well as sitting on the Advisory Council of The Global Marketing Network, Leboff is a regular contributor to many business magazines and newspapers. Amongst others, he has been featured in the Daily Telegraph, The Independent, The Financial Times, The Daily Mirror and The Sun, and has appeared on BBC Radio on numerous occasions.



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