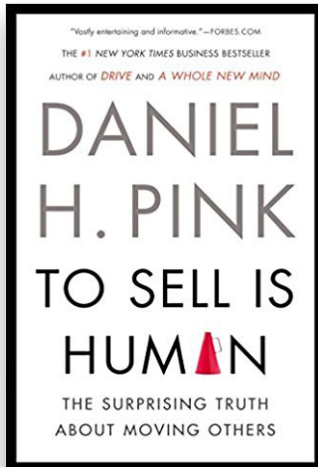


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Daniel H. Pink

*Daniel H. Pink is the author of several provocative books. His books have won multiple awards and have been translated into 35 languages.*

# To Sell Is Human

## THE NUTSHELL

Penguin Group 2012

### Introduction

Selling, I've grown to understand, is more urgent, more important, and, in its own sweet way, more beautiful than we realize. The ability to move others to exchange what they have for what we have is crucial to our survival and our happiness. It has helped our species evolve, lifted our living standards, and enhanced our daily lives. The capacity to sell isn't some unnatural adaptation to the merciless world of commerce. It is part of who we are. As you're about to see, selling is fundamentally human.

### PART ONE: REBIRTH OF A SALESMAN

Many of us now devote a portion of our spare time to selling—whether it's handmade crafts on Etsy, heartfelt causes on DonorsChoose, or harebrained schemes on Kickstarter. In astonishing numbers and with ferocious energy, we now go online to sell ourselves on Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and Match.com profiles.

The existing data show that 1 in 9 Americans work in sales. But the new data reveal something more startling. So do the other 8 in 9. They, too, are spending their days moving others and depending for their livelihoods on the ability to do it well. Whether it's selling's traditional form or its non-sales variation, we're all in sales now. The salesperson is alive because the salesperson is us.

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## PART TWO: HOW TO BE

Always be closing. Its simplicity makes it understandable; its alphabeticality makes it memorable. And it can be constructive advice, keeping sellers focused on a deal's end even during its beginning and middle. But the effectiveness of this advice is waning because the conditions on which it depends are fading. When only some of us are in sales and when buyers face minimal choices and information asymmetry, "Always be closing" is sensible counsel. But when all of us are in sales, and none of us has much of an information edge, this prescription seems as dated as the electric typewriters and Rolodex cards.

Remapped conditions require revamped navigation. So here the new ABCs of moving others are attunement, buoyancy, and clarity. These three qualities, which emerge from a rich trove of social science research, are the new requirements for effectively moving people on the remade landscape of the twenty-first century.

Perspective-taking is at the heart of our first essential quality in moving others today. Attunement is the ability to bring one's actions and outlook into harmony with other people and with the context you're in. Think of it as operating the dial on a radio. It's the capacity to move up and down the band as circumstances demand, locking in on what's being transmitted, even if those signals aren't immediately clear or obvious.

Anyone who sells, whether they're trying to convince customers to make a purchase or colleagues to make a change, must contend with wave after wave of rebuffs, refusals, and repudiations. How to stay afloat amid that ocean of rejection is the second essential quality in moving others. I call this quality "buoyancy." We human beings talk to ourselves all the time so much that it's possible to categorize our self-talk. Some of it is positive, as in "I'm strong," "I've got this," or "I will be the world's greatest salesman." Some of it is negative. "I'm too weak to finish this race" or "I've never been good at math" or "There's no way I can sell these encyclopedias." But whether the talk is chest-thumping or ego-bashing, it tends to be declarative. It states what is or what will be.

## PART THREE: WHAT TO DO

Positive self-talk is generally more effective than negative self-talk. But the most effective self-talk of all doesn't merely shift emotions. It shifts linguistic categories. It moves from making statements to asking questions.

Imagine, for instance, that you're readying yourself for an important meeting in which you must pitch an idea and marshal support for it. You could tell yourself, "I'm the best. This is going to be a breeze," and that might give you a short-term emotional boost. But if you instead ask, "Can I make a great pitch?" the research has found that you provide yourself something that reaches deeper and lasts longer. You might respond to yourself, "Well, yes, I can make a great pitch. In fact, I've probably pitched ideas at meetings two dozen times in my life." Mere affirmation feels good and that helps. Still, it doesn't prompt you to summon the resources and strategies to actually accomplish the task.

Good salespeople, we've long been told, are skilled problem solvers. They can assess prospects' needs, analyze their predicaments, and deliver the optimal solutions. This ability to solve problems still matters. Today, when information is abundant and democratic rather than limited and privileged, it matters relatively less. After all, if I know precisely what my

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problem is I can often find the information I need to make my decision without any assistance. The services of others are far more valuable when I'm mistaken, confused, or completely clueless about my true problem. In those situations, I need clarity. The ability to move others hinges less on problem solving than on problem finding.

Identifying problems as a way to move others takes two long-standing skills and turns them upside down. First, in the past, the best salespeople were adept at accessing information. Today, they must be skilled at sorting through the massive troves of data and presenting to others the most relevant and clarifying pieces.

Second, in the past, the best salespeople were skilled at answering questions (in part because they had information their prospects lacked). Today, they must be good at asking questions, uncovering possibilities, surfacing latent issues, and finding unexpected problems. We often understand something better when we see it in comparison with something else than when we see it in isolation. That's why the most essential question you can ask is, "Compared to what?"

An effective seller isn't a huckster, who is just out for profit. The true salesman is an idealist and an artist. So, too, is the true person. Among the things that distinguish our species from others is our combination of idealism and artistry; our desire both to improve the world and to provide that world with something it didn't know it was missing. Moving others doesn't require that we neglect these nobler aspects of our nature. Today it demands that we embrace them. It begins and ends by remembering that to sell is human.