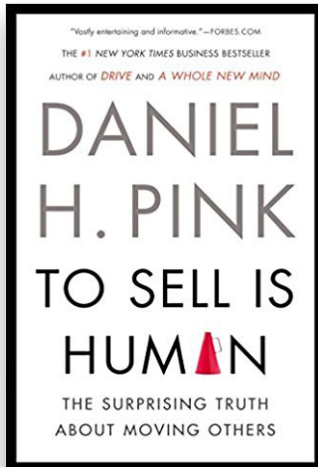


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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 SUMMARY

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Introduction

This is a book about sales. But it is unlike any book about sales you have read (or ignored) before. That's because selling in all its dimensions—whether pushing Buicks on a car lot or pitching ideas in a meeting—has changed more in the last ten years than it did over the previous hundred. Most of what we think we understand about selling is constructed atop a foundation of assumptions that has crumbled.

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

Chapter 1: We're All in Sales Now

In a world where anybody can find anything with just a few key strokes, intermediaries like salespeople are superfluous. They merely muck up the gears of commerce and make transactions slower and more expensive. Individual consumers can do their own research and get buying advice from their social networks. Large companies can streamline their procurement processes with sophisticated software that pits vendors against one another and secures the lowest price. In the same way that cash machines thinned the ranks of bank tellers and digital switches made telephone operators all

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but obsolete, today's technologies have rendered salesmen and saleswomen irrelevant. As we rely ever more on websites and smart phones to locate and purchase what we need, salespeople themselves, not to mention the very act of selling, will be swept into history's dust bin.

But we should hold off making any wider funeral preparations. All those death notices for sales and those who do it are off the mark. Indeed, if one were to write anything about selling in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it ought to be a birth announcement. Deep inside a thick semi-annual report from the Occupational Employment Statistics program of the US. Bureau of Labor Statistics lurks a surprising, and surprisingly significant, piece of data: one out of every nine American workers works in sales.

Each day more than fifteen million people earn their keep trying to convince someone else to make a purchase. They are real estate brokers, industrial sales representatives, and securities dealers. They sell planes to airlines, trains to city governments, and automobiles to prospective drivers at more than ten thousand dealerships across the country. Some work in posh offices with glorious views, others in dreary cubicles with Dilbert cartoons and a free calendar. But they all sell things from multimillion-dollar consulting agreements to ten-dollar magazine subscriptions and everything in between.

So while the idea that one in nine American workers sells for a living might surprise you, I wondered whether it masked a still more intriguing truth. For instance, I'm not a "sales worker" in the categorical sense. Yet when I sat down to deconstruct my own workdays, I discovered that I spend a sizable portion of them persuading, influencing, and convincing others—and I'm not special. Physicians sell patients on a remedy. Lawyers sell juries on a verdict. Teachers sell students on the value of paying attention in class. Entrepreneurs woo funders, writers sweet-talk producers, and coaches cajole players. Whatever our profession, we deliver presentations to fellow employees and make pitches to new clients. We try to convince the boss to loosen up a few dollars from the budget or the human resources department to add more vacation days. Yet none of this activity ever shows up in the data tables.

The same goes for what transpires on the other side of the ever-murkier border between work and life. 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 one in nine Americans works in sales. But the new data reveal something more startling: so do the other eight in nine. 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.

Chapter 2: Entrepreneurship, Elasticity and Ed-Med

Once upon a time, only certain people were in sales. Every day these folks sold stuff, the rest of us did stuff, and everyone was happy. One day, the world began to change. More of us started working for ourselves and because we were entrepreneurs, suddenly we became salespeople, too. At the same time, large operations discovered that segmenting job functions didn't work very well during volatile business conditions and because of that, they began demanding elastic skills that stretched across boundaries and included a sales component. Meanwhile, the economy itself transformed

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so that in the blink of a decade, millions of additional people began working in education and health care, two sectors whose central purpose is moving others. Until finally, in ways we've scarcely realized, most of us ended up in sales.

When we think of the differences between very large enterprises and very small ones, we often focus on differences in degree. The former, by definition, have more revenue, more customers, and more employees. But equally important are differences in kind. What people actually do inside tiny operations is often fundamentally different from what they do within massive ones. In particular, large organizations tend to rely on specialization. A two-person company doesn't need a human resources department. A two-thousand-person company can't survive without one. In bigger companies selling is often a specialized function which means it is a department, a division, or a task that some people do so that others can specialize in something else. But proprietors of small operations don't have that luxury. They must wear several hats and one of these hats is the selling cap.

When organizations were highly segmented, skills tended to be fixed. If you were an accountant, you did accounting. You didn't have to worry about much outside your domain because other people specialized in those areas. The same was true when business conditions were stable and predictable. You knew at the beginning of a given quarter, or even a given year, about how much and what kind of accounting you'd need to do. However, in the last decade, the circumstances that gave rise to fixed skills have disappeared.

A decade of intense competition has forced most organizations to transform from segmented to flat. They do the same, if not greater, amounts of work than before but they do it with fewer people who are doing more and more varied things. Meantime, underlying conditions have gone from predictable to tumultuous. Inventors with new technologies and upstart competitors with fresh business models regularly capsizes individual companies and reconfigure entire industries. Research In Motion, maker of the BlackBerry, is a legend one day and a laggard the next. Retail video rental is a cash cow until Netflix carves the industry into flank steak. All the while, the business cycle itself swooshes without much warning from unsustainable highs to unbearable lows like some satanic roller coaster.

A world of flat organizations and tumultuous business conditions punishes fixed skills and prizes elastic ones. What an individual does day to day on the job now must stretch across functional boundaries. Designers analyze. Analysts design. Marketers create. Creators market. When the next technologies emerge and current business models collapse, those skills will need to stretch again in different directions.

Chapter 3: From Caveat Emptor to Caveat Vendor

When sellers know more than buyers, buyers must beware. It's no accident that people in the Americas, Europe, and Asia today often know only two words of Latin. In a world of information asymmetry, the guiding principle is caveat emptor or buyer, beware. Imagine a world not of information asymmetry, but of something closer to information parity, where buyers and sellers have roughly equal access to relevant information. What would happen then? Actually, stop imagining that world. You're living in it.

Buyers today aren't "fully informed" in the idealized way that many economic models assume. But neither are they the hapless victims of asymmetrical information they once were. The belief that sales is slimy, slick, and sleazy has less to do with the nature of the activity itself than with the long-reigning but fast-fading conditions in which selling has often

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taken place. The balance has shifted. If you're a buyer and you've got just as much information as the seller, along with the means to talk back, you're no longer the only one who needs to be on notice. In a world of information parity, the new guiding principle is *caveat venditor*—seller, beware.

The decline of information asymmetry hasn't ended all forms of lying, cheating, and other sleaze-baggery. One glimpse of the latest financial shenanigans from Wall Street, the City, or Hong Kong confirms that unhappy fact. When the product is complicated (credit default swaps, anyone?) and the potential for lucre enormous, some people will strive to maintain information imbalances and others will opt for outright deception. That won't change. As long as flawed and fallible human beings walk the planet, *caveat emptor* remains useful guidance. I heed this principle. So should you. But the fact that some people will take the low road doesn't mean that lots of people will. When the seller no longer holds an information advantage and the buyer has the means and the opportunity to talk back, the low road is a perilous path.

Caveat venditor extends well beyond car sales to refashion most encounters that involve moving others. Take travel. In the old days (fifteen years ago) travel agents maintained an information monopoly that allowed the unscrupulous ones to over-charge and mistreat their customers. Not anymore. Today, a mom with a laptop has about the same access to airfares, hotel rates, and reviews as a professional. Consider selling yourself for a job. You can no longer control all the information about yourself, some of which you selectively include in your sales document, the resume. Today, a company might still look at that résumé but, as CNNnotes, the company will also "browse your LinkedIn and Facebook profiles, read the gory details in your blog and hit Google to find out more about you all in one sitting. Whether you're in traditional sales or non-sales selling, the low road is now harder to pass and the high road, including honesty, directness, and transparency, has become the better, more pragmatic, long-term route.

Yet the idea that we're all in sales still rests uneasily for some people, in part because of a few myths I'll quickly address here. The first is the myth of the blockhead. "We do not seem to have gone much in for genius," wrote Fuller Brush Company founder Alfred Fuller of his sales force. The way this myth has it, the smartest go off to become engineers and lawyers, while those consigned to the less favorable portions of the IQ bell curve distribution migrate toward sales, which requires far less cognitive horsepower. Not quite. When simple, transactional tasks can be automated, and when information parity displaces information asymmetry, moving people depends on more sophisticated skills and requires as much intellect and creativity as designing a house, reading a CT scan, or, say, writing a book.

The second erroneous belief, and a reason that some people disdain sales, is the myth of the money grubber which is that being effective requires being greedy and that the best (and perhaps only) way to succeed is to become a coin-operated selling machine. Once again, not quite. For starters, non-sales selling, especially in domains such as Ed-Med, has nothing to do with cash. Considerable research has shown that money is not the driving force even for the majority of people in traditional sales. What's more, a number of companies have actually increased sales by eliminating commission and de-emphasizing money.

Finally, many people believe the myth of the natural. Some people have sales chops. Others don't. Some people are innately skilled at moving others. The rest of us are out of luck. Here we confront a paradox. There are no "natural" salespeople, in part because we're all naturally salespeople. Each of us—because we're human—has selling instinct, which means that anyone can master the basics of moving others.

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PART TWO: HOW TO BE

Chapter 4: Attunement

“Always be closing” is a cornerstone of the sales cathedral. Successful salespeople, like successful hunters of any species, never relent in pursuing their prey. Every utterance and each maneuver must serve a single goal: pushing the transaction to a conclusion and getting the person across the table to sign on the line which is dotted.

Always be closing. Its simplicity makes it understandable; its alphabeticity makes it memorable. 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 are the new ABCs of moving others:

A—Attunement

B—Buoyancy

C—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.

The research shows that effective perspective-taking and attuning yourself with others hinges on three principles.

Increase your power—by reducing it. Research by Dacher and Keltner at the University of California, Berkeley, and others has shown that those with lower status are keener perspective-takers. When you have fewer resources, Keltner explained in an interview, “you’re going to be more attuned to the context around you.” Think of this first principle of attunement as persuasion jujitsu. It means using an apparent weakness as an actual strength. Start your encounters with the assumption that you’re in a position of lower power. That will help you see the other side’s perspective more accurately, which, in turn, will help you move them. Don’t get the wrong idea, though. The capacity to move others doesn’t call for becoming a pushover or exhibiting saintly levels of selflessness. Attunement is more complicated than that.

Use your head as much as your heart. Traditional sales and non-sales selling often involve what look like competing imperatives as in cooperation versus competition, and group gain versus individual advantage. Pushing too hard is counterproductive, especially in a world of caveat venditor. But feeling too deeply isn’t necessary either because you

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might submerge your own interests. Perspective-taking seems to enable the proper calibration between the two poles, allowing us to adjust and attune ourselves in ways that leave both sides better off. Empathy can help build enduring relationships and defuse conflicts.

In the world of waiters and waitresses, this sort of attunement is called “having eyes” or “reading a table.” It allows the server to quickly interpret the group dynamics and adjust his style accordingly. In the world of moving others, I call this ability “social cartography.” It’s the capacity to size up a situation and, in one’s mind, draw a map of how people are related.

Mimic strategically. Human beings are natural mimickers. Without realizing it, we often do what others do by mirroring back their accents and speech patterns, facial expressions, overt behaviors, and affective responses. The person we’re talking to crosses her arms; we do the same. Our colleague takes a sip of water; so do we. When we notice such imitation, we often take a dim view of it. “Monkey see, monkey do,” we sniff. We smirk about those who “ape” others’ behavior or “parrot” back their words as if such actions somehow lie beneath human dignity. But scientists view mimicry differently. To them, this tendency is deeply human, a natural act that serves as a social glue and a sign of trust. Yet they, too, assign it a non-human label. They call it the “chameleon effect.”

Our brains evolved at a time when most of the people around us were those we were related to and therefore could trust. But as the size of groups increased, it required more sophisticated understandings and interactions with people. People therefore looked to cues in the environment to determine whom they could trust. One of those cues is the unconscious awareness of whether we are in synch with other people, and a way to do that is to match their behavioral patterns with our own. Synching our mannerisms and vocal patterns to someone else’s that we both understand and can be understood is fundamental to attunement.

Of course, mimicry, like the other attunement behaviors, requires deftness. When people know they’re being mimicked, which was exceedingly rare in experiments, it can have the opposite effect of turning people against you. Twisting the dial toward someone else’s perspective doesn’t mean claiming that you’ve been to the place where your prospect just vacationed or that your uncle lives in her hometown. That’s not attunement. That’s lying. The key is to be strategic and human or learn to be strategic by being human.

Chapter 5: Buoyancy

Draw a map of the world of selling and the most prominent topographical feature is that deep and menacing ocean. 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.” If you understand buoyancy’s three components which apply before, during, and after any effort to move others, you can use it effectively in your own life.

Before: Interrogative Self-Talk. We human beings talk to ourselves all the time, so much, in fact, 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.

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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. The reasons are twofold. First, the interrogative, by its very form, elicits answers, and within those answers are strategies for actually carrying out the task. 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.

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." You might remind yourself of your preparation. "Sure, I can do this. I know this material inside out and I've got some great examples to persuade the people who might be skeptical." You might also give yourself specific tactical advice. "At the last meeting like this, I spoke too quickly so this time I'll slow down. Sometimes in these situations, I get flustered by questions, so this time I'll take a breath before responding." Mere affirmation feels good and that helps. But it doesn't prompt you to summon the resources and strategies to actually accomplish the task.

The second reason is related. Interrogative self-talk, the researchers say, may inspire thoughts about autonomous or intrinsically motivated reasons to pursue a goal. As ample research has demonstrated, people are more likely to act, and to perform well, when the motivations come from intrinsic choices rather than from extrinsic pressures. Declarative self-talk risks bypassing one's motivations. Questioning self-talk elicits the reasons for doing something and reminds people that many of those reasons come from within.

During: Positivity Ratios. What researchers have found is that those with a one to one balance of positive and negative emotions had no higher well-being than those whose emotions were predominantly negative. Both groups generally were languishing. Even more surprising, people whose ratio was two to one positive-to-negative were also no happier than those whose negative emotions exceeded their positive ones. But once the balance between emotions hit a certain number, everything tipped. That number was 2.9013, which, for the sake of readers who don't need the precision of the fourth decimal place, we'll round up to three. Once positive emotions outnumbered negative emotions by two to one—that is, for every three instances of feeling gratitude, interest, or contentment, they experienced only one instance of anger, guilt, or embarrassment—people generally flourished. Those below that ratio usually did not. But they also found that positivity had an upper limit. Too much can be as unproductive as too little. Once the ratio hit about eleven to one, positive emotions began doing more harm than good. Beyond that balance of positive-to-negative, life becomes a festival of Panglossian cluelessness, where self-delusion suffocates self-improvement. Some negativity, or what's called "appropriate negativity," is essential. Without it, behavior patterns calcify. Negative emotions offer us feedback on our performance, information on what's working and what's not, and hints about how to do better.

After: Explanatory Style. Think of explanatory style as a form of self-talk that occurs after (rather than before) an experience. People who give up easily, who become helpless even in situations where they actually can do something, explain bad events as permanent, pervasive, and personal. They believe that negative conditions will endure a long time, that the causes are universal rather than specific to the circumstances, and that they're the ones to blame. So if their boss yells at them, they interpret it as "My boss is always mean," or "All bosses are jerks," or "I'm incompetent at my job," rather than "My

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boss is having an awful day and I just happened to be in the line of fire when he lost it.” A pessimistic explanatory style which means the habit of believing that “it’s my fault, it’s going to last forever, and it’s going to undermine everything I do” is debilitating. It can diminish performance, trigger depression, and turn setbacks into disasters.

The salespeople with an optimistic explanatory style or those who saw rejections as temporary rather than permanent, specific rather than universal, and external rather than personal, sold more and survived in their jobs much longer. What’s more, explanatory style predicted performance with about the same accuracy as the most widely used industry assessments. Optimism, it turns out, isn’t a hollow sentiment. It’s a catalyst that can stir persistence, steady us during challenges, and stoke the confidence that we can influence our surroundings.

Chapter 6: Clarity

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. But today, when information is abundant and democratic rather than limited and privileged, it matters relatively less. After all, if I know precisely what my 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, 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 sales people 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. In his work over the past three decades, Robert Coalmine has recast how both academics and practitioners understand the dynamics of influencing others. One of his core insights is that contrast operates within, and often amplifies, every aspect of persuasion. That’s why the most essential question you can ask is this, “Compared to what?”

You can raise that question by framing your offering in ways that contrast with its alternatives and therefore clarify its virtues. The academic literature on framing is vast and sometimes conflicting. But the following five frames can be useful in providing clarity to those you hope to move.

The less frame. Everybody loves choices. Yet ample research has shown that too much of a good thing can mutate into a bad thing. Framing people’s options in a way that restricts their choices can help them see those choices more clearly instead of overwhelming them.

The experience frame. Several researchers have shown that people derive much greater satisfaction from purchasing experiences than they do from purchasing goods. Even when people ponder their future purchases, they expect that experiences will leave them more satisfied than physical goods. As a result, framing a sale in experiential terms is more likely to lead to satisfied customers and repeat business. So if you’re selling a car, go easy on emphasizing the rich

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Corinthian leather on the seats. Instead, point out what the car will allow the buyer to do such as see new places, visit old friends, and add to a book of memories.

The label frame. Something happened back in 1975 in three fifth-grade classrooms in the Chicago Public Schools. There a trio of Northwestern University researchers randomly assigned classrooms to three groups. Over a week, students in one group were told by teachers, janitors, and others that they were extremely neat; in fact, they had one of the neatest classrooms in their school. Children in the second group were simply told to pick up their trash, tidy their desks, and keep the classroom clean. The third group was the control. When investigators later measured the litter in the classrooms and compared it with litter levels before the experiment began, the results were unmistakable. The neatest group by far was the one that had been labeled “neat.” Merely assigning that positive label and helping the students frame themselves in comparison with others elevated their behavior.

The blemished frame. Can a negative ever be a positive when it comes to moving others? Remarkably, studies show that in many cases the people who’d gotten a small dose of negative information were more likely to purchase the item than those who’d received exclusively positive information. So, if you’re making the case to someone who’s not intently weighing every single word, list all the positive but do add a mild negative. Being honest about the existence of a small blemish can enhance your offering’s true beauty.

The potential frame. People often find potential more interesting than accomplishment because it’s more uncertain, the researchers argue. That uncertainty can lead people to think more deeply about the person they’re evaluating, and the more intensive processing can lead to generating more and better reasons why the person is a good choice. So next time you’re selling yourself, don’t fixate only on what you achieved yesterday. Also emphasize the promise of what you could accomplish tomorrow.

PART THREE: WHAT TO DO

Chapter 7: Pitch

The purpose of a pitch isn’t necessarily to move others immediately to adopt your idea. The purpose is to offer something so compelling that it begins a conversation, brings the other person in as a participant, and eventually arrives at an outcome that appeals to both of you. In a world where buyers have ample information and an array of choices, the pitch is often the first word, but it’s rarely the last.

The One-Word Pitch. The ultimate pitch for an era of short attention spans begins with a single word and doesn’t go any further. When anybody thinks of you, they utter that word. When anybody utters that word, they think of you. If this aspiration seems fanciful, consider how far some companies have moved in this direction. Ask yourself what technology company you think of when you hear the word “search”? What credit card company comes to mind when you hear the word “priceless”? If you answered Google for the former and MasterCard for the latter, you’ve made the case for the one-word pitch.

The Question Pitch. Question pitches prompt people to come up with their own reasons for agreeing (or not). When people summon their own reasons for believing something, they endorse the belief more strongly and become more

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likely to act on it. The next time you've got a strong case to make to a prospective employer, new sales prospect, or undecided friend, do you think you should skip making a statement and instead ask a question?

The Rhyming Pitch. Rhymes boost what linguists and cognitive scientists call "processing fluency," the ease with which our minds slice, dice, and make sense of stimuli. Rhymes taste great and go down easily and we equate that smoothness with accuracy. In this way, rhyme can enhance reason.

The Subject-Line Pitch. Whether somebody accepts that invitation, or even opens the e-mail at all, depends most on who sent it. You're more likely to look at a message from your boss or your girlfriend than from a company you've never heard of promising a product you'll never need. But the next most important element in e-mail engagement is the subject line; the headline that previews and promises what the message contains.

Your e-mail subject line should be either obviously useful (Found the best and cheapest photocopier) or mysteriously intriguing (A photocopy breakthrough!), but probably not both (The Canon IR2545 is a photocopy breakthrough). Considering the volume of e-mail most people contend with, usefulness will often trump intrigue, although tapping recipients' inherent curiosity, in the form of a provocative or even blank subject line, can be surprisingly effective in some circumstances. Along with utility and curiosity is a third principle coined "specificity." Subject lines should be "ultra-specific." Thus a mushy subject line like "Improve your golf swing" achieves less than one offering "4 tips to improve your golf swing."

The Twitter Pitch. The three highest rated categories of tweets in surveys provide some insight on pitching via this new medium. For instance, readers assigned the highest ratings to tweets that asked questions of followers, confirming once again the power of the interrogative to engage and persuade. They prized tweets that provided information and links, especially if the material was fresh and new and offered the sort of clarity discussed in Chapter 6. They also gave high ratings to self-promoting tweets provided that the tweet offered useful information as part of the promotion.

The Pixar Pitch. Emma Coats, a former story artist at Pixar, has cracked the Pixar code and, in the process, created a template for an irresistible new kind of pitch. Coats has argued that every Pixar film shares the same narrative DNA, a deep structure of storytelling that involves six sequential sentences:

Once upon a time _____. Every day, _____. One day _____. Because of that, _____.
Because of that, _____. Until finally _____.

Take, for example, the plot of *Finding Nemo*. Once upon a time there was a widowed fish named Marlin who was extremely protective of his only son, Nemo. Every day, Marlin warned Nemo of the ocean's dangers and implored him not to swim far away. One day in an act of defiance, Nemo ignores his father's warnings and swims into the open water. Because of that, he is captured by a diver and ends up as a pet in the fish tank of a dentist in Sydney. Because of that, Marlin sets off on a journey to recover Nemo, enlisting the help of other sea creatures along the way. Until finally Marlin and Nemo find each other, reunite, and learn that love depends on trust.

This six-sentence format is both appealing and supple. It allows pitchers to take advantage of the well-documented persuasive force of stories but within a framework that forces conciseness and discipline.

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Chapter 8: Improvise

Beneath the apparent chaos of improvisation is a light structure that allows it to work. Understanding that structure can help you move others, especially when your astute perspective-taking, infectious positivity and brilliant framing don't deliver the results you seek. In those circumstances and many others, you'll do better if you follow three essential rules of improvisational theater. (1) Hear offers. (2) Say "Yes and." (3) Make your partner look good.

The first principle of improvisation, hearing offers, hinges on attunement, leaving our own perspective to inhabit the perspective of another. To master this aspect of improvisation, we must rethink our understanding of what it is to listen and what constitutes an offer. Genuine listening is a bit like driving on a rain slicked highway. Speed kills. If you want to get to your destination, you're better off decelerating and occasionally hitting the brake. The ultimate idea is to listen without listening for anything.

This is what makes improvisational theater work. Imagine a scene with two actors. The first, sitting in a chair, his hands perched on an invisible steering wheel, says to his partner, "Be sure to lock the door." The second actor hasn't been listening for anything. She has just been listening. Her job in that situation is to take in anything and everything someone says as an offer you can do something with. The invisible steering wheel and the directive "Be sure to lock the door" constitute an offer. The second actor must accept it and build on it. Maybe she's a passenger in a taxi. Maybe she's a kid in the backseat of the family car. Maybe she has a broken arm and can't reach the lock. But her ability to listen without listening for is what allows the scene to move forward.

Once we listen in this new, more intimate way, we begin hearing things we might have missed. If we listen this way during our efforts to move others, we quickly realize that what seem outwardly like objections are often offers in disguise. Nearly every improv class includes a variation on the following exercise. The exercise involves two people who are planning a hypothetical gathering—say, a high school reunion. One person begins with a proposition such as, "Let's have our high school reunion in Las Vegas." Every subsequent comment from both participants must begin with "Yes, but." It usually unfolds something like this:

"Let's have our high school reunion in Las Vegas."

"Yes, but that's going to be too expensive for some people."

"Yes, but that way only the people who really want to be there will attend."

The planning process spins and spins, but nothing, and nobody, moves. Then participants take an alternative route, where the undermining conjunction "but" is replaced with its more inclusive sibling, "and". This version might go like this:

"Let's have our high school reunion in Las Vegas."

"Yes, and if it's too expensive for some people we can raise money or organize road trips."

"Yes and if we start early, we could reserve a block of rooms at a hotel that offers volume discounts."

To Sell is Human

Instead of swirling downward into frustration, “Yes and” spirals upwards towards possibility. When you stop you’ve got a set of options, not a sense of futility. There are certainly plenty of times in life to say, “No.” When it comes to moving others, however, the best default position is this second principle of improv. Its benefits stretch further than sales and non-sales selling.

In Second City’s brand of theater, performers must follow this rule: Make your partner look good. Improv artists have long understood that helping your fellow performer shine helps you both create a better scene. Making your partner look good doesn’t make you look worse; it actually makes you look better. It shatters the binary, either-or, zero-sum frame of mind and replaces it with a culture of generosity, creativity, and possibility. This third principle of improv calls for, and enables clarity, the capacity to develop solutions that nobody previously imagined.

The idea here isn’t to win. It’s to learn. When both parties view their encounters as opportunities to learn, the desire to defeat the other side struggles to find the oxygen it needs. Questions, whose potency we’ve seen in both interrogative self-talk and in pitching effectively, change the rules of engagement and therefore the nature of the interaction itself. The conversation becomes more of a dance and less of a wrestling match. That’s something that Fuller Brush founder Alfred Fuller intuited years before improv was ever invented. “Never argue,” he wrote. “To win an argument is to lose a sale.”

Making your partner, the person you’re selling to, look good has become even more critical than it was in Fuller’s day. Back then, unscrupulous sellers didn’t have to worry so much about making buyers look bad. Buyers often had nowhere else to go and nobody to tell. Today, if you make people look bad, they can tell the world. But if you make people look good, they can also tell the world.

Chapter 9: Serve

Sales and non-sales selling are ultimately about service. But service isn’t just smiling at customers when they enter your boutique or delivering a pizza in thirty minutes or less, though both are important in the commercial realm. Instead, it’s a broader, deeper, and more transcendent definition of service which involves improving others’ lives and, in turn, improving the world. At its best, moving people can achieve something greater and more enduring than merely an exchange of resources. That’s more likely to happen if we follow the two underlying lessons. Make it personal and make it purposeful.

Every circumstance in which we try to move others by definition involves another human being. Yet in the name of professionalism, we often neglect the human element and adopt a stance that’s abstract and distant. Instead, we should recalibrate our approach so that it’s concrete and personal, and not for softhearted reasons but for hardheaded ones. In both traditional sales and non-sales selling, we do better when we move beyond solving a puzzle to serving a person.

Raising the salience of purpose is one of the most potent methods of moving others. While we often assume that human beings are motivated mainly by self-interest, a stack of research has shown that all of us also do things for what social scientists call “prosocial” or “self-transcending” reasons. That means that not only should we ourselves be serving, but we should also be tapping others innate desire to serve. Making it personal works better when we also make it purposeful.

To Sell is Human

In 1970, an obscure sixty-six-year-old former mid-level AT&T executive named Robert Greenleaf wrote an essay that launched a movement. He titled it “Servant as Leader” and in a few dozen earnest pages, he turned the reigning philosophies of business and political leadership upside down. Greenleaf argued that the most effective leaders weren’t heroic, take-charge commanders but instead were quieter, humbler types whose animating purpose was to serve those nominally beneath them. Greenleaf called his notion “servant leadership” and explained that the order of those two words held the key to its meaning. “The servant-leader is servant first,” he wrote. “Becoming a servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”

The very idea of leaders subordinating themselves to followers, of inverting the traditional pyramid made many people uncomfortable. But Greenleaf’s philosophy excited many more. Those who embraced it learned to “do no harm,” to respond “to any problem by listening first,” and to “accept and empathize” rather than reject.

What helped servant leadership take hold wasn’t merely that many of those who tried it found it effective. It was also that the approach gave voice to their latent beliefs about other people and their deeper aspirations for themselves. Greenleaf’s way of leading was more difficult, but it was also more transformative. As he wrote, “The best test, and the most difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”

The time is ripe for the sales version of Greenleaf’s philosophy. Call it servant selling. It begins with the idea that those who move others aren’t manipulators but servants. They serve first and sell later. The test—which, like Greenleaf’s, is the best and the most difficult to administer—is this: If the person you’re selling to agrees to buy, will his or her life improve? When your interaction is over, will the world be a better place than when you began?

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.