

Quintessence Series

Stefan Hase
Corinna Busch

The Quintessence of Sales

What You Really Need to Know to Be
Successful in Sales

 Springer

Quintessence Series

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Contents

1	Introduction: Essential Sales Know-How	1
	Reference	4
2	The Dawn of the Sales Age: A First Basic Understanding	5
2.1	The Basics in Sales	6
2.1.1	Definition and Core Elements of Sales	7
2.1.2	Differentiation Between B2B and B2C Selling	8
2.1.3	Factors of Modern Selling	10
2.2	The Sales Arena	11
	References	12
3	The Sales Process	13
3.1	Customer Acquisition	14
3.2	Initial Meeting	16
3.3	Needs Analysis	18
3.4	Argumentation	25
3.5	Price Talk	27
3.6	Closing	31
3.7	After-Sales	33
	References	34
4	The Sales Environment	35
4.1	Four Forms of Structuring a Sales Organization	37
4.2	Managing Interfaces	42
4.2.1	Interfaces within Sales	43
4.2.2	Interfaces with Other Functional Areas	44
4.3	Managing Ethics	46
4.3.1	Ethical Challenges Facing Sales Managers and Salespeople	46
4.3.2	Unethical Behavior Due to Sales Quotas	48
4.3.3	Creating an Ethical Work Climate	48
4.3.4	Managing an Ethical Work Climate	49
4.4	Developing a Sales-Driven Organization	50
4.5	11 Points for Establishing a Sales-Driven Organization	51
	References	56

5	The Sales Team	57
5.1	The Sales Director	58
5.1.1	Qualities Needed	59
5.1.2	Typical Performance Issues	59
5.1.3	Tasks and Responsibilities of a Sales Director	61
5.2	The Ideal Salesperson	63
5.2.1	Overall Success Factors	64
5.2.2	Positive Attitude	66
5.2.3	Sales Abilities	67
5.2.4	Time Management	68
5.2.5	Territorial Routing	69
5.3	A Winning Sales Team	70
5.3.1	The Four Players	71
5.3.2	Key Factors of Successful Team Work	74
	References	75
6	Sales Management	77
6.1	Leading a Winning Sales Team	78
6.1.1	Key Leadership Principles	78
6.1.2	Key Leadership Tasks	80
6.1.3	Building and Developing a Winning Sales Team	82
6.2	Training and Development	89
6.2.1	Importance and Benefits of Sales Trainings	89
6.2.2	Development of Sales Training Programs	91
6.2.3	Typical Sales Training Mistakes	99
6.3	Recruitment and Induction of the Right Talents	100
6.3.1	The Recruitment and Selection Process	101
6.3.2	Induction of New Salespeople	108
6.4	Evaluating Salespeople	110
6.4.1	The Salesperson Evaluation Process	111
6.4.2	Performance Measures	113
6.4.3	Tools for Performance Evaluation	114
6.4.4	Typical Errors in Performance Appraisals	118
6.4.5	Conversation Techniques	119
	References	121
7	Conclusion: Managing Sales Activities	123
	Reference	125
	About the Authors	127
	References	129

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	Differentiation between B2B and B2C markets	9
Fig. 2.2	Factors of modern selling	10
Fig. 2.3	Sales Arena	12
Fig. 3.1	The sales process	14
Fig. 3.2	Seeing the urgent need	20
Fig. 3.3	Possible categories to conduct a needs analysis	21
Fig. 3.4	Characteristics of a benefit	27
Fig. 4.1	Sales organization grouped by products	38
Fig. 4.2	Sales organization grouped by channels	39
Fig. 4.3	Sales organization grouped by regions	40
Fig. 4.4	Sales organization grouped by customers	41
Fig. 4.5	Intra-functional interfaces within the sales department and inter-functional ones with other functional areas	43
Fig. 4.6	Sales reps as relationship managers	45
Fig. 5.1	Typical performance issues of sales directors	60
Fig. 5.2	Main tasks of a sales director	62
Fig. 5.3	Four kinds of salespeople	65
Fig. 5.4	The four players	70
Fig. 6.1	The six key leadership principles	79
Fig. 6.2	Assessment sheet—key leadership tasks (Excerpt)	83
Fig. 6.3	Process of building a winning sales team	84
Fig. 6.4	Sales training development process	91
Fig. 6.5	Example of agenda (Excerpt)	97
Fig. 6.6	Example of pre-course worksheet (Excerpt)	97
Fig. 6.7	Recruitment and selection process	102
Fig. 6.8	Job description	103
Fig. 6.9	Sources for finding suitable candidates	104
Fig. 6.10	Interview guide for sales positions (Excerpt)	107
Fig. 6.11	Salesperson evaluation process	112
Fig. 6.12	Management by Objectives (MBO) cycle for salespeople	117
Fig. 6.13	Evaluation sheet for field accompaniments (Excerpt)	117

Fig. 6.14	How-to guide: Setting goals	119
Fig. 6.15	How-to guide: Conducting a motivational performance review	120
Fig. 6.16	How-to guide: Giving criticism—negative feedback	120

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Structure of customer acquisition (Cold call)	16
Table 3.2	Structure of initial meeting	18
Table 3.3	Questioning techniques to identify pain points	24
Table 3.4	Developing a high-qualified questionnaire	25
Table 3.5	Structure of a benefit argumentation	28
Table 3.6	Typical price objections	30
Table 3.7	Structure for handling price objections	30
Table 3.8	Basic rules for handling customer complaints	33
Table 4.1	Potentially unethical behaviors by salespeople	47
Table 4.2	11 Points for establishing a sales-driven organization	51
Table 5.1	Typical time traps	69
Table 5.2	The profile of a sales manager	71
Table 5.3	The profile of a sales representative	72
Table 5.4	The profile of a Key Account Manager (KAM)	73
Table 5.5	The profile of the service and back office	73
Table 6.1	Employee evaluation—subordinate #1	85
Table 6.2	Action plan—subordinate #1	86
Table 6.3	Benefits of sales trainings	91
Table 6.4	Advantages of mentoring programs	95
Table 6.5	Planning of sales training programs	99
Table 6.6	Onboarding plan: Week 1 (Excerpt)	109
Table 6.7	Quantitative measures of sales performance	114
Table 6.8	Qualitative measures of sales performance	115

Sales is no rocket science. As we started working on this book 2 years ago, a good friend—and experienced business analyst—did a research for us on the existing literature status. His feedback was “Amazing, how low the written level in sales is compared to other areas like marketing or psychology. There are a lot of no-brainers such as ‘work more,’ ‘do more calls,’ or ‘get up more early.’ Is this really all, what sales is about?”

The answer is: Yes and No. Yes, the existing approaches about sales are indeed often pretty fragmented and superficial. There are some really good books, but mainly they are about the micro-perspective. Meaning: “How to... e.g. win more customers—gain more margin...” But focusing only on these (in fact: very important) skill factors, one ignores the at least equally important macro aspect of sales. So, No, this isn’t the entire story. There is much more to explore. There is also a demanding organizational framework to establish against a lot of political resistance, and to “free” sales from this unit thinking, and establish it as the accepted driver of the entire company.

What is also remarkable: Even by being called as one of the oldest professions in the world, there is hardly any accepted, established, and common education path for it. In fact, most salespeople do get a classical education in business and industry (e.g., business people, engineers, trade, banking industry, insurance,...), and then, they change their career path and switch into this completely new field of business. In their new position, they generally receive a good technical education, but just rarely run through a professional sales training program.

This leads to a very high percentage of self-taught sales reps who do their very best—in the way they have gained experience as outsiders and observers, and from their own individual practice. To rely mainly on what the company’s salespeople do believe is best seems—especially in this complex business environment with its tough competition nowadays—risky and somehow outdated. Quite a lot of those people who changed to a sales career do not even name themselves “sales staff.” Rather, they like to call themselves—due to their professional background—“technical experts,” “supporter,” or “consultant.” That’s something special in this

twenty-first century, in which many other branches take over a more and more scientific approach. Just give it a thought, when your doctor, or banker, or lawyer or even your pilot would be mainly an autodidact and would not have a proper background education. . .

It's like always in life. Only if you mix your ingredients in a certain balance you achieve something special. So the task is to define for this still emerging management discipline an appropriate balance between human factor, effective structure-shaping organization and modern tools science. And beware of the following: Due to the partial absence of hard facts, soft skills are in sales the true hard skills. Does that sound promising? OK, to keep you going, we got one more! You won't find any demanding equations in this book. If you hope to see that, you should have paid more attention to advanced maths. Promise!

Having said that, we have four questions for you to check that this book will really benefit you:

1. What Is the Goal of this Book?

Our goal with this book is:

- That you have a reference book for various situations as well as a how-to manual for your practice
- That you understand the different steps of an efficient sales process to cope with the current requirements
- That you have an overview of the organizational framework required to build a sales organization
- That you can define the different kind of sales players that are involved, and know how to build a successful sales team
- That you are familiar with the most important sales management tasks and responsibilities

2. What Makes it Special?

We like to combine the micro (i.e., personal skill set and enabling) with the macro perspective (i.e., structure, organizational framework, leadership). Sales is in our opinion, and to agree with Brian Tracy (2015, p. 3), an American great, “an inexact science.” But at least it is one—and it is not only a subdivision of marketing.

3. What Qualifies Us to Write this Book?

Over the last decade, we had the thankworthy opportunity to work for our customers around the globe in different economical hot spots. This includes the United States, Canada, South America, Russia, China, Asia Pacific, and many European countries. We attended a lot of real major customer meetings as we shadowed salespeople in their daily business. Therefore, we gained interesting insights at first-hand in different markets, as well as both a local and cultural understanding, and we got to know various negotiation approaches and techniques from the big players.

The second milestone is that the Europäische Fernhochschule Hamburg (Euro-FH) cooperated with us in the design and implementation of the first German bachelor degree course in “Sales Management” in 2012–2013. As a typical German course of study, this requires a proven structure on how sales is efficiently practiced today. For the last 4 years, we have now conducted over 100 sales workshops on six different major topics with over 500 ambitious attendees, which are heading out for being the sales leaders of the future. And we are happy to say: Mission accomplished.

4. Who Is the Target Group?

This book is not only for sales experts.¹ In fact, most REAL salespeople do not like to read any advisers! Why? Because they are—to quote somebody from this species—“so experienced, that we know everything already.”

Besides these so-called “sales natives,” we like to address all “normal” sales colleagues from all level of hierarchies: Rookies, account managers, key account managers, team leaders, sales directors, and so forth. Our aim is to give you a condensed overview and to offer guidance as well as the opportunity to double check your current approach and eventually gain some new ideas. This includes also the mentioned career changers for whom we like to establish a professional background for their new field of business.

Another target group is the management at all levels, such as owners, C-Suite members, managers, and decision makers, because they have to understand the setup of the driver of the company—which is sales—and how to implement required sales structures and to define possible shortcuts. With this knowledge, it will be easier to predict the capabilities and limitations of a professional sales organization. By the way, out of our personal experience: For our former CFO, it was not easy to understand why 30% more sales staff would not immediately result in 30% more turnover.

In addition, this book is also written for (so far) non-sales people. Whether their field of expertise is finance, HR, engineering, IT, admin, or marketing or something else: Sooner or later they will be touching the sales domain, and this book will help them to understand “terra incognita.” Especially, what keeps the sales guys going, and how to establish synergies with their own area, and how to facilitate energy and straightforward attitude of the sales colleagues.

And last but not least, this book is written for all ambitious people, who are involved in boosting their career and their business, because without knowing the sales mechanisms, this will be much tougher to achieve.

How to Read this Book

This book is not necessarily written to be read in one sweep. It also functions as a reference book. Choose the topic which can help you in your daily business. In this

¹For reasons of readability, only the male form is used in this book; however, the female form is also always intended.