

Know+Do publishes monthly *think papers* for its subscribers and clients highlighting different issues that promote the philosophy of **'knowing+doing=being'**. Our approach is: if you cannot define where you want to **BE**, how can you **KNOW** your plans are correct and what you are **DOING** will help you reach your goal? This is the third paper of our fifth series covering 'Sales Made Easier'.

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Planning to Sell Well

Think Paper No 3. Series 5: Sales Made Easier

Welcome to the fifth series of our popular *Think Papers*¹. The papers have been designed to capture our company values², including sharing and simplicity. We aim to take topical areas of knowledge and share our thoughts and experiences of these in an accessible way to encourage you to take action. We welcome your feedback about how the Think Papers have helped you or your teams.

This series – *Sales Made Easier* – is focussing upon the business of selling. A growing business will understand that being able to use an effective sales process creates clear advantages in the current marketplace and trading conditions. This series aims to make it easier for managers and their staff to engage and embrace a proactive sales culture that supports businesses to trade more successfully and sustainably.

The last paper³ covered the how to develop a good elevator pitch to ensure that you can sell yourself well at an initial meeting. Beyond this first meeting though, additional planning is needed to ensure that your sales techniques and processes portray you in the right light.

One of the top UK authors on selling Richard Denny, talks about the fact that sales people try to never admit they are involved in selling, calling themselves consultants or managers. His view is that nearly everyone in business is involved in selling whether they're a doctor, solicitor, estate agent, and surveyor and so on. They all want to develop their business reach through selling themselves and their services. Some may have great technical skills in their particular line of business, such as a surgeon, but they may not be able to sell themselves very well. Sales is a profession and as such it requires investment in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to generate and close more sales. This paper will explore some of the concepts from Richard's bestseller 'Selling to Win.'⁴

*'Selling is a profession and must have recognised professional ethics. The professional spirit seeks professional integrity from pride not compulsion. The professional spirit detects its own violations and penalises them.'*⁵

¹ You can view the Think Paper library and download past publications for free @ <http://knowanddo.com/resources>

² <http://knowanddo.com/about-us/values>

³ <http://knowanddo.com/archives/2445>

⁴ Richard Denny, *Selling to Win*, (2001), Revised Ed. Kogan Page.

⁵ Henry Ford, 1922.

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Henry Ford reminds us that if we are involved in sales we must invest in our professional development for our own sense of pride in doing a good job. Selling is usually a person to person investment although the internet has replaced some of the face-to-face interaction it is simply a tool, albeit a powerful one, that connects buyers and sellers. Contrary to many sales books selling isn't a war, it's not about hard sell v soft sell, successful selling is recognised as being a consultative process. For many businesses it's not about the one-off sale but building a relationship with a customer first and foremost, that leads to repeat or multiple sales and the salesperson's great currencies - recommendations and referrals.

Both the buyer and the seller win if it's a good sale.... But the process that leads to that (sale) should start long before you ever see your prospect for the first time. And it goes on long after the customer signs the order, pays and leaves with their purchase. In fact, if you think the sale ends then, you're going to lose more sales than you've ever dreamed of. But if you understand how selling can be a continuing process that never ends, then you're going to make it to the big time.

That advice came from Joe Girard – a man dubbed the world's greatest car salesman by the Guinness book of world records having sold 13,001 cars during his 15 year retail sales career (1963-1977). He sold during the up's and down's, the good and the bad times. He sold face-to-face, one new retail car at a time and way before the advent of the internet. He hung up his sales jacket to teach others his particular brand of sales that he maintains is even more important in today's technology driven markets. Like Richard Denny, he maintains that sales is a person to person experience honed on the front line. He pulls no punches that it's tough sometimes, it's very competitive and there is no such thing as a born salesman; just a professional who works hard at his or her craft.

There are plenty of sales books that promise a super slick sales system or work 1 hour a day and retire a millionaire, yet they rarely deliver on their promises. Books written by sales professionals though who have honed their craft and sustained consistent sales success follow a similar pattern that lasts the test of time and survive any so called fads of the day.

In his book, Richard Denny uses a motoring analogy when he talks about the six cylinders of professional selling. He suggests that for peak performance and to ensure that you are first away and first at the finish, all cylinders must be running smoothly.

The six cylinders of a professional salesperson are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Business Knowledge | 4. Product Knowledge |
| 2. Industry Knowledge | 5. Selling Knowledge |
| 3. Company Knowledge | 6. Attitude |

Let's look at each of these elements in turn and see what factors need to be considered under each:

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1. Business Knowledge

The professional salesperson and or business owner must keep themselves updated with the overall business climate at home and overseas. This can help to spot business trends, open up opportunities for discussions with clients, and keep abreast of any forthcoming changes that may impact on the market such as increase in business rates, rising fuel prices on transport costs etc. Use news filters and selected feeds to help keep you briefed and not drowning in information.

2. Industry Knowledge

Where appropriate join a professional body or industry body and subscribe to its trade journal or newsletter. This can help to keep you and your staff informed about industry changes, your competitors main selling points, new products or developments and the main people and personalities in the industry.

3. Company Knowledge

Whether working for a large or small company any professional salesman needs to have an in-depth understanding of company policy and procedure, payment and delivery schedules, etc. They need to know who is who, i.e. who are the people who can make something happen for your customer if there is a problem? Remember the sales process covers many steps not just taking an order but also successful delivery and use. If you are handing over from sales to service who should your customer speak to?

4. Product Knowledge

This sounds like the most obvious of the areas but it's one where sales people can let themselves down time and time again by not understanding what the product can do. Many times they can also over face customers with the extent of their knowledge without asking the customer what their needs are. How much product training do you offer? Can you point out advantages or disadvantages to your products and services in line with the likely market competitors? Perhaps most importantly though, if you do not understand the product you're selling, how can you sell it convincingly? Your lack of belief will become immediately apparent to an informed customer and afterwards to a customer who may well develop 'buyer's remorse' as they were poorly advised.

5. Selling Knowledge

The best product knowledge doesn't guarantee a sale though. You must constantly update your sales knowledge as well. Many sales people find one or two lines that sell a particular product and leave it at that. The consumer is much better informed nowadays and you must stay updated. There is a huge amount of information emerging around behaviour change and buying habits through the science of neuro-economics. Big data and analytics are allowing companies to target customers with increasing efficiency.

6. Attitude

Attitude is everything and the ultimate factor for consistently successful sales people. There is a fine line between attentive and smarmy, informed and overbearing, win-win or win-lose. The old adage has it that 'knowledge is power' but in sales Denny suggests that it's what you do with what you know that really matters. The good salesman or saleswoman knows that customers like to buy and appreciate being sold to well.

Knowing + Doing = Being



Planning to Sell Well Exercise:

Review each of the six points listed above and rate your competence in each area. What actions can you take in the next month to improve your knowledge or skills? What could you do to maintain a high level of competence? Sales is not a passive business process, it is an active one. Planning and preparing well creates the space for you to sell well.

The 'six cylinders'	Your Rating (0=lowest; 10=highest)	What action/s can you take in the next month to improve your knowledge?
1. Business Knowledge		
2. Industry Knowledge		
3. Company Knowledge		
4. Product Knowledge		
5. Selling Knowledge		
6. Attitude		

If you would like to explore how to enhance your organisational marketing and sales process, *Know+Do* offer in-house training on a range of business growth and management issues. We also have expert business coaches available to support leaders in business. For more information please contact us on info@knowanddo.com or call (0161) 280 4567.

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