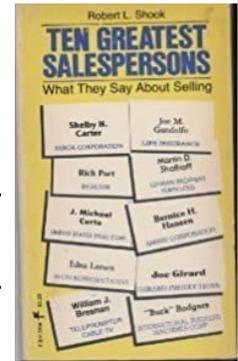


Ten Greatest Salespersons

Robert L. Shook (1978)

Notes by Bob Evely
Wilmore, Kentucky; 2021.



As Shook declares in his introduction, these are interviews with ten of America's greatest salespersons. This was one of my favorite business books from the 70's, and I wanted to share the snippets from these interviews that were the most inspirational to me. Due to the business culture in the 70's, many quotations reference men. But rather than tamper with actual quotations, I record them verbatim.

Joe Girard, Automobile Sales (p.7)

In 1976, for the eleventh consecutive year, Joe Girard sold more automobiles and trucks on a one-on-one basis than anyone else in the world.

"I have no big secrets which nobody else has. I simply sell the world's best product, that's all. I sell Joe Girard! You gotta sell yourself."

"I make every customer *want* to do business with me. From the moment he walks in, I don't care if I haven't seen him for five years. I make him feel like I saw him yesterday, and I really missed him."

"You gotta be natural. People like people who are honest. And salesmen gotta be honest and show that they care."

"When I sell a car, my customer's gonna leave with the same feeling that he'll get when he walks out of a great restaurant. You know, that satisfied, contented feeling."

Girard understands people, not cars. It just so happens that his product is automobiles.

"Joe Louis was my friend, and I think he was the greatest fighter of all time. And do you know what Joe used to do? He would study the pictures of his opponents over and over before a fight. And every professional does the same thing."

"A doctor qualifies you by asking a lot of questions before he operates. You gotta qualify your customer. I've seen too many salesmen who go right in, like a surgeon who begins operating before he knows what's wrong, and they don't find out nothin' about the customer."

"A guy's interested in me because I'm interested in him."

"I never take a telephone call when I'm with a customer. I tell the switchboard not to allow the phone to ring in my office and to take all calls. An attorney doesn't answer the phone when he's pleading a case. And a doctor doesn't take phone calls when he's in the middle of surgery."

"I consider a sale a sacred thing. I consider you my customer, and belonging to me, not to the dealership or General Motors. The customer is my private business. And I let him know it constantly. When he comes back for service, I fight for him all the way to get him the best. I really go to bat for him. I find out who can help. If our service department can't do it, then I find out who can. If his boss couldn't help me, then I'd ask 'who's *your* boss?' And I'd go to his boss. In other words, it's called saving a customer."

Joe does something most salesmen never do. He thanks them for their business and expresses his appreciation. It's a simple gesture, but most salespeople just don't bother to let the customer know they appreciate the business. "Mr. Wilson, I want you to know one thing. I'll never let you down. I really appreciate you buying from me. And believe me, if you ever need me, if you ever see people around me, I will drop what I am doing for you, and I betcha you'll never buy a car from anybody else again."

Joe's customers won't forget him once they buy a car from him; he won't let them. Every month throughout the year, they get a letter from him. It arrives in a plain envelope, always a different size or color. "It doesn't look like that junk mail which is thrown out before it's even opened." He sends cards wishing Happy New Year, Happy George Washington's Day, Happy St. Patrick's Day.

Joe Gandolfo, Life Insurance (p. 25)

Joe Gandolfo sells more life insurance each year than any other person in the world.

"I think that you can't do whatever it is that you do effectively unless you believe in it 100 percent. I believe in life insurance."

Joe believes in his product so much that he knows that every person he has an appointment with is going to buy from him. "The only buying signal I need now is an appointment. When he consents to have me come out to see him, that's it. I know he's interested in talking about life insurance."

"The majority of insurance salespeople approach each appointment with fear that they're not going to make a sale."

"Successful people usually are the ones who get up early to go to work. And because they do, they respect a salesperson who's willing to do the same thing. Can I see you a 6:30 or 7:30 in the morning, I ask? What I'm really saying, 'When you're not busy making money, I would like to talk to you about your problems so that you can concentrate on what I'm saying.'"

Joe knows that successful people respect his willingness to meet with them in the early morning. They're thinking, "This Gandolfo works as hard at his job as I do at mine, therefore he must be as astute in his field as I am in mine."

"I put my business card down and say, 'John, there are about 400,000 life insurance agents and financial counselors on the face of the earth, and I think it's important that you know about my qualifications for coming here in the first place. If you'll permit me, I'd like to tell you something about myself.'"

"Selling is 98 percent understanding human beings, and 2 percent product knowledge."

"I'm genuinely interested in this guy. I really want to know how he got into business, and I want to know all about his philosophies. I want to find out everything I can about him, because I think he's an interesting person. I really love these people."

"When you're listening, look at his mouth, and nod your head slowly, and never take your eyes off of him. I'll guarantee you that doing that will do more for selling than any of the technical information that you learn from a rate book or attending a school." If you look away as you're listening, "Your eyes are telling him that you're more interested in looking at someone else than you are in talking to him."

"My name is Joe Gandolfo. I'm in the insurance and tax shelter business, and I'm assuming that you pay more than \$4,000 a year in taxes, personal or corporate, and I'd like to run some

ideas by you. If they fit with your philosophies and pocketbook, fine; if not, I promise you I’ll be on my way. Would you have any objection to that?”

“I would like to share ideas with you that have been of help to other automobile dealers. I just want to run them by you.”

“I always attempt to give a presentation in such a manner so I don’t confuse anyone. Of course, sometimes this is difficult to do when you’re discussing a sophisticated subject such as tax shelters.”

Bernice Hansen, Amway (p. 41)

“We sold a lot of Nutrilite *because we believed in it.*”

“We have such a large product line today that there’s bound to be several items that you strongly believe in, and if that’s true, you’re going to have the self-confidence to get out there and generate enthusiasm in your customers. And, boy, that enthusiasm is a contagious thing.”

“The trouble with most people in the sales field is that they let other people’s reactions upset them. For example, they take it too personally when a prospect rejects them or gives them a hassle. I never let a rejection upset me. I always believed that if I did my best job in presenting my products to a customer, and he or she still didn’t buy, then at least I was able to educate that individual and so I performed a service. If I could teach them something about food supplements then my visit with the prospect was valuable even though it didn’t result in a sale.”

Francis “Buck” Rodgers, IBM (p. 55)

“Selling is the art of persuasion where you utilize your individuals talents to convince someone to buy the product or service you offer. Marketing, however, is a much more inclusive term which means understanding the customer’s business and putting together a solution to his problems, thereby increasing his productivity. You’re constantly looking for ways for your products to serve him better.”

Shelby Carter Jr., Xerox (p. 75)

“Calls are the guts of this business. You have to be tough on yourself. You’ve got to make that extra call. I tell my salespeople today, You make one more call a day, and that’s five a week, twenty a month, and 240 calls a year. Now what good Xerox person can’t close 10 percent? And if you get another 24 sales a year, you’ve got to be a winner.”

“The sales managers are the people who set the pace. They have to show the way.”

“While the leadership role is important, it doesn’t mean that everybody will automatically follow their leader. What I really think is important to understand is the fact that sales reps only work for one person. Themselves!”

“It’s an inner desire; salespeople want to compete. People shouldn’t be in sales if they don’t have this kind of desire.”

Rich Port, Realtor (p. 91)

“I recall coming to work one day and a new salesperson was sitting at his desk looking out the window. I asked what he was doing and he said, Nothing. There is nothing to do. I came back a few minutes later with a list entitled ‘24 Things To Do When You Think There Is Nothing To Do.’ Copies of that list are still given to our new salespeople today.”

Rich is always on the lookout for new ideas. He won't hesitate to borrow one, perhaps refine it, and then use it. One of these, for example, came from a form letter he received from the president of an airline. His prime motive is always to seek new ways to attract and better serve a client.

Edna Larsen, Avon (p. 117)

“I feel a salesperson develops confidence when he or she understands the competition. It's when you don't know what they've got that you're most likely to lack self-confidence and feel awkward with a customer. But by understanding my competition's products as well as my own, I can offer a real service. I don't care what a person's selling, he has got to know not only his product but also his competition's.”

Martin Shafiroff, Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb (p. 135)

“I always remind myself of a study I made on using time in this business. The average person spends relatively little time actually selling. He's reading publications, reviewing every memo that crosses his desk, going out to lunch with his buddies, and doing many other nonproductive activities. I concluded that he is only utilizing approximately 30 minutes of his selling day asking for the order. His customer contact time is only 30 minutes of his entire working day. Now if the average contact time is a half hour, and I can increase it to four or five hours, well, as you can readily see the leverage involved is quite dramatic.”

“I am essentially my own corporation. I'm the chairman of the board, and I also sweep the floors at the end of the day. Therefore I must be very sensitive in allotting my time.”

Martin is able to average 60 calls to clients and prospects each day. And even though Martin is the number one man in his field, he is still continually prospecting for new accounts – calling prospective clients that he's never spoken with before.

Martin's initial phone call to a prospective client who is generally a top executive – “Your name came to my attention from John Brown, who is doing business with me. He suggested that I contact you and bring to your attention the type of work we have been doing together.”

“Conviction comes from the fact that I do my homework so thoroughly.”

“I find that when most people receive an objection on the telephone, they hang up. I think the successful person in this business has to be able to penetrate any objection and find out why the prospect objects. Their defense mechanism has layers which have to be removed. My formula is that in order to be successful, you have to be on the road to success and stay there. When a prospect tries to put you off by saying something like, Let me think about it – that takes you off the road. You're sidetracked. It's a generalized statement, and in order to overcome it you must convert it into a specific objection. 'Are you thinking about it because I might have overlooked some salient point in my presentation? Is there something else you want to know?'”

“I consider their ego to be a positive factor. I take that ego and I blend in my philosophy. I say, 'Look, you are the manager of a corporation. You above everyone else surely recognizes value.' I'm talking their language, because businesspeople recognize value.”

“I'll also analyze my presentation when I haven't convinced a prospective client to share my concepts with me. Then I try to determine what improvements should be made in it.”

J. Michael Curto, US Steel (p. 155)

“I continually called on a company, but I could sense that the owner's loyalty to our competitor was strong that I would have overstepped my bounds had I tried to aggressively pull him away

“Ten Greatest Salespersons” (Robert L. Shook)

from them. I could also sense that if I stayed in there, I would eventually get some business. I continued to call on him and we became good personal friends, but still I wasn't getting any business. In a low-key manner, I would subtly sell him on US Steel. Then the competing company was taken over by a conglomerate, and the new management fired all the customer's old friends. When that happened, he no longer felt any obligation to that company. Well there I was, just sitting there in the wings, very eager to do business with him. And sure enough, he swung all of his business over to us.”

William Bresnan, Teleprompter (p. 171)

“It's important that everybody in the company is service-oriented. While something might seem like a minor thing, such as a technician or an installer taking off his muddy shoes before entering a home, don't for a second think that's not selling. He's showing that customer that he cares, and you have to instruct your people to react that way. You can't take it for granted.”

Notes by Bob Evely



Evely Enterprises LLC

Bob Evely, President

(p) 859.967.9955

bob@EvelyLLC.com

www.EvelyLLC.com

www.linkedin.com/in/bobevely