

12 Models of Selling - Revisited

Robert DeGroot, M.Ed. D.C.H.

Selling is not an unskilled occupation. There are 204 identified skilled competencies in 31 different areas of selling. Skills specific to the profession of selling have evolved over time. Each new selling skills model was influenced by changes occurring in the selling environment.

The initial research study identifying the 12 models was conducted during the late-nineties. This overview was further developed into an article and published in *Selling Power* magazine. Here is an updated version of this study.

As you're reading this, one important truth to take into consideration when selecting a sales model is that they all leak objections. Most often they start leaking due to a change in the market. But that doesn't mean you need to learn a whole new sales model. The one you're using now may be just fine for a long time to come. Instead, just select the strategies provided in the Amazon Top 100 Best Selling books for sales and selling, skills and techniques, "Objection Free Selling" to plug the leaks.

"Make it a point to keep on the lookout for novel and interesting ideas that others have used successfully. Your idea has to be original only in its adaptation to the problem you are currently working on."
- Thomas Edison

PERSONAL PREPARATION MODELS - Sales Professionals hear the word "no" more often in a single month than most people in other occupations do in a lifetime. Winning the mental game of selling is crucial.

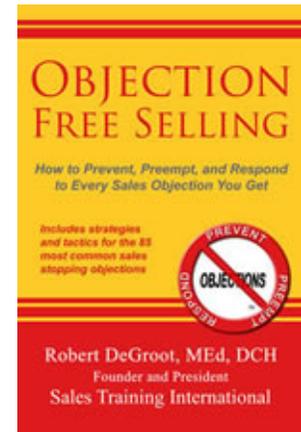
- 1. 5-P Sales Model:** This basic model was defined as "**P**roduct **P**ushing through **P**ersonality, **P**ersistence and **P**rice." This was the land of the "born salesman." These people had an engaging personality and tenacious persistence. With a low price and playing a simple numbers game, they could make sales. Even today, people wake up in the morning and decide to go into selling with few or no skills. For them, mental conditioning is essential.
- 2. Mental Conditioning Sales Model:** People in sales hear the word "no" more often in a few months than people in other occupations do in an entire lifetime. When sales people lose their enthusiasm and passion for what they sell, their prospects respond similarly. Mental conditioning is to selling as physical conditioning is to sports. Significant advancements have been made from the short-lived motivation sessions. Today Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Psychological Kinesiology, and other methods are available to build stamina.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS MODELS - Relationships are extremely important in most selling situations. Understanding the customer's interaction style will prevent miscommunication.

- 3. Relationship Sales Model:** This model was based on building a relationship by calling on the same prospect repeatedly over an extended period of time. The salesperson and the buyer get to know each other better on both professional and personal levels. At the core of this model is the ability to cross boundaries, but not violate them.
- 4. Personality Styles Sales Model:** The importance of relationships in selling fostered the use of psychological assessment instruments to identify key personality characteristics. Based on the recognition that different personality types prefer their own particular style of interaction, today, this model provides structure to the interaction and relationship building components of selling.

PRESENTATION BASED MODELS - Focus on using the presentation portion of the sales interaction to do the actual selling. These were the first models focusing on actual skills and techniques of selling.

- 5. Closing Sales Model:** Introduced in the 1950's, heavy emphasis was placed on presentation skills,



trial closing and overcoming objections, then going for the final major closing sequence. In its pure form, this model was, and still is today, most commonly used in high-pressure sales.

6. **Problem Solving Sales Model:** In the early 1960's, Sales Professionals were taught to ask open and closed-ended questions to probe for problems. Once discovered, solutions were then presented. In today's highly competitive markets, this model tends to elicit the "price" objection.
7. **Value-Added Sales Model:** This model emerged in the late 1960's to counteract the tendency of the Problem Solving Model to cause the price objection to be raised. When the price objection is anticipated, incentives are "added on" to the basic product/service as a means to make up the difference in customer perceived value versus price.
8. **Consultative Sales Model:** This model was introduced in the early 1970's. The focus was to determine how the Sales Professional could lower the customer's operating costs and/or increase the customer's ability to generate revenues. This model requires that you have an extensive track record and strong proof of results. Consequently, it had limited application for new companies, new products or new services.

APPLICATIONS MODELS - Developed during the 1980's with updates to the strategies for implementation during the 2000's. These models were developed in response to special selling situations involving buyers who are both inside and outside the organization and larger projects that required significant investments during the sales process on the part of the selling organization. They assume the person already has sales skills.

9. **Partnering Sales Model:** The partnering model is not a "legal" partnership; rather it is a part of the "Total Quality Management" process many U.S. Companies are pursuing. Partnering is usually done at the highest levels within the seller's and customer's organizations. To successfully partner, the Sales Professional must understand the needs of the "customer's customers." Collectively, the seller and customer build and exchange business plans related to the product/service specific areas.
10. **Team Selling Model:** Although it has been around for many years, this process involves a number of people at various levels and specialties interacting with a similar group at the same level and specialty in the prospect company. The Sales Professional is primarily engaged in a communications coordinating "quarterback" role. Roles, boundaries, procedures and communications are paramount knowledge and skills for this model.
11. **Complex Sales Model:** Long lead times and big ticket items, coupled with multiple decision makers, both internal and external to the client company, i.e., banks, citizens groups, governments, etc., characterize the profile of a selling organization utilizing the "complex sales model." The primary focus of this model is to define the strategic approach to the account.

VALUE SELLING MATRIX MODELS - In a value selling process the actual selling is done during the interview phase of the sales interaction, rather than the traditional presentation phase. Value selling models are specifically designed to prevent or significantly reduce price pressure.

12. **Value Selling Model:** This model introduced in the late 1980's was developed as the result of reduced product/service differentiation, competitor induced pressure on price. Value Selling models are still today the primary base model for selling and negotiating.

Value Selling Strategies P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T. Model is the most comprehensive of the value selling models. It is the $E=mc^2$ of sales models. The basic structure of the model is based on human interaction protocols and relies on time-tested business and psychology principles. Even though the nuances may change based on the application method, the core steps will remain the same. For example, listening skills, competitor analysis, problem solving process, attitude development, and the other psychological processes remain the same. The changes are in the conversations and the problems being solved.

1990 AND BEYOND: The computer age has and continues to bring about significant change in how sellers track sales and interact with decision makers who make different decisions about a purchase.

During the 1990's **Contact Management (CM) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** software was the focus of the sales process. When they were designed to help the sales person make sales and help customers, their implementation succeeded. But when they were perceived as management control processes, implementation often faltered and half the time, outright failed.

In the 2000's **selling at "C" level** became the strategy de jure. Many programs however overshot the appropriate level to call on teaching sellers to focus unnecessarily on the top levels. Further, a large number of sales people did not have the necessary personal attributes to sell at these higher levels. Overtime, these strategies are now wisely taught to sales people capable of interacting comfortably at this level in larger corporations.

The decade of 2010 is focused on using **social media** for marketing, prospecting, and selling. Specialized **Apps** with CRM capabilities enable sales people to access up-to-date customer order information on their mobile devices.

THE FUTURE: The question remains, "What must you believe before you buy something?" Until human beings change in fundamental psychological ways, they will continue to feel the need to believe certain things (need, value, trust, etc.) about the seller, the product and service, and the benefits they will get when they make the purchase.