



# FrontLine®

MARKETING INFORMATION FOR  
TODAY'S FEED PROFESSIONAL

## Customers Expect More

By: Nido R. Qubein

What makes a successful salesperson?

I have often asked that question at seminars, and the answers have been all over the ballpark. "You've got to have the right product," some say. It helps. But we've all known salespeople who went broke trying to move superb products and others who could make fortunes selling ice cream on an iceberg. A really good salesperson can rack up more sales with a mediocre product than a mediocre salesperson can make with the greatest product in the world. "You've got to make plenty of sales calls," others say. "The more calls you make, the more sales you'll get." As a general rule, that's true, but it doesn't go far enough. If you think about it, the more passes a quarterback throws, the more passes he'll complete. But a quarterback who completes three out of four passes will put points on the board much more regularly than one who completes one out of four, even though both may throw the same number of times. A baseball player hits .350 will cross the plate much more frequently than one who hits .200, even though both take the same number of swings.

Similarly, a salesperson's success doesn't depend on the number of calls. It depends on the number of sales. An effective salesperson and an ineffective salesperson may make the same number of calls, but it's the effective one who eats steak and lobster instead of hamburger. Still others say, "You've got to master the mechanics." That helps, too. But mastering the mechanics won't put you on top of the sales charts unless you master the right mechanics.

In today's market, as in none before, it is crucial that we learn selling savvy.

The sales environment has changed radically in four distinct ways:

### 1. Customers are better educated, more sophisticated, and more value-conscious.

In other words, they are harder to please; they want more for their money. Think about your own demands as a consumer.

- You insist on quality goods and efficient service.
- You don't want some slick con artist trying to trick you into buying a product or service you don't want or need.
- You don't want to be abandoned after the sale.
- You expect follow-up service. If something goes wrong, you want to know that the salesperson and the company are going to stand behind the sale.

This means that salespeople have to stay on top of their markets. They have to be knowledgeable about the products and services they are selling. In addition, they have to be honest, and sincerely interested in helping their customers find value and derive satisfaction.

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**Customers expect more from us than ever before.**

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### 2. Competition is stiffer.

Customers now have so many options that price will always be the deciding factor -- unless you can offer a strong differential advantage. With companies producing similar products at similar cost, it's getting tougher every day to offer substantially lower prices than the competition does. That means that you have to offer something that sets you apart from all the other salespeople who are trying to get you customers to buy from them. You have to provide quicker service, more up-to-date product knowledge, and better follow-up. It's not enough to provide



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products and service as good as those of your competitors. Yours have to be better -- a lot better. Moreover, your customers must acknowledge the superiority of your products and services, and the object of your presentation should be to lead them toward that recognition and acknowledgment. If you can't lead your

customers to that acknowledgment, you won't get the sale, no matter how good your product. Your success in selling depends less and less on the product you are selling, and more and more on your skills as a salesperson.

### **3. Technology is rapidly replacing peddlers.**

People are buying more through direct mail. And such media as interactive television and the Internet are making it possible to buy almost anything you want by pressing a button or clicking a mouse. Companies are no longer looking for peddlers to handle items that are much easier to sell by phone or through the mail. In many cases, they're setting up self-service systems that can be operated by clerks. Of course, there are plenty of very good opportunities for really sharp salespeople who can sell with power and skill, especially in the industrial field. To be successful as a salesperson, you must find ways to distinguish yourself from the inexpensive clerks and the commonplace peddlers. You must rise to the challenge with proficient skills, depth of knowledge and positive attitude.

### **4. Time has become a priceless commodity -- for salespeople and for their customers.**

Prospects don't want salespeople wasting their time. And if you're serious about becoming successful, you don't have time to wander around showing your products or services to anyone who will look at them. To survive in today's volatile marketplace, you need a clear and effective strategy. You need the skills to implement that strategy. And you need the know-how to make that strategy work for you. When you acquire and apply these things, you're demonstrating selling savvy.

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### **Five Ingredients for Selling Savvy**

What do we mean by selling savvy? The answer lies in five ingredients that are vital to your team's success as professionals.

1. Selling savvy is understanding the selling process well enough to approach it as a highly educated professional.
2. Selling savvy is understanding people well enough to influence them to buy.
3. Selling savvy is knowing how to execute.
4. Selling savvy means developing street smarts.
5. Selling savvy is having the self-discipline to carry out every detail of your strategy all day, every day.

### **Professionals vs. Workers**

I often draw the distinction between a person with a worker mentality and a person with a professional mentality. Workers tolerate their jobs as burdens to be endured for the sake of putting food on their tables and roofs over their heads. Professionals see their jobs as rewarding components of their lives. Their careers and their personal lives complement and support each other. Their jobs are part of who they are. Workers wait to be told what to do. They don't reach out for new responsibility, because they don't want responsibility. They take care of their own immediate tasks without worrying about how their tasks affect others in the organization. In fact, they don't see themselves as part of the organization. They see the organization as an outside entity that may have a negative or positive impact on their lives. They refer to it in the third person: as "it" or "them," and not as "we." The organization is something they have to respond to, although they're not a part of it.



Professionals see themselves as part of the organization. To them, the organization is “we.” When it succeeds, they succeed. When it suffers reverses, they feel the reverses. People look up to professionals because they recognize them as being good at what they do. They’re good because they’ve walked the extra mile toward excellence. They absorb information about their chosen fields, and they share their knowledge with others. They’re jealous of their images and are always careful to avoid compromising them.

To be a professional, you have to look like a pro, communicate like a pro, and exude the confidence of a pro. You must set a high standard for yourself and never allow yourself to fall below that standard.

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