

## CHOOSING TO SELL

After we have done our sales analysis, the next step is deciding how we want to sell. Selling is a choice we make. This chapter discusses the costs of selling and the risks we take when we decide to become sales people. It shows us what kind of job we should look for and how we should behave when we take that job.

Should we look for a “safe” sales job, one that guarantees our salary? Or do we take a chance on a job that pays all commission? Do we look for a job that offers their sales people lost of support? Or do we look for a job that keeps sales costs to a minimum?

When we take a sales job, what do we do first? What are our priorities? How do we get off to a good start?

How should our company respond to our requests? Should they give us better prices when we need them? Sales is the path to great success and personal wealth because it is also a very risky profession.

Sales is costly. It costs money to field a sales force. It is emotionally costly for the sales person. It is risky because neither we nor our companies know if we are going to make sales or not. The high costs and risks of sales gives us an important clue about exactly where and how we should sell. In Sun Tzu’s competitive system, the safest path is not necessarily that path the looks the safest. True safety comes from understanding the big picture.

Question One:

**When deciding to sell, what is the most important issue you should first consider?**

- A. Your sales goals.**
- B. The costs of selling.**
- C. How to calculate your commissions.**
- D. How to attack the competition.**

**E**verything depends on your sales philosophy.

Traveling to see customers is expensive.

Building a territory takes time.

You want plenty of sales ammunition from your company

You want to be paid thousands of dollars in advances.

This results in a large investment from your company.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

B. The costs of selling.

If we choose a life in sales, we must first consider what it is going to cost us. Sun Tzu's second chapter starts with this series of warnings about the cost of competition. These costs are equally important in sales. Sales is the only job we can work at an actually lose money. It is costly for a company to field a sales force. Since most sales people are paid on commission., unsuccessful selling can be a very expensive waste of our time.

Sun Tzu doesn't believe that success comes easily. He preaches against the idea of "get rich quick." Competition is *always* costly. Sales people who expect to win sales easily never win sales at all. If we want to succeed in sales, we must understand the demands of selling and be willing to meet them.

Our time is limited. We can't have everything and do everything. We have to make choices about who we sell for. We can't let the costs and risks of selling surprise us. Overestimating those costs is safer than underestimate them.

Question Two:

**How can you find a sales job that eliminates the risks and costs of typical sales jobs?**

- A. You can start selling with a large, established company.**
- B. You can take a job that has a guaranteed salary.**
- C. You can take a territory that has established customers.**
- D. You can't eliminate the costs and risks of selling.**

This drains resources from elsewhere in the company.  
You want the best quality in sales resources.  
You want others to support your efforts.  
Others complain about how well sales people are paid.  
You fall behind when you accept advances against future sales.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. You can't eliminate the costs and risks of selling.

Sales people are always trying to find ways to reduce their risks. Most of these risk reduction methods amount to one thing: trying to transfer their personal risks to the company for whom they work. They want guaranteed salaries or advances against commissions. They want better quality sales materials and sales support. The hope is to reduce the financial risks by assuring our success.

The problem with this approach is that it actually increases the pressure and resentment in our company as a whole. We put ourselves at odds with the interests of others. We may have more resources for selling, but this increases costs to the organization. Since we can't guarantee sales, it also increases the risks. The company needs us to generate sales quickly to defray the costs of us in the field. This increases the pressure on us to close sales rather than decrease it.

Selling is costly. Advances, material, and support are costly. As sales people, we are going to have to pay all those costs eventually. Trying to transfer or delay those costs doesn't change this eventual reckoning. The more support we ask for, the more we have to pay for.

Question Three:

**Since selling is expensive, what is the best strategy to assure success?**

- A. Relax and trust in your eventual success.**
- B. Patiently build up your territory and sales.**
- C. Find a way to quickly generate revenue.**
- D. Prepare emotionally and financially for a period without sales.**

Selling with this attitude is too costly to be successful. A complacent sales person always loses to a hungry one. Long periods without a sale drain your enthusiasm. Long sales-cycles that deplete your company's resources are wrong.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- C. Find a way to quickly generate revenue.

When we take a new sales position or take over a new territory, nothing is as important as winning a quick sale. Oriental retailers once recognized this by giving their first customer of the day a bargain in order to get that first sale. In a new position, we must always be in a hurry to get our first sales under our belt.

Selling is an emotionally demanding job. When we sell, we have to have the right attitude. The best thing for creating the right attitude is making a quick sale.

The faster we start making sales, the less costs and expenses we pile up before we start to pay for ourselves. Making quick sales takes some of the pressure off and allows us to concentrate on bigger, better sales.

In order to get a quick sale, we have to work very hard looking for the right prospects. We can't get distracted by longer-term opportunities along the way. Long-sales cycles are a luxury we can't afford when we start to sell.

Question Four:

**How can you recover from a slow start in making sales in a new position?**

- A. You can't recover from a slow start.**
- B. You have to start selling smarter, not harder.**
- C. You have to start focusing on your best prospects.**
- D. You must avoid panic and develop patience.**

What happens when you are complacent?

You lose sales to someone who needs them more.

What happens when your enthusiasm fades?

You don't have the energy to continue.

As your sales efforts weaken, you inspire your competitors to attack you.

It doesn't matter how smart you think you are.

You can't get ahead once you've fallen behind.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. You can't recover from a slow start.

Most sales people don't worry enough about getting off to a fast start. At the beginning, they are optimistic and confident. The natural tendency is to think that we are smarter, better, or somehow more worthy than our competition. The reality is that we aren't. We must make a quick sale. Once we have lost the initiative, we start to struggle.

If we get off to a poor start, everything starts to work against us. The best leads go elsewhere. We lose our confidence. Our prospects sense that we are desperate. We press too hard, start offering bad deals that won't be approved. Our expenses mount. Meeting any sort of sales goal or quota becomes less and less likely. Everything starts working against our success.

When we start selling, we have to avoid losing the initiative. We have to avoid falling behind. We have to make quick sales and get ahead on making our sales goals.

Question Five:

How can you minimize the risks in selling?

- A. You can avoid the most difficult accounts.
- B. You can quickly close sales.
- C. You can try for lower sales goals.
- D. You can carefully pick the company you represent.

You can sometimes move too fast in a sales process. However, the longer the sale cycle, the more often you fail.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- B. You can quickly close sales.

Sun Tzu doesn't want us to be hasty in closing, but he always wants us to close quickly. Speed is the essence of successful sales. One of the most basic reasons why speed is necessary is that it reduces the costs of selling.

This is a cycle-time issue. The less time we spend on each sale, the more sales we can manager and the more money we can make. When a friend of mine started selling shoes, he found that the secret to making money was to wait on as many customers as possible at once. He had to work faster, find shoes in the stock room faster, but his speed translated into dollars.

As sales people, our real resource is time. The more we get done in a limited amount of time, the more money we make. A quick failure is easier to recover from than a long, drawn-out one. Getting quickly past all the bad prospects takes us to the good prospect that much faster.

What happens when a sale drags on? Its costs mount. We cannot spend time with other prospects. Any eventual payback grows more distant. We have to manage our time carefully. The only thing worth trading our time for is dollars. Our strategy must be to generate sales and profits as quickly as possible.

Question Six:

**What is the safest path to success in selling?**

- A. There is no safe path to success.**
- B. Taking care not to make enemies.**
- C. Picking the right company.**
- D. Finding the right way to pitch the product.**

You can try to play it safe when you sell or you can be successful.

You can't have it both ways.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. There is no safe path to success.

In selling, the safe path leads to mediocrity, not success. A successful sales person takes chances and risks failure. We accept the fact that competition is risky. A job with lots of guaranties is a job that eventually pays nothing.

Selling is an emotional experience. Most people don't like sales because they can't accept rejection. Selling pays well because so few bright, capable people want to become sales people. Selling is simply too risky and scary for the average person.

If we want to be successful in sales, we have to accept the risk. We have to work harder than the other guy without knowing whether or not we will get the sale. We have to work fast. When it is time to close, we have to encourage people to decide quickly. We practically have to court rejection in order to make sales quickly.

Too many sales people try to play it safe and it ruins their chances for real success. Remember what Sun Tzu said in chapter one about a sales person needing to have courage? Sales people who draw out the sales cycle, afraid to ask for a decision, afraid to control the prospect, are courting eventual failure.

Question Seven:

**How do the risks of selling affect its awards?**

- A. You must minimize the risks to maximize the awards.**
- B. You must avoid the risks to assure the rewards.**
- C. You must embrace the risks to discover the rewards.**
- D. You must understand the risks to understand the rewards.**

You can never completely insure against failure when you sell.

You are therefore unlimited in the success that you can achieve from sales.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- C. You must embrace the risks to appreciate the rewards.

After all the warnings, Sun Tzu puts the dangers of selling into perspective. Sales is a risky occupation. We must appreciate exactly how risky and costly it is. Nevertheless, selling is also the source of all success. If we don't embrace selling and its risks, we will never know how successful we could have been.

How should we react to this dilemma?

We must always be aware that rejection is a possibility, but we can't let this knowledge paralyze us. Our optimism makes our success that much more likely.

We can never completely protect ourselves against rejection. The future is never certain, but the uncertainty of our future has an upside. A given sale may turn out to be more rewarding than we could have ever dreamed. The variables that make success uncertain also make wild success possible *if* we take the chance.

We must prepare for unforeseen levels of success just like we prepare for failure. Both are possible. If we are ready for one, we must be equally ready for the other.

Question Eight:

**How do you minimize the risks of selling?**

- A. You must be always be willing to invest more time.**
- B. You must have more prospects than you think you need.**
- C. You must expand your sales territory.**
- D. You must find a cheap, fast way to win orders.**

You want to make good use of your efforts.  
Do not repeatedly ask for new prospects or territory.  
Do not continually request more resources.  
Support the needs of your company.  
Quickly earn business from your customers.  
Limit yourself to the resources you truly need.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. You must find a cheap, fast way to get orders.

Sun Tzu approach to winning sales might be called “smaller, faster, better.” We win by being smart, by “making good use of efforts,” that is, by using the competitive system that Sun Tzu teaches. We keep our initial investment in time small and act quickly, before the prospect’s doubts and objections can form. We use our time in ways that pay off as soon as possible. We earn business from our customers.

To make this strategy work, we have to avoid getting bogged down. We don’t build up large prospect lists, develop complicated presentations, or long sales cycles that we don’t need. We look for ways to demonstrate the value of our products quickly. The more direct our approach, the more quickly we can close sales and the faster we can go onto the next prospect.

Don’t worry about losing the sale. We must assume we will win the sale. We must worry instead about moving too slowly. We must be prepared to take what the customer gives us. We can’t know beforehand who will buy. We can put ourselves in front of prospects and discover a way to win them. We can do it quickly.

Question Nine:

**What kinds of demands for sales support should your company pay attention to?**

- A. They should honor to your need for a better discount.**
- B. They should heed your desire to go into new markets.**
- C. They should accept an order with special payment terms.**
- D. They should listen to your requests and reject them.**

**S**elling into new prospects is costly for you and your company.

Trying to open new markets destroys many companies.

Conversely, selling into crowded markets is risky.

These high risks can also destroy your company.

When sales are slow, the company must accept orders of questionable value

Lowering prices undermines a company's credibility entirely.

As a salesperson, cutting your prices to win a sale leaves you with nothing.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. They should listen to sales requests and reject them.

In other words, they should pay attention to what sales people are saying. Good companies should *not* change the rules for individual sales situations.

Sales is an emotionally demanding job. As sales people, our goal is simple. We want to close sales. If we are smart, we want to close the sale at hand. If the prospect doesn't want to buy under the terms and conditions our company offers, we want to change the rules so we can make the sale.

A company cannot afford to change the rules for each sales person. Long term, doing so creates unhappy customers and undermines respect for the organization. A customer who gets special treatment always thinks some else is getting even better treatment.

Question Ten:

**What are your company's chances of success in the marketplace?**

- A. Almost all business fail.**
- B. Most businesses fail.**
- C. Half of all businesses succeed.**
- D. Almost all business succeed.**

Many companies eventually fail.  
Seven out of ten new businesses fail in two years.  
The owners lose their investment.  
Failed sales people must look for new employment.  
You must give up the knowledge you've developed.  
You may hope to find new uses for your ideas and abilities  
You have wasted your efforts to build a territory  
Six out of ten salespeople find other careers.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. Almost all business fail.

This is why businesses have to be careful about letting sales determine company policy. In business, eight out of ten new businesses go out of business within their first two years. Over a twenty-year period, even most Fortune 500 companies, the largest companies in the country, go out of business or are bought up.

This failure rate must affect our thinking about sales. First, we should be careful about who we choose to work for. Second, we must do everything we can to make our employers successful. It is just too expensive personally for us to look for a new job. We may think we want them to change the rules so we can win a given sale, but we are better off working for a solid company.

We cannot succeed unless the company that we work for also succeeds. We must seriously care about the health of our company and the demands that we and other sales people put on it. We cannot raise the costs of sales. It comes out of our own pockets eventually.

Question Eleven:

**Given the risk of failure, where should you look for the best prospects?**

- A. You should try to win your competition's customers.**
- B. You should look to develop a new, untapped territory.**
- C. You should identify new uses for your products.**
- D. You should sell to your existing prospects.**

**B**ecause of this, you must generate your income from sales to existing prospects.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. You should sell to your existing prospects.

Too many sales people start with an attitude that there is something wrong with existing customers and existing prospects. Even when they are just starting, they want to more prospects, different prospects, and fresher prospects. After all, if the existing prospects were so good, why hadn't someone already sold them? They think that if they just had different people to whom to sell, they would be able to make sales. We all tend to think that the "grass is greener" somewhere else.

This is the wrong way to think about selling. The quickest way to succeed is to start where we are. Finding and learning about new prospects takes time. Managing more prospects takes more time. The more time we spend trying to acquire new prospects, the less time we have to spend actually selling. The more time we spend managing prospects, the longer we make our sales cycles.

The fastest, least expensive way to sell is to start with our existing prospects and customers. We know their names. We know where they are. We know something about them. This is especially true of existing customers. A customer who has already bought is a great prospect to buy again even if we have to help them sell. We all have sales right in front of us, but we are too blind to see how to make those sales.

Question Twelve:

**Which sales dollars and commission income are the most valuable?**

- A. Those from key long-term customers.**
- B. Those that you can win today.**
- C. Those that create more sales opportunities.**
- D. Those that bring in a new customer.**

A dollar in commissions is worth twenty in salary or advances.

A dollar in customer sales is worth twenty dollars of future potential.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- B. Those that you can win today.

Sales competition is complex. It is too complex for us to accurately predict the future. It is easy for us to invest more and more time in what we see as potentially large opportunities. We accept long sales cycles when we think that they will pay off in the end.

Sun Tzu thinks that this is foolish. We can't predict the future. The further we go into the future, the less accurate our predictions are. The longer the sales cycle, the less likely we are to predict which sales we will win and which we will lose. Sun Tzu said that we should be able to predict which sales we will win at the end of Chapter One. The longer our sales cycles, the less accurate those predictions are going to be.

Different industries seem to require different durations for their sales cycles. It takes longer to sell a new jet plane than it does to sell a new suit of clothes. In both cases, shorter sales cycles are just as desirable. No matter how long our traditional sales cycle is, we must work to shorten it. This doesn't mean that we can skip necessary steps in the sales process, but we should move each prospect through those steps as quickly as possible. The longer a prospect spends in the sales process, the less likely they are to buy.

Question Thirteen:

**What is the best way to improve the desirability of your product in your territory?**

- A. You must offer good value for the money.**
- B. You must get people to broadly promote your product.**
- C. You must have a polished presentation.**
- D. You must win sales.**

Close sales aggressively.

You need to get the benefit of your customer's money as soon as possible.

*From The Art of War*

Answer:

- D. You must win sales.

This is the heart of Sun Tzu's advice on controlling the risks of sales. Sales go to those who are winning sales. If we win sales quickly, we begin a trend. By winning sales today, we make it easier and more likely that we will win more sales tomorrow. Success breeds more success.

Some of this is simple time management. Short sales cycles free up our time for more sales cycles. Short sales cycles also minimize our investment in each customer, allowing us to walk away from our failures more quickly. This is easier if we have already won sales elsewhere.

Later in *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu spends an entire chapter on momentum. Here he is simply laying the foundation for that concept. Without those first, early, quick sales, we can't build the momentum we need for bigger success.

Remember, Sun Tzu's system is a competitive system. Every sale that we win is one less sale that goes to the competition. As we win sales, we are also discouraging the competition. We may not see it, but we are weakening the competition as we get stronger.

Question Fourteen:

**Which competitive sales battles are the most important for eventual success?**

- A. Contests for position.**
- B. Contests for dominance.**
- C. Contests for customers.**
- D. Contests for commission dollars.**

Fight for customers' business.

Win sales by offering your customers persuasive benefits.

Reward those who buy first.

Use these first customers to bring in more customers.

Base your presentation on customers' past success.

Their success is what makes you successful.

This is what it meant by helping the customer while helping yourself.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- C. Contests for customers.

Position, dominance, and commission dollars are all extremely important in Sun Tzu's system of competition. However, these are not usually won through sales competition directly. Selling is a people business. We win sales by win customers. By having customers and their money, we get the resources and credibility to win more customers.

Here, Sun Tzu gives us this simple formula for winning more and more customers. We offer special incentives to those who are the first to buy. These initial, quick sales won't be as profitable as later sales, but the speed with which we win them is. We make sure that these initial customers get good value out of their purchase. We then use our success with these initial customers to build our credibility. We use their testimonials for our product to win more customers. Nothing we can say is nearly as persuasive as what our customers say.

Question Fifteen:

**What is the key to your ability to win more and more sales in the future?**

- A. Having a high-quality product.**
- B. Offering the best possible prices.**
- C. Spending as little time as possible with prospects.**
- D. Making good sales quickly.**

Make yourself successful by winning sales.  
Don't make yourself poorer by lengthening sales cycles.  
As a salesperson, your skill is the difference  
Good sales makes your product and company stronger.  
Your sales skill determines how easy or difficult it is to sell  
your product.

*From The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. Making good sales quickly.

Good sales are sales that create happy customers. The faster we win good sales, the more successful we are going to be.

Sales people play a key role in creating customer satisfaction. We can oversell a product. People buy it, but, once they own it, they are never happy with it. Their expectations were too high. Our sales skill must control customer expectations to create happy customers. Making quick sales is critical, but these sales must lead to happy customers.

Happy customers allow us to we can win more sales. They refer new customers. They are references for us. They don't waste our time with complaints. Unhappy customers don't produce any of these benefits and they consume huge amounts of time after the sale.

Customers know that no product is perfect. We should be candid about our product's shortcomings. It makes us more credible to prospects and minimizes future disappointments. Don't assume the product has to be perfect before people will buy it. It only has to offer more value than the alternatives.