

Lesson 91: Disadvantages and Advantages

This chapter is based on Sun Tzu's idea of emptiness and fullness; weakness and strength. This concept dictates that the benefits we offer don't come from us or our products. They arise out of our interaction with our customers' needs. There is no such thing as an inherently benefit. A benefit arises when the need of the customer is addressed by the relative value of a product. This interaction starts with the customer and his or her needs. This need determines the value of our products relative to the cost of other alternative methods of addressing that need.

We call this chapter "disadvantages and advantages," but much of it is about needs and benefits. The basic idea is that weakness and strength, advantages and disadvantages, needs and benefits are a unity. You can't have one without the other. They come as a package. This being the case, we can go onto say that our personal weaknesses can also be turned around to become our personal strengths. We can find ways to turn our disadvantages into advantages, our problems into opportunities.

This view means that we must constantly adjust our methods to meet the conditions that we find in the sale. A simple way of thinking about this is that we must let the customer's needs dictate our sales process, but the concept is much deeper than this. From understanding our weaknesses, the customer's weaknesses (needs), and our competition's weaknesses, we can learn how to focus our resources on the sales proposition that must win. We fashion unbeatable sales strength by concentrating our resources where everyone else is weak.

Lesson 92:

When should you get involved customers?

- A. Before they have begun to shop.**
- B. When they have begun to shop for a product.**
- C. When others have proven their business.**
- D. When they are ready to buy.**

You want the advantage of getting to the customer before the competition does.

Avoid selling to prospects where the competition is already entrenched.

Your only goal is to win sales.

Use your time; don't waste it on the competition.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. Before they have begun to shop.

Many sales people feel they are wasting their time if they get into a sales process too early. In Sun Tzu, the emptiness of the ground gives us a position of strength. When we see a prospect with whom no one is doing business or who hasn't even considered our product, we may feel uncomfortable going after them. It takes courage to be the first. Most sales people don't have that courage.

When we get to the customer early, their "emptiness" is complete. They are even needier than the average prospect if they haven't even recognized their needs. They need us to point out their need and define it. If we can do this well, we will create a position with the prospect that is virtually unbeatable.

In our sales careers, we will find our biggest successes in developing "virgin" territories and prospects than no one else even sees as potential customers. Someone was the first to sell nonfood items to grocery stores. Someone was the first to sell snack foods to a gas station. If we can be the first to see the new opportunity, we can find huge success.

Lesson 93:

How can you control your prospects and competitors?

- A. You use our strengths to control them.**
- B. We control our competition with misinformation.**
- C. We use their weaknesses to control them.**
- D. We can control our prospects but not our competition.**

You can make customers come to you.

You must entice them with unique benefits.

You can stop the competition from attacking you.

Make it clear that they are wasting their time.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- C. We use their weaknesses to control them.

Customers need the benefits of products. Competitors need to get a good return on their investment of time. Once we understand people's needs, we can use those needs to move them. Sun Tzu taught that people act solely out of desire or fear, that is, from their weaknesses. Our customers have needs. Our competitors have needs. If we understand their needs, we can use them to get people to do exactly what we want.

The ability to move people how we want is fundamental to our success. Think of this stanza in relationship to the last. A prospect who has not been shopping for our product has not felt the need for it, but that doesn't mean that the need isn't there. Our job is to make them feel that need, that desire, that fear, in order to move them.

There are many ways that we can make the competition see coming after our customers as a waste of time. Working in these empty areas inherently discourages the competition. If they don't know that a given category of prospect is a potential customer, they will not come after them. In every situation, our job is to minimize the value of a given customer in the eyes of the competition. We can create reasons why they might be right for our products while completely wrong for a competitor's products.

Lesson 94:

What do you do if your prospects don't feel any need?

- A. You can use surprise to make them feel needy.**
- B. You must refuse to accept their claims of satisfaction.**
- C. You can use their hidden needs to overpower them.**
- D. You can use time to change their satisfaction to need.**

If prospects are comfortable, make them uncomfortable.

If prospects are satisfied, make them hungry for more.

If prospects are lethargic, ask them to do something.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

D. You can use time to change their satisfaction to need. .

Not only does every prospect have needs, but all satisfaction (strength or fullness in the original) is temporary. If a prospect doesn't feel their needs *now*, it will only take time to change that situation. If a prospect doesn't think they need our product or service, we can trust the natural pressure of time to change their point of view. We can accept the prospect's view that they don't feel any need for our product now with perfect confidence that this situation will change in the future.

Satisfaction is temporary. People's needs eventually reassert themselves. Think of this as Sun Tzu's law of entropy.

We can confidently work to address people's needs even if they don't feel that need at the moment. When focus on people's needs, we are working on the side of nature. Satisfaction is easily changed into dissatisfaction. We can afford to be patient. Prospect's needs are always lurking just below the surface. We must work to position ourselves so that we are ready for them when there reappear. Prospect satisfaction is only a temporary disadvantage.

The last line of this stanza points to another critical idea. People who are doing nothing are "satisfied" with situation simply because they aren't active. We can speed their feeling of need sometimes simply by getting them doing something, anything, that gets them feeling again.

Lesson 95:

How do you shift your sales focus from one type of customer to a better one?

- A. Leave existing customers quickly; move slowly to new areas.**
- B. Leave existing customer slowly; move quickly to new areas.**
- C. You should never switch your customer focus.**
- D. You should keep all existing customers forever.**

Abandon an established position slowly.

Quickly stake out markets before the competition does.

You can make easy progress in any sale.

To do so, you must uncover unexplored possibilities.

You must be certain to close every sale you go after.

You do this by only going after prospects who need you.

You must always keep customers that you have won.

You must leave no needs for your competition to satisfy.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- B. Leave existing customer slowly; move quickly to new areas.

In Sun Tzu's system, we are always looking for better positions. We don't want to spread ourselves too thinly, covering every type of customer or prospect. This puts us at a disadvantage in every area. We must focus or specialize in order to sell effectively.

When we change our focus, we must be slow to abandon established customers. New positions may not prove successful. We must hold onto existing customers until they do. Each focus is a stepping stone to a new, better position, but we must be certain of our footing before we move.

When we identify a new area in which we can sell, we must move to it quickly. We want to test its potential as soon as possible. We want to explore a new market before our competition does. When a new potential area opens, we must pride ourselves on seeing it first and being the first to explore it.

Lesson 96:

What is the basis for winning and keeping customers?

- A. You must be faster than the competition.**
- B. You must understand needs better than the competition.**
- C. You must do more than the competition.**
- D. You must have a better reputation than the competition.**

*You must be skilled in winning customers.
Fill needs that the competition overlooks.*

*You must be skilled in keeping customers.
Leave no unmet needs for the competition to exploit.*

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- B. You must understand needs better than the competition.

Success in sales is not an accident. It comes from knowledge and understanding. The foundation of Sun Tzu's entire system of competition is understanding the situation better than the competition.

Moving quickly can be an advantage in some situations, but in others, we must be patient. It is our understanding of prospect needs that provides the basis for using speed or patience.

We are in an advantage in every sales situation where we understand customers' or prospects' needs better than the competition. In many cases, we can understand a specific customer's needs better than he or she does simply because we have a deeper understanding of our area.

We must avoid trying to base our success on anything other than better understanding of customer needs. Moving quicker can move us in the wrong direction. Doing more can mean simply wasting our efforts. Having a better reputation is a worthy goal, but it isn't the foundation of our success: it is the result of our understanding customer needs. Success in sales is always statistical. How well are we rewarded for each hour we spend selling? The only thing that is going to increase our statistical success is our understanding of customer needs.

Lesson 97:

How do you use knowledge about customer needs in selling?

- A. You should keep quiet about your knowledge**
- B. Only customers should know what you offer.**
- C. Customers and competitors should respect your knowledge.**
- D. You should advertise your knowledge so everyone knows.**

You must be clever about your intentions.

Don't let the customer assume they know what you offer.

You must be secretive about your proposals.

Don't let competitors know with whom you are working.

You must use your skill to control customers' thinking.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. You should keep quiet about your knowledge

Since knowledge and information are the foundations of weakness and strength, we must learn how to control information. If we can control information, we can control the decisions that others make and control the image other people have of us.

In an age of over-promotion, Sun Tzu's constant advice on keeping quiet speaks against the popular wisdom. Isn't the secret to success promoting and publicizing our ideas and plans?

The simple answer is no. Customers don't buy our products because of what *we* know. They buy based upon what *they* know. We use our knowledge to control what we do or do not do. We communicate our knowledge subtly. We certainly don't want prospect to think they know our strengths before they meet us.

Our knowledge of a customer's needs is the foundation for the sales process. We must approach each customer humbly, learning about their specific situation. Even when we understand their specific needs, we don't directly tell customer what he or she needs. We use our knowledge to point them to look in the right direction.

Lesson 98:

When the customer fights an idea, what do you do?

- A. You must work harder to convince them.**
- B. You must explore our areas of disagreement.**
- C. You must use persistent to convince them.**
- D. You must quickly withdraw the idea and offer another.**

Make sales progress where customers can't resist you.

Attack the areas where they need help.

Quickly withdraw any ideas that create a conflict.

Change your position so the customer can't fight you.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- D. You must quickly withdraw the idea and offer another.

We must avoid conflict in the sales process. If we are arguing with a prospect, we are working in the wrong area. If we push people, they push back. By pressing people to accept our views, we are actually driving them away. Instead, we want to work with their natural desires. If we are talking about what interests them, what is in their best interest, we can not come into conflict with them.

We must always remember that the customer doesn't care about how great our product is or how great our company is. The *only* thing that interests them is what we can do for them, that is, how we can make them great. If we focus our efforts on how we can make their life easier, more productive and more profitable, we should never create a conflict with them. If there is a conflict, it is because we don't understand their viewpoint well enough to talk.

If we find ourselves getting into a conflict with a customer, we should instantly change our tactics. Any time we spend in conflict is wasted and builds a wall between ourselves and our prospect. This doesn't mean that we always have to agree or pretend that we do. It means that we should guide the discussion to areas where we can promote our point of view without disagreement. This means finding areas of agreement that lead the customer to see how we can help them.

Lesson 99:

What is the strongest position you can take in a sales process?

- A. You should take the position that emphasized your strengths.**
- B. You should take a position that helps your customers.**
- C. You should take a position with which everyone agrees.**
- D. You should take a position that discourages the competition.**

You must pick your sales situations.

Customers can be secretive and protective.

You must not propose your product directly.

Instead, discover customers' goals and address them.

You must avoid sales conflicts.

You can defend your customers from any competitor.

Don't leave the competition any needs to satisfy.

Divert competitors from coming after your accounts.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- B. You should take a position that helps your customers.

In sales training, we have talked about needs and benefits so long that their meaning gets blurred. People naturally disguise their weaknesses. They don't want to talk about their fears. They emphasize their strengths, but our services can't make them happier, stronger, or better unless they have problems and weaknesses. We must learn to read between the lines. We must put ourselves in their shoes and learn to draw them out. We must discover our customers' disadvantages, their weaknesses, desires, and what they lack.

We can't do this simply by promoting ourselves and our products. It would be nice if we could simply lay out the "advantages" and "benefits" of our products and expect the customer to match them up to their personal, secret needs. Unfortunately, selling is not that easy. We must train ourselves to be detectives and identify a prospect's needs from the few clues that they are willing to give us. When we talk about our products, we must do it simply from the context of those needs. The long-term benefit from doing this correctly is that it makes it virtually impossible for a competitor to displace us.

Lesson 100:

What is the key to creating a sales advantage?

- A. Imagination.**
- B. Vision.**
- C. Ability.**
- D. Focus.**

*Learn customers' positions and keep yourself flexible.
Identify a few key areas where customers have needs.
When you focus, you become more powerful.
When customers divide their attention, they create needs.
You must focus all your attention on their needs.
Spend your time where customers have not spent theirs.
You use your knowledge to overcome their lack of it.
You must offer one small idea at a time to help them.
You must lead them one step at a time.*

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

D. Focus.

For most sales people, focus is difficult. They want to be all things to all people. They want to sell all their products to every possible customer. This is not the way to build a successful career. Over the long-term, success comes from being extremely selective about who we sell and how we sell.

In any given sales process, focus is necessary to move the sale forward. Sun Tzu taught that, despite the complexities, *at any given time*, there is always just one key factor that determines success in the sales process. If we focus on that one key issue, we can move the sale forward. We may come to another barrier, but at each step, we have to focus on the critical issue that stops the sale.

We must focus on issues where the prospect or customer is “weak,” that is, has little knowledge. Our expertise in these areas is what makes us valuable to the customer. We cannot know their business better than they do in every area, but we can know one, small area extremely well.

Lesson 101:

What relationship should you develop with your competition?

- A. Friendly.**
- B. Hostile.**
- C. Indifferent.**
- D. Secret.**

You must keep your prospects, plans, and proposals a secret.

You competition must not know them.

Force them to defend against every possible argument.

They will spread themselves too thin.

You can choose the key issues to fight them on.

They are unable to prepare in those areas.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. Secret.

In interpreting The Art of War for selling, we usually focus Sun Tzu's lessons on our sales prospect. Here, however, the lesson better applies to our relationship with our competition. We develop a sales focus in order to more easily win our prospects, but in developing that focus, we cannot forget that we are competing with other products and services.

A central teaching of Sun Tzu is that our success in competition depends upon our control of information. Controlling information is especially critical in our area of sales focus. We can be friendly, hostile, or indifferent to our competitors as individuals, but we must clearly surpass them in the area of our sales focus. We develop our sales strength by developing a specialized area of knowledge. We must protect that specialized knowledge, hiding even the fact that we want to win sales by developing a unique focus.

If our opponents don't know how we are focusing our sales efforts, they cannot prepare to counter our efforts. Over time, they may learn our focus from the marketplace, but over time, we should be shifting our focus so that they are always one step behind.

Lesson 102:

How do you attack the competition's strengths?

- A. You cannot attack their strength.**
- B. You can build a greater strength.**
- C. You can develop allies with similar strengths.**
- D. You can wait for the right time.**

If they focus on price, they hurt their claims of best quality.

If they focus on quality, they hurt their claims of low prices.

If they focus on quickness, they weaken claims of accuracy.

If they focus on accuracy, they weaken claims of quickness.

Without knowing your issue, they cannot fight you directly.

If they claim every advantage, they are weak everywhere.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. You cannot attack their strength.

We want to hide our focus from the competition. Similarly, we want to know their focus so that we can counter it. We don't counter their focus of strength by attacking it. We counter it by understanding that, in developing a strength, the competition also develops a weakness. This is where we attack.

In Sun Tzu's theory of competition, we cannot develop a strength without developing a weakness. The most fundamental example is size and speed. Sun Tzu teaches that larger organizations are more powerful, but smaller ones are quicker. Similarly, if we think about the other strengths in a sales environment, we can discover the corresponding weaknesses or openings that they generate.

We must recognize that these weaknesses are also generated by our own sales focus. We can't prevent this. We can try to be generalists; strong in every area, but then we are weak everywhere when compared to an organization that specializes. This is why we keep our focus and sales knowledge a secret.

Lesson 103:

Which issue determines which sales you go after?

- A. The customer's needs.**
- B. The customer's interest.**
- C. The customer's size.**
- D. The customer's history.**

Customers have needs.

You must prepare to address them.

The competition has strengths.

Make them try to attack you on your strengths.

From *The Art of Sales*

Answer:

- A. The customer's needs.

All customers have a variety of needs at any given time. Though we want to focus or specialize in one specific need, any solution we offer necessarily addresses a range of needs. Customers never address one issue in isolation from all others. For example, minimally, cost is always a part of the equation. The money needed to buy our product can always be put to other uses.

In addressing the range of customer needs, we must arrange the sales process so that our area of focus becomes the central issue in the sales process. We must show how other issues are connected, but secondary to our area of specialization.

If we do this successfully, we force our competitors to address our area of strength. They must show how they are stronger in that area than we are. Their only alternative is to disprove our analysis of the problem, which is very difficult if we are more expert in that area than they are.

Our ability to define the basis for competition depends on our ability to get to the prospect first. This was, of course, the first lesson in this chapter. The sales person who gets to the prospect first is often the one that defines the basis of competition. This is why we want to want to focus our efforts on prospects that we discover.

Lesson 104:

What gives you the ability to develop a strong sales focus?

- A. Position.**
- B. Innovation.**
- C. Leadership.**
- D. Knowledge.**

You must know the customer's key issues.

You must know when the customer needs to buy.

You can then win the sale despite strong competition.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

D. Knowledge.

Though we have to write books on selling in broad, general terms, the real sales process can only be generalized in aggregate. Each process has its own unique issue. We can say generally that we must know the customer's key issues, but in each specific sales process those issues are going to be different.

Every sale occurs at a specific time and place. In order to win a specific sale, we must pay attention what is happening around us at that specific time. We must be in touch with the moment.

We choose where and when we sell. We make decisions about which customers to sell and when we sell to them. Those decisions are often more important than anything we say or do in the sales process, but they are seldom discussed in typical sales training. It doesn't matter what we say or do if the prospect isn't ready to hear us or deal with us.

This is all a test of our specific knowledge about what is going on in the personal and professional life of each prospect. We cannot be too "nosy" or curious about our customers as people. We must get to know their personalities, but we must also get to the specifics about what is happening in their lives at the moment. The deeper our knowledge, the stronger our sales position.

Lesson 105:

When do we know enough about a given sales situation?

- A. We never know enough.**
- B. When we know more than the customer.**
- C. When we know more than our competitors.**
- D. When we are satisfied with our knowledge.**

Your competition may not know the key issues.
They should never know when you are asking for the sale.
Let them sell inappropriate ideas as well as good ones.
The inappropriate ones discredit their good ideas.
Let them sell useless features as well as valuable ones.
The useless features raise the cost of their valuable ones.
You can let them claim that they have a good product.
They can still miss the customer's needs.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- C. When we know more than our competitors.

For Sun Tzu, all knowledge and ability are relative. There are an infinite number of facts, but our knowledge is always limited. We cannot know everything about our customers, but we must know more than our competitors. Nothing is infinitely full. We must be conscious of our limitations. We must constantly test to make sure that we are better focused on the key issues than our competition is.

Sun Tzu's method rejects the "shotgun" approach to sales. Using this approach, we try to prove every possible benefit to win the sale, hoping that some of these issues will hit the necessary hot spot. Sun Tzu sees this approach to competition as inherently wasteful of our limited resources of time and knowledge.

We always want a tighter, more specific sales focus than the competition. If our competitors are wasting their efforts on unimportant issues, they are discrediting themselves in the sales process. Customers are never just buying our products. They are always buying the quality of the company that makes those products, starting with the sales people.

Lesson 106:

When does number of features ever matter in a sale?

- A. Number of features never matters.**
- B. Number of features of competing products matters.**
- C. Number of features matters only in our products.**
- D. Number of features matter can be positive or negative.**

You can influence the sense of value in the sale.
Your competitor can have too many features.
Are they valuable if the customer doesn't need them?

Pay attention:
You must let yourself win the sale.

The competition may have a much bigger company.
You can still control them without a direct battle.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. Number of features matter can be positive or negative.

Much of Sun Tzu's philosophy was developed to contradict the simplistic—and wrong—idea that competition is determined by “size” of the opposition. Salesmen make this mistake in two ways. First, they think that more “features” equals more benefits for the customer when this is often not the case. Secondly, they think that a larger company has a natural advantage in every sale. Both concepts are wrong.

The advantage of a large number of features is that they *may* generate more benefit for the customer. This, however, is uncertain, depending largely upon the customer's needs. The disadvantage is that a large number of features add to the cost and complexity of the product, and, from the sales person's point of view, they always add to the complexity of the sale because there is more for the customer to understand. .

Similarly, company size creates both advantages and disadvantages. Larger companies are better known, but they are also less flexible. It is the sales person's job to make his advantages matter to the customer.

Lesson 107:

When is balancing advantages and disadvantages important?

- A. In your planning.**
- B. In your presentations.**
- C. In positioning your product against the competition.**
- D. All of the above.**

When you plan, know your customers' strengths and weaknesses.

In meetings, know when to persuade and when you need to listen.

When you take a position, know what is important to customers and what isn't.

When you sell, know if you addressing too many or too few of their needs.

From The Art of Sales

Answer:

- D. All of the above.

The balance of advantages and disadvantages exist in every product we sell and every company for which we sell. It exists both for our products and those of our customers. Our job as sales people is knowing how to leverage our advantages and minimize our weakness in a given sales situation. We must continually address this balance at every phase of sale process. We must consider it when we are planning a sale. We reference it when we present our products to prospects. We must consider it when we position our product versus our competition.

The common sales approach of ignoring weaknesses and simply pounding on our advantages only works in the simplest sales situations with the dullest prospects. Most customers know that our products aren't perfect and that we have competition. It makes more sense for us to actively position our weaknesses and our competition during the sales process rather than ignoring them. The best way to sell our product is to help our prospects make a good decision. If we keep the sale focused on the prospects needs—rather than product or company strengths and shortcomings—we will control the process.

Lesson 108:

What is your competition's key weakness in a sales process?

- A. Emptiness in a needed position.**
- B. Ignorance of your position.**
- C. Need of resources.**
- D. Lack of forces.**

The best policy for any salesperson is to remain flexible. Don't go into a sale with a standard product offering. Avoid initial proposals. Then the competition cannot discredit your proposal. You can beat them if they don't know what to expect. Take a position when you see an opportunity to use your influence. Keep your competition in the dark. Their sales people may learn about your proposal when it will win. They should never know why your proposal is so pleasing to the customer. Make sure your proposal is one that they cannot counter. You must adapt proposals to the key issues of the customer.

From The Art of War

Answer:

- B. Ignorance of your position.

In competitive sales processes where the customer is choosing from among a few clear competitors, protecting our positioning and knowledge is the basis for our competitive success. Competitive weakness takes many forms, but no form of competitive weakness is as critical as ignorance. In each sales, we try to position our advantages, our strengths, so that our productions and solutions best meet the specific needs of a given prospect. We vary this approach so that our competitors can not come up with a standard counter for our proposals.

Developing unique winning proposals from the outset is easier than wasting our time in continuous dogfights with the competition.

Lesson 109:

How do we best use our advantages and disadvantages?

- A. Flexibility.**
- B. Organization.**
- C. Training.**
- D. Planning.**

You must remain flexible in the sales process.
Like water, you can take any shape.
Water naturally moves from the high and flows to the low.
You can adjust to any situation.
You must avoid strength and attack weakness.
Water follows the shape of the land that directs its flow.
You follow your customers' needs to create your offer.

From The Art of War

Answer:

- A. Flexibility.

We must let customers and their needs continuously shape and reshape our sales processes and proposals. We best control a sales process by learning how following the path of least resistance.

In other words, no part of our sales plan is as important as being opportunistic. When a customer needs arises, we must be ready to take advantage of it. Perhaps more importantly, we must be patient and wait until we understand our customers' needs. If we assume that every prospect's concerns are the same, we will only sell the small percentage of customers that meet our narrow standards. Once we open our eyes—and ears—we can learn how to win the sales. Qualifying customers doesn't mean looking for prospects who conform to our exact requirements. It means learning about customer needs and adjusting our proposals to meet those needs.

By remaining flexible and open to new possibilities, we discover new opportunities in the customer base. We open up ourselves to making more sales with less effort which is the key to long-term success.

Lesson 110:

What type of sales technique must you use to take advantage of your prospect's needs?

- A. Controlling.**
- B. Honesty.**
- C. Deception.**
- D. Opportunistic.**

You must avoid a rigid sales presentation.

Water has no consistent shape.

You win sales by following customers and adapting to their needs.

Act on their signals.

From The Art of War

Answer:

D. Opportunistic.

We can completely control the sales process, but we do this—strangely enough—by following our customer's needs. If people feel that we are controlling them, they will fight us, but if we let them lead by defining their needs, we can then use those needs to control the process. A customer cannot fight a sales process that is dictated by his or her own needs. In Sun Tzu's terms, this means using the opening that we are given rather than trying to create our own openings.

Where does honesty and deception come in? Sales people can be easily confused on both issues. In general, all sales processes must be honest, but honesty alone doesn't get us anywhere. We must be honest, but more importantly we must be relevant to our customers needs. Though Sun Tzu preaches deception, he doesn't mean dishonesty. He means controlling people's perception of the future. This sometimes means misdirecting opponents, but it usually means redirecting customers or prospects enabling them to see a future that they hadn't considered before. Again, we can only do this if we follow our customer's interest, letting their desires shape the view of the future that we create.

Lesson 111:

If your approach has worked well in the past, what do you do?

- A. Look for an opportunity to use it again.**
- B. Keep using a working approach until it stops working.**
- C. Use the same approach in different forms.**
- D. Find the right approach for each situation.**

Use different tactics; no single approach always wins.
No specific time and no single proposal are always right.
You must always create a sense of urgency.
An instant may determine your success or failure.

From The Art of War

Answer:

- D. Find the right approach for each situation.

A sales approach that worked the last time always less likely to work the next time, even in identical circumstances. Our competitors are going to react to our success. If we develop an approach that works, they are going to work on developing a way to counter it. Competitors adjust. Openings close. Every sales process demands a flexible approach to creating a winning process.

The only constant is change. Sun Tzu's philosophy distrusts rigid repetition and preaches constant creativity. In the dynamic environments of competition, too many factors are changing too much of the time. Rather than lose time in trying to find situations where we can mechanically repeat our past successes, we should spend our time adjusting to our current situations.

This isn't to say that we don't learn from every success. Each success teaches us another way to win. We are developing our bag of tricks, our tools of the trade. With more tools and techniques at our disposal, we have more new possible ways to combine them to create a sale. Each new technique that we success with can be combined in new ways with techniques that have been successful in the past. As we go from success to success, we should develop an unlimited array of ways to win.