




Executive Book Digest

Smarter Selling (ISBN 0273712462)

By Keith Dugdale & David Lambert

Published by  FT Prentice Hall
FINANCIAL TIMES



“Everyone sells. Some people sell ideas, some sell services and some sell products. Whatever you sell, this book will help you do it better, and feel better about doing it.”

“Everyone sells...” proclaims the jacket of *Smarter Selling*. So, this is a book for all salespeople from retail to technology, for consultants, lawyers, engineers, media agencies, accountants and internal support functions such as Finance, HR and Marketing.

With such a broad target audience it is no surprise that the book’s scope goes far beyond traditional sales approaches. In essence it looks at how to start and then maintain long-term business relationships that are based on openness, trust, mutual respect and genuine shared interest.

At its core, the book has a very simple message. In an increasingly competitive world, the best way to differentiate your offering is through a focus on the people aspects. Treat people fairly and they will remember you and want to work with you. This message is supported by numerous stories and examples from the authors many year’s experience working with and consulting to many of the world’s leading companies.

A change of mindset

Smarter Selling scores because it not only says what needs to be done, it shows you how with a range of tools that are easy to understand. The authors add a note of caution though, saying that to practice the book’s loweU approach and use the tools, without adopting the required mindset will quickly be exposed as a sham. True loweU practitioners adopt a genuine “helping” mindset (versus a “selling” mindset) that is fundamentally different to the majority of sales approaches – an approach that focuses on the longer term benefits for both parties rather than the short term reward for the seller.

Start with yourself

Most sales approaches start with the product and then look at the buyer. Readers of *Smarter Selling* begin with an evaluation of their own behaviours to develop an understanding of how this is likely to impact buyers.

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The Octagon™ behavioural profile generated by completing the questionnaire provided with the book provides critical insights in 8 key domains relevant to relationship building:

- Leading / Following
- Opportunity / Fear
- Trust / Control
- Your needs / my needs
- Feelings / Facts
- Free flowing / Organised
- My best better than you
- Big picture / Detail

A deeper understanding of business relationships and buying behaviours

The authors argue that people often misjudge the nature and strength of their business relationships with the common result that opportunities are missed.

They categorise relationships as either social; ad-hoc; technical or partner and provide examples and stories to illustrate each type, together with suggestions for steps to take to move relationships in the desired direction.

“So much more than just a sales book. Smarter Selling takes a critical look at business relationships and shows how to improve them.”

There is also an interesting discussion of organisational buying characteristics ranging from price-busters through deal-hunters to value-buyers and a reminder of the different roles that individual buyers can play in a corporate buying decision.

Making the right first impression

Moving to skills, the book introduces a new way to open meetings and discussions that quickly engages buyers in a collaborative process and signals very strong customer focus. The loweU opening comprises three elements:

I – is all about INTENT or aims, ensuring that the objective of the discussion is clear and agreed.

owe – is focused on “WE”. It’s about passing control to the buyer and involving them in the meeting process – quite different to a more typical agenda-driven discussion.

U – is a reminder to state at the outset the benefit that U (the buyer) will enjoy as a result of the discussion

The authors claim that opening discussions in this way begins the process of differentiation and leads to much more open (and informative) discussions.

Helping buyers achieve their goals

All sales and relationship building approaches need a questioning process to build an understanding of how a product or service might be of benefit to the buyer. We’ve seen them all, from AIDA to SPIN but we like the extra dimension added by *Smarter Selling’s* SHAPE process. SHAPE feels more balanced, positive and future-oriented than other approaches that target business pain to generate immediate action (and a sale), but at the potential expense of the longer-term relationship – since pain often breeds resentment.

The “A” for “Adjust” of SHAPE feels different too. The authors contend that too many sales discussions feel to the buyer like an interrogation: a series of questions driving towards the buyers preferred end-point. “Adjust” reminds sellers to pause from time-to-time, summarise the discussion thus far (which demonstrates respect and understanding), then check whether the buyer wants to continue or change the direction of the discussion.

In addition to the SHAPE questioning process, the book also details specific examples of question types: “Focus-5” and the more exotically captioned “Spicy Questions”, that can lead the conversation into interesting and different places, further helping the seller to engage the buyer’s interest and achieve a sense of differentiation.

Its all about collaboration

By this stage, it is clear that *Smarter Selling* is all about collaboration. It isn’t about pushing an offering to a buyer who doesn’t need it. It isn’t even about your offering. It’s all about the buyer. Get the buyer to talk, find out what challenges he/she faces and work with them to help them move forward. Do this and work will flow.

Ideas and tools

From “Value Sheets” to “different levels of thinking” and “CC letters”, *Smarter Selling* is so full of ideas and practical tools that there isn’t sufficient space to cover all of them here. For the seller, the book provides a valuable resource of approaches and tools that can be used to remove blocks in communication and build collaboration.

Where’s the selling?

It’s striking that in a book that is apparently about selling, the selling doesn’t get underway until Chapter 9. But then this is so much more than just a sales book. *Smarter Selling* takes a critical look at business relationships and shows how to improve them.

If any of this piques your interest, the book is available from all good bookstores, internet booksellers and at www.ioweu.com.

Alternatively, if you would like to get more information about the book or the training and coaching programmes that align with the book, you can contact IOWEU International through email at info@ioweu.com.

“People buy [based] on feelings and use facts to justify what they feel.”

**Ford Harding,
author of *Rainmaking***

Chapters:

1. loweU – next generation sales strategies
2. How other people really see you
3. Understanding and changing your relationships
4. Understanding and adapting to buyers
5. Building rapport and trust – the loweU approach
6. Uncovering real needs
7. Moving to a higher level
8. Cementing credibility and trust
9. Presenting your ideas for positive impact
10. Getting smarter – putting loweU to work