



**Sandler Training**  
Finding Power In Reinforcement<sup>SM</sup>

## **Ten “Selling” Mistakes “New-to-Sales” Professionals and Entrepreneurs Make in their First 120 Days**

**. . . and how not to make them.**

by Susan Villamena, S&R Associates

**Mistake Number One: you are not as comfortable as you would like to be in your role as a salesperson.**

Realistically, you didn't get as far as you did in your past corporate life and now, today, as an entrepreneur, because you wanted to be a “salesperson.” No one ever wakes up and says to himself, “Gee, now I’m in business for myself—I can’t wait to knock on doors to ask strangers if they want to buy what I have;” that’s just not a reality for you.

In fact, the conversation you have with yourself may go something more like this: *“Well, I finally took the plunge. I’m in business for myself now. I understand I need to play this role and I don't like it. I am uncomfortable. The last thing I want to look like is a salesperson, but if I am ever going to be successful, I must learn how to be comfortable in my role as a salesperson. I better turn to someone who knows how I feel to help me.”*

The vast majority of new business owners are uncomfortable with their roles as salespeople. Some of you may even be comfortable but you might not know exactly what to do to sell and attract new customers. Typically, you might see your role as someone who is supposed to answer questions and give information -- after all, that’s what you were paid to do in your previous positions working for others. People ask you questions, you give them answers. When you go into a selling situation, you don’t know how to shut that switch off. So you may be of the mindset that the only way to sell is to tell your prospective customer what you can do for him or her. ***If you’ve felt the pain of “unsuccessful” sales calls, you’ve already discovered that giving the information to the prospect isn’t always in your best interest unless you have “qualified” the prospect and the prospect has “pain;” an emotional reason to make a change (not just an intellectual one).***

You may have learned that selling is about helping the prospect with his or her needs. Well, it's a start. *Pain* goes deeper than *Need*. Right now you are trying to find somebody who has needs; they *need* what you have—doesn't mean they're going to buy—it just means they *need*. The problem is their needs are intellectual, not emotional. But people don't buy intellectually, they buy emotionally. And your challenge is to turn your prospect's intellectual needs into more emotional Pains.

**Mistake Number Two: you need to differentiate yourself from other businesses like yours.**

You have differentiated yourself from your competition – but when you are face-to-face with a prospective customer, you also need to be different, act different and sound different—if you don't, then most likely the lowest price wins the business. You will undoubtedly find yourself in "Competitive situations," where you are one of three companies vying for the business. Prospect says, "By the way, I'm meeting with you and two other firms." Since you are not a salesperson, you say, "Well, I'm going to impress them with my knowledge," because that's the only thing you know how to do in relation to selling. That's what all the other companies are doing, too. So, you have firm A, B and C: A says, "We've been in the business thirty years, we are a good quality service, know what we are doing, have industry specific knowledge, are a personalized service, and we have competitive pricing." B says the same thing, and so does C. So when the prospect looks at them, and you, he says, "Well, I have A, B, and C all sounding alike, looking alike, all seem to be good, who am I going to pick? They all seem to be pretty good. And that's when the prospect starts negotiating price, because there's no other perceived differences between A, B and C. That's where you must look different from your competitors, otherwise everything boils down to price. And who wants to eek out a living being "low bidder" all the time?

**Mistake Number Three: you give your expertise away.**

Your prospective client has his unique system of finding out how much you cost, how much you know, how you can solve his problem and how wonderful your company is; he takes your expertise, and gets free consulting. Most brand new business owners do a lot of free consulting. You find out what the needs of the prospect are and then say, "Let me tell you how I can fix that for you." So that plays right into the prospect's system and as soon as you begin talking about how wonderful your company is, the prospect knows that you are trying to "close" him. He doesn't want to be closed, so he says to you, "It looks good. It's one of the best presentations we have ever had and you gave us a lot of really good information that I am sure we can put to good use and... you know, let me talk it over with my partners." -- Next the prospect asks you to write up a proposal. Now the prospect has three proposals and they all

pretty much say the same things and they beat up one of you on price, or, the prospect decides to stay put and not make a change.

**Mistake Number Four: you fail to develop true bonding skills.**

Imagine the old fashioned salesperson who opens a sales interview with, “Gee, nice office...how's the weather...good looking picture of your family, etc.” That, of course, is only one perception of what bonding means when you're interfacing with your prospective client. Bonding and rapport goes much deeper than that—it's your ability to make your prospective customers warm up to you and trust in your ability to solve their pains—people like to do business with people they like, plain and simple.

**Mistake Number Five: getting prospective clients to leave their existing supplier (if they have one).**

Your prospective client is comfortable with the relationship he has with his present vendor, so after your visit he goes back to them and says, "Look, I've talked to some other people (that's you) and they told me they could do this and that." What do you think his present supplier says? "Oh really? I can do that for you. No problem." And sensing he might be losing a good client, the supplier adds, “Listen, George, you've been with me for 15 years. How can you do this to me? You were one of my first clients." Then your prospect doesn't have the guts to tell him it's really over, which means a lot of your potential new clients (or, so you thought) disappear. They stay put. What you need to do is deal with these sensitive issues up front—and that will be very, very difficult for you to do at first (as it will be for your future prospective client). The Sandler process for this is called, “Rehearsal”, and it is very effective in getting your future customers to unhook from their present supplier.

**Mistake Number Six: you need to get prospects to recognize the pains associated with the lack of good help in your area of service or expertise.**

People either know they need what you offer or they don't. Your job is to help people recognize the pains associated with *not* having your service or expertise, or not having it done correctly (on an *emotional* level, not an intellectual one).

**Mistake Number Seven: you give a price too early in the cycle...**

...simply because you don't know what else to do. Sounds familiar?: You talk to prospective customers who underestimate their problems. They always paint a simplistic picture of what their “needs” are and say, “Well, I think I'm paying too much. What can you do for me?” The problem, as you

know firsthand, is you don't really know how much it's going to cost up front until you get in and look. Most of the time, when you quote a price, it's almost always winds up being more. But because the person hasn't been straight with you and has underestimated his needs, now you have the problem of saying to a brand new client, "I know I told you \$5,000, but it's really going to be 7 or 8." You felt the pressure from the prospect earlier to give him a number, so you come up with a number too soon. Try this instead: "Based on what you have shared with me, it sounds like it should run somewhere between 4 and 5 thousand dollars. Now, do you have any idea what the problem is when I give you a number like that?" (The prospect says, 'no.')

"The problem is it's just an estimate. Once we get in there and start looking at what you have, chances are it's going to be more. Let me tell you what typically happens when I talk to people like yourself. They tell me that they have this, this, and this, and once we get in there, we find out about that, that, that, too. Now, if we come in there for \$4,000 or \$5,000 it's going to include this, this and this. Understand that when we get in there, and there are some other things you need, it's going to be extra. So if we ever get to that point, and I say to you, 'remember this conversation we had about the estimate,' you will remember, right?"

Yes, it's a gutsy thing to say. But that's what running a business is all about—it's about not being taken advantage of just because you are new in business, new in sales and new to the industry. Charge what you are worth, get your price and make it stick.

**Mistake Number Eight: you fail to tell your prospective client how you get paid and that you have to get paid on time.**

Collections are a touchy area in most companies, and this holds true for most service firms as well. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could say, "Sam, let me share with you how we get paid. If we decide to do business, you're going to need to give me an up-front retainer of \$3,000 and then we will expect a payment on the first of the month, whatever that number turns out to be. If that's a problem, let's deal with it now, because if it is, it may not make sense getting started together." Now, what most new franchisees might say is, "It's going to cost \$5,000", but they never tell the client how much she must pay up front, so when it's time to "close," the money becomes very awkward because now they must ask for "the check." They never talked about the amount of the check although they were talking about this "mystical" method of doing business; they never talked about expectations as to how they were going to get paid.

**Mistakes Number Nine & Ten: failure to effectively generate referrals and introductions from present clients and other professionals...**

...and set them up on the tee properly. This is such a huge void in your marketing efforts we've given it double billing: mistakes number nine and ten! The biggest resource any company has, including service companies, is their client base. You may be very uncomfortable going to your clients and asking for referrals. Of course, if you've just opened up your doors, you may not even have any customers, yet, but you are still expected to actively seek others out and ask them for help—for referrals—and that may very well be an uncomfortable behavior for you.

You may be able to approach other professionals, like accountants, attorneys, bankers, etc. and say, "OK, if you have some prospective clients, can you send them our way?" Unfortunately, chances are you're not using the Sandler **up-front contract** principle. You most likely are just taking them to lunch, and saying, "*and by the way, if you would send some people our way, we'd appreciate it.*" Then, when nothing happens, you don't know what to do. You think you're doing the right activities (the "schmoozing") because you have gone to the Chamber meetings, the lunches, etc. but nothing materializes.

Wouldn't it be nice if somewhere in your conversation, you could easily and honestly say, "My experience has been that either one or two things is going to happen. Either we will decide that we have a fit or we don't have a fit. Once we decide that we don't have a fit, that's ok. Any time during lunch, you can stop and say, "Sam, I don't think we can help each other. Why don't we just enjoy lunch." It's okay to say "No Fit." (the first up-front contract). In order for us to work together, it has to be a win-win situation. So it might make sense for me to tell you about the types of people I'm looking for and what you might be able to do for me. Then, you can tell me a little about the types of people you do business with and what I might be able to do for you. Then we can decide whether or not we can help each other. Does that make sense?"

Wouldn't it also be nice if you could get comfortable with a system (that feels natural to you) in approaching your present customers and clients and giving them a reason to help you, without feeling like a beggar? Using the Sandler Selling System, there are ways to not only get referrals, but something even better—an "introduction"—where your customer is paving the way for you to meet with a referral, and feeling gratified in being able to help you.

Welcome to the world of stress-free professional selling. That's right, selling! ...in a manner which is congruent with how you view your new profession—and yourself—with integrity. And welcome to the world of more clients!

©1998 – 2008 Sandler Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.

In New York:

*For a FREE 36-page paperback edition of either “Why Salespeople Fail” or “Why Entrepreneurs Fail,” please call Susan Villamena, 914-697-7544.*

Outside New York:

*For a FREE 36-page paperback edition of either “Why Salespeople Fail” or “Why Entrepreneurs Fail,” please go to [www.sandler.com](http://www.sandler.com) to find the Sandler Training Center nearest you.*

# # #