

SELLING IN TOUGH TIMES
Secrets to Selling When No One Is Buying

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Introduction

Some of today's richest and most influential business people got their starts in sales and regularly find themselves on the Forbes 400 Richest Americans list, and as leaders of major corporations. And they didn't necessarily earn Champion status or build their fortunes during prime economic times. Rather, many of them found ways to take market share by serving a specific need or by working hard to improve upon what the competition was offering.

To name a few:

Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire leader of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation;

S. Daniel Abraham of Thompson Medical Company (the folks who manufacture and market Slim Fast products);

Anne Mulcahy, CEO of Xerox;

Richard M. Schulze of Best Buy; and

Philip H. Knight of Nike.

They came to understand that business isn't about products. It's about serving the needs of people. In fact, when you hear the term "market" from now on, I want you to interpret that to mean "people." When you're selling, you're in the people business. You sell your products and services to people. Therefore, communicating with them and understanding their needs and motivations is what selling is really all about.

While industries, economies and companies run in cycles, they are all people-dependent. People are dependent upon the companies to offer products and to provide jobs. When any hiccup in business occurs, it's typically going to require change that impacts its people – both the employees and the clients.

Change is one of the most frightening words in the English language for many people. For those who have learned to embrace change, its impact is not as disruptive. For those who want things to stay the same, it can be downright paralyzing. When people become paralyzed with fear, they stop making decisions—especially those involving their security (translated "money.")

All businesses run in cycles. There are up cycles, down turns and everything in between. And you can succeed in any of them. It doesn't really matter all that much what happens in the marketplace when you are a true professional in sales. Your key to success lies within yourself and what you believe about where you currently find yourself on the business cycle. How well you are prepared to respond pro-actively to each cycle you'll encounter in your long-term career is what this book is all about.

You see, in economic or industry downturns the salesperson's job is more vital than ever. Some consumers won't even shop for anything other than necessities in challenging times. It's the salesperson's job to help them recognize their need for and ability to afford other items.

There's a lack of impulse buyers who are usually the "gravity" for businesses. And the meat and potato big clients may be slimming down their orders or spreading them farther apart. Again, it falls to the sales team to continue to serve the needs of these big clients and to help them through the tough times so when things turn back around, they remain loyal to you, your brand and your company.

It's up to the salespeople of the world, those who put their egos on the line every day, to get out there and make things happen. This is the same advice I gave in the paralyzing days here in the United States after the shock of the September 11, 2001 attacks. It was not meant to lessen the importance of what happened on that fateful day, but to do what we do best...pick ourselves up and keep moving forward. It's only by doing normal things that a sense of normalcy returns.

You may need to readjust your thinking and some of your strategies to sell yourself out of a slump but know that it can be done and has been done by millions of sales professionals facing worse disasters than you currently see before you.

Selling can and does continue during tough times. And, it's the true sales professionals who understand and act on what needs to be done who not only survive, but thrive.

Mastering the art of selling is mastering the art of providing your clients the products, services, and contact after the sale that they want, need and, more important, deserve. That's how individuals and organizations will ride out the waves and the roller coasters of the future. That's how they'll not only survive change and challenge, but will thrive on it, prosper with it, and achieve greatness through it.

Believe me. I've ridden that rollercoaster and surfed (and survived) the rising and falling waves of change. I know selling. I did physically demanding labor, lugging steel around construction sites, before finding out how exciting the world of selling could be. By investing in myself and in some training I entered the real estate profession. By working hard to serve as many clients as possible, I was able to achieve levels of success beyond my wildest dreams. I transitioned into sales training after seeing how many others were like I had been, loving the field of selling but not understanding that it is something to be learned, just like any other skill. Today Tom Hopkins International is recognized as America's premier sales training organization. Please read the words in this book and take them to heart. I know what I'm talking about. I also know that you can take what you learn here to achieve your most cherished goals, and beyond, by providing superior service to your customers through selling.