



Business Munch

www.salespartners.co.nz

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Developing great sales professionals who can compete and win

Food for thought from Sales Partners

Keeping in touch!

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Hi and welcome to the final Business Munch this year. To munch on this month:

Starter: So what is selling anyway?
Main Course: The Dilemma of Sustainable Selling
Dessert: Join the RSN today! & Events in 2008

If you know anybody who would be interested in reading the Munch, then please forward this on to them.

Starter

So what is selling anyway?

I often begin sales workshops by asking the question 'What is selling?' We always end up with several different definitions, and some better than others in the context of the business.

Stop reading for a moment and write down your definition of selling.

Selling can and should mean different things to people who sell. The definition needs to consider the nature of the sale. I just did a quick dictionary search on google and came up with these definitions:

1. To exchange or deliver for money or its equivalent
2. To persuade (another) to recognise the worth or desirability of something
3. A deception, a hoax
4. Sell down the river (betray the trust or faith of)

Let's look at the first two definitions. (We don't need to go to 3 & 4, but it is interesting given that the origins of the word sell are Sellan, the old English word meaning 'to give'.)

Firstly, exchanging money for goods or services is not selling. This is the definition of 'sale' which is the transactional outcome of the process of selling.

Secondly, those selling commodity product to repeat buyers in a competitive market are likely to need good persuasive skills, but hopefully not be using persuasion to get people to buy something they have no need for. The best persuasive sales people will leave the buyer thinking they have bought well, rather than been sold to.

In a complex sale however, a strategy of persuasion is unlikely to result in long term success. I think of selling as 'the process of helping people make quality buying decisions and developing mutually beneficial and profitable long term relationships'. It is about helping the client succeed, from which you make sales, rather than persuading people to buy. There is a big difference.

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**Do you find you
are always
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How well does your definition of selling support the desired sales culture of your business or organisation? I generally find that wide variation of opinion on what selling is within a team will be a good indicator of a dysfunctional sales culture. Should you start 2008 with by reflecting on what selling is for you?. In any context, selling is something you do 'with' or 'for' someone, not 'to' someone.

It is time for the sales industry to rewrite the dictionary!

Main Course

The Dilemma of Sustainable Selling

The harsh reality of global warming and the impact on our environment is apparent to most of us. The Governments "Towards a sustainable New Zealand" programme, and particularly the [sustainable procurement](#) initiative for government departments and agencies, will undoubtedly lead to further change in the way all customers are buying, not just government departments.

I attended a seminar couple of weeks ago where the Ministry of Economic Development outlined to suppliers how the sustainable procurement programme has started with the low hanging fruit - light fittings, travel, timber and paper. Next in line are ICT hardware, building & construction, textiles and uniforms, cleaning products and janitorial supplies. Best practise tools and information should be publicly available this month.

I recommend any pro-active sales person would be wise to become familiar with this information, not just those selling to government departments. It will be to your advantage.

Over the past few decades, procurement has moved through era's of total quality, legal, business ethics, and now we are seeing the dawn of a new era of sustainability. Corporate and social responsibility has been around for a while, but I predict that in time sustainability will become the new 'condition of entry' for suppliers in many markets.

It does present **opportunities** for sales people and sales managers – whatever the nature of your sale:

1. To differentiate from your competition in eyes of customers on both a domestic and global stage.

Holding the relevant certification for your industry will be a significant competitive advantage in markets and economies where it is valued. The advertising of Meridian (the only energy provider with certified carbon neutral electricity), and Noel Leeming (using the high profile Erin Brockovich) are recent visible examples of differentiation in this way, rather than the usual monotonous product and price messages.

2. To differentiate from your competition in attracting new sales talent.

It is well documented that Generation Y are more likely to want to work for environmentally responsible employers. A recent US study of young workers shows 92% would choose working for an environmentally friendly company. In today's tight employment market it will provide a significant point of difference for 'green' employers.

Does it take a long time for your sales people to get up to speed?

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The dilemma for 'sustainable selling' is whether the value of being a 'sustainable supplier' can be captured. You will have to establish the importance or weighting on sustainability that will be allocated by buyers and then make a call on how this will influence their decision. Will buyers be prepared to pay? For example, will they value reduced life time cost through better demand and waste management, will they value a recycling service, or will the purchase price at the point of sale be the deciding factor?

If you can be compliant with little or no investment, then why wouldn't you gain certification?

However if it is going to increase your cost, particularly with raw materials, which then makes you less competitive against other non compliant suppliers, then is the investment worth it? If the weighting is small, and price remains the primary decision criteria then you may have a better chance of winning by being non compliant but with the lowest price.

According to the MED, for government procurement, weightings will be category specific and posted on public websites. For those working in the private sector, figuring out the importance of sustainability is part of the challenge of discovery.

So is the incentive to be a sustainable supplier worth the effort?

Reported business opinion from the [ShapeNZ survey](#) says yes, particularly in the long term with a 78% positive response, but 31% of businesses think they will be less competitive in the short term.

For companies holding the relevant product or industry certification, and/or the new NZ [Environmental Choice Certification](#) (around 30 companies now hold it) then your challenge in the private sector is to leverage some competitive advantage, and educate your customers in the value of the environmental responsibility aspects.

You then must make a strategic decision on whether that value can be captured through higher prices and raised margins, or longer term relationships.

The other consideration is whether a new market sector, or target market, of customers who are embracing sustainable procurement and are prepared to make buying decisions on this basis can be identified.

The Government initiative is about long term cultural change, not a quick win. Forward thinking suppliers and sales people will be taking the opportunity to secure some competitive advantage early.

It will add a whole new dimension to your value proposition. Give it some thought for 2008.

The [Sustainable Business Network](#) will help you to begin your thinking.

Dessert

Join the RSN

The much anticipated **Rev Sales Network (RSN)** has been launched and is now taking applications for membership for 2008.

Looking for great sales people?

Call me now to discuss how we can help

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The Rev Sales Network (RSN) is a network of forward thinking sales professionals who are dedicated to excellence in sales and sales management.

Members of the RSN are committed to their own ongoing personal and professional development, and to upholding the highest standards of sales practise.

In addition to accessing some of the best ongoing learning and development opportunities in sales, business, entrepreneurship and personal development, the RSN also offers members a number of other great benefits to help them be the best in the business

Find out more at www.rsn.co.nz and use the promotional code rsnYMM-08 before Christmas to get \$100 off your membership for 2008.

Events 2008

These are the courses I will be facilitating for NZIM Central in 2008 in Wellington.

Click on the link to the NZIM website for more information and to register for courses.

Date	Event	Location
15 February 2008	Strategic Prospecting	NZIM, Wellington
4-5 February 2008	Account Management	NZIM, Wellington
19-20 February 2008	Consultative Sales Skills	NZIM, Wellington
6-7 March 2008	Key Account Management	NZIM, Wellington
27-28 March 2008	Marketing Management Essentials	NZIM, Wellington

Click [here](#) to see all sales and customer service learning programmes at NZIM Central.

A Parting Thought to end the year:

**"I've learned that I still have a lot to learn"
Maya Angelou**

Best wishes for the holiday season, have fun, and prepare now to hit the ground running in 2008!

.....Paul