

Insights from *To Sell Is Human* by Daniel Pink

“We’re ALL in sales” – Daniel Pink

If we look at our outgoing emails and text messages from the previous week, we’ll see that several of our messages were sales attempts. We may have sold a friend on the idea of sharing a Facebook post. We may have sold our kids on the benefits of cleaning their rooms. Or we may have sold a work colleague on the importance of attending our project meeting.

Anytime we persuade someone to act; we’re selling.

Most of our professional success will depend on receiving help from people. Therefore, knowing how to sell people and persuade them to act is critical to our long-term success. But selling is hard. If we don’t take the time to develop the right sales skills, people will resist our sales pitches.

“Selling, I’ve grown to understand, is more urgent, more important, and, in its own sweet way, more beautiful than we realize. The ability to move others to exchange what they have for what we have is crucial to our survival and our happiness.” – Daniel Pink

Two Essential Sales Skills



Attunement

We can think of attunement as the adjustment of a radio dial in the mind. Just as a radio needs to be adjusted to attune to the frequency of a radio station, we need to adjust our thinking to attune to the thoughts of the people we’re trying to persuade.

The first step to attunement is lowering our perceived power

If we approach a sale with the feeling that we have more resources and know more than the person we’re trying to persuade, we’ll fail to attune to their perspective. A 2006 Northwestern University study revealed that when people are primed to feel powerful through a series of power inducing exercises, they were three times less likely to consider another person’s point of view. Therefore, the first step of attunement requires lowering our perceived power.

“Think of this first principle of attunement as persuasion jujitsu: using an apparent weakness as an actual strength. Start your encounters with the assumption that you’re in a position of lower power. That will help you see the other side’s perspective more accurately, which, in turn, will help you move them.” – Daniel Pink



Clarity

Consider a mess in your house you should clean up, but you don’t feel like cleaning it up right now.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning ‘not the least bit ready’ and 10 meaning ‘totally ready,’ how ready are you to start cleaning?

Now answer this question: **Why didn’t you pick a lower number?**

“This technique, which originated in therapy and counseling but has since spread to other realms, seeks to spark behavior change not by coercing people, promising them rewards, or threatening them with punishments, but by tapping their inner drives... Most people who resist doing or believing something don’t have a binary, off-on, yes-no position.” – Daniel Pink

By comparing our current state of readiness with a lower state of readiness, we clarified our motive for acting (cleaning the house). Our job as salespeople is to clarify personal, positive, and intrinsic motives for action by making comparisons. If we use the right comparisons, we will spark a desire for action within the person we are persuading, which will make them more receptive to what we’re selling.

“We often understand something better when we see it in comparison with something else than when we see it in isolation....That’s why the most essential question you can ask (when clarifying a problem) is this: Compared to what?” – Daniel Pink

Start your sales by comparing someone’s current experience with a potential experience, or what they have, with what they could lose.

ALWAYS answer these two questions when selling:

“1. If the person you’re selling to agrees to buy, will his or her life improve?

“2. When your interaction is over, will the world be a better place than when you began? If the answer to either of these questions is no, you’re doing something wrong.” – Daniel Pink