

The *Art* of Selling



E-BOOK

SmallBiz *Ladies* 
Melinda Emerson

www.SucceedAsYourOwnBoss.com

THE ART OF SELLING

This ebook is about the art of selling, which is the gasoline of your small business engine. No sales = No business.

In business, we all sell something. Some sell products, some sell services. However, we all need to be about selling solutions. When you go on a sales call, it's never about what you do. Sometimes as small business owners, we are so passionate about our businesses that we forget to focus on the customer's pain points. Bottomline: It's all about what the customer needs.

We put so much time into our logos, tag lines, brochures and websites. Now, I would not be a good small business coach and marketing expert if I said that a professional corporate image and web presence are not important, but quality marketing collateral will only get you the meeting.

No matter what you sell, it's the story you tell that is memorable. Communicate how what you do affects people, and that's how you make a sale. Remember when you are selling, it should never feel like you are selling. No one wants to be sold something. Stories draw people in, and tell a little something about the nature of your company about how you solve problems. And most importantly, it leaves your client wanting to know more about how you can help them.

You must research your prospective customer and understand to whom you'll be presenting in the meeting. Whenever possible, you want to present to the end customers, but keep in mind that some organizations have many layers. The rule of thumb is - the larger the customer, the more layers and the longer the sales cycle. The great thing about social media is you can look up anyone online. Once you get the names, look them up to find out how long they've been on the job, where they went to school, are they a member of toastmasters. The point is to look for a point of connection, so you can begin to create a personal relationship once you meet face to face. One of my favorite tools is to ask women if they have kids. You can always share working mom war stories. All working moms can empathize with those mad dashes to the daycare before the fines start.



When preparing for a sales meeting, use my 4-Step Sales System to prepare. It will help you walk your clients through how using your product will solve their business challenge.

- 1 **Step 1. Pre-call Planning** — Understand the customer’s goal for the sales meeting. Whenever possible find out the names and titles of who will be in the room, how much time you have, any technology available in the room. If using Powerpoint slides, never have more than 10-12 slides, and print color hard copies for small groups of 10 or less. It’s best to prepare handouts just in case the IT tech can’t be found in time.
- 2 **Step 2. Point** — As in the Customer Pain Point. Make sure the client knows that you know their company background, broad strategy and their problem. Order a 10K or Hoovers report to understand the business strength and weaknesses of your customer.
- 3 **Step 3. Story** — Everyone responds to a story of success. Lay out case studies. Talk specifically about how your product or service worked with a similar client or in their industry and the results that it generated. Clients respond to measurable results.
- 4 **Step 4. Ask**— Never close a sales call without asking for the business or at least clarifying the next steps in their internal purchasing process.

When your presentation focuses on the voice of your customer, you will stand out. Rise above focusing on your company’s services and features and instead find your purpose by maximizing your benefits to your customer.



Turning Your Social Media Contacts into Sales Prospects

The best way to sell to your online contacts is by not trying to impress your prospect through hype, flashiness, or sugar coating problems with your product or service. Instead inform them of their options and only offer mutually beneficial relationships.

In social media, there's a term for selling it is "sell-ucation." It's a way of selling through education and direct response. The objective is to create prospect education systems where customers can learn who you are, what you have, who it is for and how you can help them. Prospective clients are always looking to make an informed buying decision and the law of reciprocity will compel them to buy from you. It will also increase buyer confidence, reduce buyer remorse and inspire your prospective buyers to take immediate action. Now a days, regardless of what you are selling, prospects are bombarded with "buy this now" messages and they are scratching their heads thinking, "Why?" Why this and not that, yours and not hers? People are just tired of it. In this economy, buyers want to be smart with where they invest their money, so you've got to earn it by giving value. If done well, you can generate sales easier, because there's less buyer confusion. This process answers objections succinctly so sales come easier and refunds drop dramatically. You can use your website or blog and other social media as well.



SmallBizlady's Rules For Small Business Sales Calls

I have been exposed to too many instances of sales calls that are inappropriate and ineffective. Social media networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are great for making the initial connection, but if you do not take the time to interact and actually build a relationship with your new connection, you are still a stranger.

My handle on Twitter is @Smallbizlady and I am considered a power Twitter user, with more than 200,000 followers between two accounts. That is great and all, but my favorite thing to do is reach someone outside of Twitter -- on the telephone. That's where the real relationship is made. Once that connection is made, there's a right and a wrong way to approach a sale.

SmallBizlady's 10 Rules For Small Business Sales Calls

1 Do not make sales calls on Monday!

Do not make sales calls on Monday! Mondays are tough enough for people; do not bother them when they are just getting their week started -- if you want to be successful. The only exception to this is if you already have a relationship or are returning a call.

2 Make sales calls on Tues. Wed. Thurs. and never make sales calls before 10am or after 3pm.

The prime calling hours for sales calls are 10-noon and 1-3pm. People do not like sales calls generally. Do not be a bother to a potential client before they get their morning coffee. After 3pm people on deadline do not have time for your call. Give yourself the best possible path to success by respecting your prospect's time.

3 Always ask if your contact has time to speak with you.

And if they are busy, ask when would be a best time to give them a call back. Then you'll have a scheduled appointment which is even better.

4 Make sure you can remind your contact how you know them.

Perhaps you meet a contact at a conference or connected on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook. You need to give people a reference point because they may not remember you.

5 Research whether or not the contact is really a potential customer.

It's always best to know what products and services your customer purchases -- and when they make these decisions. If you really know your target market, you'll know this information.

6 Make sure you have the correct name of the person you want to speak with on the call.

When you do get a potential customer on the phone, be ready. You only have 7 seconds to make an impression. Stammering over someone's name is not the way to make a good first impression.

7 Do not leave a voicemail if you do not reach your sales target.

Connections are only made with real people. Your message will be deleted anyway.

8 Use contact management software.

You need to track your calls and when it's time to make follow-up calls. Don't just keep your business cards you collect in a ziplock bag. Use software to track your communications with prospects.

9 Never make a sales call on a Friday!

No one wants someone selling them something when they are trying to wrap up their week and get out the door to start their weekend.

10 Use a target list for potential customers.

At the start of the year make a prospect list. Then at the beginning of each quarter, update the prospect list. Make sure you contact your target list at least once a month by phone, email or direct mail.

QA Interview

Your sales pipeline is the life's blood of your business, so you must make sales calls. Just remember these rules so that you can build on your social networks instead of instantly turning them off with no chance of a sale.

This is my interview with Lori Richardson @scoremoresales. Lori is a "Sales Detective." She works with company leaders to uncover sales issues and then resolve them so the organization can grow revenues. Lori has many free tips and ideas on her blog at www.scoremoresales.com

Smallbizlady: Why do so many small business owners get stuck when it comes to sales?

Lori Richardson: When most small business owners decided to start a business, they focused on the thing they were good at that they wanted to sell – that product or special service offering they love. May didn't realize they'd be their company's top salesperson until one day – it hit them – they needed more customers.

Smallbizlady: What issues do you hear about most often?

Lori Richardson: People say that they don't want to be thought of as "salesy" – you know, like Herb Tarlek from the 80's sitcom WKRP Cincinnati (just Google his photo)- white shoes, plaid jacket. In reality, it is that salesperson who doesn't listen to us and tries to shove solutions at us that don't work. Small business owners don't know the right way to sell.

Smallbizlady: So what is the right way to sell?

Lori Richardson: We know that a company with good ideas and no revenues is not a real business – so one needs to turn their products and services into dollars. That exchange – the turning of ideas, coaching, consulting, or actual products into revenue is what selling is to me. It is not associated with tricks or tactics – it is a conversation with a more probable prospective customer.

Smallbizlady: So selling is just a conversation?

Lori Richardson: Basically, yes. The conversation eventually comes to closure – one way or the other. If you focus on identifying people or companies who are "more probable" rather than "less probable" to do business with, you will have more meaningful conversations and more "qualified potential buyers". If you are bad at qualifying who your customers might be, then it is a long frustrating process.

Smallbizlady: How do you qualify a prospective customer?

Lori Richardson: Through understanding what it is that they need. Now you can start this with smartly crafted landing pages on a website – so that your more qualified potential customer will continue on and the less probable customers will leave the site – or you can do it through in person meetings, by phone, social media, email, and/or webinars.

Smallbizlady: Tell me more about who might be qualified?

Lori Richardson: These are people (or companies) who fit your ideal target, or niche. In other words, don't try to be everything to everyone. Don't think your product can serve everyone well. If you do think that, it is much harder to get strategic partners to refer you. Find a niche market and create messaging and offer value for that niche.

Smallbizlady: How can working with strategic partners help sales?

Lori Richardson: A wonderful way to spread the word about the value you offer is to find strategic partners (I often call them alliance partners) who “get” what it is that you do, and they know and trust you or your work. They can promote your company on their site or they can contact their followers and recommend you – therefore offering you a “many-to-one” opportunity – many potential customers who are being recommended highly to talk with you. This type of referral has a high rate of closure, and it happens quicker than normal.

Smallbizlady: How has selling changed?

Lori Richardson: With new social media tools and all sorts of technology tools (considered Sales 2.0 tools) – buyers have much more say and control in narrowing down choices – and sellers have less lead time. In today's business world, one needs to be nimble, and needs to be out there building their brand – so that when the buyer is finally ready – they have already heard about you before you know about it.

Smallbizlady: How does attitude play into effective selling?

Lori Richardson: Small business owners need daily inspiration to grow their business. I suggest finding ways to enjoy wearing the “business development” hat – in fact I used to have a hat I'd actually put on when I did business development – so that I remembered what it is that I am supposed to be doing at that time. Small biz owners get distracted by interruptions and opportunities all the time so they don't honor having a regular time to build business.

Smallbizlady: Who needs to be prospecting for new business?

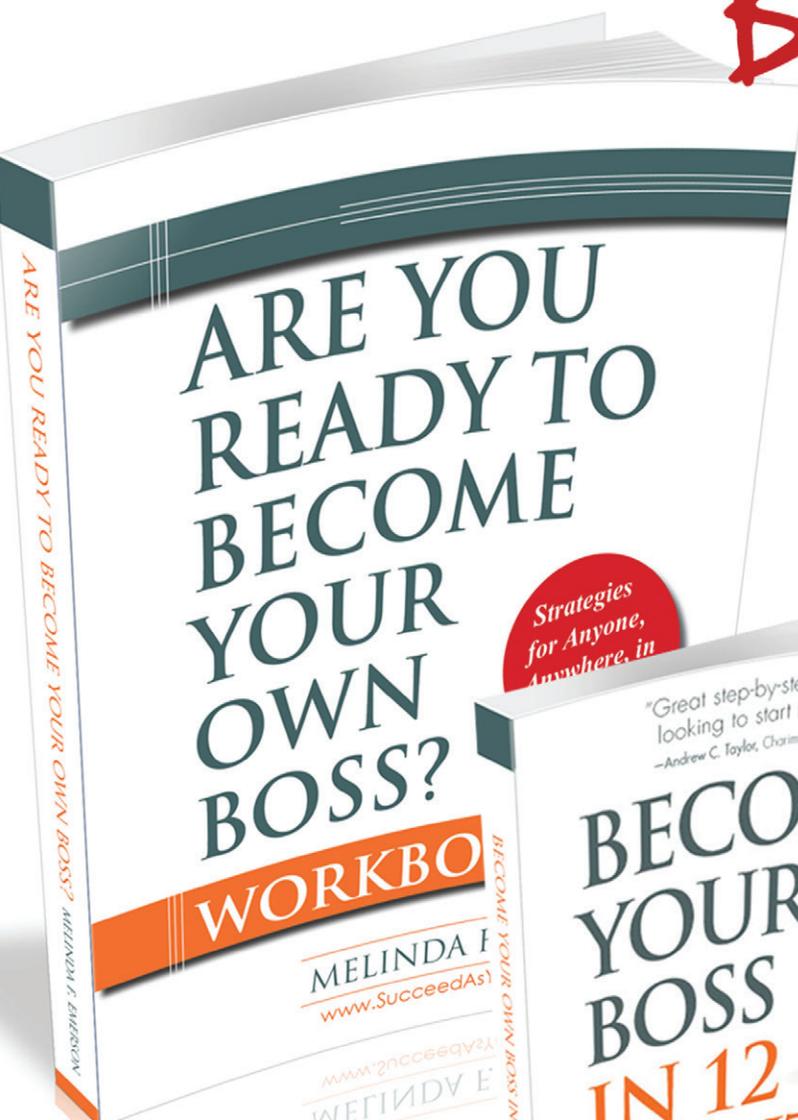
Lori Richardson: Unless you get 100% of your business through referral, you need to prospect. I prospect every week, at least to some degree. Set a regular time in your calendar each morning for outbound sales calls, emails, direct messages or at least once or twice a week schedule time for prospecting and other follow up activities for the purpose of growing revenues. Do nothing else during that time. Then, track that information in a CRM tool (web-based tracking system) like [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com) or www.bigcontacts.com

Smallbizlady: Do you have anything else to share?

Lori Richardson: Find ways to be inspired and have fun. Think about how happy you'll be when that new client comes on board or that customer places a huge order – and use THAT for your motivation.

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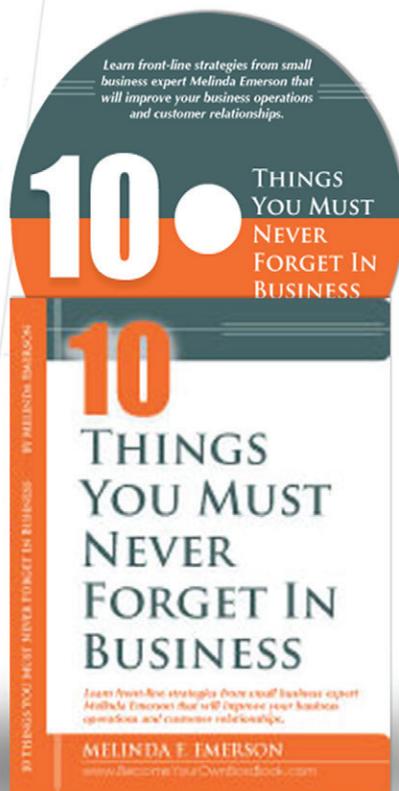
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MELINDA F. EMERSON
Foreword by Michael J. Critelli, Former CEO, Piney Bowes



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SmallBizLady
Melinda Emerson

www.SucceedAsYourOwnBoss.com

ABOUT MELINDA EMERSON

Melinda F. Emerson, **SmallBizLady**, is America's #1 small business expert. She is an author, speaker and small business coach whose areas of expertise include small business start-up, business development and social media marketing. As CEO of Quintessence Multimedia, Melinda develops audio, video and written content to help her Fortune 500 clients engage small business customers. She is a weekly columnist for the You're The Boss blog for the New York Times. She publishes a resource blog, www.succeedasyourownboss.com which is syndicated by the Huffington Post and hosts a weekly talk show on Twitter called #SmallBizChat for today's entrepreneurs. She reaches 1.5 million small business owners weekly on the internet. *Forbes Magazine* named Melinda Emerson #1 Woman for Entrepreneurs to follow on Twitter. Melinda has been featured on MSNBC, Fox News, NBC Nightly News and in *The Washington Post*, *Fortune*, *Essence* and *Black Enterprise*. She is also the author of the bestselling book "Become Your Own Boss in 12 months; A Month-by-Month Guide to a Business That Works." Melinda is a graduate of Virginia Tech.



To your success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Melinda Emerson'.

Melinda F. Emerson "Smallbizlady"

MFE Consulting, LLC
P.O. Box 280
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
610-352-0680

Email: melinda@melindaemerson.com
Web: <http://www.succeedasyourownboss.com>
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/smallbizlady>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/melindaemerson>
Facebook: <http://facebook.com/smallbizlady>

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