

CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Cracking the Marketplace of Ideas

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much. I am showing you these two book cover images not just to show the different title. People always think that British publishing must be this incredibly classy business. The American publishers came up with this rather nice wooden thing — art of the sale, subtle, discreet. (The other image) was what the Brits came up with, because they thought that it needs to really shout out from the airport bookstores. It needs to be bright orange.

I thought that I'd start by telling you a little bit about myself, and then we'll get on to this man (Donald Trump). As Simon kindly said, I was a journalist for ten years — the first ten years of my career. Further back, I was born in England. My dad was a vicar — clergyman, pastor, whatever you want to call it — who believed that money was the root of all evil. My mother bought houses, rented them out and flipped them. She was highly commercial, so I was sort tortured even growing up. "What am I to make of all of this?"

I became a journalist, and was a foreign correspondent. Then at the age of 32, I was married with a child and living in Paris — a very enviable life in many ways. But I would be staring at the ceiling night after night thinking that the newspaper business is finished — the newspaper business is finished — and I've got to get out before it crashes around me.

I didn't really want to be a businessperson. What I wanted to do was to do what I wanted to do and not go broke doing it. I wanted to figure out business and finance and all of this stuff sufficiently so that I could continue to be a writer and do interesting things — kind of fund my interesting life — the life that I had as a foreign correspondent, and to do so in a sustainable way and satisfy all of my middle class aspirations.

Off I went to Harvard Business School. I spent two years there, and to the dismay of my family and friends, I came out of it realizing that I didn't really want to be in business. I had a large bill, a degree, but no job at McKinsey or a hedge fund or any of these other things you're meant to do.

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I wrote a book about it all, which did rather well, and then I was thinking to myself, “What was missing from that whole experience?” I learned a lot. I learned how to build a spreadsheet. I learned how to build a strategic presentation. I learned the importance of alumni networks and all of this kind of stuff, but one thing that they didn’t teach was selling.

In my experience, there were a lot of clever people I knew who could do everything else in business. They could make your spreadsheets dance, and they could do these beautiful presentations and they could have brilliant ideas. But if you ask them to sell, you’d hear a whoosh of air and they’d have disappeared from the room. They didn’t want to pick up the phone and cold-call people, and they didn’t want to expose themselves to the rejection and the thought of people actually saying no to them. They were really terribly scared of selling — and at Harvard Business School they didn’t even teach it.

The reasons for this are many. One is that business schools are essentially very insecure institutions. For many years, they felt very insecure within academia. Then, in about 1950, they tried to make the subject of business very scientific. They broke things down into finance and accounting and strategy — the more quantitative it sounded, the better. Sales got shunted aside. It’s never really made its way back in.

If you want to be a professor at a business school, you have to be published in certain journals, like *Journal of Marketing* and *The Journal of Finance*. There are journals of selling, but they’re considered the academic equivalent of the “journal of bass fishing.” No one really wants to be published in them, if they seriously want a career in business academia.

I remember asking professor at Harvard, “Why don’t you teach sales? It’s so basic and so fundamental.” He said, “If you want to learn this, go to a two-week course at Dale Carnegie or something.”

So I started to look around and I thought to myself this is fascinating. You go anywhere in the world — you go to a French medieval town, or you go to Athens you see the Agora, or you go to Rome and you see the Forum. At the center of all of these places are marketplaces, places where people go and buy and sell.

Long before there were strategic planners there were merchants buying and selling; yet, when I went around and looked at all of the literature, academics didn’t really study it. It was basic psychology and when you looked at bookshops this is what you found — (Donald Trump’s) *Think BIG* and *Kick Ass*. You found a lot of books with ten tips of how to sell, which are kind of cheesy. They suggest that the main thing is to have a cute business card and to show up to meetings on time — to tell jokes and to offer a firm handshake — but it was nothing very revealing.

What I wanted to try and do was to get out into the world and really understand what salesmen actually did, because I found that there was no one really telling me. I would just be getting either these hideous clichés or this very aggressive — frankly depressing view. I knew that I needed to sell, but I couldn’t really find anyone who would tell me how I was actually going to do this in a way that made sense to me.

My approach, and you’re all anthropologists and ethnographers, but I was a journalist and so I did a bit of journalism. I was sort of journalistic in my approach. I majored in Classics at university and I had a wonderful professor there who said that the only way to write these kinds of books is outlined in the first paragraph of Herodotus’ *Histories*. He said to write about things that are “*megala te kai thômasta*” — great and wonderful, or big and amazing.

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That's all that my criteria really were, which was to go out into the world; be a journalist about things and to go and find people who seemed to me amazing in terms of how they sold.

THE TAKE ON SALESPeOPLE

When you start looking at selling — particularly in this country — the first thing that you come across if you're a literary type is this incredibly negative view of the salesman. This is a quote from *Glengarry Glen Ross* by David Mamet: in a scene where one of the salesmen is talking about customers. "They're sitting out there waiting to give you their money. Are you going to take it? Are you man enough to take it?"

Glengarry Glen Ross is an incredibly depressing film / play and (in the film version) all of these terrifying salesmen being bullied by the Alec Baldwin character. It depicts sales as this awful test of manhood. If you fail you've failed entirely as a human being.

Next is a quote from *Death of a Salesman*, by Arthur Miller. "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away. A man is not a piece of fruit. After all of the highways and the trains and the appointments and the years — you end up worth more dead than alive." Miller's play - I recently saw a revival of it on Broadway with Philip Seymour Hoffman directed by Mike Nichols - It's just so painful to watch still, sixty years after it was written.

Everything now, in all of the discussions we've had for the last five years about the corrosive effect of capitalism on the human soul, is laid out in this play through the personality of the salesman. I think that why playwrights and writers and poets always write so much about salesmen — and not so much about accountants though they write quite a lot about lawyers — is because these are the people that they come into contact with. These are the businesspeople that they see on a daily basis. They don't see all of the people behind-the-scenes but they really see the salespeople, and so you get this very depressing view.

In this quote from David Ogilvy, the great advertising executive and founder of Ogilvy & Mather, he put this very bluntly when he said, "We sell or else." Peter Drucker, the great management writer said, "Business basically comes down to two things: innovation and sales, and all of the rest is detail." Someone has to come up with something — a product or a service being the innovator — and then someone has to go out and sell it. Everything else is parasitical on these two functions. All of the lawyers and accountants and strategists and everyone else is just feeding off the host of the inventors and the salespeople. It's vital in its function, and it's important.

Again, in the U.S., and in the American tradition you have the Horatio Alger myths, the Log Cabin to White House stories. They're these amazing stories of selling and how if you can sell you can move like a hot-knife through the butter of society. If you can sell, it doesn't matter where you came from but you can rise to the top. So you have in sales the very negative and the very positive — this is absolutely terrific if you're a writer.

And then this quote, which of course I hope is haunting to everyone in this room, and it was certainly haunting to me — Walker Percy, the great novelist, "You can get all A's and still flunk life." People with tremendous educations would come out of these business schools and come out of great universities — spun out into the world with all of these wonderful qualifications — and suddenly the real world hit them in the face and it was a disaster. What was going on?

It seemed to me that sales was one of these areas which people constantly underestimated. They thought that if they could do everything else, everything would fall into place. But if they weren't

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selling well, things weren't going the way that they wanted. It's terrible and it's grim — it's uplifting, and it's fantastic material.

I started traveling around and one of the first men I met was this guy called Tony Sullivan. He's a Brit and I'm very proud of him. He lives in Tampa and is America's most successful infomercial pitchman. He grew up in Devon, the west of England. His dad used to rent slot machines, one-armed bandits to pubs. He said that the first sale he ever made was when he was nine years old and he sold his parents' house for them. The story he tells is that the realtor came around with a couple, and Tony's parents weren't there. He started taking them around the house. He said, "This is the attic. I love coming up here and playing with my train set." He took them out to see the tree house and the garden. He said, "I love riding my bike." The point was — he didn't know this, but the couple had a child that was six or seven years younger. The enthusiasm of the young Anthony for his parents' house persuaded this couple that this was the house that they wanted to raise their family in.

He said that one of the other big lessons he learned was from his father's secretary, Angie. She used to send him out on collection calls when he was about sixteen. He said that it was quite terrifying. You would go to these pubs and publicans tend to be these larger-than-life characters — bar owners. You'd often interrupt them sort of in the backroom with someone that they shouldn't be with, and they'd shout at you and they'd scream at you. Angie taught him, she said, "You must never ever be afraid of asking for money. If someone owes you money, just go out and get it."

He came to the United States and started selling in marketplaces and is now this extraordinarily successful man. He told me the story about how he really figured out his particular mode of selling. He was standing in a market in Devon when he was 20 or 21. His first sales job was selling t-shirts. He would stand behind a table of t-shirts stacked up and would wait for people to come and say, "I would like one of your t-shirts." He said that he would stand there and he would sell five or six t-shirts.

Then one day came this guy who was selling something called the Amazing Washmatic, which is a device for cleaning your car. "The faster you go, the faster it flows. When you stop, it stops." He had this whole patter that he can still recite. He said that he realized that this guy was actually pitching. He wasn't standing there with his stack of goods waiting. He was drawing in an audience with his story, which he kept repeating. It was just a rote story, a rote display.

Tony went home and about three weeks later got the pitch from the guy who did this. He learned it and would stand in front of the windows of his house and practice this thing until he had it absolutely down cold.

All of his life he has been doing the same thing. He's this wonderful pitchman. He lives in Tampa, as I said, and he lives ten doors down from Derek Jeter, the Yankees shortstop, who has a \$30-million dollar house. Tony's house is pretty big. He's got two Range Rovers and a large speedboat. He has no formal education but has an acute understanding of people and selling.

A depressing thing that he told me, he said that he doesn't think that sales can be taught — either you've got it or you haven't. He said, "I know people in my office who know everything that there is to know about sales; yet, there are kids on YouTube who are thirteen years old who are getting millions and millions of hits." He said, "The truth is once you get past a certain age, there is nothing you can teach. Ultimately, you're always being pushed back into a kind of fight-or-flight scenario in selling, and your natural instincts come out." He said, "What are you going to do in a fist fight? It's those instincts that are inculcated very early on that matter. You can't really teach it."

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What's to be done? The idea is that none of us here, if you can't sell now you're done for — which of course is very, very depressing.

THREE ASPECTS TO A SALE

What I've tried to do was to try to break this whole subject down in a way that I could understand it. This is one way. This is just one starting point. There are three aspects to a sale. One is the economic piece, which is how much something is worth. The second is structural and what's the process that we're going to go through in order to sell this. This applies to products. It applies to ideas. It applies to what you do, and it applies to everything from cars to books. It's the structure. What's the process? How long is this going to take? Whom am I going to have to meet?

Then there is the psychological piece and the battle of wits that goes on in coping with rejection and putting yourself out there. The people not taking your calls and not returning your calls, and there are the political battles you'll fight in an institution.

Now, with the first two, you can go buy books and read about them. You can study it in the same way that you study accounting. It's the third piece that I think is really hard and people really avoid — whenever they can.

One of the articles that I came across is this piece by a guy called Robert N. McMurtry who was an industrial psychologist. The article is called "The Mystique of Super-Salesmanship," which he wrote in the 1960s.

I think that it's still the best article written about salesmanship.

He said that there were these traits of the perfect salesman. The first is this thing called the "wooing instinct." Here's what he wrote. He said, "The wooer salesman is an individual who has a compulsive need to win and hold the affection of others." The trait is the product of their early environment. The woo is characterized by the conviction that he's really unloved and unwanted, and so he must use every means at his disposal — charm, flattery, even deception — to win others over. He has a high degree of empathy, which makes him compatible with whomever he's selling to, but there is an underlying hostility to everything that he does. He uses people and ends up despising those who fall for his tricks.

Wooing in a sales context is as difficult to teach as wooing in a boudoir. His ideas are that salesmen are basically these very dangerous cads, and you can't teach sales any more than you can teach how to win over people of the other sex. By the time you've bought the book on how to date, it's too late, is the idea. You'll never learn.

The second piece is boundless energy and optimism. There is a professor at the University of Philadelphia called Martin Seligman. He's best known these days for his writing about happiness and optimism, but he made his name studying learned helplessness and depressives. He has done all of this research where he says that optimism isn't just this kind of happy talk quality in salespeople, walking across fire at Tony Robbins' conventions. It really matters in how you succeed as a salesman.

He did all of these studies with Metropolitan Life Insurance salespeople in which he tested for their explanatory style — you know much more about this than I do. It's this idea of how you explain the events that happen to you. Do you immediately spiral into this vortex of self-pity and despair, or do you just put things in their right perspective and carry on? That's how you measure pessimists and optimists.

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People who came into sales with an optimistic attitude about everything in their lives tended to do not just a bit better, but a lot better. And they tended to get a lot better while they were in sales, clearly reinforced by the work.

A chronic hunger for money. I remember talking to the head of a bond sales team at a big bank in New York. He said to me that whenever he's hiring salespeople, he always asks them the same question which is if I were to give you \$100,000 today, what would you do with it? The wrong answer is that well, I would use half to pay down my mortgage and half I'd put in a 401(k) and a money market fund. The right answer is, "I would go and buy a Porsche, sir." What he wants is people who the moment they're given money, they go spend it and they immediately want more.

There's another group of salespeople and you see this in companies — I guess kind of like Zappos. They really like single mothers with children. It's the same idea where the salespeople really need to make the cash, you know? You can apply pressure in all kinds of ways that you can't with someone who's sort of complacent — some sort of generation Y-er who's trying to find himself and who is going to have a very different attitude to sales to a single woman in her forties with a couple of kids.

Self-discipline and the capacity of hard work I'm going to come back to later. Again, the idea is that often what you learn in sales is very simple stuff. It's to show up on time and make calls and to do all of this kind of stuff. It seems very simple, but most people don't do it.

I remember talking to a Japanese insurance salesman who works at Prudential. He said to me that one of the questions he got asked at Prudential as they were interviewing was "has there ever been a time in your life when you felt that you were going at full tilt?" That's the question that they had asked. The idea is that if you can't immediately find that answer, you're never going to work in sales — and do well.

It could be anything. It could have been that you played on a sports team at school and you competed in a championship. You just felt that sort of sense that you had given your all. It could have been a paper that you had written at college or whatever it happened to be, but some sense that you had given your all in a situation. If you had never felt it, you were never going to feel it. You were kind of done.

And then this final thing of seeing obstacles or rejection as a challenge, that is absolutely vital. There is a man whom I believe maybe some of you have come across — called Clotilde Rapaille, whom I believe is famous for changing the way that coffee is sold in this country. It used to be sold on taste and jolting people out of bed in the morning. Then Rapaille observed that really what people concentrate on is the smell of coffee. So every coffee ad since then has shown these kind of wisps of aroma floating up from the kitchen up to people's bedrooms.

He has written that salespeople are basically happy losers. They crave rejection. If you don't offer them rejection and if you don't offer them endless obstacles — if you don't offer them the chance to see their life as this heroic journey — they will tune out. The job of a sales manager is not to remove all of the obstacles of salesmen, but it's to put more in their way because they love overcoming them. It's what gives them real satisfaction in their life.

Another Theory: Ego and Empathy

This was another theory in that the best salesperson has this balance between ego and empathy. The way to think about this is that a lot of sales teaches us to listen. We should be listening to what

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the customer wants, you know? What are their real needs that I can satisfy? But at some point you've got to reach into their pocket and grab their wallet. You've got to close this thing. This is quite a hard combination to find, because a lot of us tend to be on one side or the other. We tend to be very good at empathy or kind of bullies. To find a person who has that match is really, really rare.

And this is what happens when you don't get it — you get this psychopath (the actor Anthony Hopkins in the role of Hannibal Lecter from *The Silence of the Lambs*). I think that many of us when we think of salespeople think of this. When we think of companies, the economic imperative to sell creates really strange behaviors in people. Similarly, there is the definition of the psychopath as someone who is highly intelligent and highly sensitive to other people. They can read you. He (Lecter) can read Clarice Starling and smell the lambs on her and hear them bleating and all of this kind of stuff — and then he's ruthless about exploiting it. Most of us are too nice. We put our arm on the shoulder and say that it's all right and don't worry. It will all be okay. A lot of salespeople don't. They see that weakness and they go for it. It makes them very unsettling. I think that a lot of companies have this tendency as well, which is a whole other discussion.

Think about what you do, because this is another useful way to think about selling and trying to break it down. It's not to generalize about selling, but to really think about all of the different kinds of selling. This is one model for looking at it.

At the bottom you have delivery. This is a postman and all they have to do is come to you and put your letters in the mailbox, and hopefully not look too angrily at you. There are the order-takers who just again, it's a simple process. As you work up, you get into selling intangibles which is what CEOs and investment bankers do — the heads of advertising agencies — and which I guess all of you do. This is in fact the hardest kinds of sales there is. It's much easier when you have a product to show and when you can say, "Here is the Prius and it only uses this much gas. It goes this mileage and has seats and all the rest of it."

When you don't have anything to sell, you have to conjure up an idea in people's minds. That takes real skill. In most professions that's where you get really paid the most. It's the senior partners at consulting firms who are out there pitching these ideas. Here's what you should do with your company, or it's the banks proposing a merger and acquisition that hasn't happened yet. That's what you get paid a lot for. That's where there is a lot of uncertainty and that's where there is a lot of skill.

One way is again, we're trying to normalize selling. We've all got to do it, and yet we don't want to be Hannibal Lecter and we don't want to be Glengarry Glen Ross — and we don't want to be Willy Loman (from *Death of a Salesman*). How can we find ways to think about selling in sort of positive ways?

These two guys (images of the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela) I love because they're both brilliant salespeople, but we don't conventionally think of them as such. When the Dalai Lama came out of Tibet in the 50s, he was very monkish. He spoke in this Himalayan equivalent of Latin. People didn't really understand what he was saying. He was very ascetic and austere. Yet, we see each day this figure who appears on stage at Rockefeller Center grinning. He's the guru of joy and happiness. He writes these books about it, you know, and celebrities want to be around him.

There is a wonderful book by Pico Iyer about him — a biography of him — which describes the process that he went through to become the Dalai Lama that we see today. He realized that no one was going to listen to him when he was speaking the Himalayan version of Latin, and just sitting up a mountaintop. He had to come down. He had to take certain aspects of Buddhism and make them

palatable. He had a mission which was to help the people of Tibet, and he had to go out and sell this thing.

Mandela, there is again a wonderful book by author John Carlin called *Playing the Enemy*. It was made into a film with Matt Damon called *Invictus* which is about the 1996 World (Rugby) Cup in South Africa. It describes Mandela's process in prison.

There he was; he went in as the face of violent resistance. At some point, when he was in jail he came to the realization that the whites knew the gig was up. They were now in this period where they were sort of holding on, because they feared that the only way this would end was with everyone being dead in their beds. He realized that what he needed to be was the bridge. "I need to be the peaceful bridge between apartheid and post-apartheid to ensure that this can be done peacefully." He figured this out. He said, "Well, how do I convince the South African whites that I am no longer the person that they think I am — the person that they sent to jail?"

He started learning more Afrikaans, and he started learning Afrikaner poetry. He started learning about rugby which was not a black sport, or it certainly wasn't then so that he could talk to his guards — talk to the foreign minister and talk to all of the politicians who came to see him — and actually develop a dialogue that was meaningful to both and to develop trust.

Now, if someone did this in order to sell you a car you might feel a little funny about it, but they did all of this for the right reasons. The reasons really matter. They adopted very conventional sales techniques and sales tactics of listening and empathizing and understanding — really trying to get into the minds of their customer in order to do things that we all agree are highly worth doing.

Again, it's getting the perspective on what is it that you're really trying to do. If it's worthwhile, then sales techniques aren't all Hannibal Lecter and grimness. They can be very, very positive.

(New images) This is Leo Castelli, the great art dealer up there and there is Jasper Johns, the painter. The story is that Castelli was sort of a dilettante who came from Europe. At age 50 he found himself in New York and thought oh, I'll be an art dealer. It was a very sort of casual decision, but I talk about him because I think that people like him — art dealers, film producers, publishers and whoever they are — they are the people who make culture happen.

So the story goes, he went to see Robert Rauschenberg. He had met Rauschenberg at a gallery opening and one Sunday afternoon he thought to himself, "Well, I'll go and have a drink with Rauschenberg." He goes to Rauschenberg's gallery and they're sitting there. Rauschenberg says, "Would you like a drink?" He said, "Yes." Rauschenberg says, "Would you like some ice?" Castelli says, "Yes, please." He said, "Well, but I have to go next door, because my roommate over there has the fridge." Castelli says, "Oh, I'll come with you." He comes in and there he sees this painting. He sees the flags, and he's absolutely captivated by Jasper Johns. Johns is only 27 or 28 — grew up not far from here (in southern Georgia).

He decides to have a show in his gallery, or in his apartment because he doesn't have a gallery yet. He moves aside the sofas and invites everyone he knows, one of whom happens to be the head of the Museum of Modern Art, a guy called Alfred Barr who ends up buying three or four paintings. Thus, Jasper Johns is born.

It took Castelli to get in there and find Johns; to go and get the ice; to see his paintings; to push the sofas aside in his gallery and to invite everyone. Thus we have Jasper Johns, and so I think it's very important to recognize the role of the salesperson in this. Artists are very grateful for the likes of Castelli. Castelli interestingly was one of the first to put artists on a stipend, because he realized that their earnings were like this. He wanted to flatten them out to make their lives more normal.

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ROLE PERCEPTION

Another famous paper on sales was a meta-analysis of all of the sales literature that was published in the '80s, all of the sales literature of the '20s. It tried to look at all of these different kinds of selling and tried to find what it is that really counted.

What they found was that it was just a mess. What they found was that different kinds of attributes, the different talents and different skills applied very differently across different kinds of sales. If you were selling real estate, it took a very different kind of person than if you were selling, you know, road materials. If you were selling a movie, it was a very different kind of pitch to selling golf clubs. Different kinds of people thrived in very different environments.

The one thing that they said actually carried across every single kind of selling was this: role perception. It's a simple idea which is that sales is such an emotional journey of highs and lows. You're being constantly buffeted, and your entire self is kind of under siege all the time.

If you don't feel comfortable about what you're doing while you're doing it and how you're doing it — if you haven't drawn clear lines between your personal and professional friendships and if you don't know what you're willing to do for a buck — your life will be a total mess as a salesperson.

But if you've figured this stuff out early on — what are you willing to do, why am I doing this, what are the techniques I need to employ and what are the goals I'm trying to pursue — you will actually succeed in almost any kind of selling. If you can get this role perception right, you have a good chance of doing pretty well as a salesperson.

One of the men that I interviewed was Martin Shanker, who trained salespeople across a range of U.S. retailing from Harry Winston at the top down to JCPenney. He said to me that the challenge with training salespeople on the floor at JCPenney is that not one of them really wants to be there as a salesperson. They're not there because they love folding sweaters and jeans, and because they love that foggy atmosphere in a department store on a Saturday afternoon. That's not why they're there. They're there because for many of them, it's the best job that they can get. It pays their health insurance, and it's decent and safe.

So when you're trying to get them to sell better, that's what you need to get to. You need to get to that reason that they're there. You can't tell them, "Oh, you've got to be passionate about your product" and all the kind of nonsense that you hear in these sales talks where you've got to be full of pep and energy. It just goes down completely flat. But if you get into that story that's going through their head that the reason I show up here is because my kids get fed and my health insurance gets paid — they will do whatever you want. Again, it's all around role perception.

Three steps of a sale. Again, we're trying to break it down to seduction, rationalize and closing. You'll see this a lot in the most basic sales training. My hunch is you lot are probably very good at the middle one ("rationalize"). On either side of this is seduction and closing, but all three matter.

The truth is that not everyone can be good at all three. Sometimes you get people who are terrific at going out and just seducing the world with your ideas and saying that this is all brilliant, and then someone else has to come in and say, "Well, here is how it actually has to happen." Then someone else has to come in and reach in the pocket and get the money — and make sure that this actually happens.

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Again, thinking about where in this are you? Where do your skills particularly lie? Where do you need to develop around those two — or hire, find someone else in your organization who can do the other two? You don't need to be all three, but all three do need to happen in order to make a sale.

The other way to think about it is that there are three kinds of a sale. Again, it's more like three kinds of a buyer. One will be sitting there thinking that I need something very particular done for me. Either you are the person to get it done for me or you are not. I need a car with airbags that can carry my kids and that goes 35 MPG. "Here sir is the Honda Accord." Done. It's a very sort of simple and transactional price, product, function and sale.

There is the self-oriented buyer. You see this a lot in commodity businesses and so bond salesmen, for example, in which basically everyone is selling the same thing. The edge goes to the person who can give them the Yankees tickets or the steak dinner — something extra — because the products are all the same.

The relationship-oriented sale is in the sort of difficult products where a lot of trust is needed. The buyer actually wants to know a lot about you, because you're delivering something that is highly intangible. It's not a commodity. It's not a bond. It's not something that's necessarily going to fix their problem. They kind of hope that it does, but they don't know at this point. They really want to start a relationship with you, and you have to be sort of open to that happening. It's just another way of thinking about it. There are many different kinds of ways of thinking about it, but I find this useful.

This man is called Abdelmajid Rais El Fenni. Majid for short. I went to see him in my sort of Herodotus mode. He lives in Tangier, in a souk in Tangier. Again, how did I find these people? I would ask people, "Tell me a good salesperson, and tell me a good salesperson you've met." One of the first things that people say is, "Well, you've got to go to the Moroccan souk. It's absolutely unbelievable the way that they sell stuff there."

Of course, anyone who has been to Morocco or Turkey or Cairo — anywhere in the Middle East where there are these souk environments, where essentially everyone is selling the same stuff — when you go in, they're tugging at your sleeve and really hassling you and pushing you to buy.

I wanted to find someone who could explain that to me, first and foremost, and also whatever else I could learn. Masjid's story is that he's a son and grandson and great-grandson of traders in Morocco. At age sixteen, he started selling sheepskin rugs to hippies in Fez. Then he was a classic souk salesman. He sold little straw camels and ashtrays and rugs that were all identical.

Now, at some point in his life without having spent far too much money on a Harvard MBA, he realized that he really needed to differentiate. He needed to get away from this commodity souk in which the only advantage went to the most aggressive salesperson.

He told me all of these tricks that they used — whether it's bribing the tour guides as people come off of the cruise ships, and he told me about these code words that they have. When the guide comes into the shop and he sees the salesman, he will say something like the word plastic in Arabic, which means Americans because they're always trying to pay with credit cards. He used the phrase in and out, if they're in and out very quickly so won't be able to compare prices. They used the word dahanzi [phonetic] which means minaret if it's a group of Jewish people, a reference to the practice of male circumcision. The shop-owners want to know this because it affects how they will sell.

There are all of these rapid fire code words that get exchanged in the first 15 seconds, and then the buyers come in and the sale proceeds.

Majid decided that he needed to sell better stuff so he went and learned about antiques. He went to Mauritania and met these great caravans going across and bought amber. He was buying amber and

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polishing it up and making very beautiful jewelry. He now runs this store that's very elegant and very chic. He has a book in the back signed by Mick Jagger and Catherine Deneuve and French presidents and all of these fancy people. If you ever go to a smart hotel or restaurant where there is a Moroccan theme, chances are that the stuff has come from Majid's shop.

Anyway, I'm sitting there with him and this tourist comes in. Majid goes and turns on the lights. The man looks at him dismissively. Yeah, okay — Majid turns on another light. Then Majid says, "May I help you with anything?" The man says, "No, no," then turns and walks out the door.

I'm sitting in the back, and I say that this to me is the great challenge in sales. Here you are a successful man and you've built this wonderful business. You know all of these wonderful things, and yet you have to deal with people basically treating you like a cheap peddler all day long. How do you do it? He flicked at his waistcoat and he said, "You need loose robes." He said, "It has to kind of flow off you. You have to get into this mindset where this just doesn't matter to you."

He told me a story about an American man who once came into his shop and started picking up things. He picked up a piece of metalware — a silver cup. He said, "What's this?" Majid said, "It's silver." The guy goes, "Yeah, yeah, Moroccan silver. Yeah, it's just a blend of junk." He picks up an antique and says to Majid, "What's this?" He said, "Well, it's a beautiful Moroccan antique." He said, "Yeah, yeah, you made it in your backyard." He picks up this ball of amber and says, "Well what's this?" It's amber. The man says, "Yeah, made in Hong Kong — plastic." Majid is getting ticked off by this. Then the man picks up this beautiful ivory bowl and starts shaking it. Majid says that he gripped him by the wrist and said, "You don't know what you're doing. That's been carved over three generations. It's a beautiful, beautiful antique. You need to put that down right now." The man went out rather chastened.

Apparently, that evening, he went out for dinner with some friends in Tangier — as Majid tells it. They told him, "You did what to Majid? You don't realize that he's the only good man in the souk." The next day the man comes in chastened, guilty and apologetic. Majid said, "I had him right there." I just started selling stuff to him and he wouldn't stop buying. He said that it's like when you put the rod out there and the fish takes it, and you let it out and reel it in. He said that the day before the customer had come in like a wild horse. And then he sat down like he was sitting on a saddle and said, "Today, I just rode him in." This was his sort of attitude to selling.

I went to Japan and met a life insurance saleswoman. There is this extraordinary group of saleswomen which is a relic of the Second World War. Japan was wondering what to do with all of these war widows. One of the jobs that they gave them was selling insurance door-to-door. It has long been a way for women to find a way into the otherwise very male world of Japanese business.

I met this woman called Mrs. Shibata. She's the top saleswoman at Daichi Life. She told me this about the rejection in her life. She said, "I often thought that couldn't make it. There were times when I couldn't get a contract, and I wept in front of a prospective client. But if you're rejected three times, you have to go back and figure out what you're doing wrong — even when you're in a devastated situation, it's a step forward to what has to be a better time. I came to learn to have an objective view of my own performance, to enjoy the hard situations. Later on, when I was trying to cold-call banks, I was rejected 98 times in a row. I just wasn't getting it. When your motivation is down, that's just another excuse. I kept coming to work because the passion was in me. This is how I contribute to society."

It goes back to this idea of finding ways to cope with rejection that is just essential to the salesperson's job. There is no way around it. There is only a way through it.

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A FUSION OF DESIGN AND SALES

(Image of Steve Jobs) I know that this man causes for a lot of you an existential crisis because it's been this bull market in Apple for ten years without a single ethnographer on staff. It's very hard but anyway — and I'm not an Apple fan boy or anything so don't worry about that.

The point I'm going to make about him is an observation shared with me by a man called Howard Anderson who is a professor at MIT and was a salesman in his day. He teaches all of these engineers at MIT. He teaches at the Sloan School, all the engineers. He says, "It's fantastic teaching engineers because they're so brilliant, but they know nothing about selling and so they're just hungry for anything." He said to me that "Often when people start up companies and a lot of these students, that's what they're trying to do, they think that they have to go out and hire a salesperson." I often tell them that that's not what you have to do. What you have to do is you have to become the salesperson. You, the engineer who can barely get your tongue out of your mouth, has to become the salesperson.

When you take the education of a salesperson and the education of an engineer and you put them together, what you get is a far stronger strain of businessperson than if you put an engineer and a salesperson — two separate people - together.

I think that one of the things that allowed Jobs to do what he did was again this sort of fusion. He brought so much together and so much of the business into himself, and he became a much more powerful salesperson as a result.

THE ZEN OF SALES

One of the salesmen I met was a man called Augie Turak. I met him in New York at Columbus Circle. I went and had breakfast with him. He arrived and he was this sort of shambly-looking man who had yellow teeth and was smoking — had on a baseball cap. He looked like someone's sort of abandoned grandfather.

He used to run sales at MTV in the 80s selling to cable companies. He now goes around talking about this thing, the Zen of Sales. He actually learned Zen in his twenties. He's a very interesting man. He went to the University of Pittsburgh and dropped out because he really wanted to be a salesman — it was crazy — and went and sold carpets.

He moved to a town where he knew nobody. It was almost like a sort of self-hazing. He went to a town and went through the Yellow Pages until he found a company that would employ him, and then he was a carpet salesman for about a year or so.

He has this very powerful sense of the hero's journey. I remember asking him, I said, "Why on earth do you do this to yourself? You don't need to. You come from a nice family and you've had a great education." He said, "Luke Skywalker doesn't need to be a Jedi, but we pay \$16 to sit on the edge of our seat and watch him become one."

He wanted the journey that sales allowed him to pursue.

Anyway, he said that the Zen of Sales comes down to this idea that he gives these endless talks saying, "listen, listen, listen," and telling his audience that that's all they need to do as salespeople. And yet the moment he stops talking he knows his audience is thinking, we get all of this about listening. But what's in it for me? The message of listening is immediately contaminated by self-interest. The Zen salesman can focus on listening without self-interest.

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Unlike so much in business, sales is almost completely transparent. It's not swathed in all the kind of mystery that other aspects of business are, which I think is why a lot of people avoid it. It's too clear. Augie Turak says that it's the best laboratory there is for understanding human nature, because it's all of these questions of what are your friendships really worth? What are you willing to do for money? What are you willing to do to the guy over there who's going to hit commission before you? You've got a great product. What kind of small lies might you be willing to tell to sell it? To what extent are you willing to get rejected? How much are you willing to go out there and put yourself out there? All of these things get thrown up in sales that I think get airbrushed in the rest of business.

With ideas, talking to people here I know that one of the big challenges is this obligation to be simple in how you communicate and to kind of take all of this work you've done — and it's so complex and brilliant. And then the market seems to demand that you turn it into this kind of idiot statement so that you can get it through into the marketplace of ideas so that people will listen to you.

Again, I've heard people say that the reason I don't like selling is I don't like asking for money. I've heard people at this conference say that. The truth is that if you don't ask for money, you're just bad at sales. It's not a virtue to be afraid of asking for money. It's not a virtue to present people with complex ideas rather than simple ones because you're so smart.

The virtue is in having this brilliant idea and actually bringing it to fruition — mastering this sales cycle in the way that the Dalai Lama and the way that Nelson Mandela did — to get what you want done done.

Sales often seems so simple and idiotic. I went to the head of the Dale Carnegie Corporation, which still operates in 130 countries in the world. You read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which is the second or third best-selling book of the 20th century and it's all this stuff you'd tell a kid. Show up on time, shake hands, write thank-you letters and smile and be nice. I said to him, "How come you've got a business doing this?" He said, "Common sense, not common practice. People ignore this stuff. They think that they do it naturally. They think that it comes naturally."

I don't think that it does. I think that it's constantly underestimated, and I think that's why people find it much harder than it should be. It forces them back. It forces them to look at themselves.

"How did you present over the last two or three days?" A salesperson would take a video and go back to their hotel room and look at it repeatedly, which is agony. It's really painful. But they do it because that's the way that they get better at it. Confronting who you are and confronting the transparency of your message is the toughest thing about sales.

This was the Zen of Sales, that you must study hard and never slack in your efforts. If you do, then you'll be nothing but an ordinary person. Augie Turak used to place this on every fridge in every apartment that he's ever been in, because he felt that that was the trick about sales. It's not complicated, but it's just relentless practice.

I went around Savannah yesterday afternoon looking for lunch. I was walking down the street — I had never heard of this place. The reason I went there was because of the line. It's very simple. People have a way of complicating selling, but this was the sales pitch for Zunzi's, which I now understand is Savannah's top sandwich — possibly America's. It was the line that did it. You realize that so much is done, so much marketing and all of this effort is expended to essentially achieve what Zunzi's has which is a line coming out of the door. It's why we go into Apple stores, because we want to be a part of this group. "It must be good if all of these people are in there!"

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(Image of man holding a religious sign) I saw this man down on the Square. I wish that I had a proper photo of him. He looked something out of a Grant Wood painting. He was very sort of grim-looking — despite having this amazing news.

(Image of two painted figures in a shop window) One place that I saw was this, and I'm going to end on this. This I found very inspiring. It was shopSCAD. Again, I have no idea what the reputation of this place is, and I'm sure that you're all very tortured by it.

I'll tell you why I liked it, which again comes back to my effort to normalize sales — thinking of a way to make sales understandable and comprehensive and doable to someone like me who didn't want to Think BIG and Kick As. I went and read some of the stuff written by the craft movement at the end of the 19th century, William Morris and people like that. They described schools and their vision for what schools should be. They said that schools should not only be teaching reading and writing and all the rest, but that they should be teaching practical skills — carpentry, gardening, flower arranging, wallpaper design and other kinds of things.

They didn't stop there. They said that there also had to be a shop at the front of each school. The reason was that children needed to learn the idea that they weren't just doing these practical activities in the abstract. They needed to take whatever it was they'd made and sit in front of the school and sell it, because they needed to understand the mechanism by which whatever they did was turned into value for others. That was the way that they understood their worth as human beings.

I remember reading this and I said, "This is it! This is why my sons do a lemonade stand every summer." I'm not trying to turn them into the next winners of *The Apprentice*, but I do want them to understand that their time and their effort and their work is worth something. I want them to be capable of mastering the mechanism by which they actually extract their value, by which they turn their hard work into a livelihood. It doesn't happen by magic; otherwise, you're just Tony Sullivan standing there with a stack of t-shirts and no one is really coming up to you — no matter how nice your t-shirts are. Meanwhile, the other guy with the Amazing Washmatic pitch is selling of product.

That's the message that I have for you — and shopSCAD is also wonderful. Again, think of sales as the mechanism by which you turn all of this wonderful work into worth and your worth as a human being. Your financial worth is an expression of that, and to think about sales like that — that's what I have to say. Thank you very much.