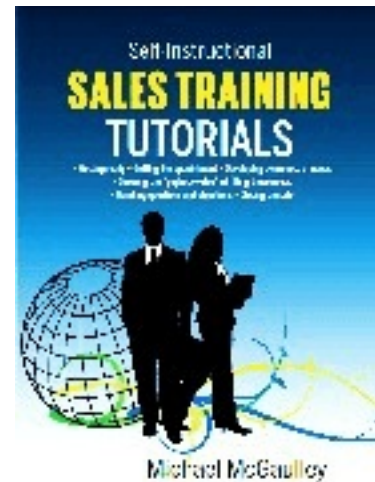


SALES TRAINING TUTORIALS

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Introduction

- Run a small business? Going off on your own? Starting-up a new venture? Independent contractor? Consultant? Free-agent?
- Got a new idea, product or service that you want to bring to the marketplace? See yourself in the mold of the classic profile, “two guys/two gals in a garage with a world-changing creation?”
- In career transition, re-aligning and packaging your skills and experience in a new way to meet the needs of our ever-changing economy?

Unfortunately, the old wisdom, “Invent a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door”—is wrong . . . if, indeed, it ever *was* true. Buyers *do not* come to your door.

The reality is that you need to find and persuade them: that is, you need to *sell* those prospects, converting them to satisfied customers.

That is how the 25 Tutorials in this book will help you: by guiding you, step-by-step through the process of defining your key “selling messages,” then finding and getting through to prospects, meeting face-to-face, developing their awareness of needs for what you offer, and responding to their questions and objections.

If you’re new to selling, the idea of phoning prospects and sitting down face-to-face to make your case may seem intimidating. But it’s not difficult . . . provided you have done your home-work, as we show here.

Some background on these *Sales Training Tutorials*

As a management consultant, my work has focused on helping organizations—and the people who make up those organizations—work more effectively and productively. My clients included some of America's most successful sales and marketing organizations, companies such as Xerox in

the United States and overseas, Kodak, Bank of America, GTE/Sylvania, and others.

Several of these consulting projects gave me the chance to ride along with, observe in action, and interview some of the best sales people, then boil down those practical how-to sales techniques into sales training and sales management courses for the new people coming along.

This book, ***Sales Training Tutorials***, and related books in this new series —

- ***Sales Survival Guide;***
- ***Sales Presentations and Demonstrations: Self-Instructional Handbook;*** and,
- ***Who Am I? Who Are you? How Can We Work Better Together?***

— builds upon that work.

What we'll be covering in these *Tutorials*

Here are some of the practical selling skills you will develop:

- Ways of moving past those who can only say No in order to get to the real Prospect—that is, the person or team who can say Yes. (In the terminology of the book, we call that person or team the “Prospect,” with capital P.)
- When to work by appointment, and when to “cold call.”
- How to break through the “Screen” or “Gate-keeper.” How to make the secretary or other Gate-keeper an ally.
- How to *use* referrals from others—and how to *get* those referrals.
- What to say in the crucial first 30 seconds with the Prospect, both on the phone and in person. “Hot-buttons” to convince this Prospect that it is essential to meet with you, ASAP.

Sample: ***Sales Training Tutorials***

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- What to look for in the reception area, and how to use that information to guide you in touching the themes that are of current special interest to this potential client.
- Some common last-minute objections to be prepared for at the start of the call, and how to turn those objections into positive selling points.
- The three most important ways of helping the Prospect feel a strong sense of need for what you are offering . . . and the most useful of those three approaches.
- How to ask the questions that lead the Prospect to put into words why she needs what you are offering, why it will pay for itself, and why she should buy from you, now.
- When and how to use samples, brochures, and other aids to enhance your message, not distract from it.
- Handling the awkward subject of price. The factor that is more important than cost, and how to help the Prospect concentrate on it.
- Ways of showing how your work or your product will more than pay for itself.
- Recognizing and dealing with the “no money” objection, both when it is a real objection as well as when it is used as a cover for deeper, hidden issues.
- Recognizing the subtle “buying signals” that indicate the Prospect is ready to buy . . . often even before the Prospect herself realizes it.
- Why it's to your advantage when the Prospect says no early. How to push for a decision without “being pushy.”
- Ways of gently prodding the Prospect to take action . . . now. Two techniques for salvaging lost causes.
- A five-step process for defusing questions and objections. Special techniques for handling both “early” and “core” objections.

- Techniques for “looking through” the *apparent* objection to find the Prospect's *real* reason for hesitation.
- Why the Prospect's objections are often questions in disguise, and how to respond to them.
- Why “I can't afford it” may really mean, “I'm ready to buy, but first tell me how to handle my boss or spouse.”
- “Proof sources”— what they are, and when, when not to, and how to use them.
- Troubleshooting and unblocking stalled sales, or “almost” sales.
- How to make sure that the Prospect's request for proof (such as for a demonstration, a proposal, or lower-cost introductory discount) is not just a way of procrastinating, or of hinting at No without really saying it, or of getting something for nothing, or of playing you off against your competition.
- How to handle it “afterward.” That is, follow-ups, thank-yous, and salvaging lost or wavering sales.

1

Are there in fact important needs that my product or service can fill?

*“Find an important need that your customers have, then show them how you can fill that need — **that’s** what good selling is really about. A smart salesperson never starts with the product; you start by gaining agreement that there is a need, and that the need is significant enough to warrant filling.”*

Traditional advice

You may already “know” what you will be selling. Perhaps it’s a *product* you’ve developed and want to bring to the world—maybe computer software, a new kind of tool, art-work . . . or whatever.

Or maybe you’re planning to take the skills you’ve developed and go off on your own, marketing your *services* as a consultant, free-agent, fix-it person, or maybe a start-up shop offering web-design or technical writing or graphic design . . . or whatever.

But . . . *what if that product or service doesn’t turn out to be what real-world potential buyers actually need?* Suppose you’re close, but not quite there?

On the other hand, suppose you’ve been “cloistered” within a specific job or organization for most of your career, and aren’t really sure how to translate your skills and experience into the larger world?

That is, how can you translate or adapt what you have (a skill, a product, an idea) to something that potential buyers will feel a strong enough need for to induce them to actually pay money for?

And—no less important—how can you communicate an awareness of that need so they will act now?

In this first Tutorial, we’ll be working through five key questions to help you take a fresh, objective look at the product or service you plan to offer. But

here we'll be asking you to shift your perspective from that of the developer or provider to that of the *Prospect*—that is, the prospective buyer.

1. *First, who (or what kind of group) makes up my target market? What do they realistically need?*

Your “target market” consists of the potential users of what you plan to sell.

If you'll be selling to business or governmental organizations, you'll need to find your way to the person or team within that organization who can say yes to buying from you. That is, the Prospect.

In this book, we'll be referring to that person or team who can say Yes as the Prospect, capital P. A Prospect is the person or team who has the authority to buy what you sell, the need for it, and the dollars or budget authority to sign the order.

The point is this: there are a lot of people to whom you can make your sales presentation, but in most cases you're wasting your time (and theirs) if they are not true Prospects, with authority, need and dollars.

For the moment, think in general terms about *who might need something like what you are planning to sell*.

I say “something like” as a reminder that it's not wise to get locked in on a particular idea just yet. Your initial idea is a good starting point, but *what really matters is **not your idea** for a product or service but rather the **real-world needs** of those who will be buying*.

Put differently, buyers are NOT likely to be particularly interested in what your product or service IS. What matters to them is what it DOES in filling real needs in the real world which they face.

Implication: in planning your campaign, you need to look beyond what your idea or product or expertise IS, and think more in terms of what it DOES for

your future buyers and clients.

True, what it IS gets you started toward what it DOES: it puts you in the ballpark.

But to really bring it into practical focus, you need to *look from the prospect's viewpoint*, and to get that you need to get a sense of *what real needs* she or he or the organization face.

Look again at what you plan to offer, now asking questions like these. (Adapt them to the particular field in which you are working.)

- What kind of *real-world needs* does it fill? That is, what problems does it solve?
- What kinds of *bottlenecks* can it break open?
- In what ways can it make the Prospect's *work or life easier*? More *enjoyable*? More *efficient*? *Happier*?
- How can it *increase the Prospect's wealth*? *Sales*? *Profitability*? (Or whatever might really matter to people who are among your target users.)
- **Ultimately: Why should someone spend money to buy what you are offering? What does it DO for them? What important NEEDS does it fill?**

Template

Note: throughout this book, we'll be using templates as frameworks for organizing information and ideas. The templates are here to help you organize and record your thoughts. Beyond that, they provide a written record for later as you fit the pieces from these tutorials together into the larger action plan.

Here's an example of how this template is used:

Potential buyers of my product/service	Why they might need it
Small family-owned restaurants	usually understaffed, need a system to make re-ordering quicker and easier

Now try it yourself, using the template as a tool for focusing on your own proposed product or service. But caution: don't get too locked in on your starting idea: that's always subject to revision. Direct your focus to the kinds of needs that exist. Keep your mind open to revising your product or service to fit what the real-world needs tell you.

Potential buyers of my product/service	Why they might need it

More about "needs"

We'll be speaking constantly of finding and filling the needs of Prospects. After all, if you find a need and offer a good way of filling it, you turn mere Prospects into customers.

As we'll be using the term in this book, "**Prospects**" are people who ***might*** buy; "**customers**" are those who ***have*** bought.

What IS a Prospect's "need?" Well, that depends. Depends, of course, on the specific person or organization and their specific situation. But the needs which Prospects have tend to fall into some broad categories, as on the chart following. These are generic needs; be alert to the specific needs that may be important in your particular field.

Broad type of need. To . . .	Examples
. . . possess something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They bought a new house, and need to get it insured. – Their car has died and they need transportation NOW.
. . . improve or repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The car only has a broken windshield that needs repair to pass inspection. – A small shop-owner sees her sales and profits sliding downhill, and needs to turn it around.
. . . make life easier, more enjoyable, more efficient, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A stressed executive would love to reduce the number of household chores waiting on the weekend.
. . . become more efficient, earn more money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You're spinning your wheels keeping up with the details and paperwork, and never seem to get to what really pays the bills.
. . . accomplish something — that is, to get it done and done well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It's tax season and that shop-owner has no idea how (nor time) to get the returns filed.
. . . eliminate something negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Too much time is wasted fighting the present computer software, time that is needed for other important tasks.

-
2. Focus on the most promising of these Prospects, and ask: ***What is that unfilled need costing? Why does it make good financial sense for them to invest money in filling that need? How does my product or service fill that need?***

It's a great advantage if you can make *the case that your product helps pay for itself* in some manner, because then the buyer can see that the *actual cost* is somewhat *less than the purchase price*.

You may even be able to show that over a time period your product even *saves more money than it costs*.

For example, a leaking roof is an unfilled need. If my roof leaks, then the longer I put it off the more it costs: the rainwater seeps through and can begin rotting the timbers; the dampness can set up conditions for mold,

which is costly to remove; water that leaks through can damage furniture and rugs and family photos— all of which means that repairs are going to cost a lot more in the end.

All of these factors — even something like embarrassment or the time plugging leaks and emptying pans — costs money . . . or costs time, which translates as money.

Template for analyzing how your solution helps pay for itself

Prospect's need: new roof to replace one that leaks

What that unfilled need is costing.	How I can fill that need and hence save Prospect money, time, effort, etc.
If roof is not replaced before rainy season, the water will seep through to main joists. That could add up to \$10,000 in repairs.	By installing a new roof now, only the shingles will need to be replaced. The entire roof can be replaced, including both parts and labor, for less than it would later cost to begin replacing the boards that may rot underneath from leaking water.
Also, interior walls and ceilings could be soaked, adding about \$1,000 or more per room.	Again, these costs can be avoided if I put the roof on now. I can do the whole roof for less than the cost of repairing walls and ceilings in just three rooms.

Using that as a model, adapt it to the specific product or service that you sell:

Prospect's need: _____

What that unfilled need is costing	How I can fill that need and hence save the Prospect money, time, effort, etc.

You may object, “But this is just guesswork”

Granted, much of your input above — at this point, at least — may be pure speculation. But it’s getting you started in the right direction. Later, before you go too far down the road, go out and talk to a few of your potential Prospects in order to test your present thinking, and to gain their fresh insight. *Then* you’ll have real numbers.

- If those real users don’t agree on the need or the importance and value of what you’re proposing, then go back to the drawing board and rethink it before investing any more time or capital.
- You’ll find that most will be pleased to be asked for their advice. They may well become your first buyers — because you can give them what they’ve told you they need.
- They may also become promoters for you, passing on leads and making helpful, door-opening introductions to other users.

3. *What questions could I ask to draw out the kind of answers that would make the case for my product or service?*

If you’re new to selling, you may be expecting a sales call to be all show-and-tell: you **show** your product, then **tell** the prospective buyer why he or she should buy.

But that is not the way the really good sales people operate, because show-and-tell is usually not very effective. In fact, mere telling is usually counter-productive, because they know you’re there to sell them. Therefore, whatever you show-and-tell is suspect in their eyes.

Much better than show-and-tell is to get the prospect **to tell you** why your product or service is needed, and why it will pay for itself many times over. Does that sound like magic, getting the prospect telling you things like that? Well, *abra-cadabra!*, *the magic comes from asking the RIGHT questions — that is, questions that lead to answers that make your case.*

However, these productive questions don't just happen.

You can't just "wing" questions and expect them to do the job effectively. *It's essential to think through in advance what kinds of questions are likely to be productive for you in this situation.*

You also need to develop a sense of what the *answers* are likely to be, so that you can take those answers and use them as evidence for making your case.

Suppose you're a free-lance editor/writer, and hope to build a business by offering the service of developing newsletters for client companies. Now you're about to make a sales call on a prospect firm which you've heard has been having problems in getting their newsletter out on time, with professional appearance.

When you make that sales call, you *could* begin by showing samples of some of the newsletters you've done for others. That might work.

But what if this Prospect doesn't happen to like the design you used in that previous project?

Or what if they aren't willing to admit that their present approach is not working well? If you've already shown your samples, then you're stranded with no place further you can go in the call.

In the sample below, I've set out some questions that might work well in this situation. That's in the first column. If the Prospect provides the ideal response that you'd like to hear (second column), then nothing more needs to be asked, and you can call on statements as in the third column to make that link between the needs the Prospect expressed, and how your product or service will fill them. (We'll abbreviate product or service as P/S.)

Questions I could ask that will help the prospect recognize and put that need into words.	The ideal response I'd like to hear	Linking to each need, a brief statement of how my product or service will fill that need, and in some way help pay for itself.
"Do you find that your company's newsletter frequently slips its publication deadline because of other calls on your staff's time?"	"Yes, it does, and all too often. Besides, my secretary is spending a lot of time typing and proofreading when I need other things done."	"In my work as a free-agent producer of newsletters, I see that happen frequently. That's why I offer a guaranteed service of handling newsletters from start to finish — from gathering information and writing it up to seeing the finished product off to the printer."
"Have you had any adverse feedback from customers when your newsletter arrives late? Do you have any concern that a late newsletter may be seen by customers as a reflection that you may be unable to meet other deadlines?"	"You bet! This is a problem for us. If our clients think we can't even get our newsletter out on time, then how can they count on us for anything?"	"Because my sole focus is on newsletters, I can guarantee on-time delivery, which means that your customers will get your company's information on time, every time. It means, as well, that they will get a positive impression of your company's professionalism in delivering on-time, every time."

Now try it yourself. Based on your insights from earlier work here, as well as any other input, what kinds of questions could you ask in order to get the Prospect to open up and discuss the kinds of needs that you can fill? Note that this is a three-step process:

- (1) ***asking the right questions***, questions that get the prospect talking you about a need that you can fill;
- (2) ***listening for the response*** that makes your point for you, as the Prospect puts a need into words;

(3) **linking that need** as expressed by the Prospect to a concrete, practical way in which you can fill that need.

The template here guides you through planning out these steps:

(1) Questions I could ask that will help the prospect recognize and put that need into words.	(2) The ideal response I'd like to hear	(3) Linking to each need, a brief statement of how my product or service will fill that need, and in some way help pay for itself.

Though the questions you develop here are all just first draft, they will form the foundation for the actual questions you ask later, when you are actually in front of customers, after you have refined the questions.

Further, the process of developing questions and then making the link to your product will help you boil down precisely what you are selling, and why it is valuable to prospects.

4. How can I best express the ways in which my product or service can assist this customer in filling these needs?

We'll be talking in more detail later, but the basic "model" for selling is,

- first, *get the Prospect to express needs and the importance of filling them*, then,
- second, *link the capabilities of your product or service to those needs by expressing what it does to fill those needs, and how it can help pay for itself by savings of cost, time, effort, or whatever.*

In the previous step, you explored the questions to ask in getting the Prospect to talk about *needs* and the *value of filling those needs*. Then you

briefly stated how you can fill that need, and how it can help pay for itself. That may be all it takes; then again you may need to flesh that out more in order to be persuasive.

The template below guides you in fleshing out your expression of how your P/S can fill those Prospect needs. (Remember this abbreviation: P/S means product or service.)

Keep in mind that “value” as we use it here, may refer to direct dollar savings or reduced cost. Or value may come in other ways: for example, the “value” of saving work time, or hassle, or of presenting a more professional appearance. In short, “value” depends on situation.

Capabilities of my product or service	What it DOES to fill customer needs.	With estimated value (by means of savings or other payback) of \$_____.
#1: write and design sales brochures	Gets brochures out quickly, with professional appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can boost sales by estimated 10%, as much as \$10,000 per month. - Also helps project a better image for the client.
#2: write product manuals	Your buyers learn how to use the equipment from neat, well-designed and tested guidebooks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The how-to manuals are ready when the product is shipped, without taking up the time of your internal staff. - This saves up to 100 hours of your staff time, at an average salary of \$25 per hour. - Your customers don't have to wade through "engineer talk." That means they are more satisfied, and less likely to return the product or need telephone customer service — both of which can be very expensive.

Now, using the sample as a model, complete the template with input for your own product or service. If you don't know what these estimated savings or other payback might be, give your best guess, but try to come up with some kind of real-world measure that can be stated in monetary terms. (Cost savings are ideal, but time savings can also be translated to money.)

Capabilities of my product or service	What it DOES to fill customer needs.	With estimated savings or other payback of \$____.
Capability #1:		
#2:		
#3:		
#4:		

5. How will I introduce myself and my product or service? What is my “Opening Business Statement or “Elevator Speech?””

Here we make a first cut at pulling the questions above into concrete action.

One of the key tools you'll need is a short, to-the-point, intriguing statement that introduces yourself and what you offer to potential buyers, or just to the people you happen to meet in business settings. That brief introduction is your **Opening Business Statement**.

A useful Opening Business Statement (OBS) is a brief, to-the-point “sound-bite” that sums up who you (and your product or service) are, along with what it does for customers, and why that is important to them.

You'll be using this OBS constantly as you call on the phone for appointments, as you set the context for your sales calls, even when you meet people in passing at business events like luncheons and meetings of the societies to which you belong.

The OBS is like your extended business card or a speaking advertisement. But it also has another purpose: the discipline that goes into developing that short, succinct “selling statement” helps you define and focus your thinking of just what you and your product or service are ultimately “about.”

Very closely related to the **Opening Business Statement** is what some term the “**Elevator Speech.**”

You use an OBS when you’re making an actual sales call, while an elevator speech is something you might say while riding an elevator with someone who asks, “So what do you do?”

You need to have a statement ready at hand that sums up who you are what needs you fill— all within the brief span of that elevator ride. The point, thus, is **to get to the point**, and focus on **how you fill needs**, not technical stuff about your product.

It’s almost certain that your perception of this Opening Business Statement, and all that it implies, will change with time and experience. Still, it’s important to develop a first draft of it now so you have something to work from.

The template below guides you in developing the three key points needed in good Opening Business Statements, and good elevator speeches. Both briefly express:

- Who YOU are;
- What your product or service IS;
- What it DOES for your clients.

Example: here is an OBS I could use for one aspect of the work I do:

Who I am	What my product or service is	What it does for clients
"I'm Michael McGaulley.	I develop training programs and packagesthat help clients increase efficiency and productivity in sales and management."

Now develop your own, drawing on your work above. Remember, you want a to-the-point sound-bite, not an autobiography!

Who I am	What my P/S is	What it does for clients

Summary

In this Tutorial, we focused on the issue of what real-world needs exist that you can profitably fill. We also examined how your proposed product or service can in fact fill those needs. We worked through these questions:

1. Who (or what kind of group) makes up my target market? What do they realistically need, in an area that I can fill.
2. Focusing on the most promising of these Prospects: What is that unfilled need costing? Why does it make good financial sense for them to invest money in filling that need? How does my product or service fill that need?
3. What questions could I ask that would lead to answers that make the case for my product or service?
4. How can I express what my product or service can do for this customer in filling these needs?
5. How will I introduce myself and my product or service? What is my Opening Business Statement, or Elevator Speech?

Sample: **Sales Training Tutorials**

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2

How Does My Product or Service Stand out from the Competition?

How Can I Make it EVEN MORE Unique or Valuable?

In today's marketplace, it's not enough for a product to be good, or even very good. To succeed, what you offer must stand out from the competition, in ways that are important to the potential buyers.

"Standing out" from the competition may involve,

- offering a *unique product or service*, or,
- offering a specially attractive *price*, or,
- providing *special service*, or *special customer service*,
- adding additional value to make the basic product even more desirable.

In this Tutorial, we examine some key questions to consider in finding your unique niche, as well as how to learn to express that uniqueness in ways that appeal to prospects.

1. Who or what is the competition for my Product or Service?

Before becoming too locked into a course, it's wise to analyze the competition you face—not to steal ideas, but rather *to see what the competitive situation tells you about the real-world marketplace*.

If you're the new kid on this block, your best strategy will generally be to aim for an unfilled niche in the market. We'll look at some ways of finding your niche shortly.

Before you can isolate those available niches, though, you need to have a clear understanding of what niches are already filled, partially or totally. . . and where openings are still left unfilled.

List possible competition	Why would a Prospect see this as a significant competitor to what you offer?

2. *Focus on the most serious competitors, and ask yourself: **What are their supposed strengths? How can I counter or rebut those strengths? What are their areas of vulnerability – what opportunities does that open for me?***

Look back through the possible competitors you listed in the template just above, and pick out those that seem most significant.

“Do nothing at all,” and “Wait (procrastinate) before making a decision” are usually among the most formidable obstacles to change — and as the new kid in the field you are proposing change. So learn to deal with the “Do nothing at all,” and “Wait before acting” as the obstacles they are to the change you propose.

In short, think of Do nothing, and Wait, as “competition” to the changes you propose.

Some of those competitors may stand out as seemingly unbeatable because of various advantages they have — such as already being on the market as established presences. But before giving up, look more closely at each competitor’s actual strengths and weaknesses.

Main competitors	Competitor’s supposed strengths. How I can rebut them.	How are they vulnerable? What opportunities does that open for me?
#1 Do nothing. Make no changes	<p>It’s easy, as it means taking no new risks or spending any new money.</p> <hr/> <p>Rebuttal: that means living with the status quo — which is costing money.</p>	<p>But the present way may not be working well any longer. Or some of the costs may be hidden — such as constant repairs and hence inefficiency.</p> <hr/> <p>My opportunity: My new equipment means fewer repairs, hence fewer delays.</p>
#2 Keep on same way with same suppliers	<p>That seems safe. No risk of the unknown.</p> <hr/> <p>Rebuttal: but they are using old, outdated technology.</p>	<p>The competitors using “tried and true” technology are behind the times.</p> <hr/> <p>My opportunity: We offer new technology to do the job more efficiently.</p> <p>Another opportunity: The Prospect may feel that the established supplier has been taking their business for granted.</p>

Now try it yourself, focusing on your own unique situation:

Main competitors	Competitor's supposed strengths. How I can rebut them.	How are they vulnerable? What opportunities does that open for me?
#1 Do nothing. Make no changes		
#2 Keep on same way with same suppliers		
#3 Competitor:		

3. What if there seems to be no competition?

Suppose you've done a diligent search and found that there truly are no competitors on the market. That's Really Good News!

Then again, maybe not. No competition may be bad news, depending on the circumstances. Here's why:

"No competition" may be <i>good</i> news	Or it may be <i>bad</i> news
You have spotted an unfilled need.	Or, there IS a Need, but it is ultimately a Need that no one can make a profit in filling.
You have the market all to yourself	That could be telling you that there may be no market because there really is no need for this. Or, the need is there, but the prospects don't recognize it.
You're first, and can build the market before others catch on.	Or once you enter the market, others may recognize the opportunity and move in.
	Or the market may be there, but the potential users may have no money, or no money at this point in the budget cycle.

Sample: **Sales Training Tutorials**

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4. How can I springboard beyond what the competition is now offering? How can I innovate? How can I provide a jump in quality and service that makes my product or service unique in the market?

This is a creative leap that only you can make, based on your expertise and experience, on your proposed product or service, and on what you have picked up in your efforts to this point.

In reality, you can probably only start this now, though you'll be coming back to add new ideas after you have been out and tested the market, learning from the input of prospects and competitors.

To open up your thinking: Suppose you worked for your smartest competitor in your field, as head of new products or chief of research and development. If so, what would you be working on now?

<p>Ways I can springboard beyond both what I and my main competition are now offering:</p> <hr/> <p>Ways I can boost quality or service in order to make my product or service unique in the market:</p>

5. Based on all that I have learned from this analysis, do I need to re-design or re-conceptualize what I will be offering?

At the end of Tutorial #1, you developed a brief statement that you could use to introduce yourself and your product or service. That is your Opening Business Statement, or OBS. (Or “elevator speech.”) It is a **brief**, intriguing, sound-bite summary of,

- Who you are;
- What your product or service IS;
- What it DOES FOR your clients.

It’s possible that your ideas have changed, particularly after analyzing the competition in this Tutorial. Take another cut at that OBS now. Refine it to include your new ideas and insights, and record it in the template below. Write it! Don’t trust your memory!

Who I am	What my Product or Service IS	What it DOES for clients

Got your OBS/elevator speech drafted? Now say it aloud. Say it again. And again.

- Is it too much of a mouthful to say comfortably?
- Does it sound natural, not as though you are reciting a memorized script?
- Does it sound forced, academic?

- ❑ Is it too “techie”? That is, does it bog down in the details of how you do it, rather than what you do for the prospect?

If yes, do a second draft, maybe even a third, until you come up with a statement that you can say comfortably and naturally.

Reality-testing your plans and ideas

Up to this point, you have probably been working mostly on speculation in putting together the elements of this plan. That is, you have tried to project yourself into the minds of the various kinds of Prospects who form the probable market for what you will be offering. That’s a good start.

But there’s another action step you should take before making the final plunge: **go out and talk to some real people** — people who fit the profile of your likely Prospects.

Most people (even probable Prospects!) will be willing, even eager, to help others as they start up new businesses. In some cases, they want to foster competition. In other cases, they are just plain kind folks. In still others, they realize that maybe, just maybe, they will be in your position a few months or years down the road—setting off as entrepreneurs, or “involuntary entrepreneurs.”

In any case, the way to begin is simply call up a few of the people you have identified as potential buyers. Be frank. Tell them that you are considering a new venture, and would like their advice and input, and give them an idea of how much time you are asking for. (An hour is, in most cases, the absolute upper limit, with half an hour usually more practical. Even 15 or 20 minutes will get you going with fresh ideas.)

If you are granted 15 minutes, keep track of the time, and when your time is up, say that, and thank them for the input. In many cases, they will say, “Oh, never mind that, I have more time, glad to be of assistance.” Or they may suggest that you come back later, on a second cycle, after you have refined your approach.

Some will even invite you to come back, not as advice seekers, but as sales people, when you have your product or service ready to go.

When you are new to selling, it's a lot easier to call and ask for *advice* and to meet face-to-face than to do those very same things in asking for *orders*. But you'll find that the process of asking for advice will give you confidence, making it much easier when it's time to make real sales calls.

And you'll have a better idea of just what and where the market is for whatever you come up with.

Summary

We considered these issues:

1. Who or what is the competition for my Product or Service?
2. The most serious competitors: What are their supposed strengths? How can you counter or rebut those strengths? What are their areas of vulnerability — what opportunities does that open for you?
3. What if there seems to be no competition?
4. How can I springboard beyond what the competition is now offering? How can I innovate? How can I provide a jump in quality and service that makes my P/S unique in the market?
5. Based on all that I have learned, do I need to re-design or re-conceptualize what I will be offering?

Wrap-up exercise: Summary Template

You will probably recycle through the exercises above several times as you refine and re-define just what you are proposing to sell, who the best prospects will likely be, and why your product or service will fill needs that are important to them. It will help to sum up all of your ideas in the worksheet below as a reminder for the future.

In a sentence or two, **what is the product or service that I offer?** *(Note: a version of this is your Opening Business Statement, or OBS, a version of which will be your “elevator speech.” You will find yourself repeating it time and again, not just to actual prospects but also to people who ask what you do. Refine and cut this until the words flow smoothly and naturally, in your natural speaking style.)*

Who needs my product or service? Why do they need it? *(That is, what needs does it fill? Put differently, what kind of needs does it fill? (Again, reduce this to simple statements that you can say easily and naturally. You don't want it to sound rehearsed, and you don't want it so dry and technical that people tune you out.)*

Why should they buy from me, or engage my services?

What other alternatives are open to this Prospect? *(That is, what competitors do I have, including the status quo?)* **What is unique about what I offer?**

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How to recognize and read “buying signals”

What IS a buying signal? Simply an indication, sometimes subtle, sometimes direct, that the Prospect is interested enough to be ready (or *almost* ready) to sign for the order (or to take some other kind of buying action, such as—on an expensive item—agreeing to come in for a demonstration.)

Buying signals may come in a variety of forms:

- a *question* might be a buying signal: “How soon can you deliver?”
- a *comment* might be a buying signal: “Sounds like what we’ve been looking for.”
- a *gesture, movement, or other non-verbal communication* might be a buying signal: Suddenly you see a flash in the Prospect’s eye, and he leans forward, picks up your sample and for the first time studies it closely.

1. *The Prospect’s questions are often buying signals.*

The questions the Prospect asks may be subtle, even unconscious, buying signals — signaling that, whether or not the Prospect consciously realizes it, they are at least somewhat interested in buying. Here are some examples of questions that signal interest:

- “What does it cost?” (Unless the Prospect is just naturally curious, interest in cost signals overall interest.)
- “Is it available in (a particular color, size, model, etc.)?”
- “How soon can you deliver?” (That suggests an immediate need.)
- “What’s the warranty?”

Based on your product or service, and on your experience, note here some of the questions that a Prospect might ask that are buying signals — that is, questions that indicate that this Prospect is taking a serious look at what you offer?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

-
2. ***Therefore, develop the habit of never answering a question without first “looking through” to determine whether that question may be a buying signal. What does the question imply? Why are they asking that question now?***
 3. ***Sometimes the best “answer” to a question is to respond, “Why do you ask?” or “Why is that important to you?”***

Someone who has no real interest in your product isn't likely to waste time or energy inquiring whether it is available in sea-foam green, or how long it takes to get delivery.

Use the template here to jot some of the buying-signal questions that you might encounter; come back later as your experience builds and add others

that you encounter.

Questions that may signal interest	What that question may imply

-
- 4. *Be attuned: an objection may in fact be a question in another form. What seems to be a random comment, an objection, or even a reason for not buying, may actually be a signal of buying interest. Look through to see what is really being said.***

A Prospect who objects, “We couldn't possibly think about buying a new system now, not when we're coming into our busy season,” is in effect implying a couple of questions:

- *Is your system so easy to install that we could get it up and running in time to help us out in the busy season to come?*
- *Is it reliable enough that we can be confident it won't just add to our work-load?*
- *Can you show me ways in which your system can help us get through this tough time to come better, faster, easier, with fewer errors?*

Similarly, a customer who says, “Your competitor has a great product, especially in its _____ capability,” is (whether consciously or not) asking whether your product is as good or better in that aspect.

That comment also implies that she has already determined which criteria are particularly important, so answer that implied question by making the case that your product is better than the competitor against these criteria.

However, in order to make the case that your product is better for this Prospect, you may need to ask more questions to find precisely what specific features of that other product are of interest to this Prospect: “What it is about the Widget 10 that you find particularly useful?”

Details are ammunition: the more clearly you grasp what that other product has, the better you can target the counterpart in your own product.

Note: at this point, you may uncover a need that you missed earlier. What may not have seemed significant then may, given this later perspective, turn out to be crucial.

Objections that may signal buying interest	What that objection may imply

5. When you encounter a question or objection that you suspect may be a buying signal, respond to it, then immediately inquire to make sure your response answered the Prospect’s real concern. If yes, then immediately move on and try to close.

Follow-up your answer to that question by asking the Prospect whether your response was sufficient. When the Prospect says yes is usually an ideal time to close. We’ll talk more later about closing, but in this present situation, the closing dialogue could go like this:

Sales person: *“Does that answer your concern?”*

Prospect: *“Yes, very well. It does seem like a good system.”*

Sales person: *“We can have it up and running on the first of the month. Will that be soon enough?”*

Another example: Suppose a Prospect says, “The Whizco Model 5 has always been the standard of the industry, and we want to continue going with the best.”

If you listen to just the words and miss the deeper meaning, that *sounds* as though the Prospect is turning you off.

But not really: look through to what is really being said, and what sounds like a closed door can actually be perceived as an *implied question* on the order of, “The Whizco 5 has the reputation of being very good. Is your product better? Why? How?”

Respond to that implied question, then immediately move on to a trial close. Here’s an example to use as a model:

Responding to the question/objection:

“You’re right, the Whizco Model 5 has been the recognized standard of the industry. But no longer. Now our new Ultima is setting the new standard. The Whizco would take two hours to accomplish the _____ task that you speak of, and with a five percent error rate. By comparison, our Ultima can accomplish the same task in approximately half the time with zero errors. But don’t just take my word for it. Advanced Industries replaced all of their Whizco units last year with new Ultimas, and the results are even better than they projected.”

Then closing for an intermediate “buying action:

“Mr. Wadsworth at Advanced has indicated that he is so pleased with what the Ultima has done for his firm that he invites Prospective Ultima purchasers to visit his office and see the units in action. I’d like to set up a visit for you. Would you like to do that perhaps an afternoon later this week, or would early next week be better?”

Notice that here the close was for “an intermediate buying action,” that is for an interim step, not for the order itself.

If you are selling a relatively expensive product (as in this model script), closing for the order on the first call might be too big a step at this point.

Instead, the salesperson asked the Prospect to take the interim step of agreeing to view a demonstration.

Possible objection or question

How you would respond

How you would confirm that satisfied the Prospect's concern

How you would follow up by transitioning into a close

6. *It is usually a strong buying signal when a prospect begins negotiating on price or details.*

“Is that the best price you can give me?” or, “What volume discounts are available?” or, “How soon can you install?” are all signals that the Prospect may be ready to buy.

Therefore, answer the question, then ask if that is satisfactory; if so, close.

Tip: sometimes it's wise to answer a question with a question.

For example, if you're asked how soon you can install, don't rush to make a commitment. Instead, respond,

How soon do you need it?,

Or, *“I'll check with the factory to make sure that we can accommodate your requirements, but I'll need to know what delivery date you have in mind?”*

Note how that combines your response with a built-in close, as the Prospect is implicitly “buying” by giving you a required delivery date.

7. ***Buying signals may be non-verbal.***

A Prospect who's sitting forward in the chair, head vigorously nodding, eyes sparkling with interest is sub-consciously radiating a high level of interest. That usually tells you that this may be a good time to fast-forward from wherever you happen to be in the sales call in order to attempt a close.

There's nothing exotic about non-verbal buying signals; you're probably already familiar with many of them from everyday experience. Here are a few to get you started; expand the checklist as others come to you.

- *Facial expression:* A Prospect who looks bored and distracted is almost certainly not sending buying signals. But one whose face is animated, with eyes alert and focused on you or your product is at least interested, and perhaps even ready to buy.
- *Proximity:* A customer who leans forward, toward either you or the product, is signaling a rising level of interest. If you are standing beside the customer who has been "keeping his distance," and then he turns or moves more toward you, read that as a signal of rising interest, perhaps even of buying interest.
- *Caution:* We are conditioned to keep a "circle of personal space" around us. If someone moves into that space, we tend to draw back to keep the circle intact. Do not move backwards if a customer comes toward you. Stay forward so you literally "get your heads together."

For more on non-verbal communication in the sales situation, see Part three of my other book, ***Sales Presentations and Demonstrations***. Information at my blog, www.SellingFaceToFace.com.

Here's a template to help you structure your personal "dictionary" of buying signals and their meanings:

What you observe	What it likely means

-
8. ***Rule of thumb regarding possible buying signals: If in doubt, test it out.***
 9. ***Don't be compulsive about "finishing" everything in your planned sales call. If the Prospect projects a buying signal, move on to test interest by a trial close. If that goes well, you may not need to say anything more.***

Suppose you pick up what seems to be a buying signal. You could play it safe and carry on through the whole sales presentation that you had planned. But there's a risk: the Prospect's high enthusiasm may fade before you work your way through everything.

Seize the opportunity: try a close. It may just wrap up the sale. If not, then you can transition back to your plan.

OR the response you get to that close may tell you more about what's really in that Prospect's mind. Focus on that.

10. Develop a repertoire of “trial closes” for testing Prospects’ readiness.

In addition to remaining alert for buying signals sent by the Prospect, you can also test buying readiness by using “trial closes” that subtly test whether they are ready to buy. *(If they are ready to buy now, then there’s no point in continuing to make your presentation after that point; at that stage you’re more likely to talk yourself out of the sale!)*

Here are some questions that can serve as useful trial closes:

- *“Is there anything else we should cover before moving forward?”*
(Now you and I know what “moving forward” is code for, don’t we?)
- *“Can you think of any other action steps we need to take from here?”*
- *“Do you have any other questions?”*
- *“How soon will you need delivery?”*

Make a note of at least three different forms of trial closes that you could use, that are specific to the product or service you offer.

Summary

1. The Prospect's questions may be buying signals.
2. Therefore, never answer a question without first "looking through" to determine whether that question may be a buying signal. That is, consider what the question implies, or why the person is asking that question at that time.
3. Sometimes the best "answer" to a question is to respond, "Why do you ask?," or "Why is that important to you?"
4. What *seems* to be an objection, or even a reason for not buying, may actually be a signal of buying interest. Look though to see what is really being said.
5. When you encounter a question or objection that may be a buying signal, respond to it, then immediately move on and try to close.
6. A Prospect who begins negotiating (or haggling over details) is usually sending a strong buying signal.
7. Buying signals may also be non-verbal, such as facial expressions, gestures, and proximity.
8. Rule of thumb regarding possible buying signals: If in doubt, test it out.
9. Don't be compulsive about "finishing" everything in your planned sales call. If the Prospect projects a buying signal, move on to test interest by a trial close. If that goes well, you may not need to say anything more.
10. Develop a repertoire of "trial closes" for checking Prospects' readiness.