



# The 10 Biggest Goofs Salespeople Make

by Bill Gallagher Ph.D.

Becoming a more successful sales professional today does not usually require a major, dramatic shift in one's sales skills. As with other world champions, products and services are sold today by one person and not another, simply because someone has the edge. Someone did something, perhaps unnoticeable, which created that 1/1000th of a second difference that made him or her the winner who got the sale.

**One of the most critical reasons salespeople aren't more successful is because they become discouraged.** They begin to doubt themselves and their products. Like many of us, they lose sight of their real purpose as a sales representative.

One solution is to be reminded of the importance of salespeople in world society. Without them we never would know about products and services that may save and enrich our lives. Salespeople are the "doctors" who uncover our wants and needs and provide us with goods and services which make us more successful, look good, feel good, be healthier, happier and, in every way, better off because of them. Salespeople have a high calling – an important and critical purpose in the world.

Another solution is to look into selling workshops (i.e. Guerilla Selling Workshops at [www.gmarketing.com](http://www.gmarketing.com)), which teach professionals how to fully overcome common sales pitfalls. Learn to get that winning edge in order to prospect better, to be more professional, and to close significantly more sales!

A few years ago, a nationally acclaimed writer and sales consultant spent several months traveling across North America interviewing scores of top sales professionals and leading sales managers. He wanted to find out the most damaging mistakes salespeople make. He wanted to discover why people often didn't buy products and services that they really needed.\*

Here are some of his findings, in no particular order, with some popular "guerilla" solutions and sales tips to give you and your organization the winning sales edge. For us, including my co-authors Jay Conrad Levinson and Orvel Ray Wilson, guerilla means "unconventional, creative, not doing it the way it's always been done."

## 1. SALESPEOPLE FAIL TO REALLY LISTEN.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Follow the 80/20 rule: Listen 80% of the time; talk only 20%. This is very tough for many salespeople. By asking a lot of questions you'll be listening to the answers more. Learn to take written notes and ask for more information.

**Guerilla Tip:** *Listen to your customers actively; be really interested. No, be fascinated! Sit on the edge of your chair, literally.*

## 2. SALESPEOPLE JUMP INTO THE PRESENTATION TOO SOON.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Ask more questions until you're sure that you fully, completely, 100% understand your client's needs, wants, expectations and feelings. Then, and only then, give your sales presentation.

**Guerilla Tip:** *Wait before you explain your product or service. As guerilla David Sandler says, "Don't spill your candy in the lobby." Don't tell the good news on page one.*

## 3. SALESPEOPLE PRESUME THE PROSPECT'S NEED.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** "I know exactly what you need," is probably the dumbest thing to ever say or even think. No medical professional would ever prescribe a cure until after much questioning and examination. Neither should you.

Guerillas are "sales doctors." So in uncovering the need, remember that most people buy things to make them look good and clever, and to make them appear successful. No kidding. The second most common reason for buying things is to make the person feel good or to overcome some pain, either real or imagined. These two motives – looking good and feeling good – lie at the heart of nearly every buying decision.

As a sales doctor, make sure you thoroughly understand your prospect's "ordinate" pain – the one that your product or service will solve.

**Guerilla Tip:** *Be a "sales doctor." Be sure that you've thoroughly explored exactly how your customer wants to look and feel by using your product. Then support them in their conclusion.*

#### 4. SALESPEOPLE FAIL TO UNCOVER THE BUDGET, UP FRONT.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Everyone saves time when all concerned know the budget range up front. Not to do so wastes everyone's time. Since we're all slightly wacko about money, it's hard to get to the truth about financial matters. But if you're asking a lot of clear questions per #1 – #3, above, you'll probably create enough trust and professional rapport to ask for and get an honest budget amount.

**Guerilla Tip:** Ask for a ballpark budget number, a range, "off the record," "in round numbers," and then refine it.

#### 5. SALESPEOPLE FAIL TO GET A BUYING COMMITMENT, FROM SOMEONE WITH AUTHORITY TO BUY.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Many great sales presentations are made to folks who can't say yes. You must find out who can. Maybe it's a committee, maybe it's a spouse, might be the owner, or the CFO, better find out. Be ready to reschedule the sales call, if necessary.

**Guerilla Tip:** Give your sales presentations only to those who can make buying decisions.

#### 6. SALESPEOPLE CHAT AND "MAKE FRIENDS," BUILDING RAPPORT FOR HOURS.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Making friends is great, but it doesn't necessarily make sales. So, what's the answer? Find one thing – ONE thing – in common. That's enough rapport. Notice the golf trophy if you're a golfer, or the college pennant if you relate to that university. Talk about it for 2 – TWO – minutes then move on to your client's needs, budget, and buying authority. This is not a social call.

**Guerilla Tip:** As a salesperson, be friendly; don't make friends.

#### 7. SALESPEOPLE ANSWER UNASKED QUESTIONS, ESPECIALLY "OBJECTIONS."

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** This is my personal favorite goof. "Uh, you're probably wondering why our prices are so high. Well, in fact, they're not really that high, they're..." Got it? Don't do this. Don't "know" what they've maybe heard. Should a customer raise an objection, don't answer it. It probably isn't a question anyway. Ask why they raised the "objection."

**Guerilla Tip:** Assume that prospects know nothing about you, your products, or your organization, and don't tell them until they ask.

#### 8. SALESPEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND OR PROPERLY RELATE TO THE CLIENT'S UNIQUE PERSONALITY.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** Each one of us is unique and special. We all want to think that we got a bargain – that we got special treatment. We all operate from different levels of immaturity, yes, immaturity all day long. Knowing this is an advantage to you – an edge.

Many of us, not all – just about 30 to 40 percent of us – act like overgrown two-year-olds! We sometimes act like selfish egomaniacs, complaining that the world won't devote itself to making us happy. We're looking out for Number One.

**Our best advice about this to you, as a sales doctor:**

- a. Make us, your customers, as happy and comfortable as you possibly can;
- b. Ask questions and listen more attentively;
- c. Say "That's interesting," "Tell me more," "How did that feel?" and "You're right" a lot;
- d. When we ask about you, let us know that you and your firm are absolutely "number one;" and,
- e. Be prepared. Make each sale unique; give each person something special such as a unique discount or add-on.

**Guerilla Tip:** Everyone's a "Number One." Let us know that you understand that we are.

#### 9. SALESPEOPLE TRY TO CONTROL AND MANIPULATE THE SALE.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** We all like to shop and buy stuff, some of us even like to sell, but we all hate to be sold. We all say "No Thank You, I'm just looking." when the sales person says, "Can I help you?" Why? **Because we don't want to be controlled.** Our guerilla advice is: STOP SELLING.

START LISTENING to what your prospects want with respect to your product or service. Find out what they really need. Does your product match or fulfill that need? If not, be willing to leave. You'll never be invited to do so. Let the customer's needs and priorities govern the call.

Concerning the match between your product and your customer's wants, needs and budget, when you admit to any negative, the customer will come up with a positive and you'll look great. It's the Guerilla Law of Candor.

**Guerilla Tip:** *Everyone knows when they're being controlled or manipulated and we resist it. Don't do it. By actively inviting your customer to be "in control," you are really in more control because you're the one who's giving it out!*

## 10. SALESPEOPLE HAVE NO SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO SALES.

**Commentary and Guerilla Solution:** A lot of selling is "hit and miss." It's sometimes called "Good Ol'e Boy – Good Ol'e Gal" Selling. The salesperson shows up and chats a bit, then asks a few leading questions and/or launches into a sales presentation.

Time is very valuable to all of us. You don't need to memorize pages of a sales presentation. Follow a successful model or sales track. If you get off course, use it to get back on. We teach a simple memory device which will keep you on a proven track to dramatically close more sales. We call it **NaB & CaPTuRe** – two good guerilla words that are easy to remember. We spell them with the consonants capitalized to remind you of the most successful and most efficient track to professional selling.

**Follow these six steps, NBC/PTR:**

- a. **N** stands for **Need**. Find out your prospect's needs first;
- b. **B** stands for **Budget**. Uncover the prospect's budget second, after you're sure that you understand the need fully;
- c. **C** stands for Buying **Commitment** – Who has the authority to buy?
- d. **P** for your Sales **Presentation**;
- e. **T** for **Transaction** (the paperwork); and,
- f. **R** for **Reward**. (Guerillas are taught to regularly throw in a little something extra with each sale. It makes customers feel special.)

**Guerilla Tip:** *Nab and capture more sales with the winning NaB & CaPTuRe Sales Track!*

## AND FINALLY...

As salespeople, members of the world's largest, often toughest, sometimes highest paid, and, quite possibly, the oldest profession, we would do well to occasionally review the words of Shaw. He must have been thinking about salespeople when he wrote:

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be completely used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live.

I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

-- George Bernard Shaw, from *Epistle Dedicatory to Man and Superman*

\* Brian Azar, "The 10 Most Common Mistakes Salespeople Make" in *Master Salesmanship*, September, 1991.

For more information on Bill "Guerilla" Gallagher, Ph.D., please go to <http://guerrillagallagher.blogspot.com/2008/04/bill-gallagher-bio-on-all-american.html>. For information on Guerilla Marketing or for more articles by other "guerillas in the field", please go to [www.gmarketing.com](http://www.gmarketing.com).