



The Raphael Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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EGO

"Ours is the country where, in order to sell your product, you don't so much point out its merits as you first work like hell to sell yourself." - Louis Kronenberger

Ego is the necessary second ingredient of a successful salesperson. Put this together in proper balance with Empathy (see last month's Raphael Report) and you have a winning combination.

Having strong empathy but little ego will make you well-liked but will not make the sale. Having strong ego but little empathy will make you disliked. The sales you make are done through brute force or intimidation. And you're never asked to come back again.

The successful salesperson's ego means he has a basic need to succeed. The customer is merely a way to achieve this goal. He has tremendous self confidence. He is a strong believer in "imaging." He sees himself throwing the pass for the touchdown, breaking the track record and always making the sale.

And yet, less than 1% of salespeople have written goals.

In Robert Lewis Taylor's biography of W.C. Fields, he writes of the times Fields and another actor in the same traveling company were each earning about \$15 a week. Said the actor to Fields, "What is your ambition?" Said Fields to the actor, "To make \$1,000 a week."

"As he said it," wrote Taylor, "his eyes were fixed on the bright personal horizon and he seemed to know he would be there on some secret schedule of his own a few years hence."

Selling is one of the few professions that do not depend on advanced education. Psychologist Walter Dill Scott said, "Success or failure in selling is caused more by mental attitude than by mental capacities."

This does not mean good salespeople don't have an education. They do - but it is knowledge of the product they sell. It is not unusual to see people who sell sophisticated medical equipment in the operating rooms of major hospitals watching the skilled surgeons use the newly-bought machinery. The salesman who made the often high six-figure sale is there to advise, suggest and watch the procedure. They definitely have an education - in the product they sell.

Elmer Wheeler was chosen as "America's Public Speaker No. 1" by a poll of 500 business clubs. He spoke to more than one million people in his lifetime. Yet he failed a public speaking course in college. After his first professional engagement a kindly professor told him, "You don't have what it takes to be a public speaker. Take my advice and get into some work where you don't have to meet the public."

Wheeler ignored the advice and is remembered and written about in books and articles on selling because of his unique ability to come up with just the right wording or phrase to sell merchandise.

One example: He went to see King Gillette, owner of Gillette blades and razors and said, "I have six words on this folded piece of paper. If you decide to use them, you pay my fee. If you don't, I leave."

Gillette took the paper, unfolded it, read the words and wrote out a check. Here are the six words: "How are you fixed for blades?"

Many salesmen are not salespeople in the sense of the word. They are often simply "order takers." Those that deliver basics to the supermarket: bread, eggs, milk. If asked, "What do you do?" they would say, "I'm a delivery man."

No selling here. . .

Many salespeople are, in reality, "clerks." They stand behind the auto parts counter and bring forward the item asked-for.

No selling here . . .

Appliance stores have their wares displayed on shelves with prices and a description of major characteristics. You choose the one you want, come to a central desk where someone brings out the product you've selected.

No selling here . . .

True salesmen create business. People who sell insurance, refrigerators, home repair, copy machines.

There's selling there...

It's never easy.

Salesmen have long and irregular hours. They often travel long distances. They need a tremendous ego, knowing many of their prospects feel the salesman is an unwelcome interruption in their daily work and often go to great lengths not to see them - even with scheduled appointments.

Frank Bettger was a failure as a salesman at the age of 20. In a few years he became a national salesman for a large insurance company and a successful teacher for Dale Carnegie schools. He said, "I was convinced I wasn't cut out for selling. I remember pacing up and down outside a prospect's door getting up enough nerve to knock. Yet, when I was 40 years old, I made enough money to retire and people said I was a 'born salesman.' My answer: 'Men are not cut out for selling. They cut themselves out.'"

Most people want security, certainty and a predictable future. Sorry, not available in the selling profession.

Most people find it difficult if not impossible to know when they wake the next morning there is no promise of a wage or benefits from a company. Sorry, they must create these opportunities themselves.

In his report "The Mystique of the Super-Salesman" in the Harvard Business Review, consultant Robert N. McMurry said it well, "My guess is that not more than one person in a thousand is so constituted that he will be successful and find challenge and security in direct sales."

This was written forty years ago and still holds true.

Unless you have Empathy. And Ego.