

PART II



Creating Customer Value

Developing a Relationship Strategy

High-performance salespeople are generally better able to build and maintain relationships than moderate performers. Part II focuses on the person-to-person relationship-building strategies that are the foundation for personal development and for relationships with customers that result in repeat business and referrals.

The manner in which high-performance salespeople establish, build, and maintain relationships is a key ingredient of success.

— Dr. William M. DeMarco and Dr. Michael D. Maginn

Sales Competency Research Report



Creating Value

WITH A RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

Learning Objectives

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. Explain the importance of developing a relationship strategy
2. Define partnering and describe the partnering relationship
3. Identify the four key groups with which the salesperson needs to develop relationship strategies
4. Discuss how self-image forms the foundation for building long-term selling relationships
5. Describe the importance of a win-win relationship
6. Identify and describe the major non-verbal factors that shape our sales image
7. Describe conversational strategies that help us establish relationships
8. Explain how to establish a self-improvement plan based on personal development strategies

The salespeople who work for Masonite International (formerly Premdor Inc.) understand the importance of developing relationship strategies to build long-term partnerships with their customers. The Mississauga-based manufacturer produces more than 100 000 doors per day in its plants in five countries, and sells them in more than 40 countries through a well-established wholesale and retail distribution system.

To demonstrate their commitment to service, salespeople develop “relationship plans” in consultation with their customers. Philip Orsino, president and CEO, says that the process of developing and committing these plans to paper ensures that they understand each customer’s needs and that they have clearly defined objectives for serving each customer. The customized plans also outline how the salespeople will meet their objectives for each customer, and how their performance will be measured. According to Orsino, the number-one comment from customers who have been presented with a written relationship plan has been “No one has ever done this with us before.”

Masonite International is creating value with its relationship strategy.¹

Developing a Relationship Strategy

To develop and apply the wide range of interpersonal skills needed in today’s complex sales environment can be challenging. Daniel Goleman, author of the best-selling books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, notes that there are many forms of intelligence that influence our actions throughout life. One of these, **emotional intelligence**, refers to the capacity for recognizing

our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. People with a high level of emotional intelligence display many of the qualities needed in sales work: self-confidence, trustworthiness, adaptability, initiative, optimism, empathy, and well-developed social skills.² The good news is that emotional intelligence can be enhanced with a variety of self-development activities. We discuss many of these activities in this chapter.

Selling in the age of information involves three major relationship challenges. The first major challenge is building new relationships.³ Salespeople who can quickly build rapport with new prospects have a much greater chance of achieving success in personal selling. Needless to say, building new relationships starts with the communication of positive impressions during the initial contact. The second major challenge is transforming relationships from the personal level to the business level. Once rapport is established, the salesperson is in a stronger position to begin the need identification process. The third major challenge is management of relationships. Dr. Charles Parker—a noted consultant and sales trainer—says, “In order to achieve a high level of success salespeople have to manage a multitude of different relationships.”⁴ Salespeople must develop relationship management strategies that focus on four key groups. These groups are discussed later in this chapter.

Ongoing development of a **relationship strategy** should be the goal of every salesperson; customers tend to buy from people they like and trust, so we must learn how to establish and build relationships. In this chapter we introduce the win-win philosophy and discuss the importance of projecting a professional image. Chapter 4 explains how an understanding of communication styles can help us better manage the relationship process. Chapter 5 focuses on the importance of maintaining high ethical standards in order to build long-term relationships with the customer (Fig. 3.1).

emotional intelligence The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships.

relationship strategy A well-thought-out plan for establishing, building, and maintaining quality relationships.

ADDING VALUE WITH A RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

Every salesperson knows the difficulty of getting business from a customer who has a good relationship with a competitor’s salesperson. The salesperson may be able to compete on the basis of product solution, price, or even

Strategic/Consultative Selling Model	
Strategic step	Prescription
Develop a Personal Selling Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Value Personal Selling ✓ Adopt Marketing Concept ✓ Become a Problem Solver/Partner
Develop a Relationship Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project positive, professional image • Practise communication-style flexing • Behave ethically

Figure 3.1 Every salesperson should have an ongoing goal of developing a relationship strategy that adds value to the sale.

The Importance Of EQ

Steven J. Stein and Howard E. Book, both at the University of Toronto, have been actively researching emotional intelligence (EQ). In their book, *The EQ Edge*, they argue that while IQ can predict on average 6 percent success in a given job, EQ can predict between 27 and 45 percent success, depending on the job.

What is emotional intelligence? Two terms that loosely describe at least part of it are “street smarts” and “common sense.” Stein and Book measure it as five dimensions, comprising a total of 15 sub-dimensions:

1. The Intrapersonal Realm: Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Independence, Self-Regard, and Self-Actualization.
2. The Interpersonal Realm: Empathy, Social Responsibility, Interpersonal Relationships.
3. The Adaptability Realm: Reality Testing, Flexibility, Problem-Solving.
4. The Stress Management Realm: Stress Tolerance, Control.
5. The General Mood Realm: Optimism, Happiness.

The good news about EQ is that it can be reliably measured and, unlike your IQ, you can improve it throughout your life. Men and women achieved roughly the same scores overall, although there were a few differences on sub-scale scores. Women everywhere

scored higher on social responsibility and empathy and men scored higher on stress tolerance. In North America, there were a few additional differences. Women scored higher on interpersonal relationships, and men on self-regard. There were no noted differences on EQ scores across races.

Stein and Book report the five most important sub-dimensions that distinguish low from high performers in a number of sales-related occupations. The following is a list for some selected positions.

General Sales

Self-Actualization
Assertiveness
Happiness
Optimism
Self-Regard

Insurance Sales

Assertiveness
Self-Regard
Happiness
Stress Tolerance
Self-Actualization

Business Services Sales

Self-Regard
Reality Testing
Assertiveness
Stress Tolerance
Optimism

Customer Service Representatives

Stress Tolerance
Assertiveness
Happiness
Interpersonal Relationships
Self-Actualization^a

service, but may still fail to get any business because of the relationship bond the customer and the competitor's salesperson share. This relationship bond may be the only value-added feature of the competing salesperson's business with the customer, but it can also be the most difficult to overcome.

Customers perceive value is added to a sale when they feel good about the relationship they have with a salesperson. Customers feel that if a problem arises, they will get prompt service and fair treatment. The good relationship creates a channel of communication between the customer and the salesperson without any “psychological noise.” Intended messages move more freely between them, and with more understanding and accuracy. Salespeople need to develop strategies and practise skills necessary to create relationship value for customers.

A salesperson's positive and professional self-image can add relationship value for the customer. This image creates an impression that the salesperson

It's about relationships



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has a win-win philosophy, necessary for the development and nurturing of a long-term relationship. It also projects confidence, and the customer views this as a necessary quality the salesperson needs to create and deliver outstanding solutions. Good manners, appearance, posture, and handshakes also add value to the relationship as perceived by the customer. Salespeople who execute well on these areas form stronger bonds with customers. Poor performance in any of these areas can subtract relationship value. A pleasant, well-modulated voice and the ability to adjust communication style to match the needs of the other party are important when salespeople wish to add relationship value. Ethical behaviour, both in the short term and in the longer term, adds value to a sales relationship. Because so many aspects of a

sale occur after the customer signs an order, the feeling of trust that is projected by ethical behaviour can often make or break a sales relationship. Verbal and nonverbal behaviours that project high ethical conduct are critical value-added components in selling today. These characteristics give the salesperson a competitive advantage: a relationship strategy that adds value for customers, an advantage that becomes increasingly important as products, prices, and service become more similar.

PARTNERING—THE HIGHEST QUALITY SELLING RELATIONSHIP

Salespeople today are encouraged to think of everything they say or do in the context of their relationship with the customer. They should constantly strive to build a long-term partnership. In a marketplace characterized by increased levels of competition and greater product complexity, we see the need to adopt a relationship strategy that emphasizes the “lifetime” customer. High quality relationships result in repeat business and important referrals. A growing number of salespeople recognize that the quality of the partnerships they create is as important as the quality of the products they sell. Today’s customer wants a quality product *and* a quality relationship. One example of this trend is the J. D. Power and Associates Automotive Studies research. The Initial Quality Study conducted by this marketing information firm measures the number and type of problems experienced by new car owners. The Sales Satisfaction Study, also conducted by J. D. Power, examines factors that impact on sales satisfaction such as treatment by auto sales representatives and customer experience when the auto was delivered.⁵

partnering A strategically developed, high-quality relationship that focuses on solving the customer’s buying problem.

Partnering can be defined as a strategically developed, high-quality, long-term relationship that focuses on solving the customer’s buying problem.⁶ Traditional industrial-age sales training programs emphasized the importance of creating a good first impression and then “pushing” your product. Partnering emphasizes building a strong relationship during every aspect of the sale and working hard to maintain a quality relationship with the customer after the sale. Personal selling today must be viewed as a process, not an event.⁷

Larry Wilson, a noted author and sales consultant, identifies partnering as one of the most important strategic thought processes needed by salespeople. He points out that the salesperson who is selling a “one-shot” solution cannot compete against the one who has developed and nurtured a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership. Wilson believes there are three keys to a partnering relationship:

- The relationship is built on shared values. If your client feels that you both share the same ideas and values, it goes a long way toward creating a powerful relationship.
- Everyone needs to clearly understand the purpose of the partnership and be committed to the vision. Both the salesperson and the client must agree on what they are trying to do together.

- The role of the salesperson must move from selling to supporting. The salesperson in a partnership is actively concerned with the growth, health, and satisfaction of the company to which he or she is selling.⁸

Salespeople who are willing to abandon short-term thinking and invest the time and energy needed to develop a high-quality, long-term relationship with customers will be rewarded with greater earnings and the satisfaction of working with repeat customers. Sales resulting from referrals will also increase.

RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES FOCUS ON FOUR KEY GROUPS

Establishing and maintaining a partnering-type relationship internally as well as with customers is a vital aspect of selling. High-performance sales personnel build strong relationships with four groups (Fig. 3.2):

1. *Customers.* As noted previously, a major key to success in selling is the ability to establish working relationships with customers in which mutual support, trust, and goals are nurtured over time. Salespeople who maintain regular contact with their customers and develop sound business relationships based on mutual trust are able to drive up sales productivity.⁹ John Franco, former president of Learning International, says that in some cases the salesperson must move beyond the role of trusted consultant to gain full acceptance by the customer. He says that in today's highly competitive business climate the salesperson needs to be perceived as someone who is working on the customer's team as a member of the customer's organization.¹⁰



Partnering is a strategically developed, high-quality, long-term relationship that focuses on solving the customer's buying problem. Partnering involves establishing, re-establishing, and maintaining relationships with customers.

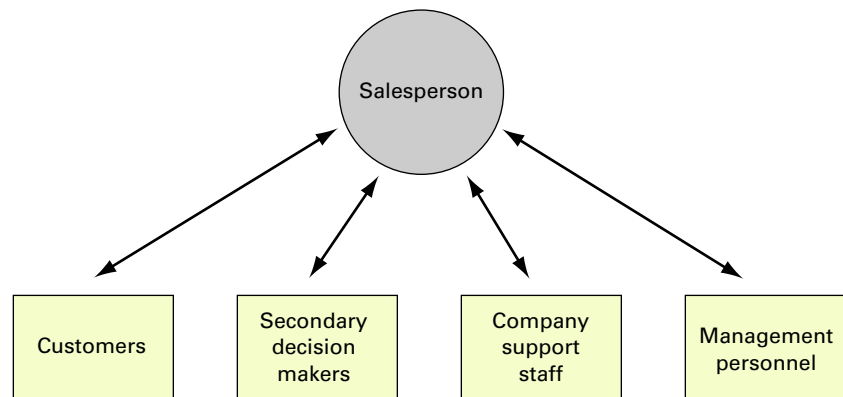
Communicating Using CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) software can be used to enhance the quality of your relationships. A good example is the software's ability to enhance communications between you and your contacts. With the ACT! software, for example, you can quickly prepare and send a letter, fax, or e-mail to one or more people who have records in the database. Recipients of your appointment confirmations, information verifications, company

or product news, or brief personal notes, will recognize and appreciate your effort to keep them informed. The written word conveys consideration and helps avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications. CRM empowers you to easily use the written word to advance your relationship building. (See the exercise Preparing Letters with CRM on page 74 for more information.)

2. *Secondary decision makers.* High-performance salespeople understand the importance of building relationships with the people who work with customers. In many selling situations the first person the salesperson meets is a receptionist, secretary, or assistant to the primary decision maker. These persons can often facilitate a meeting with the prospect. Also, the prospect may involve other people in making the buying decision. For example, the decision to buy a new copy machine may be made by a team of persons including the buyer and persons who will actually use the machine.
3. *Company support staff.* The maintenance of relationships internally is a vital aspect of selling. Support staff may include persons working in the areas of market research, product service, credit, training, or shipping. Influencing these people to change their priorities, interrupt their schedules, accept new responsibilities, or fulfill any other request for special attention is a major part of the salesperson's job. Most sales personnel will readily admit that their productivity depends on the contributions of these people.

Figure 3.2 An effective relationship strategy helps high-performing salespeople to build and maintain win-win relationships with four key groups.



4. *Management personnel.* Sales personnel usually work under the direct supervision of a sales manager, department head, or some other member of the firm's management team. Maintaining a good relationship with this person is important.

Developing Thought Processes that Enhance Your Relationship Strategy

Industrial-age folklore created the myth of the “born” salesperson—a dynamic, outgoing, highly assertive individual. Experience acquired during the age of information has taught us that many other factors determine sales success. Key among these factors are a positive self-image and the ability to relate to others in effective and productive ways. With the aid of knowledge drawn from the behavioural sciences we can develop the relationship strategies needed in a wide range of selling situations.

SELF-IMAGE—AN IMPORTANT DIMENSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

Self-image is shaped by the ideas, attitudes, feelings, and other thoughts you have about yourself that influence the way you relate to others. Psychologists have found that, once we form a thought process about ourselves, it serves to edit all incoming information and influence our actions. Let us consider a salesperson who has come to believe that he cannot build strong relationships with high-level decision makers. Once this mental picture, or self-image, has been formed, it is unlikely that this salesperson will be able to influence high-level executives in a sales situation. Essentially, this person is programmed to fail in attempts to build relationships at this level. There is no anticipation of improvement, so the negative self-image becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You simply cannot succeed at something unless you think you are going to succeed at it.

self-image A set of ideas, attitudes, and feelings you have about yourself that influences the way you relate to others.

SELF-IMAGE AND SUCCESS

Self-image is a powerful thought process influencing the direction of our lives. It can set the limits of our accomplishments, defining what we can and cannot do. Realizing the power of self-image is an important breakthrough in our understanding of the factors that influence us.

A pioneer in the area of self-image psychology was the late Dr. Maxwell Maltz, author of *Psycho-Cybernetics* and other books devoted to this topic. We are indebted to him for two important discoveries that help us understand better the “why” of human behaviour:

1. *Feelings and behaviour are consistent with the self-image.* The individual who feels like a “failure” will likely find some way to fail. There is a definite relationship between self-image and accomplishments at work.

Generally speaking, the more positive your self-image, the greater your prospects for achieving success, because a positive self-image helps generate the energy needed to get things done.

2. *The self-image can be changed.* Numerous case histories show that you are never too young or too old to change your self-image and thereby achieve new accomplishments.¹¹

A positive self-image (high self-esteem) is an important prerequisite to success in selling. According to a study conducted by Sentry Insurance, high self-esteem mixed with candour is the vital ingredient in the makeup of top salespeople.¹² Low self-esteem, according to Nathaniel Branden, author of *Self-Esteem at Work*, correlates with resistance to change and with clinging to the known and familiar. He notes that low self-esteem is economically disadvantageous in an information economy where knowledge and new ideas count for almost everything.¹³

How can you develop a more positive self-image? How can you get rid of self-destructive ways of thinking? Bringing your present self-image out into the open is the first step in understanding who you are, what you can do, and where you are going. Improving your self-image will not happen overnight, but it can happen. A few practical approaches are summarized here.

1. *Focus on the future and stop being overly concerned with past mistakes or failures.* We should learn from past errors, but they should not immobilize us.
2. *Develop expertise in selected areas.* By developing “expert power” you not only improve your self-image but also increase the value of your contributions to your employer and your customers.
3. *Learn to develop a positive mental attitude.* To develop a more positive outlook, read books and listen to audiotapes that describe ways to develop a positive mental attitude. Consider materials developed by Denis Waitley, Stephen Covey, Brian Tracy, Dale Carnegie, and Zig Ziglar.

Later in this chapter you will learn how to develop and initiate a plan for self-improvement. If you want to improve your self-image, consider adopting this plan.

THE WIN-WIN

Denis Waitley—consultant, national speaker, and author of several books—provides us with a brief and simple definition of the term **win-win**: “If I help you win, I win, too.”¹⁴ Both the customer and the salesperson come out of the sale feeling a sense of satisfaction. The salesperson not only obtains the order, but sets the stage for a long-term relationship, repeat business, and future referrals. Here is how one author described this “win-win” approach:

win-win The view that “if I help you win, I win too.”

Selling Herself

Today, Elaine Minacs has an incredibly positive attitude and is one of Canada's most successful businesswomen. But to get where she is, she first had to overcome her shyness and learn how to sell herself. "There was so much I disliked about myself but I worked very hard to overcome it. And I think because of that, to a certain degree, I've always been in sales. It sounds like an odd thing to say but maybe selling

myself was an over-compensation for my incredible shyness," says Minacs.

Today, Elaine Minacs heads up a \$95 million-a-year firm, Minacs Worldwide (visit www.minacs.com). Her company is the largest customer relationship solutions company in Canada, employs over 2400 people across five continents, and handles over 40 million customer contacts per year.⁹

Both you and the Buyer "Win." That is, you both come out of the sale feeling satisfied, knowing that neither of you has taken advantage of the other and that both of you have profited, personally and professionally, from the transaction.¹⁵

The win-win strategy is based on such irrefutable logic that it is difficult to understand why any other approach would be used. However, some salespeople still have not accepted the merits of the win-win approach. They have adopted a win-lose approach, which means that the salesperson wins at the buyer's expense. When a salesperson sells a product that is not the best solution to the buyer's problem, the win-lose strategy has been used.

We can adopt the win-win attitude that is one of the principles of partnering-style selling. The starting point to development of a win-win philosophy is to compare the behaviours of persons who have adopted the



This salesperson's clothing and facial expression project a professional image. A pleasant smile and eye contact convey friendliness to the customer.

win-lose approach with the behaviours of persons who have adopted the win-win approach (Fig. 3.3).

CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY

Your character and integrity strongly influence your relationships with others. **Character** is composed of your personal standards of behaviour, including your honesty, integrity, and moral fibre.¹⁶ Your character is based on your internal values and the resulting judgments you make about what is right and what is wrong. When your behaviour is in tune with your professed standards and values—when you practise what you believe in—you have integrity. In a world of uncertainty and rapid change, **integrity** has become a valuable character trait. Salespeople with integrity can be trusted to do what they say they will do. One way to achieve trustworthiness in personal selling is to avoid deceiving or misleading the customer. More will be said about this topic in Chapter 5, which examines the ethical conduct of salespeople.

character Your personal standards of behaviour, including your honesty and integrity. Your character is based on your internal values and the resulting judgments you make about what is right and what is wrong.

integrity Part of your character; what you have when your behaviour is in accordance with your professed standards and personal code of moral values.

Nonverbal Strategies that Improve Relationships

The first contact between a salesperson and a prospect is very important. During the first few minutes—or seconds in some cases—the prospect and the salesperson form impressions of each other that will either facilitate or detract from the sales call.¹⁷ It is very difficult to rebound from a poor first impression.

Every salesperson projects an image to prospective customers, and this image influences how a customer feels about the sales representative. The image you project is the sum total of many verbal and nonverbal factors. The quality of your voice, the clothing you wear, your posture, your manners, and your communication style represent some of the factors that contribute to the formation of your image. We discuss body language, voice quality, and manners in this chapter. Communication style is examined in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.3 The starting point to developing a win-win philosophy is to compare behaviours of win-lose salespeople with those of salespeople who have adopted the win-win approach. (Adapted from a list of losers, winners, and double winners in *The Double Win* by Denis Waitley.)

Win-lose people	Win-win people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a problem in every solution • Fix the blame • Let life happen to them • Live in the past • Make promises they never keep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help others solve their problem • Fix what caused the problem • Make life a joyous happening for others and themselves • Learn from the past, live in the present, and set goals for the future • Make commitments to themselves and to others and keep them both

THE EFFECT OF BODY LANGUAGE ON RELATIONSHIPS

Body language is a form of nonverbal communication that has been defined as *messages without words* and *silent messages*. For example, a purchasing agent who continually glances at his watch is communicating a concern for time without using the spoken word. A salesperson who leans forward in her chair while talking to a customer (as opposed to slouching) is more likely to communicate a feeling of concern to this person.

Research indicates that, when two people communicate, nonverbal messages convey much more impact than verbal messages. Words play a surprisingly small part in the communication process. Studies indicate that, in a typical two-person conversation, only about seven percent of our understanding comes from words spoken by the other person.

About 38 percent of our understanding comes from what we hear. Does the other person sound sincere, credible, and knowledgeable? Every spoken message has a vocal element, coming not from *what* we say, but from *how* we say it. The voice communicates in many ways: through its tone, volume, and speed of delivery. A salesperson wishing to communicate enthusiasm needs to use a voice that is charged with energy.

About 55 percent of the meaning we attach to communication efforts by others is based on what we see or feel (Fig. 3.4). A positive message can be communicated to a customer with a smile, a firm handshake, good eye contact, and a professional appearance.¹⁸

Nonverbal messages can reinforce or contradict the spoken word. When your verbal message and body language are consistent, they give others the impression that you can be trusted and that what you say reflects what you truly believe. When there is a discrepancy between your verbal and nonverbal messages, you are less apt to be trusted.¹⁹

body language A form of non-verbal communication that has been defined as “messages without words” and “silent messages.”



Ruth Bell Steinhauer (see p. 40): A pleasant smile sends a positive nonverbal message.

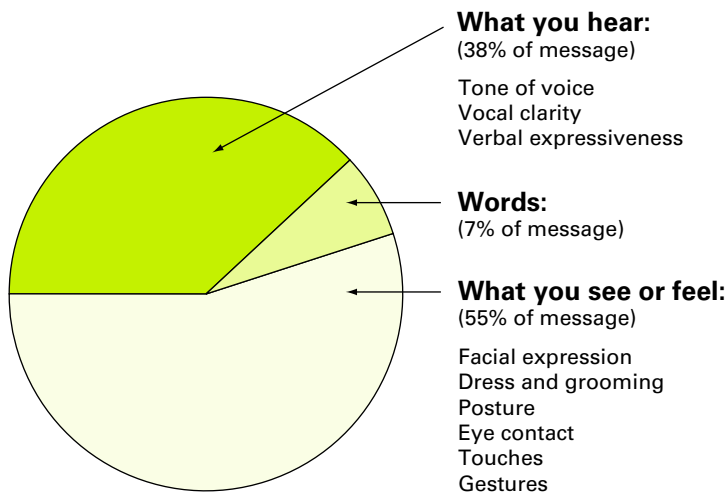


Figure 3.4 When someone else is speaking, your understanding of what is said depends heavily on what you see or feel. (Source: Moravian Study of Nonverbal Communication.)

ENTRANCE AND CARRIAGE

As noted earlier, the first impression we make is very important. The moment a salesperson walks into a client's office, the client begins making judgments. Susan Bixler, author of *The Professional Image* and *Professional Presence*, makes this comment:

*All of us make entrances throughout our business day as we enter offices, conference rooms, or meeting halls. And every time we do, someone is watching us, appraising us, sizing us up, and gauging our appearance, even our intelligence, often within the space of a few seconds.*²⁰

Bixler says that the key to making a successful entrance is simply believing—and projecting—that you have a reason to be there and have something important to offer the client. You can communicate confidence with a strong stride, good posture, and a friendly smile. A confident manner communicates to the client the message, “This meeting will be beneficial to you.”

SHAKING HANDS

An inadequate handshake is like dandruff: no one will mention it, but everyone will notice it. The handshake is an important symbol of respect, and in most business settings it is the proper greeting.²¹

In the field of selling the handshake is usually the *first* and frequently the *only* physical contact one makes during a sales call. The handshake can communicate warmth, genuine concern for the prospect, and an image of strength. It can also communicate aloofness, indifference, and weakness to the customer. The message we communicate with a handshake will be determined by a combination of five factors:

1. *Eye contact during handshake.* Eyes transmit more information than any other part of the body, so maintaining eye contact throughout the handshaking process is important when two people greet each other.
2. *Degree of firmness.* Generally speaking, a firm handshake will communicate a caring attitude, while a weak grip (the dead-fish handshake) communicates indifference.
3. *Depth of interlock.* A full, deep grip will communicate friendship to the other person.
4. *Duration of grip.* There are no specific guidelines to tell us what the ideal duration of a grip should be. However, by extending the duration of the handshake we can often communicate a greater degree of interest and concern for the other person. Do not pump up and down more than once or twice.
5. *Degree of dryness of hands.* A moist palm not only is uncomfortable to handle but also can communicate the impression that you are quite nervous. Some people have a physiological problem that causes clammy hands, and they should keep a handkerchief within reach to remove excess moisture. A clammy hand is likely to repel most customers.²²



The best time to present your name is when you extend your hand.

The best time to present your name is when you extend your hand. When you introduce yourself, state your name clearly and then listen carefully to be certain you hear the customer's name. To ensure that you will remember the customer's name, repeat it. In some cases you will need to check to be sure you are pronouncing it properly.²³

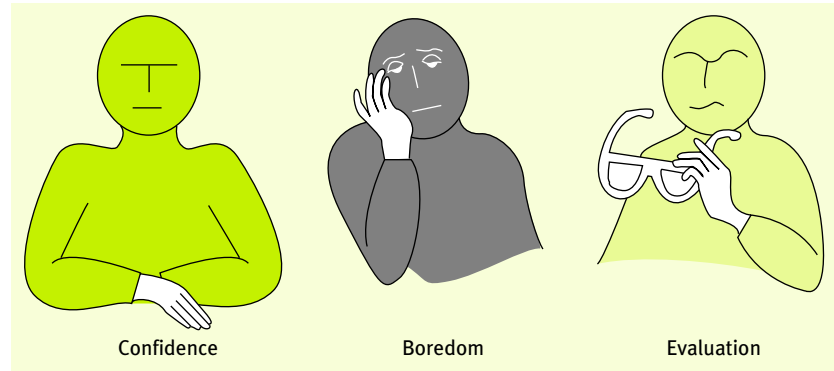
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

If you want to identify the inner feelings of another person, watch facial expressions closely. The face is a remarkable communicator, capable of accurately signalling emotion in a split second and capable of concealing emotion equally well. We can tell in a blink of an eye if our customer's face is registering surprise, pleasure, or skepticism (Fig. 3.5). Facial expressions are largely universal, so people around the world tend to "read" faces in a similar way. It is worth noting that the smile is the most recognized facial signal in the world and it can have a great deal of influence on others. George Rotter, professor of psychology at Montclair University, says, "Smiles are an enormous controller of how people perceive you." People tend to trust a smiling face.²⁴ Get in the habit of offering a sincere smile each time you meet with a prospect.

THE EFFECT OF APPEARANCE ON RELATIONSHIPS

We form opinions about people based on a pattern of immediate impressions conveyed by appearance. The clothing we wear, the length and style of our hair, the fragrances we use, and the jewellery we display all combine to make a statement about us to others—a statement of primary importance to anyone involved in selling.

Figure 3.5 Our subtle facial gestures are continuously sending messages to others.



wardrobe engineering Combining the elements of psychology, fashion, sociology, and art into clothing selection.

unconscious expectations Certain views concerning appropriate dress.

According to many of the top image consultants, clothing is particularly important. John T. Molloy, author of *Dress for Success*, *New Dress for Success*, and other books, was one of the first to acknowledge publicly the link between dress and the image we project to others. He is credited with introducing the term *wardrobe engineering*, a concept that was later refined by William Thourlby, Jacqueline Thompson, Emily Cho, Susan Bixler, and other noted image consultants. **Wardrobe engineering** combines the elements of psychology, fashion, sociology, and art into clothing selection. The position taken by Molloy and others is that clothing can evoke a predictable response.²⁵

We all have certain views, or **unconscious expectations**, concerning appropriate dress. In sales work we should try to anticipate the expectations of our clientele. The clothing worn by salespeople does make a difference in terms of customer acceptance because it communicates powerful messages. The clothing we wear can influence our credibility and likeability. Martin Siewert, a member of the business development team for Axiom Management Consulting, has adopted a flexible approach to dress. His company's policy favours an informal dress code, so he usually wears casual clothing at work unless he is meeting with a client. When he calls on customers, most of whom are Fortune 500 companies, he wears a suit and tie. "I want to show that I respect their culture," he says.²⁶

Most image consultants agree that there is no single "dress for success" look. The appropriate wardrobe will vary from one city or region to another and from company to company. However, there are some general guidelines that we should follow in selecting clothing for sales work. Four key ideas should govern our decisions: simplicity, appropriateness, quality, and visual integrity.

SIMPLICITY

The colour of our clothing, as well as design, will communicate a message to the customer. Some colours are showy and convey an air of casualness. In a business setting we want to be taken seriously, so flashy colours should usually be avoided.



Body language, voice quality, and manners shape much of the image we project to others.

APPROPRIATENESS

Selecting appropriate clothing for sales work can be a challenge. We must carefully consider the clients we serve and decide what will be acceptable to them. Many salespeople are guided by the type of products they sell and the desired image projected by their employer.

QUALITY

The quality of our wardrobe will also influence the image we project to customers. A salesperson's wardrobe should be regarded as an investment,

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Selling In Italy

Italy is Canada's tenth-largest trading partner, but is the world's sixth-largest economy. Canadian business people frequently underestimate its economic potential. Italy's population is nearly twice the size of Canada's, and its per capita GDP is comparable. In fact, per capita incomes in industrialized northern Italy are the highest in Europe. Bilateral trade between Canada and Italy totaled over \$5 billion in 2000. If you wish to sell in Italy, here are some tips on business etiquette for you to consider.

- Looking good is a reflection of success. Italian businesspeople will dress fashionably and you should too.
- Soccer is a good topic for conversation if you are trying to build rapport, but discussing the mafia is in very poor taste.
- Italians may appear late for meetings, but you should be respectful and appear on time. Italians are sensitive to issues of *honore* and *rispetto*.
- Italians are much more tactile than Canadians. Physical contact is frequent, but you should take your cue from your host and not initiate contact. You will be seen as unfriendly or arrogant if you shrink from physical contact.^c

with each item carefully selected to look good and fit well. Susan Bixler says, “If you want respect, you have to dress as well as or better than your industry standards.”²⁷

VISUAL INTEGRITY

Visual presence must have a certain amount of integrity and consistency. The images you project are made up of many factors and lack of attention to important details can negate your effort to create a good impression. Too much jewellery, a shirt that does not fit well, or unshined shoes can detract from the professional look you want to project. People often are extra alert when meeting someone new, and this heightened consciousness makes every detail count.²⁸

The Effect of Voice Quality on Relationships

As noted previously, voice quality contributes about 38 percent of the meaning attached to spoken messages. On the telephone, voice quality is even more important because the other person cannot see your facial expressions, hand gestures, and other body movements. You cannot trade in your current voice for a new one. However, you can make your voice more pleasing to others. How?

Here are two suggestions.

1. *Do not talk too fast or too slowly.* Rapid speech often causes customers to become defensive. They raise psychological barriers because a “rapid-fire monologue” is associated with high-pressure sales methods. Peter Urs Bender, a noted Canadian business speaker and author of *Secrets of Power Presentations*, says 85 percent of presenters begin too fast. He says, “Remember, it’s better to go slower than faster as this will make you look more confident. Also, be sure you incorporate some appropriately long pauses between sentences, particularly at the beginning.”²⁹ The slower presentation allows others to follow, and it allows the speaker time to think ahead—to consider the situation and make judgments. Another good tip is to vary the speed of your speech.
2. *Avoid a speech pattern that is dull and colourless.* The worst kind of voice has no colour and no feeling. Enthusiasm is a critical element of an effective sales presentation. It is also contagious. Your enthusiasm for the product will be transmitted to the customer. Your tone of voice mirrors your emotional state and physical well being. When you are feeling good and enjoying a positive mental state, your voice will naturally sound upbeat, energetic, and enthusiastic. However, the normal stresses and strains of life can be reflected in your voice. Sometimes you have to manipulate your tone of voice to communicate greater warmth and enthusiasm. Before you make that important phone call or meet with a prospect, reflect on your state of mind. To drain tension from your voice, inhale and tense every muscle. Hold for a count of



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five, and then exhale for a count of ten. If you want to sound warm and friendly, smile while speaking.³⁰

With today's affordable video camcorders you can easily find out how you look and sound. To evaluate the quality of your voice, tape it while talking to another person. Play back the tape, and rate yourself in the previously described areas.

THE EFFECT OF MANNERS ON RELATIONSHIPS

The study of manners (sometimes called *etiquette*) reveals a number of ways to enhance your relationship strategy. Salespeople who possess knowledge of the rules of etiquette can perform their daily work with greater poise and confidence. Think of manners as a universal passport to positive relationships and respect.³¹

With practice, anyone can have good manners without appearing to be “stiff” and at the same time win the respect and admiration of others. Space does not permit a complete review of this topic, but we cover some of the rules of etiquette that are especially important to salespeople.

1. *Avoid the temptation to address a new prospect by first name.* In a business setting, too much familiarity too quickly can cause irritation.
2. *Avoid offensive comments or stories.* Never assume that the customer's value system is the same as your own. Rough language and off-colour stories can do irreparable damage to your image.
3. *Do not express personal views on political or religious issues.* There is seldom a “safe” position to take in these areas, so it is better to avoid these topics altogether.
4. *When you invite a customer to lunch, do not discuss business before the meal is ordered unless the client initiates the subject.* Also, order food that is easily controlled, and avoid items such as ribs, chicken, and lobster.
5. *When you use voice mail, leave a clear, concise message.* Do not speak too fast or mumble your name and number.

It has been said that good manners make other people feel better. This is true because good manners require that we place the other person's comfort ahead of our own. One of the best ways to develop rapport with a customer is to avoid behaviour that might be offensive to that person.

Conversational Strategies that Enhance Relationships

The foundation for a long-term relationship with the customer is frequently a “get acquainted” type of conversation that takes place before any discussion of business matters. Within a few minutes it is possible to reduce

the relationship tension that is so common when two people meet for the first time. This informal visit with the customer provides the salesperson with an opportunity to apply three of Dale Carnegie's guidelines for building strong relationships:

- Become genuinely interested in other people.
- Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
- Talk in terms of the other person's interests.³²

In a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, the customer is more apt to open up and share information that will help the salesperson determine customer needs. A casual conversation is frequently the first step in developing a trusting relationship.

The length of this conversation will depend on your sense of the prospect's reaction to your greeting, how busy the prospect appears to be, and your awareness of topics of mutual interest. In developing conversation the following three areas should be considered.

COMMENTS ON HERE AND NOW OBSERVATIONS

Observant salespeople are aware of the things going on around them. These observations can be as general as unusual developments in the weather or as specific as noticing unique artifacts in the prospect's office.

COMPLIMENTS

When you offer a *sincere* compliment to your prospect, you are saying, "Something about you is special." Most people react positively to compliments because they appeal to the need for self-esteem. Your admiration should not be expressed, however, in phony superlatives that will seem transparent. The prospect may suspect ulterior motives, which are unwelcome.

SEARCH FOR MUTUAL ACQUAINTANCES OR INTERESTS

A frequent mode for establishing rapport with a new prospect is to find friends or interests you have in common. If you know someone with the same last name as your prospect, it may be appropriate to ask whether your friend is any relation. Anything you observe in the prospect's office or home might suggest an interest that you and your prospect share. Such topics of conversation appeal to your prospect's social needs.

Strategies for Self-Improvement

Orson Welles, a well-known and highly respected actor, once said, "Every actor is very busy getting better or getting worse." To a large extent, salespeople are also "very busy getting better or getting worse." To improve, salespeople must develop an ongoing program for self-improvement. It is important to keep in mind that all improvement is self-initiated. Each of us controls the switch that allows personal growth and development to take place.

Building Relationships with Frequent Deposits

Building relationships in sales can be compared to making deposits in the bank. Regular bank deposits have a compounding effect, so over time you see steady growth in your account. Each of the following contacts with a customer or prospect is a deposit that can build the relationship:

- Send articles or reports of interest to your contacts. Be sure a personal note accompanies them.
- Send cards to celebrate an event, such as a birthday or anniversary.
- Contact customers after the sale to check on their level of satisfaction with the product.
- Express appreciation for purchases with a card, letter, or phone call.
- Don't forget to make contact with secondary decision makers, support staff, and appropriate management personnel.^d

At the beginning of this chapter we introduced the concept of emotional intelligence. We noted that this form of intelligence can be increased with the aid of self-development activities. Would you like to develop a more positive self-image? Improve your ability to develop double-win relationships? Develop effective nonverbal communication skills? Improve your speaking voice? These relationship-building strategies can be achieved if you are willing to follow these steps:

- **Step one: set goals.** Goal setting, as noted previously, is an important element of any self-improvement plan. The goal-setting process requires that you be clear about what you want to accomplish. If your goal is too general or vague, progress toward achieving that goal will be difficult to observe. An important step in the goal-setting process is to put the goal in writing.
- **Step two: practise visualization.** To make your goals a reality, engage in visualization. Forming a mental picture of yourself succeeding in goal attainment will actually affect your behaviour. Mary Lou Retton and many other Olympic stars have used visualization. She described her preparation for the gymnastics event this way:

When I visualized myself going through a beam routine, I didn't imagine myself falling. I visualized myself on the beam—perfect. Always picture it perfect.³³

You can work the same “mental magic” in goal setting by visualizing yourself as the person you want to be. For example, spend time developing mental pictures of successful experiences with prospective or established customers.

This salesperson has set a fitness goal. Physical fitness can be an important part of a self-improvement program.



self-talk An effort to override past negative mental programming by erasing or replacing it with conscious, positive new directions. It is one way to get rid of barriers to goal achievement.

- **Step three: monitor your self-talk.** Shad Helmstetter, author of *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself*, defines **self-talk** as “a way to override our past negative programming by erasing or replacing it with conscious, positive new directions.”³⁴ It is an effective way to get rid of barriers to goal achievement. Helmstetter suggests that we develop specific positive self-talk statements and repeat them often to keep ourselves on target in terms of goal attainment.
- **Step four: recognize your progress.** When you see yourself making progress toward a goal, or achieving a goal, reward yourself. This type of reinforcement is vital when you are trying to change a behaviour. There is nothing wrong with taking pride in your accomplishments.

Self-improvement efforts can result in new abilities or powers, and they give us the motivation to utilize more fully the talents we already have. As a result, our potential for success is greater.

SUMMARY

The manner in which salespeople establish, build, and maintain relationships is a major key to success in personal selling. The key relationships in selling include management personnel, company support staff, secondary decision makers, and customers.

The concept of *partnering* was defined and discussed in detail. Partnering emphasizes building a strong relationship during every aspect of the sale and

working hard to maintain a quality relationship with the customer after the sale.

An understanding of the psychology of human behaviour provides a foundation for developing relationship strategies. In this chapter we discussed the link between self-image and success in selling. Self-imposed fears can prevent salespeople from achieving success.

We have described several factors that influence the image you project to customers. The image others have of us is shaped to a great extent by nonverbal communication. We may choose the right words to persuade a customer to place an order, but aversive factors communicated by our clothing, handshake, facial expression, tone of voice, and general manner may prejudice the customer against us and our product or service.

There are few absolute standards for defining aversive factors. Beyond obvious things like slovenly dress and rude manners you must develop your own awareness of geographic and social factors, as well as your knowledge of particular customers, to know what might be considered aversive.

We also discussed the importance of self-improvement. A four-step self-improvement plan was described.

Key Terms

Emotional Intelligence 53
 Relationship Strategy 53
 Partnering 56
 Self-Image 59
 Win-Win 60
 Character 62

Integrity 62
 Body Language 63
 Wardrobe Engineering 66
 Unconscious Expectations 66
 Self-Talk 72

Review Questions


- List the three prescriptions that serve as the foundation for development of a relationship strategy.
- How important are establishing, building, and maintaining relationships in the selling process? List the four groups of people with whom sales personnel must be able to work effectively.
- Define the term *partnering*. Why has the building of partnerships become more important today?
- Defend the statement, “Successful relationships depend on a positive self-image.”
- Describe the double-win or win-win approach to selling.
- How is our self-image formed? Why is a positive self-image so important in personal selling?
- Describe the meaning of the term *emotional intelligence*.
- Identify three conversational methods that can be used to establish relationships.
- Describe the meaning of the term *body language*.
- List and describe each step in the four-step self-improvement plan.

Application Exercises

- Select four salespeople you know and ask them if they have a relationship strategy for working with customers, management personnel, secondary decision makers, and company support staff.
- Emotional intelligence* is a fairly new concept that has been introduced in this chapter. Go to

www.google.ca (or another search engine if you prefer) and hit “advanced search.” Type “emotional intelligence” under “Find results with exact phrase.” Limit your search by typing “.ca” under “domain.” (You will still find lots of information to review.) Be prepared to discuss what you find in class.

3. Complete the following etiquette quiz. Your instructor will provide you with answers so you can check your responses.
 - a. On what side should you wear your name tag?
 - b. Is it appropriate to drink beer from a bottle at a reception?
 - c. When introducing a female salesperson to a male prospect, whose name should be spoken first?
 - d. At the table, when should you place your napkin in your lap?
 - e. Is it ever proper to comb, smooth, or touch your hair while seated at a restaurant table?

4.  This is a two-part role-play exercise. Part one involves preparation for a sales call on a new prospect you have not met previously. The primary objective of this meeting is to get acquainted with the prospect and begin the process of building a long-term relationship. You anticipate that this prospect will become a very good customer. Review the text material on thought processes that will enhance your relationship strategy, nonverbal strategies that add value to your relationships, and conversational strategies that enhance relationships. Prepare a written outline of the things you plan to say and do during the first five to ten minutes of the meeting. Think of this outline as your “strategic plan.” Part two involves a role-play. Try to say and do everything that was part of your plan. At the end of the role-play, give your strategic plan outline to the prospect and request feedback on your performance.

5. It has been pointed out in this chapter that clothing communicates strong messages. In this exercise you will become more aware of whether or not your clothes communicate the messages you want them to communicate.

- a. Make a chart like the one that follows:

Item of clothing being analyzed	What I want my clothes to say about me to others	What others think my clothing says

- b. In the first column, list the clothing you are now wearing (for example, dress slacks, dress shoes, and sweater; athletic shoes, jeans, and T-shirt; or suit, tie, and dress shoes).
- c. In the middle column, describe the message you would like the clothes you have chosen to say. For example, “I want to be comfortable,” “I want people to notice me,” or “I want people to understand how proper and organized I am.”
- d. Have somebody else fill in the third column by describing what they think your clothes say about you.
- e. Compare the two columns. Do your clothes communicate what you want them to?

Do the same exercise for social dress, casual dress, business attire, and hairstyle.

CRM Application Exercise PREPARING LETTERS WITH CRM



Load the ACT! software and look up My Record. This screen identifies the person using the database—which in this case was Pat Silva, and now will be you. Replace Pat Silva’s name with your own.

The ACT! software demonstrates how customer relationship management programs are designed to be

used by people who are in a hurry or who don’t have extensive typing skills. Make menu choices by using the mouse, by typing simple key combinations, or by selecting an icon. This means that a procedure, such as preparing and printing correspondence, can be started by (a) selecting with a mouse the word Write, then the word Letter, from the menus; by (b) pressing the Alt

key and the **W** (**W**rite) key at the same time (Alt+W), and then pressing the **L** (**L**etter) key; or by (c) selecting the **L**etter icon with the mouse.

On your screen will appear a blank letter with the date, inside address, salutation, closing line, your name, and your title. All you need to do is begin typing. If you have a printer connected to your computer, you can print your letter by selecting Print from the File menu. With the File menu open, note that the right column displays key combinations, such as Ctrl+P to print.

Find the record for Brad Able by choosing **L**ookup, **L**ast Name, type in “Able,” and press Enter. With Brad Able’s record on the screen, choose the letter icon or, from the menus, **W**rite and **L**etter. Prepare, then print, a brief letter to Brad Able confirming an appointment to meet at his office next Thursday at 9:00 a.m. to discuss his training needs. Your letter should feature the double-win approach discussed in this chapter.