

FROM HELLO TO SOLD

How to Find Customers, Build Trust and Make Sales In Person or on WhatsApp

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Forty-plus years of real-world selling lessons

PRACTICAL SELLING GUIDE | DIGITAL EDITION

A note from Gilbert

I have worked with customers, shopkeepers, businesses and salespeople for more than forty years. I have worked in South Africa and Mozambique, in shops, on the road and around the people who make a living by selling something every day.

This book is not about a magic closing sentence. It is not a promise of quick riches. I want to share something more useful: how to approach a person, start a sensible conversation, listen properly, explain what you offer and look after the customer once the money changes hands.

Somebody selling vegetables from a roadside table and somebody selling a service to a business owner have more in common than you might think. Both must earn the next minute of somebody's attention. Both need to explain the value of what they are offering. Both need to be trusted.

Today, much of that conversation happens on WhatsApp. That is fine with me. Technology changes, but people still want to be treated like people. The same respect that opens a door in a shop should be there when you send a message.

I have kept the lessons short. There is something to practise at the end of every chapter. You can read the book in one sitting, but you will get more value if you take one lesson into the world tomorrow and try it.

One last thing before we begin: selling is not about winning an argument. A customer must be happy with the decision. That is the kind of sale worth making.

The journey through this book

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A short guide for everyday sellers. Read it once, then return to the lessons when you need them.

CHAPTER 01

What to Say After Hello

A customer can decide whether to listen to you before you have even mentioned your product.

That is why I have always believed that one of the most important questions in selling is a very simple one: What is the purpose of your visit?

You may have the best product in the world. You may know every price, every feature and every special offer. But if you walk into somebody's shop and start talking without explaining why you are there, you have already made the conversation harder than it needs to be.

The first few seconds

Imagine walking into a small shop. The owner is busy behind the counter. A customer is paying. Another person is waiting to ask a question. You arrive with your sales bag and a big idea.

This is not your stage. It is somebody else's business.

If the owner is serving a customer, let them finish. Never interrupt somebody who is doing business just to tell them you want to do business.

When there is a suitable moment, greet the person. Introduce yourself. Then explain your purpose in plain language. You do not need a speech.

> “Good morning. My name is Gilbert. I'm visiting local shops to introduce a product that might suit your customers. Would you have two minutes, or is there a better time for me to come back?”

Notice what that does. You have said who you are, why you are there, and how much time you are asking for. You have also given the other person a choice.

That is not weakness. It is respect.

A reasonable request

I have always believed that a reasonable request from a reasonable person deserves a reasonable answer. It does not mean the answer will always be yes.

Perhaps the owner says, “Not now.” Fine. Ask when would be convenient. Perhaps the person at the counter is not the buyer. Ask who handles purchasing. Perhaps the answer is no altogether. Thank them for their time and move on.

Do not take a busy person's response as a personal insult. And do not turn a two-minute request into a twenty-minute presentation.

Selling begins with understanding that the customer has a business to run, a life to live and a choice to make.

A simple opening you can adapt

This is a teaching example, not a line you must memorise word for word:

> “Morning, I'm Lerato. I supply lunch packs to nearby businesses. I wanted to find out whether packed lunches would be useful for your staff. Is now a good time for one quick question?”

If the person says yes, ask the question. If the answer is no, don't try to squeeze in the whole presentation anyway. If they are busy, arrange a more convenient time.

The first conversation should be light enough for the customer to accept. They should not feel trapped because they were polite enough to greet you.

What this looks like on WhatsApp

The same principle works when the shop counter becomes a phone screen. A WhatsApp message should not begin with a long advertisement, an unexpected catalogue or ten pictures. A contact number is not automatic permission to send repeated promotions.

If somebody has asked about your products, a reply could be:

> “Hi Thabo, thanks for asking about our lunch packs. I'm Lerato. We prepare fresh lunch packs for collection in the area. Would you like today's menu and prices?”

If a person has not asked to hear from you, use an appropriate introduction or referral and respect their preference not to receive marketing. Do not pretend you know them, invent an endorsement or add them to a broadcast list without permission.

The principle is exactly the same: greet, explain, ask.

Try this tomorrow

Write a two-sentence introduction to your own product or service. Say it aloud. Then write a WhatsApp version that a person could understand on a small phone screen.

Before you send or say it, ask yourself: Is it clear? Is it respectful? Have I explained the reason for the conversation?

Your first job is not to deliver a pitch. Your first job is to earn the next minute.

CHAPTER 02

The Customer Who Said No 18 Times

Some customers say yes on your first visit. Others say no. And sometimes they say no so many times that you wonder whether they will ever become a customer.

I remember one particular restaurant owner in Johannesburg who taught me a lesson about patience, consistency and the importance of building a relationship before making a sale.

His name was Jean-Pierre. And he said no to me approximately eighteen times.

The French Bistro in Rosebank

At the time, I was selling cigarette brands to restaurants, hotels and clubs. My job involved travelling along a regular route, visiting establishments and offering them a selection of products they could sell to their customers.

One of the restaurants along my route was the French Bistro in Rosebank, Johannesburg. The owner was Jean-Pierre. I would generally arrive at around half-past nine in the morning, when he was opening the restaurant.

The first time I called, he wasn't interested in buying anything. Fair enough.

The following week, I was travelling along the same route, so I called again. Still no. And so it continued. Week after week, Jean-Pierre declined my offer.

I wasn't making a special journey across Johannesburg to persuade him. His restaurant was on my normal route, and I was continuing on to another customer called Jack's. I had a job to do, and Jean-Pierre was one of the businesses along my route.

"Are you mad?"

After approximately eighteen or nineteen visits, something changed. Jean-Pierre invited me inside. As I remember it, he asked me something along these lines:

> "Are you mad? I've told you I don't want to buy anything from you."

My explanation was quite simple. I passed his restaurant every week on my way to Jack's. I was being paid to make my sales calls, and perhaps one day he might need something I could supply.

I wasn't asking him to buy something he didn't want. I simply wanted him to know that I was there.

And then, after all those refusals, he gave me an order. He started asking for cartons of different brands. Just like that, a man who had repeatedly said no became a customer.

There was no magic closing technique. No special discount that I remember. No complicated sales presentation. The important thing was that I had remained consistent and available.

What happened after the first sale?

This is the part of the story I particularly remember. Jean-Pierre didn't simply give me one order and disappear. He became a regular customer.

Every Thursday, I would call at the restaurant and service his account. Over time, we became good acquaintances. Sometimes we would have a coffee or share a drink.

I eventually placed a cigarette dispensing unit in the restaurant, and we also supplied brands that his staff could purchase on the premises.

What began with repeated refusals developed into an ongoing business relationship. And that, to me, is far more important than the first order.

Getting somebody to buy once is one thing. Giving them enough confidence to keep buying from you is another.

The lesson

Now, I want to make something very clear. This story is not about refusing to accept the word no.

I would never advise a salesperson to pester someone, ignore a request to stop visiting, or keep sending unwanted messages. Jean-Pierre's restaurant was part of my regular sales route. My calls were brief, and I didn't turn every refusal into an argument.

The lesson is that a salesperson should understand the difference between a customer who is not interested today and someone who does not want further contact. Respect both.

A person may not need your product today. Their circumstances may change. Their existing supplier may let them down, or a new opportunity may arise. When that happens, they may remember the salesperson who was professional, reliable and respectful. But they must be free to make that choice.

Persistence should build trust, not wear down somebody's resistance.

What this looks like on WhatsApp

Today, many young entrepreneurs conduct most of their sales conversations through WhatsApp. The principle remains the same, but the way we communicate is different.

Imagine you are a plumber who has given a customer a quotation. The customer hasn't made a decision. If they have agreed that you may follow up, you could send:

> “Hi Sipho, just checking whether you had a chance to consider the quotation I sent you. If you have any questions, I'm happy to help. And if you've made another arrangement, that's absolutely fine too.”

Simple. Friendly. No pressure. If the customer replies that they aren't interested, respect the answer. And if they ask you not to contact them again, leave it there.

Remember, a WhatsApp number is not permission to keep advertising to someone. Your job is to create confidence, not irritation.

Try this tomorrow

Think about three customers who have already shown interest in your product or service but haven't made a decision. For each customer, ask yourself: Do I understand why they haven't bought? Have they agreed

that I may follow up? Can I offer useful information rather than repeat the same sales pitch?

Choose one customer who has welcomed further contact. Write a short, respectful follow-up message. Don't start with a discount. Don't demand an answer. Simply offer to help them make an informed decision. And if they aren't interested, thank them and move on.

Persistence may open the door. Good service is what keeps it open.

CHAPTER 03

When the Customer Isn't There

Sometimes you arrive at a business and the person you came to see is not there.

It happens. You drive across town, find a place to park, walk in and hear: “The owner is out.” Your first reaction may be disappointment. You might think the visit was a waste of time.

But not every visit has to end with an order. Some visits are about finding the right person, the right time or the right question.

The person behind the counter matters

I learned through retail that the person serving a customer can know a great deal about what happens in a shop. They may not place orders, but they often hear the questions shoppers ask. They know what people come looking for and what frustrates them.

That does not mean you must interrogate them while they are working. Treat them as a professional person, not as an obstacle between you and the owner.

For example, an illustrative conversation might go like this:

> SELLER: “Good morning. I wanted to speak to whoever orders the shop's cleaning products. Is that the owner?”
>
> STAFF MEMBER: “Yes, but she has gone out.”
>
> SELLER: “No problem. Is there a better day or time to call? I can leave my details if that's helpful.”

You've made a little progress without trying to force an order from somebody who cannot authorise one.

Don't mistake a name for an appointment

There is a difference between finding out that the buyer is called Mrs Daniels and arranging a time to speak to Mrs Daniels.

Before you leave, try to agree on a next action. Keep your question small and useful: “Is she normally in before lunch?” “Would it suit her if I came

back on Tuesday?" If the person doesn't know, thank them and leave it there.

Never claim that the owner asked for a visit when they did not. And never make the staff member feel responsible for a sale.

The next visit starts with your notes

Good salespeople keep good records. Use a notebook, your phone or a CRM to note whom you met, what you discussed and the agreed next step. A good CRM helps you organise relationships and follow up on time.

Bad note: "Owner not there."

Better note: "Owner normally handles ordering on Thursday mornings. Staff suggested I phone first. No catalogue requested."

If you have agreed to call, follow through. If the shop doesn't want further contact, respect that decision.

What this looks like on WhatsApp

If someone has asked you to quote for a business purchase but says their partner makes the final decision, don't assume you should start messaging the partner.

You could reply:

> "Thanks for letting me know. Would a short summary help you discuss it together? I can send the price, what is included and the delivery time in one message."

Only send the summary if it is welcomed. Keep the facts accurate so the buyer can make a decision without your presence.

A small exercise

Think about the last five calls or visits that did not result in an order. For each one, write down the actual next step. Not "try again sometime," but what was agreed, if anything. If nothing was agreed, do not invent one. Notice whether your visits are creating clarity.

If you cannot make the sale today, make the next conversation easier.

CHAPTER 04

Sell the Opportunity, Not Just the Product

Too many salespeople arrive with a product list and a price. They are excited about what they have to sell. Unfortunately, the person buying may be thinking about something completely different.

The shopkeeper is thinking about customers walking out because stock is missing. The restaurant owner is thinking about the dinner rush. A parent is wondering whether those school shoes will last until the next term.

When you understand what matters to the buyer, you have something worth talking about.

A lesson from supplying retailers

During my time with Rembrandt Tobacco Company, one of the useful things we discussed with retailers was model stock: keeping a sensible quantity of the products customers asked for. I would ask questions such as, “When last did you run out of that brand?” and “What are your average sales?”

The conversation was not simply, “How many cartons can I sell you today?” It was about helping a retailer avoid running out of a popular item. If a shopper cannot find what they came for, the shop can lose that sale, and perhaps some goodwill.

That was the practical value behind the order.

Product, problem and benefit

Here is a simple way to prepare for a sales conversation. Write three lines in a notebook.

PRODUCT: What do I actually offer?

PROBLEM: What difficulty might my buyer be facing?

BENEFIT: What will become easier, quicker, safer or more reliable if this product is suitable?

An example: You sell bottled drinking water to small offices. Your product is water. The possible problem is the office running out during a busy week. The possible benefit is arranging a sensible quantity and delivery pattern so staff do not have to make emergency trips.

But be careful: do not tell the customer what their problem is before listening. Ask first. Your idea about their problem may be wrong.

What if they ask only for the price?

Many new sellers panic when the first question is, “How much?” Some reply with just a number. Others avoid the question and begin a long explanation.

Neither extreme is helpful. If you know the price, answer it. Then, if it will improve the recommendation, ask one brief question.

> “The unit is R450. Delivery is R60 in your area. May I ask whether it's for home use or an office so I can confirm the right option?”

That gives the customer the information they requested without ending the conversation. Don't hide a real price behind unnecessary questions.

Selling the right quantity

Another mistake is thinking that the biggest order is always the best order. For a small trader or shop, excess stock ties up money. Ask what they sell and what they can realistically move. If the product is not right for their business, say so.

The customer who sees you protect their money has a good reason to trust you next time.

On WhatsApp

You can apply the same thinking in two messages rather than ten. For example:

> BUYER: “How much for the solar consultation?”
>
> SELLER: “The consultation is R___ and includes ___. Before I confirm a booking, is the property a home or a business?”

Be clear about what is included. Never promise savings or results you cannot support.

Try this tomorrow

Choose three products or services. For each, finish this sentence: “This helps my customer because ...” Then write one genuine question you can ask before making a recommendation.

Don't sell the box. Help the customer understand what the box does for them.

CHAPTER 05

Multiply Yourself Through Others

You have only so many hours in a day. You cannot personally speak to every possible buyer. But people talk to one another. They recommend shops, products, plumbers, mechanics and food sellers. A good reputation can travel further than your vehicle.

This is not about tricks or asking strangers to work for free. It is about making it easy for people who genuinely understand your product to explain its value to somebody else.

The people who serve the customer

If you supply a retailer, remember that you are not always there when the shopper walks into the shop. The assistant behind the counter may be the person who answers the shopper's question.

What does the assistant know about your product? Can they explain it simply? Do they know who it is suitable for and where it is kept? Do they know what they should not promise?

Teaching somebody those basics is often more valuable than leaving a beautiful brochure that nobody reads.

For example, with an everyday household product, a good explanation might include the size, the price, how to use it and what to check before purchase. The assistant should not invent a feature just to get a sale.

The recommendation you earn

A customer whose problem has been solved may recommend you. You cannot demand that. You earn it by doing what you promised and being easy to deal with.

After a satisfactory job, you could say:

> “I'm pleased it worked out. If a friend or neighbour has the same problem, you're welcome to pass on my number.”

That's an invitation, not pressure. You are not asking for somebody else's private number or permission to contact strangers.

Give people the words

People sometimes want to help but don't know what to say. Give them a short and honest description they can pass on:

> "She repairs small household appliances in our area, tells you the likely cost first and lets you decide whether the repair is worthwhile."

Notice that it describes a real service, not a claim that everybody will be satisfied.

Keep the relationship personal

An introduction is the beginning, not the sale. Treat the new customer as a new person, not as somebody who is obliged to buy because a friend referred them.

Thank the person for the referral without sharing private details about what the new customer bought or discussed.

What this looks like on WhatsApp

After a completed order, a simple message can work:

> "Thanks again for trusting me with the repair. If somebody you know needs similar help, you're welcome to share my contact details."

One message is enough. You do not need to chase a customer for five names.

Try this tomorrow

Choose one product. Write a thirty-second explanation that a shop assistant or happy customer could repeat accurately. Read it aloud. If you hear exaggeration, remove it.

Make it easy for people to explain your value to someone else.

CHAPTER 06

Your Product Knowledge Is Your Armour

When you're young and starting to sell, you may think confidence means speaking loudly or knowing a special set of sales words. In my experience, confidence comes much more naturally when you understand what you're selling.

If a customer asks a simple question and you cannot answer, you have two choices. You can guess and hope for the best, or you can be honest and find out.

Choose the second one.

Know more than the brochure

Before offering a product, learn the basics: What does it do? Who is it for? What does it cost? How long does delivery take? How does the customer use it? What are its limits? What should the customer do if something goes wrong?

For a retailer, add a few business questions. How much stock is sensible? Which items do shoppers ask for? How will new stock be displayed? What margin will the retailer actually earn?

You don't need a university degree to know your product. You need the discipline to ask questions and learn the answers.

The power of “I'll check”

Suppose a customer asks whether a replacement part fits a particular model. If you aren't certain, don't bluff.

> “I don't want you to buy the wrong part. Can you send me the model number? I'll check compatibility and get back to you.”

Then actually check and respond. Never use “I'll get back to you” as a polite way to disappear.

There is something attractive about a seller who can say, “I don't know yet.” It tells the customer that you're more interested in the right result than pretending to know everything.

Know when not to sell

Sometimes your product is simply not right for the job. Perhaps the customer needs a smaller size. Perhaps your service doesn't cover their area. Perhaps a repair would cost more than replacing the item.

You might lose today's order by telling the truth. You may win something bigger: a reputation for honesty.

The five-question test

Before your next selling day, answer these in plain English: (1) Who is this product suitable for? (2) What problem does it solve? (3) What does the full price include? (4) What could go wrong or make it unsuitable? (5) What happens after purchase?

If you cannot answer one question, find out before promising anything.

On WhatsApp

People sometimes send photographs and expect an immediate answer. A photograph may not show enough. Ask for the information you need, rather than guessing.

> “Thank you for the photo. I can see the type of fitting, but I need the model number before I can confirm it. May I ask you to send that?”

Try this tomorrow

Write down the five questions customers ask you most often. Practise giving short answers that an ordinary person can understand. Where you are unsure, check your facts.

If you don't know, don't pretend. Find out.

CHAPTER 07

Let the Customer Teach You

A customer can teach you about your business if you give them room to talk.

Sometimes a shopkeeper knows exactly why a product doesn't move. A parent can explain why a pair of shoes won't work for their child. A homeowner can tell you what the last service provider did wrong. None of this knowledge comes from talking more loudly.

It comes from listening.

Questions that open the conversation

“What's important to you?” is usually more useful than “Let me tell you why my product is the best.”

You can also ask: “What are you using now?” “What's working well?” “What would you like to improve?” “What happened the last time you tried something like this?”

Ask one question. Then give the person time to answer. A good sales conversation is not a police interview.

The potato lesson

One lesson from my family's retail experience has stayed with me: one bad potato should not cost you a good customer.

Think about the meaning. A customer complains that one potato in a bag was bad. You can argue that all the other potatoes were fine. You can explain that produce is natural and not every item is perfect. Or you can listen, understand the complaint and put right what is reasonable.

A small argument can damage years of goodwill. A small act of good service can strengthen it.

You don't have to agree with every complaint. You do have to take people seriously.

Listen for the real concern

Suppose a customer says, “I can't buy today.” You might be tempted to offer a discount. But the real issue may be that payday is next week, that they don't have enough space, or that they need to speak to another person.

Instead of guessing, try:

> “No problem. Is there anything you're unsure about that I could explain before you decide?”

If the answer is no, leave it there. Listening includes listening to a final no.

Repeat back what you've heard

A useful skill is to summarise: “So the main issue is that delivery must happen before Friday. Have I understood you correctly?”

That one sentence can prevent a wrong quotation, a wrong order and a disappointed customer.

What this looks like on WhatsApp

Typing makes it easy to misunderstand. Keep your questions short and don't bombard people.

> “Thanks, I understand. Is your main concern the delivery time, the cost, or something else?”

Then wait for the answer. Don't send another four messages while the customer is typing.

Try this tomorrow

In your next three conversations, ask one genuine question and let the customer finish. Afterwards, write down what you learned that you didn't know before.

Listening is not waiting for your turn to speak.

CHAPTER 08

Don't Argue - Find Out

“Too expensive.” “I already have a supplier.” “I'll think about it.”

Every salesperson hears these words. They can feel like doors closing. But an objection is not a personal attack. Sometimes it is a real concern. Sometimes it is a request for information. Sometimes it is simply a polite way of saying no.

Your job is not to defeat the customer. Your job is to understand whether there is anything useful to discuss.

A person convinced against his will

There is a saying I believe in: “A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”

You may win the argument, but you have not won the customer. They may buy to get rid of you, regret the decision and never come back. That is no victory.

Ask a calm question if the customer seems willing to talk. Then listen to the answer.

When they say “too expensive”

You can respond:

> “I understand. Is your concern the total amount, or are you comparing what's included with another quotation?”

If your price is higher because delivery or support is included, explain that clearly. If you really are more expensive for the same offer, don't pretend otherwise. Not everybody will choose you.

When they say “I have a supplier”

Try:

> “That makes sense. If they're looking after you, that's a good thing. May I leave my details in case you ever need an alternative?”

If the answer is no, thank them and leave. Don't invent stories about a competitor to frighten the customer.

When they say “I'll think about it”

Try:

> “Of course. Is there any information you'd like me to clarify before you decide?”

If the person wants time, give it to them. Ask whether they would welcome one follow-up and agree on when. Do not assume that silence means you should send reminders forever.

When they say “not interested”

The best response may be the shortest:

> “Understood. Thank you for your time.”

One of the most important skills in selling is knowing when to stop.

On WhatsApp

Written words can sound sharper than you intended. If somebody writes “Your price is higher,” stay calm:

> “You're right, it is higher. Our quotation includes delivery and installation. If useful, I can show you the breakdown so you can compare like for like.”

This is an offer to explain, not a demand to justify yourself.

Try this tomorrow

Write your three most common objections. For each, prepare one honest answer and one calm question. Practise saying them without rushing or sounding defensive.

Don't argue your customer into a sale.

CHAPTER 09

The Sale Is Not Finished at Yes

The customer says yes. You feel pleased. The order is in the book.

But the most important part of the relationship may be starting right there.

Every promise you made during the selling conversation now has to be kept. If you promised Friday, Friday matters. If you promised a certain size, quantity or feature, the customer is entitled to expect it. If the price has conditions, they should have been explained before payment.

Confirm the details

Do not rely on memory when money and delivery are involved. Confirm what was ordered, the agreed price, what's included, when it will arrive and how the customer can reach you if something goes wrong.

It can be as simple as:

> “Thank you. Confirming: two units at R___ each, delivery to the agreed address on Friday. I'll let you know when the order is on its way.”

Send only the necessary details. Respect the customer's privacy.

If you make a mistake

Nobody runs a perfect business. Deliveries are delayed. A box is missing. A technician discovers a problem that was not visible during the quote.

What matters is what you do next.

Tell the customer as soon as you know. Explain the real situation. Offer a practical remedy you can actually deliver. Do not disappear and hope the problem will solve itself.

A customer may forgive a mistake handled well. They seldom forget being ignored.

The second order begins with the first

Repeat business isn't always the result of another promotional message. Often it grows because the last order went smoothly.

Did you arrive when you said you would? Was the product correct? Did you answer the phone? Did you explain the problem honestly? These ordinary things are the foundations of a business that lasts.

A five-minute after-sales habit

At the end of each day, look at the orders you took. Ask: Is every customer clear on the next step? Are there any deliveries to confirm? Does somebody need an update? What promise have I not yet kept?

Do the promised work before chasing the next new customer.

On WhatsApp

A useful follow-up after delivery might be:

> "Hi, I'm checking that your order arrived as agreed and everything is correct. Please let me know if anything needs attention."

That is service, not an excuse to start sending marketing messages.

Try this tomorrow

Look at your last three sales. Write down one thing you promised each customer. Can you prove you delivered it? If not, resolve the issue.

The first sale tests your promise. The service afterwards proves it.

CHAPTER 10

Persistence Opens the Door. Service Keeps It Open

I have spent much of my working life around people and products, in South Africa and Mozambique. I've seen different shops, markets and ways of doing business. The tools changed over the years. The customers changed. The products changed.

But the questions people ask themselves before buying are very familiar. Can I trust this person? Do they understand what I need? Is the price clear? Will they do what they promised?

People still buy from people

You may meet a buyer in a shop or get their first enquiry on a small phone screen. A good approach is still a good approach. Explain why you're there. Ask a sensible question. Listen. Offer a solution that fits. Give the customer freedom to decide.

Technology can make this easier, but it cannot replace character.

You can send a photograph in seconds. That photograph must still be honest. You can reply instantly. The reply still needs to make sense. You can take an online payment. The product still needs to be delivered.

You are selling your reputation

Every promise is remembered. A sensible quotation, a respectful no-pressure conversation, an apology when something goes wrong - these moments become the story people tell about your business.

You don't control everything a customer says. You can control how you behave.

Keep a simple daily record

Make recording your customer conversations a simple daily habit. Whether you use a notebook, your phone or a CRM, keep track of what matters. Who did you speak to today? What did they ask? What did you

promise? Who welcomed a follow-up? Which order needs attention? What did you learn?

Then use those notes. A list you never act on isn't a sales tool.

Don't confuse busy with progress

Some days you will be busy and sell very little. That doesn't mean you must panic or start pushing people. Look at whether you are speaking to suitable customers, asking useful questions, offering clear value and keeping your commitments.

Change what isn't working. Repeat what genuinely works. Keep learning.

A final word

I want this book to be something you can take into a shop, a market, a small business or a WhatsApp conversation. Not a set of clever phrases to trick someone. A reminder of how to deal with people properly.

Start with hello. Earn the next minute. Listen before you recommend. Respect the no. Ask for the sale when the customer is ready, and then do what you promised.

If you do those things consistently, you will be building more than one transaction. You will be building a reputation.

Try this tomorrow

Make a list of five people you owe a reply, an update or a promise. Complete those commitments before looking for five new prospects.

Technology changes. Trust still matters.

YOUR PRACTICAL SELLING TOOLS

The Pocket Selling Guide

Keep this page on your phone or print it. It is not a script to read like a robot. It is a simple order for a sensible sales conversation.

1. GREET

“Good morning. My name is ___. Is now a convenient time?”

2. EXPLAIN

“I'm here because we help ___ with ___.”

3. ASK

“What are you using at the moment?” or “What's the main problem you're trying to solve?”

4. LISTEN

Let the person finish. Repeat back the concern in your own words.

5. RECOMMEND

“Based on what you've told me, I think ___ may be suitable because ___.”

6. CONFIRM

“The total price is ___. That includes ___. Would you like to go ahead, or is there anything you'd like to ask first?”

7. FOLLOW THROUGH

Confirm the order. Keep your promise. Check that the customer is satisfied.

Never force step six. If the customer isn't ready or isn't interested, respect that.

YOUR PRACTICAL SELLING TOOLS

What To Say In Common Situations

These are teaching examples. Change the wording to suit your product and your personality. Every figure must be accurate for the actual sale.

When you approach a new business

“Morning, I'm ___. We supply ___ to businesses in this area. I don't want to interrupt you. Is there somebody I could speak to briefly about how you currently buy ___?”

When the buyer asks for a price

“The price is R___ for ___. Delivery is R___ if required. Would you like me to confirm which size would suit your needs?”

When the buyer needs time

“That's fine. Is there anything else you need from me to make the decision? If you'd like, we can agree on a convenient time for one follow-up.”

When the buyer says it's expensive

“I understand. Would it help if I explained exactly what's included so you can compare properly?”

When the buyer already has a supplier

“That's good to hear. If you're happy, I respect that. Would you like to keep my details as an alternative?”

When you need to admit you don't know

“I don't want to give you the wrong answer. Let me check the facts and come back to you by ___.”

When the buyer says yes

“Thank you. Let's confirm the product, quantity, total price and delivery arrangements so we're both clear.”

When you want to ask for a referral

“I'm glad the job went well. You're welcome to pass my number to anybody who needs the same service.”

When the answer is a firm no

“Understood. Thank you for considering it.”

Short, truthful and respectful works better than a long performance.

YOUR PRACTICAL SELLING TOOLS

A Simple WhatsApp Message Library

WhatsApp is a conversation channel, not permission to send unlimited advertising. Use these examples in response to an enquiry, an established customer relationship or another appropriate contact basis. Honour a request not to receive further messages.

Replying to a product enquiry

“Hi ___. Thanks for your message. Yes, we supply ___. The price is R___ and it includes ___. Would you like collection or delivery details?”

Answering a price comparison

“Thank you for checking. Our total is R___. It includes ___. If you have another quote, compare the included services and delivery terms as well as the price.”

Confirming a quotation

“Hi ___. Here's the quotation we discussed: ___. Total: R___. Valid until: ___. Let me know if anything needs explaining.”

One agreed follow-up

“Hi ___. As agreed, I'm checking whether you need any more information on the quotation. If the timing isn't right, that's no problem.”

Confirming an order

“Thank you for your order. Confirming: ___ at R___, delivery or collection on ___. Please let me know if any detail needs correcting.”

After-sales check

“Hi ___. Just checking that everything was received as agreed. Please let me know if there is anything I should put right.”

Referral invitation

“Thanks for your support. If you know anybody who would find our service useful, you're welcome to pass on my contact details.”

Only send messages that are relevant, welcome and accurate. Never invent a relationship or endorsement.

YOUR PRACTICAL SELLING TOOLS

Your Seven-Day Practice Plan

You don't need to transform your business overnight. Practise one useful habit a day and take notes on what actually happens.

DAY 1 - YOUR INTRODUCTION

Write and say your two-sentence greeting. Explain who you are, why you're there and why it may be relevant. Keep it natural.

DAY 2 - YOUR THREE QUESTIONS

Choose three genuine questions that help you understand what customers need. Ask them in real conversations.

DAY 3 - YOUR PRODUCT FACTS

Write five basic product facts and check any detail you're unsure about. Know the total price and what it includes.

DAY 4 - YOUR PRICE CONVERSATION

Practise stating the price clearly, then asking one useful question only when it helps the buyer.

DAY 5 - YOUR OBJECTIONS

Prepare a calm response to “too expensive,” “I have a supplier” and “I'll think about it.” Practise without arguing.

DAY 6 - YOUR PROMISES

Check recent orders and conversations. Give every customer the update you promised. Fix one unfinished service issue.

DAY 7 - YOUR REVIEW

Look at the week. Which conversations felt natural? Which questions were useful? What did customers teach you? Choose one habit to repeat next week.

Do not measure success only by money that came in this week. Count the useful conversations, honest quotations, clear next steps and promises kept. Those are the building blocks you can control.

YOUR PRACTICAL SELLING TOOLS

The Five-Minute Daily Review

Use this page each evening. It can be copied into a notebook, a phone note or a spreadsheet.

Date: _____

People I spoke to today: _____

What they wanted or asked: _____

What I recommended and why: _____

Who welcomed a follow-up: _____

Orders I must confirm: _____

Promises I must keep: _____

One customer concern I learned from: _____

My first useful action tomorrow: _____

The daily checklist

[ ] I explained my purpose.

[ ] I asked and listened before recommending.

[ ] I gave accurate prices and product information.

[ ] I respected a no.

[ ] I confirmed every order clearly.

[ ] I kept or updated my promises.

[ ] I contacted people only where appropriate.

Procedures may look ordinary. They are what help you keep a good reputation.

About the author

Gilbert Nobrega has spent more than forty years working in sales, marketing, retail and distribution, including South Africa and Mozambique. His approach puts people, honest communication, reliable service and practical business sense ahead of complicated tricks.

FROM HELLO TO SOLD is a project of The Professor & Me. The same book is promoted through Marketing Mastery Academy for younger readers who are beginning their working lives.

A note about the stories

The recollections involving Jean-Pierre and Rembrandt are based on Gilbert's accounts. The potato lesson comes from his family's retail experience. Other shop, service and WhatsApp scenarios are clearly presented as examples to help readers practise, not as new claims about Gilbert's life.

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