

The Most Important Sales Story Ever Told

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Ask Sales Coach

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Dedicated in loving memory to my greatest mentor, Ron McKinney

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Formal education will make you a living; Self education will make you a fortune.

Jim Rohn
Business Philosopher & Success Coach

Dear Friends,

I was recently asked by a good buddy of mine why modern day selling is so difficult.

After a few seconds, the first thought that came to mind was that most sales people aren't taught the right way to sell.

That thought led me to reminisce on my first sales experience back in the early 1990's.

Was I lucky that my first ever sales call resulted in meeting an entrepreneur that would change my business life? It certainly can be viewed that way. The initial sales lessons I learned in the fall of 1991 set the base for my sales career and success I would encounter moving forward.

Unfortunately, most young sales people don't have that experience. Consequently, most sales people learn from college professors and sales executives that quite frankly haven't a clue on how selling works. Most teaching is based on theory and books, not real world experience.

Let me be clear, I'm not suggesting there is only one "right" way to sell. What I'm implying is most sales people learn from people that haven't had any success in a real selling environment.

There are really two key points here.

The first is the critically important base training you need to even be able to play in the top echelon of the sales game. Most sales people never learn this base training or they learn a portion of it and "wing it" from there.

The second point is that the sales world changes almost as fast as modern day technology. As a matter of fact, both are connected in many ways. Selling in 1968 was different than selling in 1980 and 1980 was different than 1991. 1991 was different than 2000 and 2000 is way different than 2011.

One could argue that the way sales people sold products and services over the past ten years alone has changed quicker than the 30 years prior to that. The same can be said about technology.

Thus, we have the eternal question in sales.

How do sales people in today's environment learn the base sales training and keep up with the ever changing, fast-paced world of business?

Who has the time? Where do you start?

I believe these are valid questions, which is why I felt compelled to write this manifesto.

Let's cut through the clutter and look at a few modern day sales statistics.

- According to the Squidoo website, 48% of sales people never follow-up with a prospect after their initial call.
- Also, according to the same site, 25% of sales people never follow-up with a prospect after their 2nd call made.
- Finally, 12% of sales people make more than 3 contacts with their prospects

Are you kidding me? Here's the kicker...

- 80% of sales are made after sales people make their 5th call!!!

To clarify, I'm defining the word "call" as a "touch point" meaning this could be a phone call, E-mail exchange or actual face to face meeting.

To me, those statistics are incredible. Statistics, when used correctly are one piece of the puzzle in which to judge something. Stats shouldn't be taken as the be all, end all because we know there are many factors that come into play in the selling process.

What are you selling?

Who are you selling to?

What is the state of the economy?

Those are just a few of the variables but as you can see the statistics are horrible even if you skew them down a bit.

Why is that? Poor training and coaching? That's got to be a part of it, right?

I believe it's important for you to understand the basis of where I started. More important though, is how my success translates to you. Hundreds of thousands of sales people don't have success at the beginning of their careers and that fact is really unfortunate.

Let me ask you a question.

Can one story change your life?

It is remarkable but what you're holding in your hands can truly change your sales success and entire financial destiny.

The story that you're about to read happened in 1991 but don't be fooled by how old it is.

I'm sure that there are many newbie sales people reading right now thinking the following...

- I was 5 years old in 1991
- Selling today is way different than selling in 1991
- The internet and e-mail weren't around in 1991
- Is this guy a dinosaur?

Those are all valid points with the exception of me being old. At 42, I have a very good pulse on the business world and more specifically how to sell. I can say that with the utmost confidence based on results.

Before we delve into one of the most important sales stories ever told, I'd like to ask you a couple of important questions:

1. What captivates you?
2. What overwhelms you?

Take a few minutes to think about those questions. Even better, take out a sheet of paper and write some notes on what immediately comes to mind. This exercise is not about getting it perfect but just to open your mind. Go ahead...

I often have conversations with my wife about how difficult business can be in today's world. It saddens me because I don't believe our educational institutions do a good job preparing young people for the realities which they will face out there.

Regarding sales specifically...

Competitors are surrounding you! Sales are harder to come by than ever before and there are self proclaimed gurus everywhere promising you the magic solution.

Winning business isn't as easy as it used to be, is it?

That's okay. Because what you are about to read will change all of that. It's definitely not a magic pill but something very real that changed my selling life and the lives of many others I've taught as well.

This is an important roadmap that will make your selling life dramatically better in the 21st century.

Consider...

What if you could really achieve your sales quotas & business plans year after year, and what if you could service your customers to where they become raving fans....raving fans who are not only thrilled with your products or services, but refer more and more business to you each month.

You can do this and you can do it in a way that will systematically provide you more qualified prospects than ever before.....creating more money than you've ever had before. A lot more!

Imagine going head to head with your competitors not having to sell on price every time you encounter a new opportunity. You'll have higher profit margins while delivering more value to your customers.

Wouldn't that be something?

Envision having a 30% growth plan each and every year that's realistic and attainable. Whether you're a sales person or business owner, this story will have a profound effect on you.

Inside the following story, you're going to discover several strategies that are going to put you on the road to making all of this a reality.

Relax in your favorite chair, grab your beverage of choice and enjoy it. Relish every moment of what is about to happen for you.

To Your Success,

Greg McKinney

P.S. I'll be back to join you on the other side of this story. The names in the story have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

The year was 1991 and there was no internet. There were a limited amount of cell phones and maybe one or two personal computers in office environments. Laptops – hadn't seen one yet.

A young 21 year old kid strolled into the offices of the Warsaw Warriors Baseball Club in Dyersville, Rhode Island. The Warriors are a minor league baseball team and the AAA affiliate for one of the most well known major league baseball teams in our history. They are extremely successful and envied by the majority of teams in baseball.

The Unknown

I was excited.....wearing a suit and finally starting a “real” job.

It had been 4 long years down in Florida away from my family and friends but I graduated from college. I was ready to start making some money. Like many other college graduates, \$20.00 seemed like great wealth. I was tired of being poor.

After meeting everyone in the front office and filling out a few mounds of paperwork, Mark Jamison, President of the Warriors asked me to follow him to a small room in the front of Mitchell Stadium. At this point in time I had no idea what I'd be doing on a day to day basis. It didn't matter to me quite frankly.

As we entered the room, I noticed there were no windows and it was a bit dreary. My first thought was that this room resembled a jail cell.

Mike handed me the Providence, Rhode Island yellow pages book, a few sheets of paper and put a phone down in front of me. At this point, my excitement dwarfed into confusion. Was I doing hard time?

Mike said I was going to start selling for the Warriors. I asked what I was going to be selling as a lump formed in my throat.

He handed me a sheet of paper and began to show me the various ways that local and national businesses could purchase advertising on an annual basis from the Warriors. It all had to do with companies getting exposure and visibility because at that time over 350,000 fans attended games during the summer baseball season.

Mark said “You have all you need.”

“I do?” I asked meekly.

“Sure, a phone, the yellow pages and the rate sheet I gave you for our products. Start calling and good luck....let me know if you have any questions” and he closed the door behind him.

That was it? What about the training program?

Facing Fear

The lump that had formed in my throat was now more like a mountain and sweat started beading profusely from my forehead. I reached up and ran my fingers through my hair as the room suddenly felt like being on a Texas roof in the summer.

That was my introduction to sales when I was 21 years old. I had what I needed, a phone (communication device), yellow pages (leads) and the rate sheet (my product).

“What do I say? Who do I ask for? What do I do? How do I answer questions? Am I trying to set up face to face appointments or am I selling over the phone?”

This was going to be hard, really hard. I don't remember any business course in college that covered this sales thing. If there was a course on cold calling I didn't take it or didn't make it to the class enough.

I sat down and looked at the phone while grabbing a legal pad and pencil nearby. There was a 1990 Warriors yearbook on the shelf next to me. I started perusing it to see who advertised already and what types of industries were represented.

Certainly, there was a better way to sell than this, but I grinded my way through a bunch of calls. I wrote a lot of notes since I wasn't even sure what to say. I guess you would call it a script.

After a few hours of cold calling I had been hung up on, told never to call again, and seemingly spoke to a minimum of 75 gate keepers that had no interest in talking to me. I'm sure they could tell that this punk kid had no idea what he was doing.

Each day passed (very slowly) and after a couple weeks I had made my way through the letters A and B in the yellow pages. Progress! Not one sales meeting set-up!

The days were long and I questioned myself on the value of my college education.

Was this what sales was all about? Is this what people do when they leave their families every Monday through Friday for 40 years?

Again, I knew in my heart of hearts there had to be a better way.

I spoke to my parents and some friends for inspiration and to gain some perspective in what I was doing. Of course they encouraged me, gave me some tips and told me to think positively. Most of them said it had only been a few weeks and to give it time.

A Breakthrough

While plugging through the C's in the yellow pages, I made my way to the "catering" section. There was a large ad for Ryan's Farm Restaurant in Towson, RI. Growing up in Massachusetts, I had never heard of Ryan's Farm but after asking around the office, I was told that it was a Rhode Island institution....very famous.

As I looked into it a bit more, Ryan's was a chicken farm, restaurant, and catering place for large group dining and events.

I decided to call.

Like many times before, I dialed the number and the phone started ringing. After a few rings a lady answered the phone.

"Ryan's Farm Restaurant, may I help you?" She said.

"Yes, please, I'm calling from the Warsaw Warriors and I'm trying to reach the person in charge of your marketing?"

There was abrupt silence that seemed to last a minute or two, then the lady responded "please hold". (Please hold – this was a breakthrough! I wasn't shown the proverbial door right off the bat).

Suddenly, the phone began ringing again as if I were transferred to a "real" person.....could it be....a decision maker?

A voice answered on speaker phone.

"George Ryan" he stated.

What should I say? I wasn't prepared to actually reach a real human being after my brief existence as a cold caller.

"George Ryan" he said again a bit louder.

"Uh-em," clearing my throat.

"Hi my name is Greg McKinney with the Warsaw Warriors" (I actually verbalized my correct thought).

"Yes" George responded on the other end of the phone.

"I wanted to see if you'd be available to meet with me to talk about possible marketing opportunities here at the Warriors?" I said.

“No thanks” George retorted, “we don’t do any advertising here at Ryan’s – everything is word of mouth and referrals. It’s been that way for years.”

What to say, what to say, I pondered.

“I understand and have heard nothing but great things about Ryan’s but you advertise in the yellow pages?”

“That’s all though” George responded.

Where do I go from here, I thought?

“You certainly should be very proud of your accomplishments but I really believe that when you see some of the things we have to offer, you’ll really be impressed.” A voice inside my head was screaming.....Impressed by what?

Suddenly, after a 5-10 second silence, George said “Next Thursday at 10 am, see you then”

He hung up.

I managed a smile stood up and gave a fist pump like I won the lottery. I had an appointment. I needed to tell someone.

Hold on big fella, that voice in my head screamed, you have a meeting, that’s all!

Mark Jamison had checked on me periodically those first few weeks – I really think he was just making sure I hadn’t become part of the décor in the cold calling boiler room.

I have to tell him what happened. I walked into the back office at the Stadium and Mark was sitting behind his desk.

“I got a meeting” I stated.

“Wonderful, what company?” He asked.

“Ryan’s Farm Restaurant”

“Who’d you talk to” Mark asked as he seemed more interested.

“George Ryan” I said proudly.

“Greg, he is the owner of Ryan’s Farm and they don’t advertise. We’ve tried them for years.”

“We’ll if you don’t mind I’d still like to meet with him next Thursday.” I said a bit deflated.

“Sure, it’s a good experience but don’t get your hopes up” he said “This is a long shot”

“Understood, thanks” I said leaving Mark’s office.

I went back to the dungeon and sat down. Although I was a bit deflated, I still had a sense of accomplishment because of my first meeting with a real prospect. I continued to call potential customers that day and each day moving forward. Unfortunately, I had no success since talking with George but I still had a renewed energy.

It was the night before my meeting with George. I laid in my bed restless, with a million thoughts running through my head. I lived in a one bedroom apartment near downtown Dyersville.

I got up and drank some water and laid back down envisioning how things would go in my meeting the next day.

Judgment Day

I don’t know how much time elapsed but the next thing I remember was the annoying sound of my Sony alarm. Today was the day! Was I cut out for this sales stuff or not?

I jumped in the shower with a nervous energy, got dressed in my only suit and headed to work. As I walked up into the office a few of my buddies were huddled around the coffee maker waiting for the new brew to be finished.

“Good luck today” my friend Jeff said.

“Thanks”

After pouring my coffee I headed to my room to organize my papers and finalize what I wanted to say. Now I was getting really nervous. Towson was about 45 minutes from Dyersville so I left the office right at 9 am to ensure I was early to my first and only appointment.

There wasn’t much traffic as I drove through the beautiful northern Rhode Island suburbs on my way to Towson. It was a rural town out in the boonies.

I finally found Imust Road where the large Ryan’s sign stood, directing me to the offices. I pulled into the parking spot and grabbed my briefcase. At this point I wasn’t nervous, I was downright terrified.

As I approached the office I noticed a car off to the side, adjacent to the main facility. Since I was a little early I walked over and glanced at the pure beauty that caught my eye. There is was – the newest model Mercedes sports sedan, shining perfectly from the wash and wax it had received that morning. It was the most beautiful car I had seen in my life. I walked to the back of the car and looked down. Oh god!

The license plate read GR1. George Ryan #1. Great – I'm pulling up in my 1986 Ford EXP that had been through three years of college beat down and this guy drives a \$100,000 Mercedes.

Walking up the front steps to the Ryan's Farm offices I noticed how remarkably clean and immaculate everything was, from the window designs, granite statues, landscaping, doorways and the overall beauty of the entire scene. Surely, they kept this place in top notch condition, not missing the smallest of details.

I walked in and was greeted by the receptionist at the front desk. She was an attractive older lady.

"Greg?" she asked

"Yes" I replied nervously

"George is expecting you. Have a seat and I'll see if he is ready for you.

"Thanks" I said a bit surprised that she knew my name.

After a few minutes sitting on a comfortable chair in the Ryan's Farm Restaurant lobby, the woman came back down the long hallway.

"George is ready for you" she said

"Ok" was all I was able to manage at that point.

The term Dead Man Walking is appropriate right here. I tried to concentrate on putting my right foot and left foot in constant unison walking down that hallway.

The receptionist opened the door and said go in....

I walked into George's office looking straight ahead toward the back wall. There were numerous monitors built into the wall displaying security images from various points around the Ryan Farm property. It looked like the security room in the back of Caesar's Palace monitoring a gambler on a winning streak. It was impressive.

Along the right side was a mahogany conference room table with ten chairs. Above that, there was a beautiful, shiny wooden cabinet with elegant glass across the front. Accolades and awards were on every shelf.

To my left was more furniture and everything was shined up perfectly. The cream colored carpet was vacuumed that morning and the lines from the vacuum were still intact.

At that point the large leather chair turned around and a distinguished, nice looking middle aged man stood up. I walked forward and put my briefcase next to one of the chairs in front of the desk.

“George Ryan” he said extending his right hand “Nice to meet you”

“Hi, my name is Greg McKinney. Nice to meet you as well.”

“Have a seat” George responded

I noticed two beautiful, very expensive looking rings on George’s hands. I also noticed that his hands shook uncontrollably as he sat behind the monstrous desk. It looked as if it were some kind of muscle tremors relating to a disease.

Suddenly, the silence ended.

“Greg, I told you I don’t do advertising but agreed to meet with you. I respect the Warsaw Warriors which is why you’re sitting here. I’m a busy man so what do you have to show me?”

George spoke with a combination Rhode Island/New York accent and was obviously a very confident man. He did not mix words and wanted to cut to the chase.

I pulled my materials out of the briefcase and started to talk about why the Warsaw Warriors would make good advertising sense for an organization like Ryan’s.

“You’re a Rhode Island Institution Mr. Ryan and so are the Warsaw Warriors. I think the visibility you’ll receive by advertising with us will generate more visitors to your location thus creating more business for you.”

“Greg, we are at full capacity almost every night we’re open.” I don’t think spending my money on advertising with you will help me at all” George said.

His receptionist beeped in on the speaker phone and said that George was needed in another part of the facility to go through some legal paperwork.

I sat there a bit dejected not sure what to say. He was right. His place was packed all the time and I couldn’t guarantee with any credibility that advertising with us would generate one extra visitor to his place.

“Ok, I understand” I said “I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me.”

I looked to the side of his desk and noticed a bunch of family pictures with little kids smiling. George was a lucky guy. He had a great business and what looked like a wonderful family. I’m

guessing George was in his early fifties so one would assume those little kids in the pictures were his grandchildren.

I put my materials back in my briefcase stood up and extended my right hand to George.

“That’s it” he said

Now I was confused. Was he playing some mind game with me or could he tell that I was totally dejected?

“You drove all the way out here from Dyersville and you’re going to give up that easily? You didn’t give up that easily on the phone when I said I didn’t want to meet with you.” George stated laughingly.

I wasn’t sure what to say but the next thing that came out of my mouth was surprising to both of us.

“Do your grandkids like baseball?”

“Yes, they love it and one of them starts little league next spring.” George responded.

“Wouldn’t it be cool to bring them to a Warsaw Warriors game next year where you can show them the Ryan’s Farm advertisement in our yearbook?”

I’m not sure what’s worse –that I’m starting to negotiate with a guy way out of my league or that I just said the word “cool” in a sales pitch.

George stood there looking down and picked up the picture of his grandkids. He paused for a minute and I thought that I should say something, but didn’t.

“You know Greg.....you’re right! That would be a great idea” George said with the picture still in his hand.

“My boys would love that.”

He picked up the rate sheet that I had left on his desk minutes before. Glancing up and down he finally said...

“Give me a quarter page ad in your yearbook. I’ll have Brenda get the art work over to you in the near future. Send me a contract with the bill and we’ll get it done.”

Talk about having an out of body experience, I stood there and all I could muster was...

“Yes Sir, thank you.”

“Greg, do you know what you just did?” George asked

“No sir”

It was at that moment where my life in sales was about to change...

George smiled and looked at me “You made me change my mind in an instant. That’s a gift son. Know that and take every opportunity to share it with others. Sales people like you don’t come around every day.”

I didn’t know what to say except thanks.

“Greg, I’ve been a business owner most of my life. I’ve seen thousands of sales people over the years, most of whom I would never meet with and even if I did, I wouldn’t buy what they were selling.”

I almost felt honored as he spoke.

“Have a seat Greg. I want to talk to you about selling and people.” George said

He reached down and pressed the intercom stating he would have to re-schedule the legal meeting.

“There are three critical things you need to understand about sales. We’ll call them the 3 Sales Pillars.”

I sat on that couch and listened intently more so than ever before. George spoke with great passion as he started describing each of the 3 sales pillars.

“You truly need to understand each of these pillars and everything about them in order to achieve long term success in sales.” George confidently stated.

Pillar # 1

Emotion

e·mo·tion /iˈmōSHən/ Noun

1. A natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.
2. Any of the particular feelings that characterize such a state of mind, such as joy, anger, love, hate, horror, etc.

George began to talk about emotion and how I brought his grandchildren into the conversation, but more importantly how they would react to seeing George’s business in the Warrior’s

yearbook. That would be a special moment for George and he could envision that moment in his mind.

The last point is very important.

In selling, it is so critically important to get “inside” the mind of your prospect. You need to understand their wants, desires and what keeps them up at night. Remember, we live in a society of individualism. What’s in it for me?

Understanding all aspects of your prospect’s business is so important if you want to develop the relationship. I didn’t realize it at the time but so few sales people spend the time to learn even a little about who they’re calling.

How can you sell to anyone when you have no understanding of their day-to-day business? Some important questions to ponder...

1. How will my product accomplish my prospect’s goals?
2. How can I make my prospect look like a hero to his boss?
3. What emotions does my product evoke in my prospect? How can I capitalize on that?
4. How is my prospect compensated? Do they get a bonus?
5. Who is my prospect’s competition?
6. Is my prospect # 1 in the market or are they struggling?
7. How does my product differentiate his company?

I brought his grand children into the conversation but more importantly how they would react to seeing George’s business in the Warrior’s yearbook.

George went through numerous examples on how emotion played out in his business experiences. It provided me with an absolutely fresh outlook on how to view prospects. I sat there in deep thought listening to George and what he was saying completely changed my outlook on how to sell.

“Greg, how do you invoke emotions in people? Yes, they’re prospects but never forget that they are people first.”

If you can paint a picture in a person’s mind of the benefits your product will positively create for them, you will succeed in sales...

“Emotion is generated from storytelling and being able to create visions & pictures in the mind of your prospect is so vitally important. You just did that with me by bringing up my grandkids at the ballpark.”

Selling is about storytelling and I’m not talking about slick snake oil salesman stories. I’m talking about stories that engage the person you’re talking with at that given time. Tell them real life stories about how what you’re selling will positively affect them through the emotions and benefits they will experience. Picture the end result and the end benefit.

“If you can accomplish that, my friend, you will have no end to your success” George smiled.

Pillar # 2

“Do you know what I can’t stand about most sales people? George asked

“No sir” I answered somewhat confused

“They talk too much” George laughed

Great Questions & Unscripted Conversations

“In all seriousness, sales people talk too much about nothing. They talk about their product, themselves, and stuff I really don’t care about.”

“Along with emotion, sales people need to understand what questions to ask a prospect. There are many questions that can automatically create rapport and move a sale forward.”

George shared some of his favorite questions he had been asked through the years...

1. What are your goals in growing your business? Short term? Long term?
2. What is the most successful way you’ve acquired new customers?
3. What’s your biggest headache or pain?
4. Who is your best vendor? Why?

Remember to ask questions that will help you identify with your prospect and what he is really telling you about his needs. It is that important.

Asking great questions takes a lot of practice because sales people want to talk and after you ask a great question you need to shut up and listen.

This is very hard. That is why there are very few great sales people.

You need to practice. George handed me a feather.

Looking up at him, I was completely confused holding a bird's feather.

"During your next internal meeting, try this exercise. One person holds the feather and that is the only person that is allowed to talk. The person with the feather asks a question and gives the feather to the person that will be answering it. No one can talk unless you have the feather."

"Asking great questions takes a lot of practice because sales people want to talk and after you ask a great question you need to shut up and listen"

This exercise accomplishes two important things. First, it disciplines you not to talk for the sake of talking so when you do speak it should be something valuable. Second, it forces you to think and listen closer to the person's answer. This will help in your follow-up questions.

Another way to practice asking great questions is to develop your skill of conversation. I'm going to say something that may sound a bit silly but don't over-prepare for meetings.

If you really think about it, the best conversations you've had in your life weren't ones you spent an hour preparing for. They were improvised, made up as you went along and that is when you truly connect with someone. Asking great questions is a part of this because it leads to powerful connections in the conversation.

Think about it. You don't meet a girl at a bar, smile at her and say you need to go prepare something clever to say. You make it up as you go along. Those are often the best conversations in your life.

Take a course in acting. It'll help you learn improvisation and become a better conversationalist.

This is a great way to develop personal and professional relationships quickly.

Pillar # 3

George glared at the clock almost amazed that he had spent well over an hour with me. I just sat there hoping we would continue to Pillar # 3.

"You know what amazes me about businesses?" George said as he looked down at me.

“They are all about sameness and following the crowd. Whether you’re looking at a business card, an advertisement or generally what they say about their company, there is no differentiation.”

Differentiate & Deliver Value

“As a sales person this is important to understand because you have an opportunity here Greg, an opportunity to differentiate the companies that you met with. Do you know how huge that is?” George said.

He went on to talk about differentiating in two forms.

1. How I need to differentiate myself from other sales people (Create my personal brand)
2. How I can help my prospects differentiate themselves and their companies vs. their competition.

He handed me a phone book and told me to open up the yellow pages.

I opened to the “L’s” and looked at the landscaping section. Every single company had their name and phone number at the top along with a picture of a beautiful lawn with flowers.

All of them said the same thing.

“Great prices with quality service”

“Best prices in town. Call for a quote today.”

“Friendliest service, low prices and reliable staff”

George shut the yellow pages.

“Companies have no idea how to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Sales people have the same problem.” he said shaking his head.

The solution is delivering value to your prospect and customer.

“Delivering value?” I asked.

“Remember Greg – what’s in it for me?” George said as he pointed to himself.

George went on to explain that in every sales cycle there are opportunities to deliver value to your prospect. Delivering value is a never ending process even when your prospect becomes a customer.

“How do you deliver value?”

- Send me articles about my industry
- Send me articles about my competition
- Communicate ways to increase my sales
- Provide things I would find interesting
- Tell me something that make me think you're an expert
- Tell me something that makes me think you care about me and my business

Provide this type of value consistently and you won't be thought of as just another sales guy. You'll be thought of as a trusted friend and that is the key!

"Remember though, you need to deliver value consistently to establish and maintain credibility." George insisted.

I got it. I really believe I got it. It all makes sense now. People talk about that "aha" moment and I guess you'd consider this mine but the sales thing was starting to make real sense.

You shouldn't be intimidated by a prospect. The goal is really to convey your personality, not to be scripted through forced conversations. Selling is about having real, purposeful conversations that build trust and rapport.

"Provide this type of value consistently and you won't be thought of as just another sales guy. You'll be thought of as a trusted friend and that is key!"

Unfortunately, fear paralyzes us in many of these situations as it did for me prior to meeting George.

Wow, I thought.

"Well Greg, I believe you have a good starting point from which to build your sales career.....don't take the information I provided lightly. It can help you and when you're older share the information with others."

"Remember selling is about giving. Never forget that." George stated

A Different Person

I stood completely dumbfounded. I did manage to thank George for his time and tell him that I truly appreciated his wisdom. George Ryan was the first sale I ever made but something far greater happened that day.

George walked me out and said good-bye. I looked at my watch and it was 11:40 am now. He had given over 90 minutes of his valuable time to a young kid that he didn't even know.

I walked out of George Ryan's office that fall day in October 1991 and thanked his receptionist. She asked me how everything went in the meeting. I told her it couldn't have gone better.

I exited the building to the crisp air of a sunny Rhode Island day on that Thursday morning. It was a regular day to most but to me it would be very special. I definitely didn't realize the magnitude of what George talked about with me that day. However, I realized that he taught me more about sales that morning that I had learned the 21 years prior.

I drove back to the Warsaw Warriors offices beaming ear to ear with a new found confidence and love for selling.

I walked into Mark Jamison office and told him I sold George Ryan a quarter page ad in the 1992 Warriors yearbook. Mark looked back at me like he'd seen a ghost and broke into a vibrant laugh as if he couldn't believe it. He shook my hand with a death-defying grip and hugged me as we walked into the main part of the office.

Bye the way, the quarter page advertisement that George took in our yearbook cost \$345.00 and with my 5% commission, I earned \$17.25 before taxes. When all was said and done, I probably had enough money for a pizza and one beer. It was ok with me though.

The Upcoming Years

George Ryan came out to the ball park numerous times in 1992 and continued coming for many years. I would always leave tickets for him and his grandkids. He loved it and I could tell by his reaction that it meant a lot to him.

I got to know George as a real person during my time at the Warsaw Warriors. We shared stories, laughed, talked business and overall had great conversations about life.

Over the years, George continued to advertise with the Warriors increasing the amounts he spent each time, \$4,000 in 1993, \$7,000 in 1994 and \$12,000 in 1995.

In 1996 I left the Warsaw Warriors to pursue other opportunities in the sales world. I told George I'd be moving closer to Boston but would do my best to keep in touch.

We always have good intentions in life but unfortunately we didn't stay in touch as often as I wished.

A few years later a good friend of mine told me that George Ryan had died. I hadn't spoken to him in quite some time but it was certainly a sad day for me.

Since that time, I've gone on to work as a sales person and leader for a number of fantastic companies. These include Fortune 500 companies, medium sized companies and small businesses.

I've sold millions of dollars of products and services primarily in the business-to-business environment and have had many highlights in my 20 year sales career. I've managed hundreds of sales people that also sold millions of dollars in products & services.

More importantly though, I've always taught others what I learned about selling. Paying it forward, if you will.

I look back today and truly appreciate the time George spent with me and of course, the invaluable knowledge he shared with me during that first meeting.

Post Story Thoughts

I really hope you enjoyed what you just read and it resonated inside of you.

As we discussed in the opening, the basis of what George Ryan taught me is a portion of the roadmap that I use today when teaching sales people and business owners. Those three pillars are truly important and will transcend time but I've added to them over the years. I want sales people to understand this foundation that is needed to sell successfully.

We talked about how sales have dramatically changed in the 21st century with the constant speed of change we see every day. This will continue to occur and the speed of change will only get faster.

In my opening I asked you to ask yourself two questions.

What captivates you?

What overwhelms you?

One reason I asked those questions was to open up your mind to your real interests and fears. Another reason is to think of these questions in terms of every person you encounter in sales. It is one of the best ways to develop long term relationships with your customers.

There are many sales training corporations and individuals out in the world, some big, some not so big. If you want the ultimate success in sales you need to find the right teacher for you or your company.

Remember though, most sales coaching programs have very little or no interaction between teacher and student(s). How are you supposed to learn without interaction and ongoing learning?

Tiger Woods didn't become the best golfer in the world by reading books. Tom Brady didn't become a great quarterback by watching a video. Roy Halladay didn't win multiple CY Young awards by listening to CD's on how to pitch.

It's all about learning, executing what you learned and improving upon that every day. You're going to make mistakes but as long as you're improving and innovating, you'll get better really fast. Experience does count for something.

The best sales coaching is continuous, meaning, you learn and implement the techniques but there has to be follow-up by your coach to provide valuable feedback. The coach and student have to be accountable month after month. All results need to be measured.

*It's all about learning,
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We talked about some sales statistics earlier and I want to leave you with a couple more...

Based on a study that was produced by Dave Kurlan, the Founder of the Objective Management Group, 350,000 sales candidates were assessed. Brace yourself.

- 24% of all candidates will not prospect!
- Only 1% of all hunters have the complete hunter skill set!
- Only 8% of candidates could be considered hunters!
- 45% of all candidates will not close – at all!

There are many reasons for these stats but the bottom line is those numbers are downright scary.

As I leave you today, here are some important questions to ask yourself...

1. What is my time worth? (it's the single most important resource you have so you should know this)
2. Are you focusing on revenue generating activities?
3. Have you formulated a sales strategy?

I really hope you enjoyed this manifesto but more importantly that the ideas made you think about what you could be doing better today. Reading it and forgetting it doesn't help you. You must implement the fundamentals in order to start your path to success.

I'd love to hear your comments and feedback at www.asksalescoach.com. In addition, you can sign up for my free weekly blog, again by going to www.asksalescoach.com.

Important sales traits can be learned and that is a really important statement. I know that in my heart because I experienced it.

What are you doing to better yourself today?

Greg McKinney is a respected sales leader and is nationally known as a speaker, sales coach and consultant. He believes in helping others and serving the better good of humanity. His phenomenally popular website www.asksalescoach.com is a must see for all sales leaders, small business owners and sales professionals.

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