

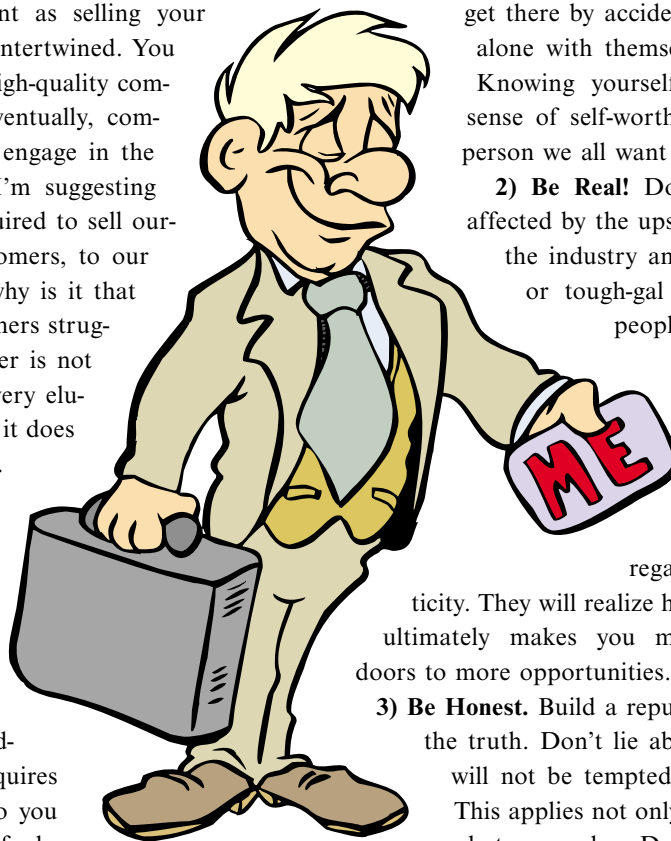
# Secrets of Selling 'You'

**S**elling yourself is as important as selling your products. In fact, the two are intertwined. You have to present yourself as a high-quality commodity, worthy of curiosity and, eventually, commerce. No, I'm not suggesting you engage in the world's oldest profession. Rather, I'm suggesting that we get real about the skills required to sell ourselves to prospects, to existing customers, to our bosses and even to our peers. So, why is it that some of us succeed with ease and others struggle to be taken seriously? The answer is not really that big of a secret, but it is very elusive. It's not really that complex, but it does require consistency and commitment. There are seven tricks, no pun intended, for selling "you."

## The Tricks

**1) Be You!** Whoever you may be, get very comfortable with your authentic self. Drop the airs and pretense and the smug self-assuredness, and just be yourself. This requires that you have a strong sense of who you are. To have a clear understanding of who you are, what you value and what guides you, you need to reflect on these topics regularly. This means that you have to carve out some space to spend time alone with you. This sounds a little like a lesson from Dr. Phil or some other self-help guru, but it's just common sense. You can't be yourself until you know who you are, which requires uninterrupted time alone.

Why does this introspection work? We all like to be around people who are authentic and sincere, but those people didn't



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get there by accident. They took the time to be alone with themselves. The payoff is twofold: Knowing yourself helps you build a strong sense of self-worth, but it also makes you the person we all want to emulate.

**2) Be Real!** Don't pretend that you aren't affected by the ups and downs of the company, the industry and the world. That tough-guy or tough-gal image only serves to keep people away. Building the relationships that you need to survive (and to sell) means connecting with people. So, be real about what you think and feel. People will hold you in higher regard for this display of authenticity. They will realize how very human you are. This ultimately makes you more approachable, opening doors to more opportunities.

**3) Be Honest.** Build a reputation for integrity by telling the truth. Don't lie about the little things and you will not be tempted to lie about the big things. This applies not only to what you say, but also to what you do. Don't fudge hours on your timesheets, misappropriate company resources or exercise creativity on your expense reports. Many salespeople consider their tall tales to be workplace essentials. They are not. Just tell the truth. You know you didn't close that deal in five minutes. It took months of tenacious, persistent work. By being honest about your

struggles, you will be better able to mentor and support colleagues. They will see you as someone they can both learn from and admire.

Honesty has other components. You have to build the courage to be honest with clients, even if it means losing the deal. Don't make promises that the rest of your company cannot keep just to close a deal. This will only build internal animosity from the people who have to make good on your promises. Honesty also implies that you will give accurate feedback to colleagues. When they ask for ideas and opinions tell them what you actually think, what you have experienced and what you have learned. This requires being a little vulnerable, but it builds stronger relationships.

**4) Be Quiet.** The ability to listen and reflect is essential. When I say listen, I mean listen to the intent of the other person's message, consider it and then respond. This is very different from silently formulating your response while the other person is still speaking. The act of genuinely listening is the ultimate sign of respect. It will raise your esteem in the eyes of customers and co-workers. Being quiet is also the foundation of the first two tricks, Being You and Being Real. Both require time dedicated to silent, thoughtful reflection. This gets tough in our world of noise, haste and hurry. Create space for reading, thought and peaceful silence. It will allow you to be clear about the things that are most important. Being quiet may mean removing yourself from all of the tech toys to which we've become addicted. The world will not end if you turn off your pager and cell phone for an hour. Claim time for yourself and then guard it vigilantly.

**5) Be Cool.** Self control will be born from the silent reflection required for quiet time. It's easy to fly off the handle in the heat of the moment. Work on getting and keeping a grip on your temper. Colleagues will appreciate your cool head. When you are the one who is cool, you are the one who has the most potential to impact the situation positively. You can become the mediator who helps everyone create solutions. This is a great role to fill in the workplace. You become a more valuable asset to the company. Being cool also pays off in terms of your own health — it's usually the hotheads who have high blood pressure, heart attacks and lots of other illnesses.

**6) Be Prepared for Every Client Encounter.** Know your products. Know your customers' industries and issues. Read their trade journals. Visit their Web sites. Be active in their trade associations. Be prepared to talk about the things that matter to them. This level of preparation will raise you to the level of trusted business adviser, not just a mere sales rep.

Being prepared also entails staying abreast of related advancements that impact your products and services. Be sure to attend training and other educational forums so that you are always up to date. Pay attention and learn at industry events and trade shows. You will leave knowing more about the larger industry. The contacts that you make will also help you better serve clients through a wider network. One more note on being prepared; be sure to have samples and supplies. Think about what you need before you leave for the sales call. Carry extra brochures; you never know who you'll meet.

**7) Be Considerate.** Everything we do requires human contact. So, it is essential that you develop and continually refine your interpersonal abilities. These abilities are not limited to basic good manners, but extend to being respectful, courteous and a kind human being. Sounds a little mushy, but we're talking about what it takes to sell you. Being considerate means that you will listen diligently, weigh others' opinions and respond thoughtfully. Recognizing the value in other perspectives enables you not just to be considerate, but also to possess the rarest commodity of all: an open mind. Most of us enjoy doing business with people who demonstrate these traits.

Consideration extends even further. Get in the habit of saying thanks, not just for major successes, but also for obvious displays of effort. Don't just thank people who can help you; thank peers and subordinates, too.

In addition to displays of gratitude, regular displays of empathy go a long way to building a more considerate character. Take the time to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Work on not just hearing others' ideas and perspectives, but also having interest in their life issues. Those issues always impact workplace performance and productivity.

So, there you have it, the seven tricks for selling you. Applying these tricks requires some introspection, some humility and even some thoughtful planning. The payoffs will be in terms of your sense of self worth and, of course, all that revenue you will generate. Ply these tricks of the trade consistently and with personal commitment and you'll get the results you're after. **R**

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