

# Selling without feeling like you are selling!

By Montie L. Carr

## About the Author

Montie is a hands-on business strategist specializing in business expansion for companies who desire to grow their businesses by leveraging their current assets. Currently serving as the Chief Knowledge Officer at Alexander Group, Montie has many years of experience in Sales, Marketing and Business Development. Montie has consulted with software developers, defense contractors, government agencies and wireless service providers.

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Strong sales are the key to everyone's business success, whether you are in an economic downturn or during a time of economic prosperity. It is universally understood that nothing happens in business until something gets sold. The gift to sell, much like the gifted athlete, exists only in about 3% of our population. So how do the rest of us, who are thrust into the role of salesperson, meet the daunting challenge to sell well? Selling without feeling like you are selling is a concept which applies to professionals, who may fall outside of the group with natural sales talent. *Compensating for this natural talent relies heavily upon trust, integrity, the relationships you build and your personal value proposition.*

Following a set process can be particularly important to professionals like doctors, lawyers, bankers and plumbers where the ability to provide a quality product or service is more critical than your ability to sell. We refer to this process of personal value building as Relationship Accounts (RA). When professionals are provided with a non-threatening structure that follows a simple process, one that is comfortable to implement, the result will be a positive work experience that produces increasing sales. Understanding and exercising the concept of Relationship Accounts will be very important to the future health of our companies. While most salespeople will be selling harder and louder to increase sales, creating higher barriers to sales in the process, you should be building up your RA, *creating trust and differentiating yourself from the crowd.*

## **The Basics of Interpersonal Relationships – Emotional Bank Accounts**

In his book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", Dr. Stephen R. Covey discussed his concept of the Emotional Bank Account which represents the amount of trust built up in a relationship. Dr. Covey suggests there are six major ways to make deposits into your Emotional Bank Account.

- 1) Understanding the individual
- 2) Attending to little things
- 3) Keeping commitments
- 4) Clarifying expectations
- 5) Showing personal integrity
- 6) Apologizing sincerely when you make a withdrawal

### **Taking Sales to another Level with Relationship Accounts**

How do you go about building that Relationship Account? A great starting place is to exercise the fundamentals of successful interpersonal relationships that Dr. Covey outlines in his Emotional Bank Account. Taking your sales to the next level via a Relationship Account requires you to build a strong personal value proposition with the client.

The foundation for this form of selling is to maintain continuous, ongoing non-sales contacts with your client or potential client base. Provide them with information that helps them with their job or updates them with important events or trends within their industry. When the opportunity to sell arises, it will be self evident. People buy on their schedule, not on ours. Therefore, if we are continually present in their thoughts and have demonstrated our value to them as business partners, it stands to reason that when they are ready to buy, they will buy from us.

The real key is how do you create or demonstrate your value in the customer's mind. *What you do has to have impact!* Random acts will soon be forgotten. If your client is having a particular problem with his supply chain, give him a copy of a case study where another company solved the same problem. If you are trying to convince your customer to take a particular action and he has objections, provide him with an article from a credible source, like Forbes Magazine, that illustrates how following your suggestions will position him for future success based on the subject matter in the article. If your client is having communication problems, suggest he investigate Skype. *But explain why, to deliver impact!* Give him an example of the features that directly affect his problem and explain how his entire organization could save money and be more productive by making the conversion. Contributions to your RA don't always require direct benefits. Keep the desires, needs, wants

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and problems of your clients in mind at all times. As you go through your day, you will find ways to address these issues, to your clients' benefit. Deposits can be made by providing magazine articles, a sympathetic ear, passing along an ad for something she would like to purchase. Each one of these small acts can help grow your RA. There are innumerable ways for you to demonstrate your value to your clients that have a lasting impact. Make your customer the hero at all times.

Inversely, if the only time that you contact potential buyers is when you are making a conscience effort to sell, not only will you and your client have a negative experience, you will be making withdrawals from your RA, building a negative balance. Strong sales are never an accident and high pressure or manipulative tactics never really work. Why make yourself and your contacts miserable and unproductive when you can create a positive, easy to manage atmosphere of relationship building that can last for a lifetime.

If you ignored your next door neighbor, except when you wanted to borrow his lawn mower, or snow blower, or borrow a cup of sugar, pretty soon you will find that they are avoiding you and no one answers the door bell, even when you know they are at home. But if you are always friendly and accessible, if you provide a safe place for their kids to stay when they are late from work or if you help them carry in a new piece of furniture, you will be building up that RA. Just like a real bank account, an RA requires continuous deposits to remain healthy and growing. Also like a bank account, overdrawing your RA will cost you, in the form of lost future business. A healthy RA will empower you to close sales, ask for favors or endorsements, and even make mistakes.

You want these value and relationship building contacts to be ongoing in a natural, graceful way. However, they do not have to incur expense; it is not necessary to always offer something of monetary value such as lunch or a trip to the ballpark. Making regular "catching up" calls will make them seem more natural, normal and non-threatening. Always be aware of the limited time your customer might have and never give the impression that you are calling just to "shoot the breeze".

Customers or clients will never feel like they are being sold and you will never feel like you are selling. It will

all be a seamless, natural process. Every time that you make a call or conduct a visit, you are in effect making a deposit in your Relationship Account with that person. As those deposits grow, so grows your value with that client and so grows your opportunity for a profitable relationship. It is a very good idea to keep a tracker of your contact history, which will ensure that you maintain regular natural contacts. This record can also serve as your RA and you may make notations when and how these contacts turn into sales. This exercise will build a sales model from which success ratios and sales cycles will emerge.

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In summary;

1. Always be thinking about how you could be of help to a client or potential client
2. Take positive action that can provide impact
3. Constantly groom your EBA and RAs
4. When the opportunity to sell presents itself, “go for it”

*Building your RA with trust, credibility, integrity and value will cause buyers to seek you out when they are ready to buy.* The well stocked RA will enable you to identify selling opportunities in a non-threatening environment and when done well, it will cause your customer to recommend you to others because they enjoy their relationship with you.