

Chapter 1 Confidence and how I started in sales

As we get started with a step-by-step guide to selling with a tactical approach, it's important to note that sales is very much an emotional rollercoaster. Whether you are currently in sales or brand new to the industry, you will know that disappointments, rejections, and hearing the word "No!" are and will be common occurrences. Sales pros with years of experience don't always speak about this side of the trade because it's something that you have to deal with and overcome moment by moment and day by day. You have to learn to look at it as objectively and find opportunities within the lows. Conversely, you will also have moments of greatness, moments when you feel you are triumphant against all odds, a true champion and full of joy. The sales pros with years of experience will tell you about these times, and many will retell their tales of great sale closes and big ticket sales over and over.

The reason we are starting this book with a chapter entitled Confidence is because, after 16 years in sales, I feel that this is the foundation that all the top sales reps have in common. Confidence can be an emotion or a state of mind you inhabit. It can change, and there is more than one way to achieve inner confidence.

My experience in sales began in the mid 90s. I was in a difficult financial situation and needed to make more money. I had worked super hard in my previous jobs, but they didn't offer any additional incentive or compensation for hard work besides keeping the job. My only hope of earning more money was to be promoted or be granted overtime. Needless to say, I didn't feel rewarded, recognized or fulfilled. At one point I had three jobs just to make more money. I was not tired, as many thought I would be, but I *was* upset, angry, and frustrated that my self-worth

was not more than what I was doing. During the day I was working at a glass and door store. It wasn't the kind of store you walk into but a workshop, and I was an apprentice. We would go to office buildings and homes and replace the screens and glass in windows. I was not very good or mechanically inclined – never have been – but they knew I worked hard because they had recruited me from a large grocery chain store nearby. I switched my hours at the grocery to graveyard, and put it into my head that I was a machine – almost a robotic state of mind – so I could work hard at both jobs. I was coming up to my 18th birthday and needed to step up and make more money before altering my living situation was no longer an option. I was living almost an hour's drive away, so it made little sense to drive an hour to my home after work at the glass company only to turn around and drive an hour back to the grocery store, so I decided to take a swing shift at a fast food restaurant in between the other two jobs. Needless to say I did not calculate for sleeping, resting and eating. I was too stressed and in need of more income to survive, so I did not focus on the details. I just wanted money.

I was able to hold on long enough to save enough money for a cheap car and a deposit for a one-bedroom apartment. Shortly after I had obtained my own place and car, everything started to fall apart systematically. My car broke down and would have cost more to fix than it was worth (and I didn't have the money). I had quit the graveyard shift at the grocery store because I couldn't physically keep up the hours, the glass shop shut down after 40 years, and the few part-time hours at the fast food place didn't pay enough to keep me going. Through connections and my reputation in the grocery industry, I was able to get a job as a stock boy at a health food store, but with no car it took me two and a half hours on public transportation each way, a total of five hours' transportation time to work six hours a day. I never fit in at the health food store, and after

a few short months I was let go. They called it a layoff, which I didn't believe at the time, but I came to find out they did let go of the five most recently hired employees because they were being bought out and wanted to have expenses low on the books.

With no job, no car, and barely holding onto my apartment (in not the best neighborhood), I needed options and I needed them quickly. I decided to hit the pavement near my home and literally walked into local businesses and told them I was looking for a job. This required a bit of confidence. Back then there were no websites to which to send your resume, so going to look for work face to face took courage and the ability to overcome, fear of rejection. One day I got lucky. I was walking by a gas station when a man filling a delivery van with gas asked me for a light for his cigarette. "Isn't it dangerous to light up while filling up with gas?" I asked him. He laughed and told me how he just broke up with his girlfriend over the same conversation. We got to talking and he asked what I was up to. I told him I was looking for work, and he said that where he worked they were looking for a driver to help with deliveries of home items. It was a rent-to-own company, so I would deliver everything from TVs to recliners and appliances. The only thing about a rent-to-own place was that we also had to pick up items from people's homes, including beds, for example. We would walk into someone's home and take their refrigerator back to the store because they hadn't paid their weekly rental amount. It was the most physically demanding job I had ever done, and I sometimes found myself in dangerous situations picking up items from people who didn't want them taken away.

After about a year I quit the job abruptly. I still remember the day. I was on third floor of an outdoor spiral staircase with no cover or roof, in the rain, by myself, picking up a side-by-side refrigerator. When I got back to the store I just couldn't do it anymore. I understand that after I

left, the store changed its policy, so that each job required two people to go for pickups and deliveries. I didn't have a back-up plan and didn't know many options for work at the time. I always thought that if I kept my mouth shut and worked hard I would have a good life, be OK financially, and become a productive member of society. It is what I instilled in myself from a young age. But because this book is not about my personal life, I will leave out the many other influences and distractions that came to me along the way. I will keep it simple, just sharing the story of the jobs I did, and how I landed in sales.

Having just quit my job with no back-up plan at the age of 19, I was frustrated. I had never had anyone I could ask for advice or counsel – not that I would have listened to them anyway. I was also very undisciplined, but one afternoon, while I was in line for lunch at a local fast-food restaurant, I overheard some guys in suits talking. One asked another, “How much commission did you make?” The other guy answered, “Slow quarter, only \$3,300.” At that point I had no idea what quarter meant, no idea what suits they were wearing, and didn't get the context of their conversation or anything else. All I wanted to know was how I got commission for myself.

I decided to walk around the business section of my city where all the strip malls and commercial properties were, and look for people going to work in nice clothes, driving nice cars, and find out if they knew of this magical word commission. Besides the bank and some office buildings, the only other place was a branch of Radio Shack, where the customers looked like they had money but the guys working there wore slacks and tucked in their shirts. I walked in, asked for the manager, and asked him if they got commission. Yes, he told me – and spiffs and bonuses as well. All this was sounding great, so I asked if I could have a job. He had me fill out

an application, and explained how I had to get through the hiring process and go to corporate headquarters to get trained. He asked if I knew about electronics, which I did from delivering and setting up home electronics at the rent-to-own place. He then asked if I knew how to sell, and I said I had no experience, but it couldn't be that hard, and I could do it for commission. I think I gave him the impression that I was ambitious and hungry for money. He was brief with me after that, and simply told me to come back with my application filled out. Fast forward a few weeks, and I was in training to work as a sales associate at Radio Shack.

The history of how I got to work in sales is based on the fact that first, I had a need, and second, a strong desire to make more income. I have worked, managed, and owned several companies selling different products and services, but the first thing I needed to obtain these positions was a way to sell myself by being sincere, respectful, confident and positive. Looking people straight in eye helped me to obtain jobs for which others with more qualifications were passed over. I did not have many options: no education, no friends or family to lean on for money, or anyone to provide much guidance. By my first day in sales, I was so wound up with excitement, anxiety and expectation that my energy was overflowing – which would later prove to be a good thing. Getting paid to speak to customers and upsell them batteries seemed like a dream job. My perception and my mindset gave me the confidence to go into a job that had me doing things I had never done before. To speak with customers as a representative of a large company was a big deal for me – people would ask me questions, and I knew the answers and could meet their needs. This is where I had the opportunity to put my new found-sales techniques to work. It was all about how I felt about myself – when I walked through the door, I created the environment and perception I wanted, regardless of what might be happening in my home and

personal life. I was constantly in a good mood, with a smile on my face. I stood tall, and always answered yes, sir or yes, mam. Not only did I build my confidence, but customers could feel it and wanted to be a part of it. I built my confidence by being prepared. I have never been the smartest person, or the studious type, but I immersed myself in what I was doing. I remember watching a television interview with the famous basketball player Michael Jordan. When they asked him if he was ever afraid on the basketball court, he simply answered that he was never scared because he knew he was prepared before going to play a game. From then on, that was the way I looked at sales – as a sport. Like any good athlete, you need to have a plan, you need to practice, and you need to have talent. From early in my career, I felt that my talent lay in my ability to work harder than anyone else, or at least put more effort. This was something that had been instilled in me from a young age. At many times in my youth, I had to persevere through hardships. Most of these arose from lack of finance, from holes in my shoes and stinky breath from not being able to afford toothpaste, to living in an area with a high level of gang crime. I had to talk my way out of dangerous situations on several occasions. I never used my background as an excuse, though. because many people have come through difficult times and have been successful. What gave me confidence in sales was knowing that I was studying my trade, my product, and my technique, and was always looking to improve. Combined with my perception and positive outlook, that was the winning combination that gave me confidence in selling.

I have met hundreds of sales reps from all over the world, and everyone seems to have a different form of confidence and a different method of building it. Some might have more determination and confidence at certain times of the day or in a particular season. Some veteran

sales reps have told me they only get excited during a lay down (easy sale) because they get to take it easy and not stress. Others used talents that came naturally to them such as humor, negotiating, and catchphrases to boost their confidence. My goal from the start was to be like a star athlete, like the basketball player Michael Jordan. He was successful because he was well rounded in his attributes, but was also well known because he could score a lot. I feel that the foundation for being a successful salesperson is to have a form of confidence that translates to happiness when interacting with prospective clients. I have known grumpy sales reps who felt that because they had succeeded in a previous sales job, they were entitled to the same level of success and respect wherever they went. I have known sales reps who had major personal problems which they allowed to affect their work (I have been there myself), and sales reps who felt that the product or service they were selling was so good or well known that it should sell itself with little or no effort on their part. I call these reps order takers. The worst kind of sales reps I have known are the ones who blame low sales on everything but themselves: they usually blame the company first, then management, then the product or service, then the customers, then their co-workers, then the government, then the economy, then the weather, and finally acts of God. The negative sales reps I have run across have not usually lasted very long in the job. I have never understood them, and some I feel try to complain themselves to the top. Whiners and complainers are usually people with low confidence outside of work as well.

That is why surrounding yourself with other confident, happy co-workers and people in general will make you a happier, more confident person as well. Remember this: it's easy to complain and point out problems, but the real challenge is to bring solutions to light and make them happen. No one wants a downer, but some people are just built that way. Even now, I find

they are still around me every day. What I do is keep them at arm's length and try not be the guy that always has to hear them bitch and complain.

Finding one little thing that you really enjoy and can do every day – even for just a few moments – can help as well. It can be anything from listening to your favorite song, running, calling a family member to say hi, or reading a joke online, to eating your favorite cereal in the morning. Whatever it may be for you, find it and use it. If you get bored with it, change it.

Confidence is the core of your sales endeavors, and you must build it internally. Do not be dependent on someone else to give it to you. Let others be dependent on you for their confidence. When you are the confident one in the room, you will usually attract others. This is especially true in sales, because sales can often be volatile and change from good to bad from one moment to the next. This usually plays out in one of two ways. It can be draining, because someone may be feeding off your energy and stealing your thunder. However, I have always felt that the more people use me as a resource for the job at hand, the better it drives me to be a leader. I have often heard that when you teach you actually learn well. I have found this to be very true, and the more you are accepted by your peers, the better it can be for you in the long term. This is not a priority, however; what should be a priority is having a healthy work environment that will showcase and build your confidence .

My first few months selling was an experience. I vividly remember walking into work. The store was clean and well organized, and items were easy to find. The staff was small: one manager, four full-time reps including me, and two part-time reps. The manager was funny in a sarcastic way even when he wasn't trying to be. He did not have much interaction with customers, but when he did, he got straight to the point and had an authoritative voice that made

you believe he knew what he was talking about. The other full-time reps were much older than me: one was in his fifties and the other two were retired Navy men in their late sixties. They were all pleasant and very knowledgeable about electronics and gadgets such as CB radios and fuses. The part-time reps were closer to my age: one was a high school teacher in his forties and the other a 25-year-old college student who mostly filled in odd hours.

My training was brief and did not entail much sales, but mostly focused on company history, store procedures, and the products that we sold. After training I was able to start right away and interact with customers. For every product we sold, we would get credit, or what is called sales per day. One of the ways the company measured if you were working effectively was to see how much money you brought in to the store each day, and you needed to maintain a certain average. When I started it was apparent that there was a flow to the store and that everyone got an equal amount of sales. My co-workers would take turns helping customers and be happy with just a piece of the pie. The only time I would see them attempting to sell was when they asked customers if they needed batteries at the point of sale. It didn't work very often because the customers knew what they were looking for, and just wanted to get it and move on. If you went above and beyond and had a high sales average, the company would give you a very small commission – so small I don't remember the amount.

As I stated earlier, I wanted to grow in sales like a great athlete, and not just improve but excel and make more money. I figured that the company gave commission to incentivize their workforce to make more sales for a reason, and I wanted to maximize that opportunity. So I asked the manager to let me know what I could sell that would make me more money. At times the company would offer bonuses for selling batteries. I asked why this was, and the manager

explained that the markup was huge and, since the company made their own brand, they could control the cost. Now I understood why the reps would focus on asking customers if they needed batteries at the time of purchase. Selling batteries not only earned you a bonus, but they made a larger contribution towards your daily sales total. My co-workers seemed content with the flow of custom that came through the door. The 10 percent of customers who would actually buy some double AA batteries was just the icing on the cake for them, since they felt that all they had to do was ask. Everyone was content except me, and it showed. One of my co-workers told me to be patient and wait for the holiday season, as that was when everyone made more commission. Outside work, I had made friends with a fellow passenger on public transportation. He was also in sales, but in phone sales – telemarketing. He represented himself as a marketer, and used a lot of big words to describe what he did to make himself seem more educated and knowledgeable than me. He was right! I soon figured out that what he did was what I would consider at the time to be real sales, while what I did was retail sales. While he had to find customers and close them, I had them walking through the door, and all I had to do was place their products in a bag, hand them a receipt and then wait for my turn to help another customer. I started picking his brains and figuring out his style. He had a big personality and would say hi to everyone, smile at them, and try to make people laugh. He had a way of bringing people in and engaging them to the point where they felt that he was an old friend. He liked to talk and joke around, lived with his mother, and was carefree and just having fun. I didn't have the luxury of just having fun – I needed money to survive. I wanted a car, I wanted nice clothing, and I felt that I had the opportunity to get them.

I approached my manager once more, asking what else I could sell to make more money. He looked at me and said he didn't know. I reminded him that I had asked before, and he said laughingly, "You can sell cell phones. You get a \$20 bonus per phone you sell." He and my co-workers just laughed at me for even considering it, because at that time the experts predicted that only 3 percent of the population would ever use a cell phone. At that moment I knew what I was going to start selling to make more money: cell phones. I knew there was a reason for the popularity of beepers a few years back, and that several customers came in for cordless phone batteries every day. Communication was sellable. But this was where confidence was needed. Cell phones were not yet the norm. I knew I would be ridiculed by my co-workers, I knew I would be told "No!" by customers over and over again, and I knew that my sales would suffer because I was not trying to upsell the safe batteries option. I was risking it all, but in my eyes I could not continue with the norm. I couldn't picture myself staying at the store for 25 years and becoming a manager someday unless the income was higher. In a weird way, the fear of losing my job and maybe starting all over was exciting, not because of the challenge but because I knew that I would have no regrets knowing that I had tried to do my best. If I did not have confidence I would not have the courage to sell something that was not the normal. I didn't want a piece of the pie – I wanted my own piece and my own oven to make the whole pie. I wanted more control.

"Here we go," I told myself as I walked into the store the next day, knowing that I was about to attempt to sell cell phones to customers. I knew that my first attempt would be met with a "no", so I waited to make sure another co-worker was not listening. I was confident, but didn't want to be embarrassed. I asked the customer in the same way we asked if they wanted to buy

batteries. The sequence of events was set up for failure: the customer had come in not to browse but to fill a need. I happily helped him find the part he needed, and as I was ringing up the register, I asked, “Would you also like to buy a cell phone?” The short, quick answer – without hesitation or missing a breath – was “no”. It was almost as if, no matter what I said, the answer was always going to be no.

At that point I told myself that I had to figure this out. Later that day, my telemarketing friend and I went to the mall to eat. I took the opportunity to figure out how I could merge my friend’s selling style, which I thought was exciting and fun, and the retail sales in which I felt I was categorized. The first thing I noticed at the mall was that when someone entered a store, the sales associate would ask the same question: “Hello can I help you find something today?” I noticed that the sales associate would not even look at the customer while asking this, but just carried on folding clothes or walking by. There was no confidence in the way they asked, as if they knew what the customer’s automatic response would be. This seemed comical to me, since there was no effort, and the associate would receive the same answer, “No, I’m just looking,” over and over again from the customers, who would say it without looking at the store employee either. Walking through the mall, I noticed there was a Radio Shack there. I knew about it, but had forgotten it was there because they were a franchise, and at the time there were only a handful left in the country because the corporation was buying them back. I did not walk in, but as I was passing by I noticed two things we did not have in our store. The first was a line of people waiting to make their purchases, and second was that the store employees were energetic, smiling and talking loudly. There was a buzz, an energy of consumer spending, that made me slow down to observe for a second. The store I worked in was quiet, and gave off a feeling that if

you were too loud or energetic that was a bad thing. It was accustomed to doing things a certain way and in a certain order, taking turns and attempting to sell by having product knowledge. It was far from fun. But at the store at the mall it not only looked like the staff were having fun, but the customers were also laughing, and spoke to the employees on a first-name basis. On the way home on the bus, I asked my friend what he said to people to make them buy. He told me he didn't say just one thing, but read a script that his manager provided. I asked him, "If you read the same thing every day, what does it say?" He recited his script word for word. He had it memorized, and the way he said it was pleasant and loud, with a lot conviction in his voice. He was very confident and not at all embarrassed, even though we were on a bus full of people. The other passengers didn't mind, or even look round – if anything, their own conversations just got louder. The first thing I noticed about his script was that he was asking questions, but asking questions with excitement in his voice: "Isn't that great?! Can you picture that?!" I asked him what would happen after that. What if the customer said no?

"You're starting to learn from me," he answered jokingly. "That's good, that's good – you need to." I gave him an unamused look. He laughed quickly and said, "I don't know. After I read my script I transfer the call to a supervisor."

"You've been no help whatsoever," I told him. "I'm now more confused than ever. I wish I'd never listened to you. All I've learned from you is that you can read a script." We both laughed and went about our day.

Now it was crunch time. I was done trying to figure out sales and what others might do to get higher commissions. I didn't even mind if I was embarrassed at work when customers said no to me in front of everyone. I was just going to go for it. I told myself that I was going to wait

until the following Monday to get a fresh start. When the day came, I got to work asking customers to buy a cell phone. One after another said no. I didn't understand why at the time, but a couple of days later, after about twenty nos, one customer asked me, "How much is it?" I did not know off the top of my head, so I quickly scrambled for the brochures next to the small rotating display case of cell phones. I opened the brochure and started reading it to the customer. The customer quickly cut me off and said, "Maybe next time."

When the next customer came in a few hours later, I asked if they would be interested in a cell phone and handed them the brochure. This time the customer left the store saying "I'll think about it." Having customers give other objections than a flat "no" gave me more confidence because I felt like I was getting somewhere. I also felt that I was mixing my approach: if customers were asking questions about the price or saying that they would think about it, there must be some level of interest. In the next chapter, I cover product knowledge and learning the benefits of your product or service. Along with confidence, they form the basic foundation of sales.

I knew the weekend offered the best opportunity to get a sale because that was when we had the most customers. During the week, I studied the brochure and asked my manager what he knew about the pricing. All he knew was that if I sold a cell phone I would get credit for \$350 in my sales totals. Even if the phone was free to the customer, I would receive credit for its value, which would help my totals, and I would also earn a \$20 bonus. I started figuring out the cheapest combination so that when the next customer asked me how much it was I didn't have to fumble around in the brochure. I figured out that the phone would be free if the customer agreed to a two-year agreement, which they could break during a one-month grace period before the two

years was up. They had to pay sales tax on the \$350 value of the phone, and the cheapest plan was \$20 a month for 40 minutes and 60 cents a minute if they went over. The terms on a cell phone changed quite rapidly from that point on, but this was the information I needed to have an educated conversation with customers.

By the time the weekend came I felt confident and ready. At first I only attempted to sell to customers I felt would buy a cell phone, but I quickly learned that this was not a good tactic because it only lowered my confidence when a customer I thought would buy said no instead. I soon decided to try and sell to everyone, and each conversation I got farther and farther, till finally a middle aged woman came in the store. She looked like she was in a hurry as she put her purse on the counter to pay for a surge protector I had helped her find. With a lot of enthusiasm I asked, "Have you ever looked at owning a cell phone?"

"No, sweetie," she answered. "How much is it?" As I started going into the cost of owning the cell phone, she cut me off and told me she was asking about the surge protector. Mistakenly thinking she meant the cell phone, I had had a momentary shot of confidence. I gave her the price of the surge protector, and as she was pulling cash from her purse I said, "Well, it seems like you're very busy and in a hurry."

"Yeah," she answered, "I have to go pick up the kids. Just got a new job and need to hurry." I processed her payment quickly and said, "You know, since you so busy you probably need a cell phone so you don't have to stop and use a pay phone, especially if you have children. I can give one to you for free if you want."

"Nothing is for free," she chuckled.

“You’re right,” I responded. “You have to pay like twenty bucks for tax and that’s it. The phone’s worth like \$300! This could really maybe save you some time, and you can just keep it your car, especially if there’s an emergency, and people can call you as well.”

At that moment she looked at me in the eye for the first time and said, “OK, let’s do it. I’ll take one.” I had no idea how to process the sale, what kind of phone we had in stock, how to activate it with a number, or even how to turn the thing on. I didn’t think of anything but getting a yes from a customer and the \$20 bonus. To top it off, it was a Saturday, the store was busy and the customer seemed in a hurry. I asked her to wait one second while I got a phone from the back, even though they were stocked in the front. I was in luck as my manager was there.

“OK, I sold a cell phone,” I yelled at him, “and the lady is in a hurry. Can you help me, please?” For a split second he looked at me like I was bothering him with a stupid request. Then he processed the fact that I had sold a cell phone, and that my receiving \$350 in credit towards my sales totals also helped the store’s totals, which in turn helped his paycheck. He looked quickly at his reflection and walked to the front of the store. Greeting the customer with a simple smile and hello, he opened up a cabinet, grabbed a box with a cell phone and placed on the counter. He then turned to the computer, logged in and started opening the box. This was beginning to look like a lengthy process, and I could tell the customer was ready to leave. Before she could say anything I handed her the brochure and started explaining to her the plan for the cell phone, and how it was only \$20 a month.

“What?” she said. “You didn’t tell me that!”

I quickly responded with “I know. That’s what I’m going over now.”

“Guillermo,” my manager chimed in, “You have to tell the customers how much it is first.”

I didn't have time to be confused or upset about the way this was turning into a nightmare, but I could see that my manager had really done nothing but grab the box and hadn't even entered anything into the computer because he most likely didn't know how to process the transaction. All I knew is that I had to say something quickly to keep my sale by buying time, so I looked at her and said, “It's only \$20 a month but that includes 40 minutes, so its not like you're paying for nothing. Even when you go to a pay phone it's 25 cents per call, so really you're saving money, and saving time because you don't have to stop to make a phone call. You get to keep it for a year, and if you don't like it you still get to keep the phone that's worth \$350, so if you do the math its still a good deal. And remember how we talked about how it's good to have in the car in case of emergencies?”

She seemed happy with my explanation and I felt I had thrown everything at her that I knew about the cell phone. She looked at my manager and then at me and said, “But I thought you said it was only going to be \$20 for the whole thing.” My manager stepped in looking like he had figured out how to run the sale through the computer he asked me to pick up the store phone and dial a number. As I was dialing he told the customer, “You know, what we can do is, I'll give you a free car charger for your cell phone. That's worth 29 dollars.” The customer was excited and simply said “OK.” Then she looked up at my manager and asked, “What's a car charger?”

My manager took the phone out of my hand and put his finger up to indicate to the customer that he needed a minute. He told someone over the phone that he had an activation, and answered a series of questions such as the cell phone's serial number. Then he handed the phone

to the customer and told her they were going to ask her a few questions to assign her a phone number. She gave the person on the phone all the information they needed, including her social security number and agreement to the service. She was very calm and seemed relaxed. The phone was passed back to my manager, he entered some numbers into the computer and the transaction was done.

I watched as the customer walked back to her car and thought to myself, I did it – but I need to do it faster and more. As I followed the manager back to the store room, he seemed upset, not so much with me but at how sloppy the transaction had been. I explained to him that I really didn't know any of the steps, but after giving me a short explanation of the process, he simply said, "You keep selling them and we'll figure it out."

That was good enough for me. I knew I could figure out an efficient way to complete the transactions, but I didn't want to expend energy on that because if I didn't sell more cell phones, what would be the point? I had the confidence to sell a cell phone and present it well, and I looked at what worked and what didn't, but quickly told myself I needed to sell more to get really good. Right away I began asking every customer if they would like to buy a cell phone. I asked each customer differently and at different times in the sales process. When one of my co-workers asked me, "Why do you ask everyone to buy a cell phone?" I simply said, "I don't know who's going to buy, and everyone uses a telephone so anyone can use a cell phone." He looked at a customer in the store as if to indicate, "Try it on him." I looked over and saw an older gentleman in flannel and overalls and what looked like a train conductor's hat. I looked back at my co-worker to read his face, and he had a sleazy smirk. I walked up to where the customer was standing looking at the electronics section and asked him, "Are you looking for a certain wire or

cable?" He told me abruptly that if he needed my help he would ask. I smiled and said, "No problem. We have a catalog, so if you don't see what you're looking for please let me know and I can look it up for you. I'll be right over there." As I walked back to the counter I grabbed the catalog and started leafing through it. A couple of minutes later the customer came up with a wire in his hand. As I rang up the purchase I placed a cell phone box on the counter and asked him if he knew anyone with a cell phone.

"No," he said.

"Well," I replied, "if you ever need one, please let me know."

"Who's going to use that?" he said.

"Well," I replied, "I think you should, because it's convenient and you don't have to give your number out to anyone, so that way you only call people when you want. On your time. But here's your receipt. Let me know if you want some more information on your own private cell phone."

I knew that my co-worker was trying to see me fail just for laughs because he assumed this customer would never, ever buy a cell phone or even be upsold, but right away I tried to put a strategy in place. My plan was centered around confidence: I felt that even if the customer turned me down it wouldn't be so embarrassing, because that was only what was expected, and I had felt confident enough to try. Attempting to sell to this customer who appeared to be stuck in his ways and didn't want anything from anyone gave me an opportunity to figure out a way to sell him. Here was my thinking at the time: when the customer objected to my offer to help him find a wire, I knew that he was more prone to sell himself. It gave me an insight into what might trigger an opportunity to sell him. That is why, when he came to the counter to purchase his wire,

I didn't ask him to buy a cell phone – I simply asked if he knew anyone who had one. Nothing to do with selling or asking anything about him – just making small talk as I was processing the transaction. This way he didn't feel like I was trying to sell him or annoy him, but opened up the conversation and gave me an in. It took confidence to attempt this. Most sales reps would have regarded this customer as someone who had already told them to leave him alone.

The second part of my strategy was based on what he would say after I asked if he knew anyone with a cell phone. He could've said yes or he could have said no. Either way I knew what I would say next, and that's exactly what happened. When he said "no", I quickly responded, "Well, if you ever need one, please let me know." He did not even notice that I was now making the conversation about him. I emphasized the word you when speaking to the customer. That reflects confidence. I always emphasize certain words that can help in the selling process. I call them power words: good, cheap, fast, you, others, deal, bargain, savings, and trustworthy are all power words. More importantly, I changed gears with the customer, I engaged him in a different way so that he didn't feel that I was just trying to sell him. To start, I asked him a general question about whether he knew anyone with a cell phone. After he said no and I asked him to let me know if he ever needed one, he said "Who's going to use that?" This was the opportunity and the insight I needed. While many sales people would simply regard this statement as an objection and give up on the sales process, I looked at it as the best thing that had happened so far for two reasons. First, I felt that others who had tried to sell this very stern man had given up at this point, considering it a waste of time to go on. Second, the fact that he had asked a question, albeit one that did not invite a response, gave me a chance to continue the sales cycle. I responded to the customer with a very positive and upbeat demeanor. "Well, I think you should

because its convenient, and you don't have to give your number out to anyone, so that way you only call people when you want. On your time. But here's your receipt. Let me know if you want some more information on your own private cell phone."

My thinking was that the customer was done with his transaction, and this might be the last thing I would be able to say to him before he left, so I wanted to use power words related to him and his potential needs. The first part of my response ("Well, I think you should, because it's convenient") allowed me to add a benefit – convenience – to the cell phone, and relate it to him with my power word – you. Who doesn't like things being convenient for them? The next part ("and you don't have to give your number out to anyone") gave me the opportunity to add another potential benefit: since he appeared to be a very private man who just wanted to do things himself, owning a cell phone could be a benefit for him because it would allow him to control communication. The third part ("So that way you only call people when you want. On your time") reinforced the idea that he would be in control and afforded me the chance to add some power words about him by saying "you" and explaining the benefit that he need only call people when he wanted.

If I had continued to rattle off benefits at this point, the customer might have walked away feeling that I was being pushy. So, with my final comment ("But here's your receipt. Let me know if you want some more information on your own private cell phone"), I quickly changed gears by using the word "but" and indicating that the transaction was done by handing him his receipt. I finished with what seemed to be an open-ended question: if he needed more information, please let me know. However I finished the sentence with power words relating to ownership of his own private cell phone.

There was also a strategy behind my walking to the counter and looking through the catalog while I waited for him. I wanted to convey the understanding to the customer that I was there to meet his needs and willing to help and work for his business. This was subtle, and maybe he did not even notice me looking at the catalog, but if he did, he would know that I was working, while my coworker was just standing looking at the TVs. I also placed the cell phone on the counter so he would get a visual impression of the phone as I was discussing it.

The customer looked at me and opened up a little, telling me half jokingly that he hated getting sales calls at his home during dinner. This was the hot button I was looking for. I couldn't help but think of my friend who I rode the bus with as the person calling this stern man during his dinner. I told the customer, "Well, if you had your own private cell phone you could unplug your home phone during dinner and only people you know could call you on your cell phone, even in an emergency."

This seemed to strike a nerve with him "Yeah, but it's probably expensive. Thanks anyway," he said as he turned to walk away. I quickly said, "The phone is free! It's actually only \$20 bucks a month – and no more phone calls while you're trying to enjoy a steak." There was a pause, and he didn't walk away. My co-worker even looked up from watching TV. The customer looked at the cell phone box and said, "My kids call too, and all they want is money." I laughed and said, "Well you don't have to give them the number, I guess." He laughed as well and turned back to the counter and asked, "I'm in my rig all day. Does this contraption work while I'm driving?"

I had the sale. My co-worker just stood there watching me even as other customers started walking into the store. I felt that my attitude and confidence had guided me through the

sales cycle. While processing the sale, however, I felt nervous because my manager was not in the store and I was not yet certain about all the steps in the process. So I had to do something that was not the norm once again and call him at home on his day off. This was taboo, and when he answered he let me know that it better be an emergency. I told him I had a sale and needed help with an activation. He told that there was a binder with everything I needed under the register. I thanked him, and he told me to call him back if I had any problems. I assumed he was happy that another cell phone was being sold because it helped the store totals. I opened the binder, called the number for activations, and the customer was on his way with a new cell phone.

In my 16-plus years in both face-to-face sales and telesales, I have sold many different products and services. In the course of this book I will share my experiences to explain how I gained a tactical approach to sales. I have been involved in the selling of consumer electronics, marketing and advertising, home loan refinancing, wholesale car sales, vacation packages, practice management systems/medical software, student loan consolidation, municipal bonds, and business-to-business services such as CRM tools for the automotive industry. The more I knew about a process the more comfortable I felt with the sales transaction, so I took that cell phone binder home with me and studied it thoroughly. When I went to work the next day I wanted to showcase my new knowledge. As I was discussing it with my manager, I asked him how I gave customers the free cell phone charger, because I could not find it in the book. He explained that he had only done that the once; because the customer was complaining about the \$20 sales tax, he gave her something to offset the price. He also explained that many things in the binder were outdated. He was right – much of what I found in the binder, such as car phone activations, looked like it was not applicable anymore. I had a lot of questions, and the manager

did not have all the answers. He looked at me and said, “You’re just going to have to try and figure it out.” I decided to call the number for activations, where I spoke with a representative from the company Airtouch. We built a good rapport, and soon I knew all the ins and outs of the activation process and felt more confident than ever.

I began to master my sales technique, helping customers to find what they were looking for and then quickly talking about cell phones. I tried hundreds of different sales presentations with customers, improving every time until I was selling an average of 80 to 100 phones a month. Within six months I was making quadruple everyone else’s sales, and was bringing in half the store’s revenue. I was promoted to assistant manager, and my quick success helped to build my confidence – but I would soon learn that success had its downside: not feeling part of the team, the jealousy, the responsibility, and the expectations, all of which would have a negative effect on my confidence.

The manager called us all to a meeting, something that had never happened before. He explained to us that once a year the company would get together for a “ra ra meeting” to give awards and motivate everyone. I was keen to go because I had never been to a corporate meeting. It sounded important to me at the time, and the only problem was that I did not have transportation. After the meeting, I walked up to my manager and explained that I might not be able to go because I did not have a vehicle. He asked me to carpool with one of my co-workers. “Yeah, boss,” I told him. “I don’t think that’s going to happen.” He must have understood from the way I said it that a clear separation had opened between me and the rest of the staff. Over the previous few months my co-workers had spoken with me less and less. I never understood this – I was always willing to help them, and they were watching me selling cell phones, but somehow

the whispers started that somehow I had an unfair advantage, be it from my hours scheduled by my manager, or because I offered customers a free cell phone, or because I knew a special number to call for activations. All in all, I knew that my co-workers were now looking on me as the enemy. It made me feel bad, and at times I would try to hand over my sales to my co-workers so they could get the \$20 bonus. But despite this, the whispers and cold-shouldering continued, so I stopped.

My manager gave me a ride to the corporate meeting. There must have been at least 500 employees there, and people were called down to a small stage presented with awards for doing a great job and bringing in a lot of sales. The person handing out the awards was the district manager, a nice man I had met during my corporate training. As I heard others' names called out for recognition, a strange feeling came over me. I could feel it physically: my chest got warm and my hands closed into fists. I was getting mad. As I looked around, I noticed that all my co-workers were sitting away from me, while my manager was sitting with the other managers. I was sitting by myself. Then, to top it all, the last award was for the most cell phone sales. My hands opened up, and I felt relieved. Finally I would be receiving a reward, and everyone would know who I was and all the hard work I had put in. No one could have sold more phones than me.

As I looked around, I saw people talking away without a care in the world. They didn't care about the awards or the people being called up; they were just there to socialize and have a good time. I thought these people were less than me. I judged them because they did not work hard. I looked back at the stage with high hopes in anticipation of the award. Then the lights dimmed, a side door opened, a motor revved loudly and large motorcycle was driven onto the

stage. Now everyone was quiet. The district manager yelled into the microphone, “OK everyone, if you recall, last year Sprint announced that they would give away a Harley Davidson to the employee with the most digital cell phone sales.” Everyone started talking amongst themselves. Now I was more emotional. Getting mad was not enough – I started to get angry. I knew I had not won because I hadn’t known about this competition, and did not know what Sprint was either. I felt that my manager had failed to tell me and did not care, which made no sense to me. Why he would not mention it if I was doing well in sales for him? The district manager announced the winner, and the guy went up to the stage, grabbed the keys and took lots of pictures with the executives. I looked at everyone clapping and smiling having a good time and told myself that I didn’t care, that I was making good money and I was good at selling. For the first time, I experienced jealousy. Now I knew what my co-workers were feeling, and I put myself in their shoes and imagined how the store manager probably didn’t recognize or acknowledge their efforts. Now I had a healthy understanding of that feeling and how it can affect your confidence and your work environment. It was about feeling secure as well – if I was quadrupling their sales, they might feel they could lose their job.

On the drive back with my manager, I explained to him my feelings of jealousy because I hadn’t won anything, about my co-workers’ attitude towards me, and how I now understood how they felt. He was very calm, having just won an award for one of the highest grossing sales stores in the region. There was something almost cold and distant in his manner as he said, “Look, Guillermo, if they don’t have the fortitude to...” I cut him off. “What do you mean, fortitude?” Having just left such a large-scale meeting, something I had never attended before, I felt that

there was something larger at play. I felt left out somehow, and didn't know a lot of what was going on with the company I worked for, so I was in a very questioning mood.

“Fortitude,” the manager explained, “means willingness to try and do more and make more money. You see these guys every day. They just fart around and stand there while you pick up a manual or a brochure and try to read up on our products. In 17 years of managing you are the only who has ever asked me how to make more money. You are a third of their age and you are the assistant manager. Don't worry about what they think – just stay focused on what you are doing. You are doing a good job.”

I thanked him, and asked how many cell phones the guy had sold to win the motorcycle. He laughed, shaking his head, and said, “See what I mean?”

“Yeah,” I said, laughing myself, but it was a fake laugh. I didn't know what he meant at the time, but what he said really resonated with me. It gave me a lot of confidence to know that my manager felt that way about my work ethic, and saying that no one else had asked him how to make more money before made me feel good. I got over sitting by myself at the conference, and didn't feel bad about my co-workers anymore. Now I had a new purpose: to be recognized and known within the company.

I went to work the next morning expecting it to be just another day, with my co-workers whispering and giving me the cold shoulder, my manager in the backroom doing numbers, and me by myself trying to sell cell phones. As I walked in to the store my co-workers were standing around waiting for me, and started clapping. One of them stuck his hand out to shake mine.

“What's up?” I asked, laughing. “I don't get it”

They explained that our store had been recognized as top out of 60 branches in the county, and they were happy because they all look good. I felt very happy, and was comfortable around my co-workers again. I think that after the annual meeting we all realized that we were just a small store in a little strip mall on the east side of town compared to the others at the conference. Everything was back to normal, the whispering and cold shouldering stopped, and it turned out that my co-workers were actually upset that I had not been recognized with an award.

Later that day, as my manager was leaving, a brand new BMW convertible pulled up in front of the store. A young guy with a polo shirt and a binder got out of the car, asked for the manager and introduced himself as the Airtouch representative for the area. "On my way out," my manager said. "You can speak to him. He's the one that sells your phones." The rep asked my manager to stay. It would just take a moment. The rep looked over at me and asked if I was Guillermo. "Yes," I said. "How did you know? I like your car."

"Well," he responded, "I wanted to come by introduce myself and give you our new binder. You guys are doing good. Congratulations on everything. Here's my card – let me know if I can help."

I thanked him, and he started asking me questions. "Guillermo, do you speak Spanish? How long have you been in sales?" My manager leaned against the counter and folded his arms as if to indicate that this was going to take a while. These weren't ordinary conversational queries; the rep seemed to be working his way through a set list of prepared questions. "Have you ever thought of relocating? Do you feel more comfortable selling our phones over Sprint? How long have you worked here? How much do you make per unit? Can you teach others how to sell our phones?"

“Stop,” my manager cut in loudly. “I know what you are doing, and you can go now. Thanks. Bye”

The rep asked what was wrong, and I looked at my manager to indicate that I agreed with the rep. What was the problem? We’d had the meeting yesterday, and maybe they had forgotten an award. My manager looked away from the rep and headed out of the store, saying “If Guillermo wants to talk to you he can during his next break.” As my manager was leaving, the rep asked me, “Do you really want to stay here selling a phone at a time?” The manager turned round and asked the rep to leave the store.

The next day I received a call from the district manager asking me what had happened between the rep and my store manager. “I don’t know,” I said. “The guy was asking me questions and then was asked to leave. While I have you on the phone, let me ask how many cell phones the guy sold to get the motorcycle.” The district manager said he had sold 125. “What! I sold a lot more than that!” I yelled. He explained to me that the other sales associate sold Sprint digital phones. At the time I had no experience of selling them, and knew nothing about them except that they offered better quality on the calls but had a lower area of coverage, and that the phones and service through Sprint were more expensive and my high-volume technique did not afford me the opportunity to try something new. I felt that what I was doing was fine, especially the way I was going.

I was very naïve at the time, and only then did I realize that the Airtouch rep had been trying to recruit me, and that my manager did not want that to happen and felt it was unprofessional of him to do so in the middle of the store. Once I understood all that, my confidence soared again. This time I felt that my hard work had value, even without an award.

Soon afterwards, I was given a new job title, transferred to a new market, and helped to mold the cell phone industry – all of which I will cover later in this book.

Self confidence is a fragile state, and you can't afford to get too low or too high, as I learned from feeling down and frustrated during the annual convention and from the high points that followed. My confidence fluctuated wildly because I was not yet secure in my ability, and too sensitive to what others thought of me. What I learned is that if I had remained positive and smiling, standing up straight, always treating everyone with courtesy, then I wouldn't have felt so angry and frustrated because I would have been confident that I had done all that I could. The main thing now was to be consistent, because outside elements – other people, home life, your sales performance, or just your perception of the way others see you – can and will affect your confidence.

In conclusion to this chapter, I want to point out that confidence can be derived from many sources, but one of the most basic is to take pride in what you do, whether you sell as a telemarketer, sell to major corporations, sell to doctors, or are selling oranges on the side of the freeway. If you feel confident, happy and have a smile on your face, you will sell more than someone who doesn't. Confidence puts you in a positive state of mind, making sure you are in the zone in which you feel most comfortable. It will reap large results and prepare you for the road ahead. The most successful salespeople I have ever known have understood how to make sales fun. While working hard they made their environment a positive one, their customers had enjoyable experiences, and they themselves had a healthier lifestyle by not carrying a burden stress and worry.