

The 8 Myths of Selling by Mark Blackmore

Selling is the simplest of all professions. It follows a simple formula; a single principle (and there is only one – no matter what the sales gurus will try to tell you.) It contains just 16 words, and unequivocally the mystique of selling.

Here it is, the Single Sales Principle®:

‘People buy when a compelling need is met by a credible solution that offers perceived value’.

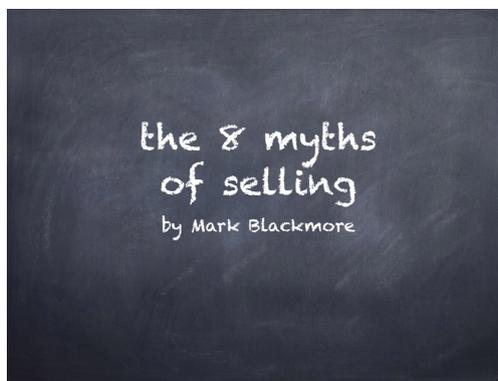
Simple. Too simple? Well, as Jim Collins claims in his book *Good to Great*, “Freud, Darwin and Einstein all had one thing in common. They took a complex world and simplified it.” And Single Principled Salespeople do just that. They understand that selling doesn’t have to be complicated. They simply make it easy for a customer to buy.

It’s one of the two things they have in common. They are customer centric, not sales centric.

The other thing that Single Principled Salespeople have in common is that they never follow the 8 myths of selling. Simply never.

The 8 myths of selling were taught by well-meaning sales managers, eager to pass on the wisdom and knowledge that their sales managers had passed on to them. Like a cult, however, no one had questioned whether they were true. The 8 myths may have worked in their day, but they simply do not work today.

Do you remember how you felt when you discovered there wasn’t really a Santa Claus? I remember it well. It was the 12th December 1971 and my (so called) best friend Johnny Harrison broke the fateful news to me over a Curly Wurly. I felt like I had been had. You don’t question what you are told as a kid; you just believe it to be true.



Well, that was also the way I felt the day that I discovered that everything that I had been taught up to that point in sales was a complete lie; all myths. They were theories that had no substance in the modern world.

Walk onto most sales floors and you'll see the 8 myths of selling proudly displayed on the wall (probably next to the target and the 'Inspiration' poster):

"Attitude Sets Altitude"

"People Buy People "

"Always Be Closing"

"Customers Like to Talk about Themselves"

"It's a Numbers Game"

"Sell the Sizzle not the Sausage"

"Money Talks"

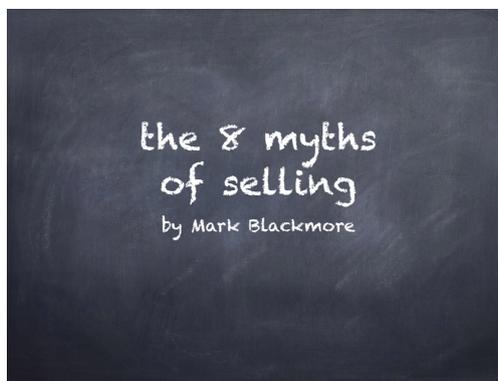
"Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail"

Be honest, you believe in at least half of the 8 myths yourself, don't you? You are not alone.

Most salespeople will quote them as the 'sales gospel'. Suggest that they are myths and they will think you have gone mad.

On the surface the 8 myths look perfectly reasonable. In fact, set inside a picture frame, each one looks positively motivating. And I am sure they made a lot of sense, at the time.

But things change. And so has selling.



Myth 1: Always Be Closing

If you need to use closing techniques to get a sale, you clearly haven't demonstrated that your product meets their needs. Rather than force the customer into a decision they will regret, simply go back to where you lost them in the buying process, and start again from there. If you apply the Single Sales Principle® you don't need to close...the customer should be asking you to buy.

Myth 2: Attitude sets Altitude

Abraham Lincoln asked the question: "How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg". No amount of looking in the mirror and telling yourself 'you're a tiger' will work if you don't believe in your product.

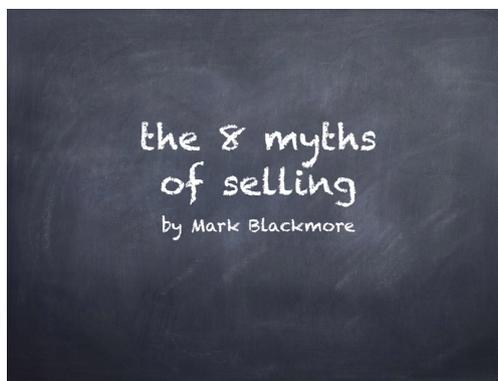
The better the value proposition, the better the attitude of a salesperson. Single Principled Salespeople ensure that they have a deep, genuine belief in their value proposition.

Myth 3: People Buy People

People buy when the product/service cost-effectively meets the customer's needs. No amount of schmoozing with a client will make up for a poor product match.

Being personable is, of course, important in sales. But isn't it important in all vocations? Friendly plumbers are more pleasant to deal with than unfriendly plumbers. Friendly bus drivers are more pleasant to deal with than unfriendly bus drivers. Friendly lawyers are more pleasant to deal with than unfriendly lawyers (unless they're on your team of course!)

Ken Hubbard, the American writer said "Beauty is only skin deep, but it's a valuable asset if you're poor or haven't any common sense!"



In the good old/bad old days, salespeople would use their charm ('beauty') to cover up for this lack of a credible solution ('common sense'). Today's professional buyer can see through that. It's what is underneath that counts most.

Myth 4: Customers Like to Talk about Themselves

We have sat on thousands of sales calls. Some were good. Some were bad. And some were downright ugly. The bad ones were those where the salesperson doesn't ask any questions at all. They launch into their features and benefits without any consideration for what the buyer may actually need.

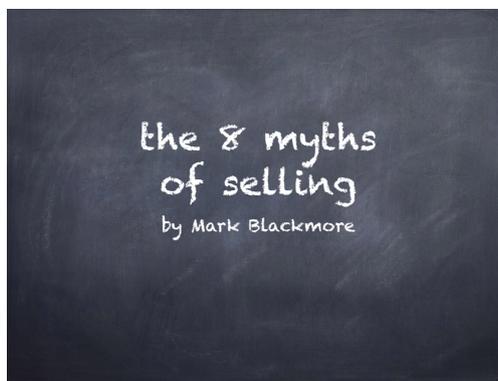
And then there were the ugly calls. The salesperson knew that they had to conduct a fact find, and gain as much information about the customer as possible. So they launched into a 'Spanish inquisition', asking a list of meaningless questions that did nothing but bore the customer.

Yes, there is a certain amount of information that needs to be identified in a sales intervention, as without it it is difficult to make a recommendation and know whether the opportunity is worth fighting for. But this is all for your benefit, not theirs. Needs make sales, not customer biographies.

Myth 5: It's a Numbers Game

Average salespeople get a long way by putting in long hours and running around contacting a lot of people. They then submit 'phantom forecasts'; over-optimistic sales projections based on a pipeline of proposals that never convert into actual business. This is because the needs identified in the sales call were not compelling needs.

Just having a need doesn't mean that the customer will act upon it. Many of the deals on a salesperson's pipeline remain unclosed because the customer keeps procrastinating over the



decision. Playing the numbers game doesn't help them deliver more sales. It just creates more work for themselves and everyone around them.

The Single Principled Salesperson ensures that the needs are compelling prior to presenting the solution. Why? Because only then are they assured that the customer will be motivated into action.

Myth 6: Sell the Sizzle, not the Sausage

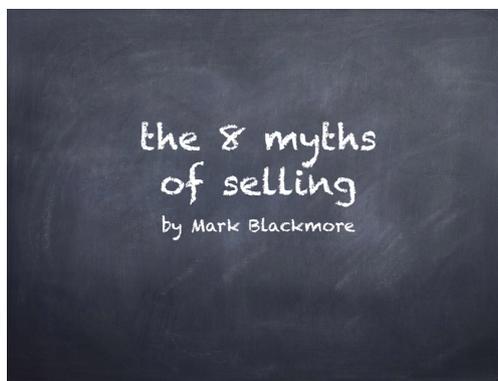
We love the concept of making presentations sizzle. Our issue with the myth of 'selling the sizzle' is with how salespeople think that they can bamboozle a customer with fancy presentations that are high on show but low on substance.

At first sight, 'selling the sizzle' seems to make perfect sense. The sausage sizzling away on a griddle is much more likely to sell than an uncooked sausage sitting in the fridge. But this is because the sizzle fired up your senses bringing attention to the fact that you are hungry. The sizzle satisfied your compelling need.

Ever smelt a sizzling sausage when you have food poisoning? It would probably make you feel even worse. This is because this time your need isn't hunger. In fact, food is the last thing you need.

Myth 7: Money Talks

Listen to buyers and you'd think that they really do believe that money talks. Buyers are a brutal species, taking sheer delight in making a salesperson sweat on price. They trick them into thinking it is all about cost, and if the salesperson doesn't drop their price they will find a supplier who will. Indeed, some buyers actually believe in this hype themselves.



But customers actually want value, not the cheapest price. If people wanted cheap we would all be driving around in 10-year-old cars and shopping in charity shops. Products are only perceived as expensive if the value is not appreciated by the customer. You'll never lose a deal on price, only on value.

Myth 8: Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail

Salespeople tend to fall into two camps: those who plan too much and those who hardly plan at all.

Those who plan too much tend to be 'busy fools,' i.e. running around doing very little. When we go out with these salespeople on calls they show us all the planning they have done: a tour of the client's website; the previous history; a list of questions they are going to ask; competitor information etc. The problem is they don't even refer to it.

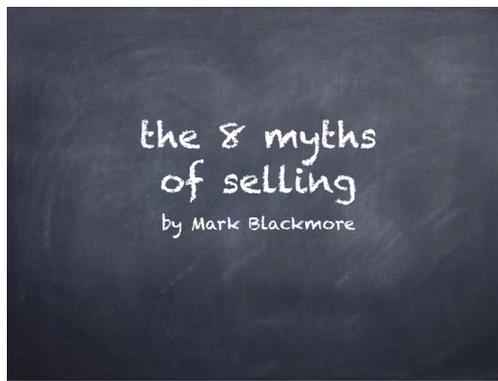
The second type are those salespeople who do very little planning. Indeed, most salespeople fall into this category. You may be surprised to learn that so do Single Principled Salespeople.

"Hooray!" I hear the cry from the sales community at large. "What? No need to plan?" Not quite!

Peter Drucker, the management guru, defined the difference between 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' as being:

"Efficiency is doing things right; Effectiveness is doing the right things."

Single Principled Salespeople are effective because they identify the right things to do. It's why they often work fewer hours than the average performers.



The cartoonist, Doug Larson, said on time management, “For disappearing acts, it’s hard to beat what happens to the eight hours supposedly left after eight of sleep and eight of work.” I think we can all empathise with this sentiment. Life is too short to be planning for the sake of it.

Summary

Winston Churchill said “Out of intense complexities, simplicities emerge.” Selling has become a complicated business. But it doesn’t have to be. Simple is good.

And that’s why great sales people follow the Single Sales Principle®. By focussing on matching compelling needs with credible solutions that offer perceived value you will succeed in selling. We guarantee it. Follow the 8 myths and you will become frustrated and disillusioned with our wonderful profession.

About Mark Blackmore

Mark Blackmore is Managing Director for sales and management training company Lammore Consulting Ltd and author of The Single Sales Principle and the 8 Myths of Selling, published by FastPrint Publishing.

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