



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS IN SELLING



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I A N S E L B I E

The Seven Deadly Sins In Selling

By Ian Selbie



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Introduction

Ian Selbie has been delivering high performance sales services internationally for 20 plus years. He has delivered his proven sales methodology to over 17,000 sales professionals around the globe.

His client list ranges from well-known multi-nationals to smaller more regional companies. Ian's clients have witnessed a number of sustainable benefits from his services which include:

1. Increased forecasting accuracy
2. Increased customer loyalty
3. Less sales turnover
4. More effective hiring and of course
5. Increased margins and revenues.



Objective

In Ian's experience working with his clients' senior management, sales management and salespeople regardless of industry, he has found organizations making the same classic mistakes on a repetitive basis.

The objective of this guide is to provide you with an opportunity to compare the behaviors of your sales force with the findings and benefits of Ian's experience.



SIN #1

Calling At Non-Decision-Making Levels.



In the highly dynamic world of selling, there are two very desirable words - “Yes” and a quick “No”.

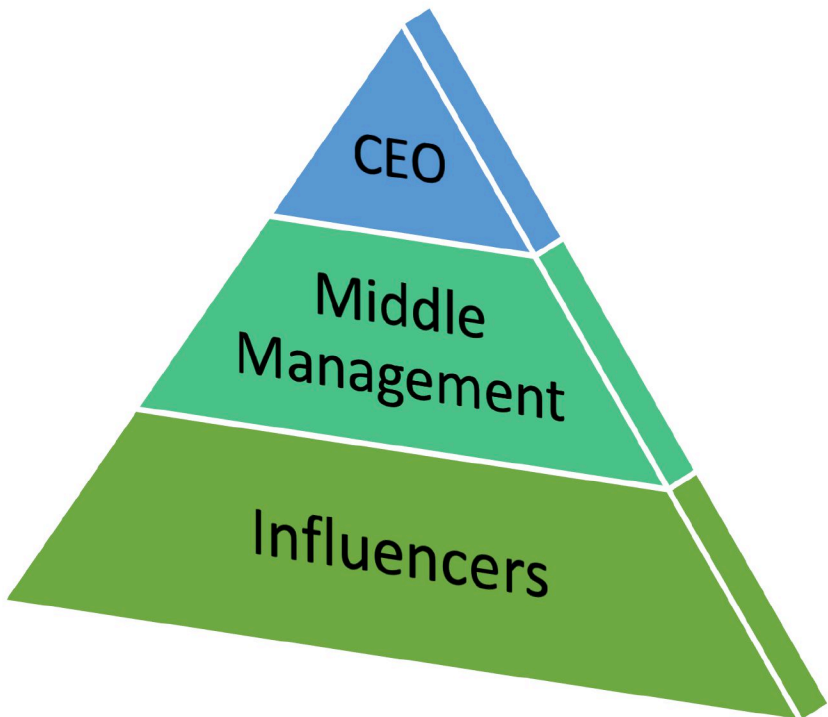
The slow “no” robs salespeople of their most precious asset, time. The quick “no” allows salespeople to move onto opportunities they can win.

The most significant contributor to the slow “no” is calling at non-decision-making levels. Spending time talking to middle managers and influencers of prospective clients not only creates a slow “no” proposition, but commits your level of contact in the account. Once established at the influencer level you are now at their mercy in terms of moving up to meet with the executive, where the real decisions are made.

In fact to get the meeting with the executive, you may need to climb over the influencer, putting your relationship and chances for success at risk. Always calling high first, can more than double your company's win percentage.

QUESTIONS:

- On new business opportunities, what would increasing your win ratio by 40-50% do for your total revenue?
- How often do your salespeople meet with senior management within your customer's organization? Could your sales force be calling higher on a consistent basis?



SIN #2

It's All About Qualifying, Not Closing.



When meeting company presidents for the first time we often hear, "our salespeople struggle with closing; can you help us?"

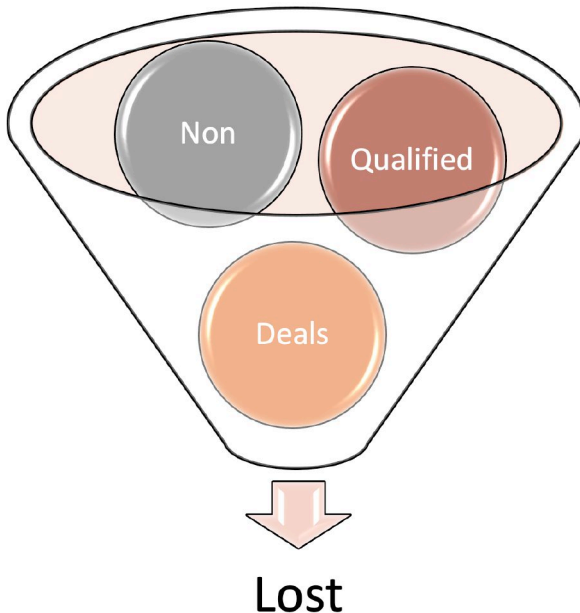
After helping well over 17,000 salespeople from around the world we have found that it has never been a closing problem, but always failure to diligently qualify opportunities that causes the loss of the deal.

One of the most overlooked elements is failing to understand the prospective client's business pain. Not just what they need, but why they need it - the cause not the effect. Most salespeople who are so focused on trying to "close the deal", find the harder they push, the further away the deal gets.

Twenty percent of the salespeople in the world are making eighty percent of the commissions available. The other eighty percent are fighting over the crumbs. These top guns are where they are, not because of closing skills, but because they know how to qualify their opportunities and invest their time appropriately.

QUESTIONS:

- What percentage of new opportunities pursued last year did your sales force lose?
- How many of these should have been abandoned earlier in the process because they didn't qualify?
- How many would you have won if your sales organization were diligently qualifying?



SIN #3

Not Using A Consistent Sales Process.



When conducting assessments for clients, we typically find as many sales processes in companies as there are salespeople. The absence of a consistent approach creates three significant challenges for sales organizations.

1 The first is a lack of consistency with customers. Salespeople use their own approach, which also differs from customer to customer.

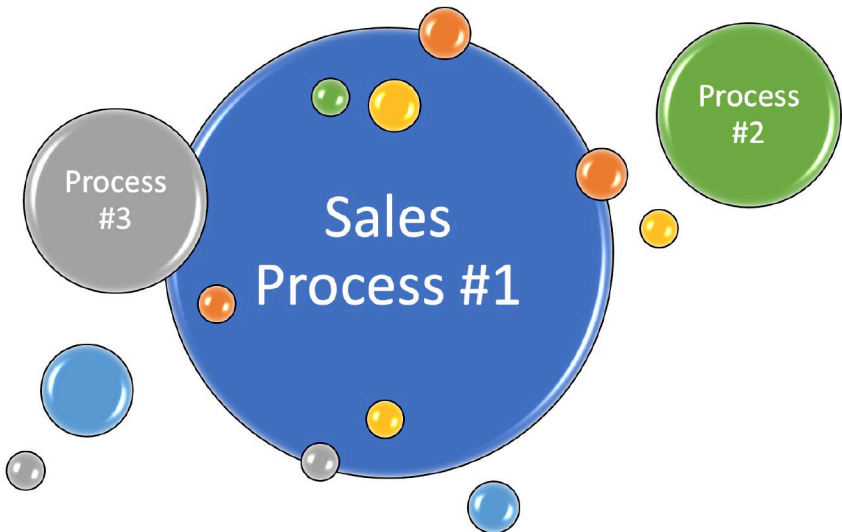
2 Secondly, a lack of a systemized sales process creates a sales management nightmare. We define good sales management as being a proactive coach and mentor of the sales force.

To be an effective coach, managers must be experts in the process themselves. How can managers be experts in ten or more processes?

3 Thirdly, inaccurate revenue forecasting due to lack of inconsistent sales process.

QUESTIONS:

- How many salespeople do you have?
- How many sales processes do they have?
- How accurate are your sales force's revenue forecasts?
- What are the costs to your business due to inaccurate revenue forecasting?



SIN #4

The Premature Proposal Trap.



What is the fastest way to get rid of a salesperson?
Ask for a proposal.

The salesperson usually hurries back to their office to begin their proposal building process, and for some salespeople this is a major work of art.

After countless hours, or days of work, the salesperson calls the prospect and says, “when can I show you our proposal?” To which the unqualified prospect replies, “oh, just email it to me, we’re really busy, but I’ll read it this week!”

A week passes, the salesperson follows up only to learn the prospect has not read it, but tells the salesperson to follow up in 9 months... Does this sound familiar? Never create a proposal for a prospective customer without a diligent client needs assessment and qualification process.

If the prospect is not willing to invest some time in having you better understand their needs, then they're probably not really interested.

Equally important, yet so often overlooked, always present your proposal in person to the entire team making the decision.

Some salespeople trust their contact within the client's organization to present their proposal for them. The problem with this is that the contact is not qualified to represent your company's value, as they are not a salesperson and can't speak from experience about the many satisfied reference customers who deal with your company. They cannot thoroughly explain any details about your proposal that may need discussion.

QUESTIONS:

- How many proposals does your company produce in a year?
- How many of these proposals were created without first conducting a thorough client needs assessment and qualifying the opportunity?

- How many proposals did your sales force present in person last year?
- Through proper qualification and presenting your proposals you can increase your win percentage by at least 30% - what would this mean to your company?



SIN #5

Not Having A Documented Sales Plan.



❗❗ If you fail to plan, you plan to fail" ... this is so true in the world of sales. Beyond having an annual sales quota, every salesperson needs to have a plan to achieve, in fact overachieve, his or her numbers. Salespeople need to build an annual strategy, broken down into monthly goals and objectives.

Quarterly, the salesperson and sales manager should review these goals and make any needed adjustments to ensure the completion of the plan. This sin is as much an issue for salespeople as it is for sales management.

There are two modes of selling:

1. The first we refer to as "hunting", or identifying, qualifying and winning new accounts.

2. The second we refer to as "farming", or account management of existing clients, ensuring maximum repeat and referral potential.

In today's economy, the luxury of having a team of hunters and a team of farmers is all but gone. Each salesperson must manage their existing customers while continually prospecting for new business.

Many salespeople are resting on the laurels of their previous big wins, giving their prospecting, low to no priority. Prospecting activity needs to be given priority and requires a real discipline.

Every salesperson should not only have a revenue quota, but also a monthly quota for meeting with new prospective clients. Nobody can manage results, only the activity that leads to results. And you cannot manage, what you do not measure.

QUESTIONS:

- How confident are you in your existing documented sales plan?
- How many new business meetings do your salespeople hold consistently on a monthly basis?
- Is this level of activity enough to meet your company's growth projections?



SIN #6

Under Utilizing Your Best Sales Tool.



The most powerful tool a salesperson has is the power of proof “the reference customer”.

We work with a wide range of companies and we usually discover that they are not fully leveraging their existing customers to help them succeed.

In our sales performance workshops, we teach the seven "R's" of consultative selling. Four of them are:

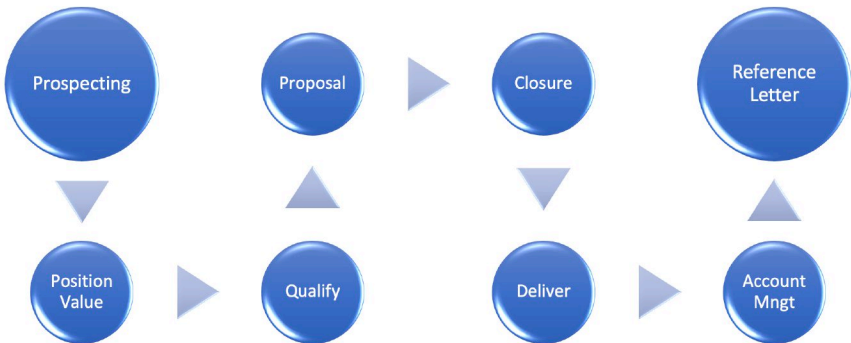
- Relationship...
- Reference...
- Repeat... and
- Referral...

Put your clients on your sales team.

QUESTIONS:

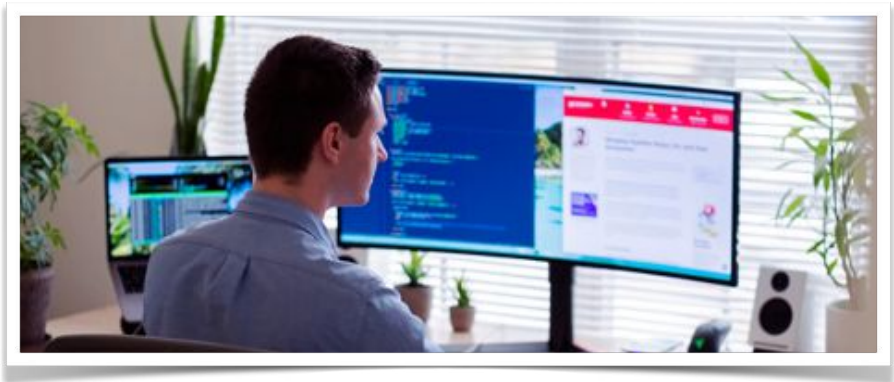
- How many letters of reference from existing customers do you have on file?
- How many customers do you have?

If the customer doesn't want to give you a letter, you must ask, why not? And you must address the issue proactively. This is another positive aspect of asking for the reference letter.



SIN #7

Thinking That Software Will Correct An Inconsistent Or Ineffective Sales Process.



Regardless of the business process, accounting, operations, software development, even warehouse management, software has never corrected or created an effective process. You must start with an effective process first, and then apply the appropriate tools or software to support the effective process.

Let us use the game of golf to provide you with an example to drive home the point. I have been golfing for years but still have a slice which usually puts me in the rough or even the trees for my next shot.

What would happen if I ran back to the pro shop and purchased one of those Big-Headed Drivers? Does the “tool” fix the problem? Absolutely not, in fact I’ll go even deeper into the trees.

My problem is in my swing, or simply said, my process. After correcting my swing, with lessons and practice, I'm ready to add the 'Big Club' to go further, but only once I've addressed the process. The very same point can be stated about sales software or CRMs.

In recent surveys, over 70% of the CRM initiatives failed to meet the customer's expectations, due primarily to two factors.

The first and most dramatic is that sales organizations, in trying to implement the software, do not have a consistent sales process that incorporates their best practices.

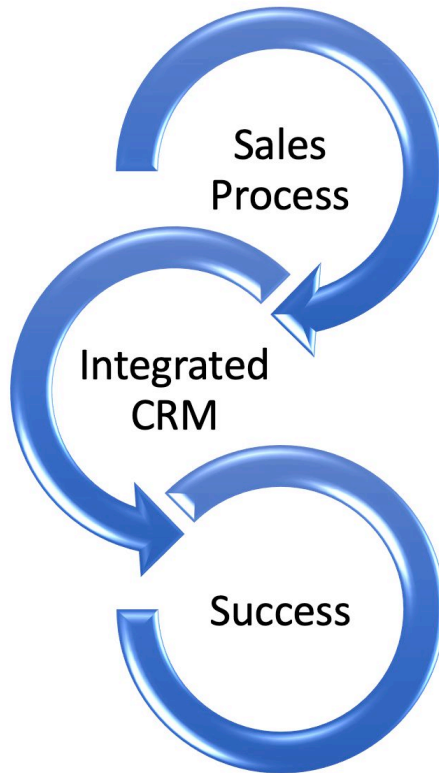
The second failure factor comes from the sales force not "buying in". This is based on the fact that the software takes far too long to input information and provides limited, if any, payback in helping them win more business.



Salespeople ask the question ...“does the software help me win? Or is it just more admin?” Process and methodology must come first; then you're ready to implement software to support the sales force.

QUESTIONS:

- When asking your sales force, “does your sales management software help you win,” what would their answers be?
- Did you have a consistent and effective sales process that incorporated your best sales practices prior to implementing your sales management software or CRM solution?
- Can you quantify your return on investment with your sales management software or CRM solution? If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?



Summary

I hope this guide has helped you to reflect on your sales organization and consider where improvements can be made.

True sales effectiveness is not just a campaign or company "theme of the quarter." It is an attitude and a commitment to continual listening, learning, refinement, and development.

This commitment must start at the top, with the senior management, only then can this journey begin.



About the Author



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The logo for SalesMentor features the word "SALESMENTOR" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A blue curved line arches over the letters "M", "E", and "N". To the right of the word is a circular icon containing three stylized human figures in blue, representing a team or community.

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