

Free Sales Resource

article: "the world's greatest salesman"



Why read this article?

This is an article about the world's greatest salesman, Ron Popeil.

It is designed to help you by pointing out some of the time-honoured classic sales techniques that are still relevant today.

We know this because Ron Popeil is still using them, and they make him \$1m an hour.

Natural Training has developed a strong reputation for helping our customers to refocus sales efforts on what counts: a strong compulsion from the market to buy!

I hope you like the article and I look forward to receiving some feedback to matt.drought@naturaltraining.com

Kind Regards,



Matt Drought

Chairman



The world's greatest salesman

There's something wonderful about the classics. I read David Copperfield by Charles Dickens about 15 years ago, yet I've never really let it go. Somebody always reminds me of it – the greed of a Uriah Heep character, or the resolute nature of Peggotty. Even though I listen to all the chart music, nothing stirs the soul like Guns 'n' Roses (we're even thinking of naming a course "Objections 'n' Closing"). And I'm really into Thai-fusion cooking, but nothing makes me more excited than Mum's roast dinner.

In short, classical things inspire more of me for longer. In the world of selling, it seems that there is a particular family in the US who have been mastering the art of selling for generations – hence a classic. It's the Popeil family. For those not familiar with Ron Popeil, he inherited the Chop-O-Matic ("It slices, it dices!") from his father Samuel, who in turn learned the trade of selling from his father.

And Ron created the Showtime Rotisserie ("Set it, and forget it!"). Ron Popeil was probably the first man to start the infomercial or at least the first to really bring it into the mainstream¹.

But wait, there's more.

Ron Popeil was a gladiator of the classic art of selling, as described by Malcolm Gladwell in Chapter 1 (The Pitchman) of his latest book, What the Dog Saw. Here's a picture of Popeil – if you look closely he's wearing his spray on hair in a can, another one of Ronco's products. He's even won a Nobel Prize for home engineering.!



¹ The reason Ron brought it into the mainstream was that taped recordings of his demonstrations on TV were the only way he could avoid the massive cost of chopping onions, celery and tomatoes. It wasn't uncommon to go through 20 kilograms of carrots using the Chop-O-Matic in a day of demonstration!

Now here's a challenge: I next time you are watching a late night infomercial (it's okay, everyone does it) step behind the content and pay attention to the structure – the way they hook everyone in. From my research, it looks a little like the following:

A Classic Structure to Selling Just About Anything: Popeil Style

1. An attention-grabbing headline – let's call it the hook
2. A structured argument that builds to several crescendos in say half an hour
3. Heavy on demonstrations – yep, more evidence!
4. The turn (the close)
5. The mop-up (the close for those who haven't been closed)
6. Repeat cycle

Most of those serve as a reminder, and don't need explaining. I'm going to focus on the two steps that I find most fascinating – steps 4 & 5.

Step 4 - The Turn

This is where you ask the crowd for money. In modern day parlance, it's the close. The audience knows the close is coming, just like your client knows the close is coming. To quote from Gladwell: "The pitchman must make you applaud and take out your money...(the turn is) the perilous, crucial moment where he goes from entertainer to businessman."²

Is that an insight into closing, or what?!

When you close business, here is what the modern sales practitioner really ought to do: Ensure you keep the rapport moving, the relationship moving forward, **but don't forget to ask for the money**. Here's what I got from this: It's not the close that counts as we know it. It's not the closing questions, or objection handling. It's how well likeability and closing techniques merge. In other words, it's how comfortable you are, and how comfortable the customer is, that is the difference between success, or another sale that got away

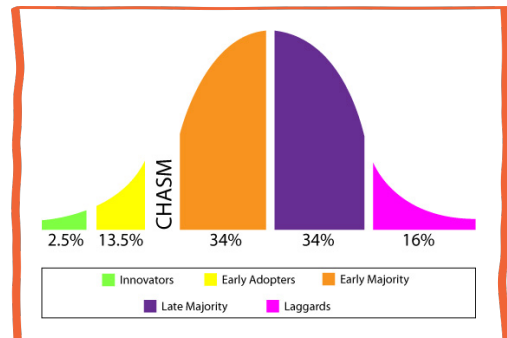
² What The Dog Saw, Chapter 1 "The Pitchman" Malcolm Gladwell, Page 12, Hardcover Edition, Penguin 2009

In our sales skills training we focus on loads of behavioural based practice, making sure that sales people move from rapport to close with a high degree of comfort. Eventually, asking for the money becomes as easy as asking for the time. (But a lot more fun.)

Step 5 - The Mop Up

For those who haven't bought the first time around, infomercials will often go around again, with a summarised highlights package. This is for the people who still might buy, but aren't as quick on the buzzer. In the Innovation Adoption Curve, they are the probably the early or late majority.

What a great lesson for the modern day salesperson – particularly those who give up at the first objection. Customers might be in to you, but not quite enough to dig deep. So, give them a persuasive, summarised version of events up to this point. Ensure you load it with reasons, or benefits to buy.



But wait, there's more...

I love the following part of Gladwell's article on Popeil so much that you are getting it verbatim. When reading this passage, it's best to picture a well dressed but hard working 40-something, selling in a vaudeville monologue:

"If, out of a crowd of fifty, twenty-five people come forward to buy, the true pitchman sells to only twenty of them. To the remaining five, he says, "Wait! There's something else I want to show you!" Then he starts his pitch again, with slight variations, and the remaining four or five become the core of the next crowd..."³

³ What The Dog Saw, Chapter 1 "The Pitchman" Malcolm Gladwell, Page 12, Hardcover Edition, Penguin 2009

How can you use this to sell today?

You can certainly use this technique if you sell at a market stall, but these days that accounts for only a few of us. The rest of us sell in a corporate environment and an increasing amount over the phone. I think a useful way to think about this passage of the book is to consider this concept of “herding”.

Psychologists such as Dr Robert Cialdini say that humans are much more likely to do something that others are doing. That’s why a piano man in a bar will “salt” the jar with a few five dollar notes at the start of the night. It sends a clear direction to others.

How do we make herding work for us?

Referral selling might be the modern, consultative example of making this work. Think about who are like your customers in various ways – number of employees, buying patterns, industries, challenges – and send them a beautifully presented sheet with your customer’s case study on it.

Keeping the focus of your initial sale very simple might be another example: bringing a client into your world for 5 different services is much more challenging than bringing them in on the easiest service to say “yes to”. You can always sell them the rest later – once they have paid their first invoice and established that spending pattern it’s much easier.

This stuff works!

I know infomercials can be annoying, and considered only for late night couch potatoes. The fact is, in one hour they can sell \$1.5m worth of products. Which is why I’ve paid more than a passing nod to this classic form of selling.

If you would like to talk to us about introducing some of the classics with a modern twist into your business, then please do contact us on +44 (0) 207 264 1150.

The Natural Training Company Ltd.

Natural Training started trading in 2005 with a simple proposition: fresh, relevant, practical training that works with your natural personality rather than training which crunches against it. This means participants can relax in the knowledge that their personal style is right for them. We simply add some tools and concepts that help rather than constrict natural style.

Based in London and servicing the UK and Europe, Natural Training focuses on delivering group workshops and personal coaching to start-up business right through to big name brands representing most industry sectors.

Natural Training now has over 1600 clients across all industries enjoying our practical, results-driven training. Natural Training has 20 staff: six full time staff maintaining our superb customer experience, and fourteen trainers all receiving excellent feedback. The Natural Habitat is in a beautiful converted pump house in Aldgate East, London.