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The Canterbury Sales®

The Jazzman in Every Salesperson

By Andy Gole

Not many salespeople realize they play jazz every time they effectively sell. Even if the prospect doesn't hear "Take the A Train" or "Rhapsody in Blue," they are hearing jazz nonetheless.

Why?

The essence of jazz is structure and improvisation. The structure – the melody line, the interaction between the musicians – is the spine that inspires and permits the improvised solos and binds the music together.

How does the salesperson emulate jazz? By improvising around the standard sales call. The standard sales call – the step-by-step procedure for initiating, managing and closing the sale – is the structure that frees the salesperson to improvise – to express his personality yet remain in control.

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Consider the intellectual burden of tracking dozens of strategic selling issues and simultaneously expressing your personality – being real, even entertaining, to the prospect. These strategic issues include managing the three fatal flaws in the selling process:

1. Assuming the prospect enters the conversation with serious intent
2. Assuming the prospect believes what we say
3. Assuming the prospect knows how to make a decision

As you maintain and manage this inventory of strategic issues, you have to be spontaneous, allowing your personality to flow.

It's an almost impossible intellectual task without a very well defined and implemented structure. So most salespeople choose to be themselves and let strategy "take care of itself."

But selling, like nature, abhors a vacuum. If as salespeople we abandon strategy and structure, the buyer will cheerfully pick up strategy and bludgeon salespeople to death with it.

There is a deeper sense in which we are all playing jazz. The very essence of effective conversation evokes jazz.

When we begin a new thought, a new sentence – either in discussion or when we

write – we typically don't know where it will end. Certainly, we don't know the paragraph's final resting point.

We improvise. We begin a thought and, on the fly, scanning the possibilities, settle on a direction. As our sentences flow, they become more defined; we anchor ourselves in the structure of language – including grammar, syntax and meaning.

We have the potential to "play jazz" every time we talk, every time we express ourselves. It takes substantial practice to make this seem effortless.

The salesperson has the same potential. But he faces longer odds. He's not just in a conversation. The salesperson is in a complex, conflict-laden situation. The buyer wants quite a bit more than someone who not only seems real but who actually is a raconteur. The buyer wants to find and break through the bottom of the market.

The salesperson must maintain his command of strategy as he projects himself to the buyer as real. The salesperson needs tremendous structure to free him to be real. Theme and variation, structure and improvisation. The salesperson needs jazz. So do we all.



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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 17 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, Urgency Based Selling®, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at www.bombadillc.com or by calling him at 201.415.3447.