



## **TO SELL IS HUMAN**

The surprising truth about moving people

*Daniel H. Pink (Riverhead Books, New York 2012)*

Daniel H. Pink is the author of five provocative books — including the long-running *New York Times* bestsellers, *A Whole New Mind* and *Drive*. His latest book, *To Sell is Human*, is a #1 *New York Times* business bestseller, a #1 *Wall Street Journal* business bestseller, and a #1 *Washington Post* nonfiction bestseller. Dan's books have been translated into 34 languages and have sold more than 2 million copies worldwide. In 2013, Thinkers 50 named him one of the top 15 business thinkers in the world. A free agent himself, Dan held his last real job in the White House, where he served from 1995 to 1997 as chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore.

### **Part 1 REBIRTH OF A SALESMAN**

#### **1. Where all in sales now**

In many cases a sales person in the traditional sense, has become irrelevant. Consumers can do their research and purchase online and have access to product information, your social network can advise you etcetera.

##### *Non-Sales Selling*

That is why older door-to-door sales companies have gone out of business, and their practices seem outdated. But still, 1 in 9 workers are in sales, amounting to over 15 million people. And the rest of us are also selling – not just objects, but ideas and techniques. We are persuading, negotiating, and pitching, like lawyers selling juries on their verdict or public figures selling their personal brand on Twitter. In fact, a study Pink commissioned showed that people spend 40 percent of their work time selling something.

#### **2. Entrepreneurship, Elasticity, and Ed-Med**

Also the rise of entrepreneurship has increased the number of sales people; thanks to innovations like E-bay, Apple's app store have made us all potential sales men. Pink states in today's world the ability to be flexible is key; as an organization you have to adjust to a modern world, as a professional you have to shift between different skills, even in larger companies. And the growing field of education and health services (the largest job sector in the US economy) is about selling: convincing students to pay attention, and patients to follow through with treatments. But one particular category of skill is here to stay: the art of moving others.



### 3. From Caveat Emptor to Caveat Venditor

Pushy, dishonest, sleazy, annoying, manipulative are words that come to mind if people were prompted to think of “sales” or “selling”. Now, since buyers have reviews, ratings, and comparison shopping at their fingertips, sellers have more incentives to be fair and honest. The information balance has shifted; “in a world of information parity, the new guiding principle is *caveat venditor* – seller beware”. So sales is becoming another ball game; it’s more about moving others and that requires sophisticated skills, intellect and creativity.

#### Part 2 HOW TO BE

Pink teaches us the cornerstone of sales, as you can remember by the first three letters of the alphabet; A-Always, B-Be, C-Closing is outdated. A sales person is no longer a predator pursuing its prey; “every utterance and each maneuver must serve a single goal: pushing the transaction to a conclusion and getting the person across the table to sign the line which is dotted.”

#### The new sales ABC:

##### 1. Attunement

The first trait of successful sellers is understanding the perspective of the buyer, and studies have shown us how to do this: “power leads individuals to anchor too heavily on their own vantage point, insufficiently adjusting to other’s perspective. Therefore assume that the buyer is the one with the power and ; get inside the other persons head, see the world through his eyes. Other findings from social scientists: focus on understanding the buyer’s thoughts rather than their feelings; and mimic the buyer’s gestures.

##### *Ambiverts*

You probably think extroverts are the best sales people. As it turns out, studies show that extroverts aren’t the best sellers; that title goes to ambiverts, who score around 4-4.5 on the extroversion scale of 1-7. This outcome can be explained easily: introverts can be too shy to initiate and too timid to close, extroverts on the other hand can be too assertive (too pushy) and can talk too much and listen too little, which dulls their understanding of other’s perspectives.

*“Selling of any sort requires a delicate balance of inspecting and responding.  
Knowing when to speak up and when to shut up.”*

##### 2. Buoyancy

The second trait of successful sellers is “buoyancy,” the combination of “a gritty spirit and a sunny outlook.” To survive repeated rejections, follow three practices.

1. Ask yourself questions beforehand (“Can I succeed?”) rather than pumping yourself up (“Rrrrrrr, I am the best!!”); they encourage your brain to come up with answers, reasons, and intrinsic motivation.



2. Be mostly positive: it can make the buyer more positive and open to different possibilities (although a little negativity keeps you grounded). (P. 103)
3. Be optimistic: believe that rejections are temporary, contained, and due to external factors. Monitor your positivity ratio.

*“Optimism, it turns out, isn’t a hollow sentiment. It’s a catalyst that can stir persistence, steady us during challenges, and stroke the confidence that we can influence our surroundings.”*

### 3. Clarity

Pink describes this aspect as “the capacity to help others see their situations in fresh and more revealing ways and to identify problems they didn’t realize they had”. In the early days, a good salesman was someone that’s good at solving problems: assessing needs, analyze and deliver optimal solutions. In the current times where information is abundant and democratic, this skill matters less. Good sales focuses on servicing others in telling them they are mistaken, confused or completely clueless about their true problem. Therefore two skills are essential:

1. *Curating* information (going through massive data, selecting and presenting clearly), instead of *accessing* information.
2. *Asking* questions instead of *answering* questions, in order to uncover possibilities, surfacing latent issues and finding unexpected problems.

*In days of information overload, moving others is more likely to happen by problem finding, instead of problem solving*

Then, clarity depends on contrast; we often understand something better when we see it in comparison with something else than when we see it in isolation. Frame your offering in ways that contrast with its alternatives and therefore clarifies its virtues.

1. The less frame – restrict their choices, it helps to see more clearly, instead of overwhelming them; Less is More
2. The experience frame – point out what the car will allow the buyer to do – see new places, visit old friends
3. The label frame – assign a positive label
4. The blemish frame – list all the positives, but add a mild negative (p.136)
5. The potential frame – emphasize the promise of what you could accomplish tomorrow

Finally: clarity on how to think without clarity on how to act can leave people unmoved.

## Part 3 WHAT TO DO

### 1. Pitch

It’s important to be creative and to invite the counterpart as a collaborator; by doing so the ‘catcher’ becomes so fully engaged by a ‘pitcher’ that the process resembles a mutual collaboration. Once the catcher feels like a creative collaborator, the odds of rejection diminish.



*"The purpose is to offer something so compelling that it begins a conversation, brings the other person in as a participant, and eventually arrives at an outcome that appeals to both of you. In a world where buyers have ample information and an array of choices, the pitch is often the first word, but it's rarely the last."*

The elevator used to be the only rare opportunity to speak to a CEO; luckily today's organizations are more flat and we have more opportunities to get our message out there, but our recipients are way more distracted. Pink believes we should broaden our repertoire of pitches for an age of limited attention and *caveat venditor*.

1. The one-word pitch – "search", "priceless" demand discipline and forces clarity
2. The question pitch – Reagan: "Are you better off now than you were 5 years ago?"
3. The rhyming pitch – O.J. Simpson's lawyer: "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit"
4. The twitter pitch – Can engage recipients and encourages to take the conversation further – by responding, clicking a link, or sharing the tweet with others
5. The Pixar pitch – Once upon a time – persuasive power of stories

## 2. Improvise

If none of the above works, practice improvisation techniques.

1. Listen well and hear the buyer's answers as "offers," not objections. (P.188)
2. Say "Yes and..." which means agreeing but adding a suggestion.  
For example: "Let's have our high school reunion in Las Vegas!" Not: "Yes, but that's going to be too expensive for some people." But: "Yes, and if it's too expensive for some people we can raise money or organize road trips."
3. And make the buyer look good – there's no sense trying to win arguments against them.

*"Instead of swirling downward into frustration, "Yes and" spirals upward toward possibility. When you stop you've got a set of options, not a sense of futility."*

Books to read: "Getting to yes" by Roger Fisher about 'principled negotiation': the aim is not to make the other side lose, but to help it win (win-win): "If each party looks past the other party's position to its actual interests and invents options for mutual gain, negotiations could end with both sides better off than they began." (p.193)

## 3. Serve

Sales is ultimately about service. And Pink is not talking about 'smiling at the customer', but a deeper definition of service – improving others' lives and, in turn, improving the world.

1. Make it personal – by recognizing the person you're trying to serve and putting yourself personally behind what you're trying to sell
2. Make it purposeful – 'servant selling' If the person you're selling to agrees to buy, will his or her life improve?

*The best sellers adopt an attitude of service. They believe in the value of the product and how it will impact the life of the buyer. And because buyers also care about benefitting others, good sellers incorporate altruistic messages into their selling.*