



# **"Stop Selling!" for the Million Dollar Contract**

**By**

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During our briefings, when we introduce the “Stop Selling!” philosophy, we typically use the example of buying shoes to make the participants aware of the infinite number of ways buyers decide on purchasing simple items.

While using this example makes it easy to get a deeper understanding of buying behavior, it often creates doubts as to whether the “Stop Selling!” approach is equally applicable to selling high-value solutions in business-to-business (B2B) settings. As a matter of fact, this approach is practical for these situations as well. During his corporate career, Charlie was involved in mostly technical solution sales with order values typically ranging from 20,000 to 4,000,000 USD. Now that he promotes the “Stop Selling!” approach, Charlie realizes that this method would’ve been extremely useful at that time!

Let’s have a look at the key benefits of this unique approach and how they are achieved:

- 1) Creation of deeply trusted relationships for long-term recurring business
- 2) Acceleration of the buying decision, leading to more time available for more sales
- 3) Improved margins by becoming a truly trusted partner

### **1) Recurring sales through deeply trusted relationships**

The “Stop Selling!” approach is much more than a method. It is based on a mindset that differs quite considerably from the typical sales mindset.

Most salespeople believe that once they discover a customer need that could be satisfied with their product (products can be goods, services, solutions, etc.), they have something to sell. As a consequence, perhaps after some further needs analysis, they start pitching their product, hoping that it will lead them to a sale.

However, even though a buyer may have a need that perhaps could be met by the seller's product (or the product of the competition, for that matter), it doesn't necessarily prompt him to act upon that need. There can be numerous reasons for this behavior, including poor prioritization, lack of budget, complicated approval processes, and so on.

It is therefore important for a salesperson to acknowledge that identifying a need that could be satisfied is pretty meaningless unless the buyer realizes that this need is important enough for him to act on it.

If the salesperson is willing to accept the possibility that there might be nothing to sell at this point even though he sees a potential need, only then will he be able to interact with the buyer without creating any pressure.

The "Stop Selling!" approach promotes the concept of NATOO – "Not being Attached To our Own Outcome". If a salesperson is able to shift his focus completely to the best possible outcome for the buyer independent from the seller's own outcome, he will be able to display true care, resulting in relationships based on deep trust. Using this approach could mean that for the buyer, the best outcome might be not to buy, or to buy from another supplier.

During our “Stop Selling!” seminars, we help the participants adopt this new mindset through a change in their belief system. This is achieved through “real plays”, i.e., role plays that reflect their own situation. Through this exercise, they experience the role of their buyers and become aware of their own selling patterns and how they can change them.

Needless to say, a deep level of trust becomes more important when more is at stake in making a buying decision.

## **2) More sales through acceleration of the buying decision**

While the “Stop Selling!” approach seems to be a soft approach towards sales, it is by no means a slow or passive one.

One of the key targets of our approach is to shorten the length of the buying cycle without creating uncomfortable pressure for the buyer.

In the true sense of coaching – that is, to help the coachee speed up his development – the seller assists the buyer in making his buying decision faster than he would without the seller’s intervention.

Making a buying decision is like solving a jigsaw puzzle: the seller has an idea of what the final picture could look like and the buyer needs to assemble majority of the pieces to see the picture.

The puzzle pieces represent the criteria and factors the buyer needs to consider before he can make a decision. The seller, having an outsider's view of the entire picture, is in a position to coach the buyer through his decision by asking whether certain key pieces are already in place. In order to do so, the seller needs to learn how to ask the right questions without creating pressure and without disrupting the buyer's own efforts to move forward with his own process. We have observed that the coaching approach is an effective way to do this.

Obviously, for high-value buying decisions, the puzzle is more difficult to assemble. This also means a salesperson acting as a highly qualified buying coach can add tremendous additional value to the buyer.

### **3) Improved margins by becoming a truly trusted partner**

It is far from easy for a salesperson to adopt this new mindset and truly coach the buyer, especially when the seller is used to being a consultant who believes he has all the answers. Habits are hard to change so this process requires a strong follow-through for new behaviors to be wholly adopted. This is why we emphasize the importance of effective follow-up procedures after our seminars.

Let's be realistic: even if we are fully aware of the benefits of the "Stop Selling!" approach and even if we can grasp what the new mindset and resulting behaviors should be like, we are still likely to make mistakes and may occasionally fall back into our old patterns. This, in itself, is not a problem – as long as we are aware when it does happen. We need to become sensitive and create a higher level of self-awareness, so that we can take corrective actions when necessary.

However, once we manage to fully apply this new approach, the quality of our relationships with our (potential) buyers shifts. We become truly trusted partners instead of people who want to sell something. When we achieve this state, the selling price becomes secondary because both parties look for true win-win outcomes, which include a comprehensive margin for the seller also. This is equally true for selling shoes ... and for selling high-value solutions.

**Conclusion:** The “Stop Selling!” approach is *not* just a technique for selling certain products. It involves a new mindset for a different approach towards (potential) buyers. In effect, the buyer recognizes the seller as a truly trusted partner who adds new value to the relationship by being an effective coach for the buyer. The benefits for the seller are shorter buying cycles, recurring business and improved margins. Clearly, the impact on selling high-value solutions tends to be even more significant.