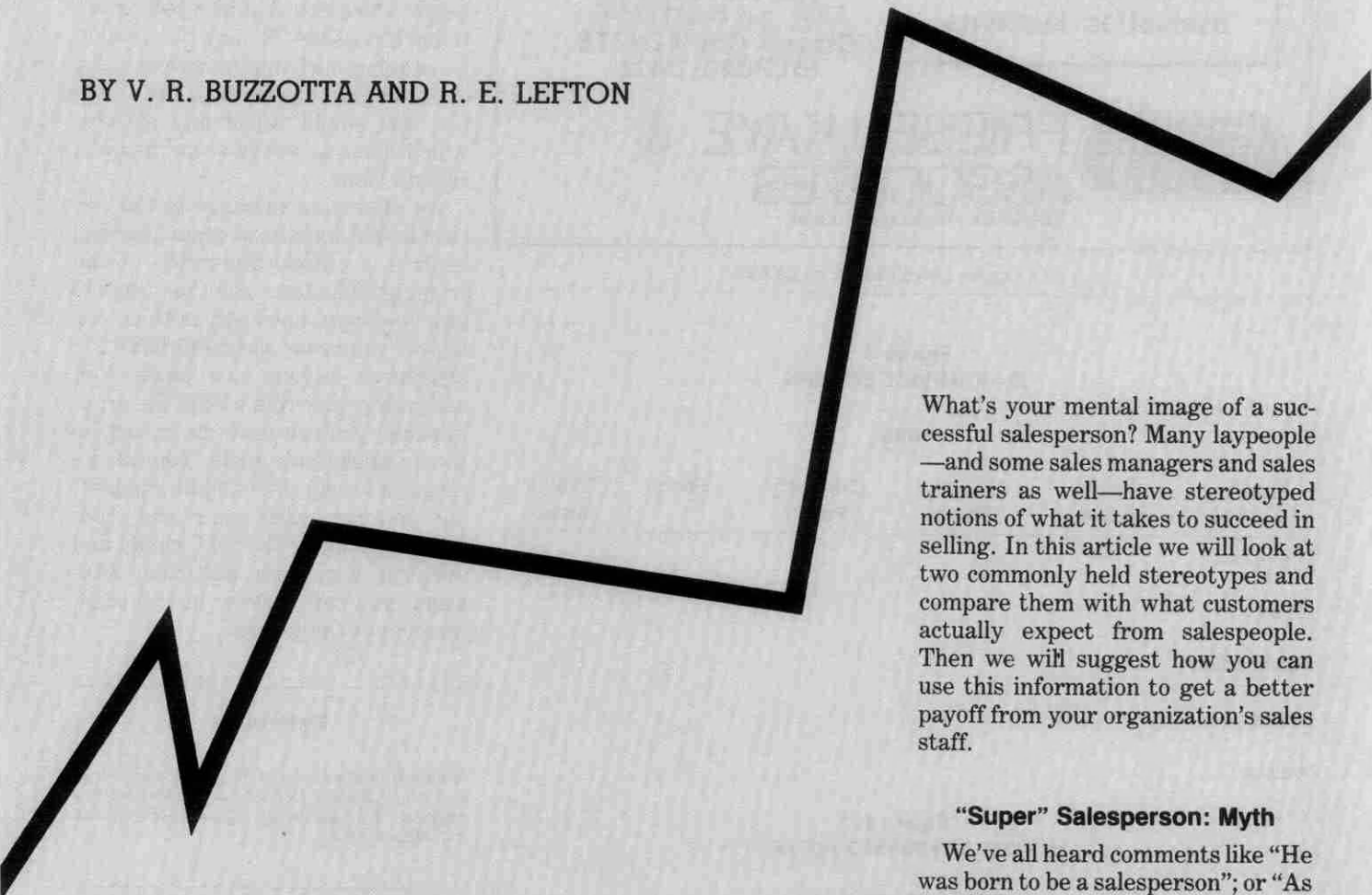


# What Makes A Sales Winner?

BY V. R. BUZZOTTA AND R. E. LEFTON



What's your mental image of a successful salesperson? Many laypeople—and some sales managers and sales trainers as well—have stereotyped notions of what it takes to succeed in selling. In this article we will look at two commonly held stereotypes and compare them with what customers actually expect from salespeople. Then we will suggest how you can use this information to get a better payoff from your organization's sales staff.

## **"Super" Salesperson: Myth**

We've all heard comments like "He was born to be a salesperson"; or "As a salesperson, she's a natural." These comments reflect a common belief that the successful salesperson is born rather than made—that he or she either "has it" or doesn't "have it."

What does "having it" mean? There are two common stereotypes around. One of these includes sales-



people who are blatantly aggressive, coming on very strong or overpowering their customers. Their goal is to reach their own ends (to make the sale or win the argument) regardless of the means. These people never stop selling. They keep driving toward the order. They overcontrol and overwhelm the customer.

The second stereotypical "super" salesperson is quite different. This one is just friendly Joe or Jill, whose first goal is to make a "buddy" of the customer. Then, since it's best to buy from your buddies, selling takes place *after* the pact of friendship has been sealed.

Do these stereotypes conform to reality? Are these the selling behaviors successful salespeople actually display? To help answer this question, we should first take a look at the *Dimensional Model of Salesperson Behavior* because we'll use its terms in the rest of this article (see Figure 1).

This model was developed to help

sales managers and trainers make sense of the varieties of sales behaviors they see in the real world of selling. This model is not based on hunch or intuition, but on solid empirical behavioral research. It posits four basic kinds of selling behaviors. (For brevity, we call these behaviors Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4.)

Q1 sales behavior is based on the premise that heavy-handed control of the customer is the road to sales. Jumping to conclusions about customer needs, Q1 makes exaggerated and lavish claims about how these needs can be satisfied. It's fast-paced and argumentative, providing little space for the customer's feelings and concerns.

Q2 sales behavior follows from the assumption that the salesperson can do nothing to move customers toward a sale and that the initiative to a sale lies entirely with the customer, not with the salesperson. Thus, Q2 is colorless and apathetic, superficial and mechanical, merely going through the paces and taking orders.

The attitude that salespeople who make themselves liked will eventually make the sale is the basis for Q3 sales behavior. This attitude holds that business flows from sociability and acceptance. Wishing to please, Q3 becomes weak and compliant. It ignores negatives and concentrates on areas of agreement, thus becoming superficial and unsystematic.

Q4 sales behavior follows from the belief that to make a sale, salespeople must prove their product or service will pay off for the customer. To do this, Q4 focuses on a "give and take" of information about the customer's needs and about how the product or service can fill them. Q4 tries to understand the customer's feelings, needs and concerns, and to address these realistically in designing, presenting and closing a sales proposal.

Having established this, let's take another look at those commonly held stereotypes. It's obvious that they are very similar to what the model describes as Q1 and Q3 selling behaviors. Therefore, doesn't it make good sense to hire people who show a lot of Q1 or Q3 behavior and, once the new people are on board, to train them in Q1 and Q3 selling techniques? This would be sensible if we

**Figure 1:  
THE DIMENSIONAL MODEL OF SALES BEHAVIOR**

		<b>DOMINANCE</b>	
		<p><i>Q1 Sales Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Basic Premise:</i> The surest way to make a sale is to overpower the customer.</p> <p><i>Opening:</i> Hard-driving, exaggerated. "The first thing to do is dazzle or intimidate the customer."</p> <p><i>Exploring needs:</i> Superficial. "I know what's best for the customer without asking lots of questions."</p> <p><i>Presenting:</i> Fires barrage of facts, exaggerations, claims, with no give-and-take. "Keep up the pressure 'til you wear down the customer."</p> <p><i>Managing objections:</i> Bulldozes, belittles, out-argues. "Bury the objection before it buries you."</p> <p><i>Closing:</i> Intense, overbearing. "Keep the pressure on 'til the customer gives in."</p>	<p><i>Q4 Sales Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Basic premise:</i> To make a sale, prove your product will make the customer better off.</p> <p><i>Opening:</i> Informative, results-oriented. "Tell the customer why you're there, and what you expect to do for him or her, and find out if he or she is ready to work with you."</p> <p><i>Exploring needs:</i> Questions and analyzes. "I must know what the customer's needs are so I can make a presentation that meets all concerns."</p> <p><i>Presenting:</i> Fits products to customer's needs. "I show the customer how the product will fill needs and make him or her better off."</p> <p><i>Managing objections:</i> Patient, searching, thorough. "I try to understand and remove all the customer's doubts."</p> <p><i>Closing:</i> Systematic, instructive, results-oriented. "I sum up the presentation, clear away last-minute doubts, and emphasize what's in it for the customer."</p>
<b>HOSTILITY</b>			
		<p><i>Q2 Sales Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Basic premise:</i> "You can't create sales; you can only take orders."</p> <p><i>Opening:</i> Mechanical, colorless. "Why knock myself out? The customer will buy when ready—in spite of anything I say."</p> <p><i>Exploring needs:</i> Superficial, indifferent. "If the customer needs something, he or she will say so without my asking questions."</p> <p><i>Presenting:</i> Spiritless, apathetic. "I present the facts and let the customer draw the conclusions."</p> <p><i>Managing objections:</i> Ignores or goes along. "There's no way to change a customer's mind, so why try?"</p> <p><i>Closing:</i> Weak or non-existent. "Whether or not to buy is up to the customer. If he or she is ready to place an order, I'll be told."</p>	<p><i>Q3 Sales Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Basic premise:</i> "If you make yourself liked, you'll eventually make the sale."</p> <p><i>Opening:</i> Very sociable, relaxed, may not mention business at all. "Let the customer know you're there as a friend."</p> <p><i>Exploring needs:</i> Superficial, unsystematic. "As long as you keep the conversation going, you'll learn the customer's needs sooner or later."</p> <p><i>Presenting:</i> Longwinded, unfocused. "I'm more concerned with fostering a personal relationship than talking about the product."</p> <p><i>Managing objections:</i> Agrees, glosses over, or changes topic. "Why dwell on something that could damage our relationship?"</p> <p><i>Closing:</i> Weak, compliant. "I go along with the customer. As long as we're friends, I'm sure to get my share of the business."</p>
		<b>SUBMISSION</b>	
		<b>WARMTH</b>	

1981, Psychological Associates, Inc.  
St. Louis, Missouri

**Figure 2:  
THE DIMENSIONAL SALESPERSON ANALYSIS**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: This questionnaire contains a list of words and phrases which you can use to describe the sales strategies of your salespersons. Write the initials or names of each salesperson you are describing in the spaces provided at the top of the inside pages.

Go through the complete questionnaire for one salesperson before moving on to the next salesperson. In describing a salesperson, think of how the salesperson sells and interacts with customers.

There are thirty-six (36) items in the questionnaire. Each item con-

sists of two alternatives; a and b. This enables you to compare sales behaviors. Indicate your preference between the two alternatives (a and b) for each item by distributing 3 points between them. If one alternative seems completely descriptive of the salesperson you're describing, assign all 3 points to that alternative. On the other hand, if both alternatives seem descriptive, choose the most descriptive and assign it 2 points; give the one remaining point to the other alternative.

Below is an example of how the 3 points may be distributed.

If you feel the (a) alternative is most descriptive of the salesperson being described, write a 3 on the (a) line and 0 on the (b) line:

  3   a. irritable  
  0   b. competitive, but does not put customers down

If you feel the (b) alternative is most descriptive of the salesperson write:

  0   a. irritable  
  3   b. competitive, but does not put customers down

If you feel the (a) alternative is slightly more descriptive than (b) write:

  2   a. irritable  
  1   b. competitive, but does not put customers down

If you feel the (b) alternative is slightly more descriptive than (a) write:

  1   a. irritable  
  2   b. competitive, but does not put customers down.

Use only the combinations shown in the examples above. Try to relate each item to how you actually see the salesperson relating to customers.

Make a choice from every pair of alternatives.

## DIMENSIONAL SALESPERSON ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

1.  a. Irritable  
 b. Competitive, but does not put customers down
2.  a. Ignores or backs off from objections  
 b. Preaches
3.  a. Customer often feels overwhelmed or manipulated  
 b. Overly agreeable in accepting customer procrastination, indecision, or "no"
4.  a. Yields too easily to customer point of view  
 b. Unenthusiastic
5.  a. Vigorously surveys needs  
 b. Passive
6.  a. Lacks persuasiveness or conviction  
 b. Involves customer
7.  a. More concerned with self than with customer  
 b. Provokes impatience and aggressiveness in customers
8.  a. Glosses over or compromises objections too quickly  
 b. Achieves understanding and commitment
9.  a. Readily accepts blame for not making the sale  
 b. Pushes customer to buy
10.  a. Unresponsive  
 b. More concerned about being nice guy than persuading customer
11.  a. Enjoys tough, challenging customers  
 b. Customer doesn't fully understand benefits of the product, but feels salesperson is nice person.
12.  a. Probes in depth  
 b. Listens enough to argue
13.  a. Assertive  
 b. Unsure and vague
14.  a. Evades or denies responsibility for not making a sale  
 b. Develops a positive foundation for future calls
15.  a. Stubborn  
 b. Distant
16.  a. Probes limited to closed-end or brief assertions  
 b. Over-eager to please
17.  a. Easily led  
 b. Inconsiderate
18.  a. Meanders or rambles  
 b. Sells features and advantages without benefits
19.  a. Does not face up to tough customers  
 b. Responsive
20.  a. Appropriately warm  
 b. Quarrelsome
21.  a. Confident  
 b. Develops customer acceptance but customer can become frustrated or aggressive
22.  a. Makes exaggerated and lavish claims  
 b. Links features and advantages to needs to establish benefits
23.  a. Goes through the paces  
 b. Lacks conviction and vacillates
24.  a. Passive in closing and/or accepts "no" too easily  
 b. Assumes he or she already knows customer needs
25.  a. Probes only agreeable, pleasant areas  
 b. Develops mistrust and antagonism in customer
26.  a. Hostile  
 b. Surveys needs in a loose, random way
27.  a. Order taker  
 b. Makes firm close by summing up what customer will gain from the transaction
28.  a. Insincere  
 b. Freezes when it comes to making a close
29.  a. Explores objections  
 b. Unresponsive to customer reactions
30.  a. Soft touch  
 b. Boring
31.  a. Most information is volunteered by customer  
 b. Bulldozes objections
32.  a. Naive and overly trusting  
 b. Spins up receptivity
33.  a. Customer often feels salesperson is not interested in his or her needs or problems  
 b. Inappropriately social
34.  a. Flexible  
 b. Probes are superficial and mechanical
35.  a. Listens attentively  
 b. Relies on enthusiasm and warmth rather than strong benefits
36.  a. Overcontrols  
 b. Develops customer loyalty and trust

## SCORING THE DSI QUESTIONNAIRE

Put the number you assigned to each answer choice on the line next to the letter of the choice. Example: For Item 1, if you assigned 1 point to choice a and 2 points to choice b, put 1 point on the line next to a and 2 points on the line next to b. Fill in points for all choices.

Add points in each column. Add subtotal scores for Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4. Write these totals in the appropriate boxes. Transfer scores from Q boxes to the quadrants to get a dimensional portrait of the salesperson scored.

### DIMENSIONAL SALESPERSON ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
1. a _____				b _____	20. b _____			a _____
2. b _____	a _____				21. _____	b _____		a _____
3. a _____			b _____		22. a _____		b _____	b _____
4. _____	b _____	a _____			23. _____	a _____	b _____	
5. _____	b _____			a _____	24. b _____	a _____		
6. _____	a _____			b _____	25. b _____		a _____	
7. a _____	b _____				26. a _____		b _____	
8. _____			a _____	b _____	27. _____	a _____		b _____
9. b _____			a _____		28. a _____	b _____		
10. _____	a _____		b _____		29. b _____			a _____
11. _____			b _____	a _____	30. _____	b _____	a _____	
12. b _____				a _____	31. b _____	a _____		
13. _____	b _____			a _____	32. _____		a _____	b _____
14. _____	a _____			b _____	33. _____	a _____	b _____	
15. a _____	b _____				34. _____	b _____		a _____
16. a _____			b _____		35. _____		b _____	a _____
17. b _____			a _____		36. a _____			b _____
18. _____	b _____		a _____					
19. _____			a _____	b _____				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	← subtotals →	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total Each Column</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	= 108	<b>Enter Scores in Quadrants</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 5px;"></div> </div>		

©1976 Psychological Associates, Inc.

could demonstrate that effective salespeople do, indeed, show Q1 and Q3 selling behavior.

How can we tell whether these are the behaviors that succeed for salespeople? Why not ask customers? After all, customers are on the receiving end of selling behaviors. That's exactly what we did.

#### How Customers Look at Sales Behavior

We asked approximately 415 select customers what they considered to be sales behaviors shown by the best and by the poorest salesperson with whom they had recently had buying contact. (These "customers" included 80 chief executive officers present at speeches we gave, spouses of 35 of these CEOs and some 300 participants in a dimensional management training seminar.)

To do this, we used a diagnostic questionnaire we had developed called the Dimensional Salesperson

Analysis. The questionnaire can be used to develop a selling-behavior portrait of a specific salesperson.

The selling behaviors listed on the DSA represent the Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 selling strategies from the Dimensional Model of Sales Behavior. Scoring the DSA creates a dimensional portrait of the salesperson, showing what proportion of the individual's total selling behavior is made up of Q1, Q2, Q3 or Q4 selling actions.

We asked our group of "customers" to fill out the DSA, first thinking of the best salesperson they had dealt with recently. Then we asked them to fill out the questionnaire to describe the poorest salesperson they had encountered. By combining the scores of these "customers" and averaging them, we developed composite dimensional behavioral portraits of the "best" salesperson and of the "worst" salesperson. These dimensional portraits then could be compared to the common notions of

what "super" salespeople are like, either confirming the truth of these stereotypes or revealing their inaccuracy.

Before getting into our results, you may want to go through the DSA yourself. First, fill out the questionnaire on pp. 00 for a salesperson you consider one of the "best" you have met when you have been the customer. Then fill it out for an individual you think one of the "worst" salespersons you've encountered as a customer. Directions for scoring your completed questionnaires are on page 00.

Scores yielded from our 415 select customers showed that the sales personnel seen as best were judged to exhibit a very high degree of Q4 sales behavior, and relatively low degrees of the other strategies. Looking at scores for the "best salesperson," we see them averaging (out of a total 108 points) 48.3 points of Q4 behavior, 19.0 points of Q1 behavior, 18.1 points of Q2 behavior and 22.3

points of Q3 behavior. On the other hand, scores for the poorest salespeople reversed that picture; these salespeople were judged to be very low in Q4 behavior—averaging only 8.7 points—and relatively high in the other three behaviors, with 34.6 points of Q1, 33.4 points of Q2 and 31.3 points of Q3 behavior.

These scores indicate that the stereotype of “super” salespeople as high in Q1 or Q3 behavior probably is false. Furthermore, they indicate that a predominance of Q4 behavior likely is the best behavioral predictor of sales success.

### What Our Data Teach Us

What these results mean to sales managers and trainers is this: we must hire individuals who demonstrate as much Q4 behavior as possible, and then train our salespeople in Q4 selling actions such as the following:

- Surveying customer needs;
- Raising customer interest and receptivity;
- Probing;
- Listening;

- Presenting ideas with conviction;
- Providing sound reasons (benefits) for buying;
- Exploring objections and solving them;
- Maintaining the interest and attention of customers;
- Summarizing benefits and asking for the sale (closing);
- Closing so as to maximize understanding and commitment.

Thus, the manager or trainer can teach specific selling skills that are genuinely related to effectiveness rather than miss the mark by relying on stereotypes. Successful salespeople aren't born that way but they can be “made” that way—if we teach them the requisite skills.

We can teach these skills to new salespeople or to those already on the job. For example, a trainer or sales manager may determine that a salesperson is bringing a lot of Q1 behavior into his or her presentations. Coaching, then, can be focused on eliminating such Q1 behaviors as negative flat assertions, belligerence, overly rapid pacing and leading questions. Skill building can be tar-

geted toward replacing these unproductive behaviors with results-oriented Q4 selling strategies, such as open-ended questioning, reflective statements and pauses that allow the customer to reflect upon and enter into the transaction.

As salespeople build their repertoire of Q4 skills, they should be increasingly able to sell more to their current customers, more readily open new accounts and more effectively meet the pressures of competition. This increased sales productivity will pay off for the customer, for the salesperson and for the organization. Customers will find their needs better understood and met. Salespeople will forge better relationships with customers and thereby enhance their sales records. And, organizations will see these differences reflected on the bottom line.

V. R. Buzzotta is chairman of the board and executive director for research and development of Psychological Associates, Inc., of St. Louis, Mo. Robert E. Lefton is president of Psychological Associates, Inc., of St. Louis, Mo.

# Effective Lowest Cost Retirement Planning Books Available

Action for Independent Maturity (AIM), the leader in retirement planning, has twelve (12) well-written easy-to-read, up-to-date guidebooks on retirement planning. Current topics are:

- |                            |                       |                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| • Planning Your Retirement | • Financial Security  | • Housing Choices   |
| • Midlife Roles and Goals  | • Dynamic Fitness     | • Time in Your Life |
| • Home and Personal Safety | • Alcohol in Midyears | • Single Living     |
| • Marriage Communications  | • Legal Readiness     | • Estate Planning   |



Use these guidebooks separately or as a supplement to your existing program. Send today for the story on these low-cost informative publications and see for yourself why companies like Bell Telephone, ALCOA, IBM, Texaco, Sun Co., and over 3,000 other employers have used AIM guidebooks for their employees. We'll send you a free sample.

### ACTION FOR INDEPENDENT MATURITY

A Division of the American Association of Retired Persons

Circle No. 100 on Reader Service Card

1909 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
202/872-4850