

9,9 SALES GRID® STYLE PRODUCES RESULTS

*the use of a new
conceptual basis
for assessing
salesman-customer interaction*

Selling effectiveness experiments provide clear evidence that *solution selling* produces nearly three times the results that *formula selling* does. It is seven-and-one-half times more effective than *hard sell*, over nine times better than *people-oriented selling*, and 75 times better than *order taking*.

These experiments are taking place in Sales Grid Seminars, which have been attended by over 500 salesmen. This novel approach was introduced early this year and is based on a new book on Grid theory entitled *The Grid for Sales Excellence*.¹

This article describes results obtained from selling experiments and training methods employed to increase sales effectiveness.

Problem-solving selling skills that are "9,9" as described on the Sales Grid (below) can be learned by salesmen who have other Grid orientations. The possibility is that *any salesman can systematically change his basic selling strategy*. Selling styles are neither permanent nor rigid. But the salesman *must* examine why he sells the way he does, learn other possible ways by experimenting with them, and develop the skills to apply them.

To gain a deeper understanding of the implications that underlie Sales Grid Seminar results, two kinds of background information are needed. One is brief knowledge of the Sales Grid and the Customer Grid. The other is an understanding of what goes on in the Seminar.

TWO GRIDS IN SELLING – FOR THE SALESMAN, FOR THE CUSTOMER

Those acquainted with the Managerial Grid² will see the relevance of the Sales Grid and the Customer Grid for learning how to sell. Grid theory is their common basis. The Grid has been widely used in industry, government, and service organizations since 1962 for training managers, engineers, technicians, staff people, and wage earners. More than 125,000 people in 22 countries have participated in Grid learning activi-

ties, which are available in eight languages.

On the Sales Grid the horizontal axis is *Concern for Making a Sales*, the vertical, *Concern for the Customer*. On the Customer Grid the horizontal axis is *Concern for Making a Purchase*, the vertical, *Concern for the Salesman*.

The Sales Grid in Figure 1 shows the 9,1 *pusher* in the lower right-hand corner, whose hard-sell drive is directed toward overwhelming the customer, the 1,9 *people-oriented* person who thinks friendship is what produces sales, the 1,1 *order taker* who offers the catalogue, leaves his phone number, and withdraws; and the 5,5 *middle-of-the-Grid formula salesman*, who uses routines, tricks, and gimmicks of selling. The 9,9 *problem-solving* salesman, as contrasted with all the others, works with the customer, digging out facts about his problems and needs, testing possibilities to see what can best fit the customer's requirements. He is selling solutions.

The Customer Grid shown in Figure 2 is parallel to the Sales Grid. The 9,1 *defensive* customer distrusts salesmen and enjoys battling through every sales interview. The 1,9 *pushover* has his mind more on pleasing the salesman than making a sound purchase. The customer in the 1,1 "quit" corner avoids salesmen or takes the line of least resistance. In the middle is the 5,5 *reputation buyer*, who maintains his social status by buying what others are likely to admire. Finally, in the upper right-hand corner is the 9,9 *solution purchaser*, who is ready to share a problem with the salesman and who respects the salesman's ability to contribute to its solution.

THE SALES GRID SEMINAR

Sales Grid Seminars are instrumented. The pace of activities is rapid. The method combines theory, experience through practice, observation and comparison of results, individual personal feedback, and plans for application. The entire Seminar design is built around the goal of improving sales effectiveness through increasing participants' self-

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objectivity. This leads to replacing less effective approaches which fail to sell when the competition is rigorous. By the end of the Seminar, as a result of the information and feedback which others have provided, a majority of participants see their sales styles differently.

Sales Grid Seminars are preceded by prework with emphasis on study of *The Grid for Sales Excellence*. Tests, questionnaires, and other evaluation instruments are completed to provide a basis for Seminar activity. In the Seminar itself, a task is completed to ensure participant understanding of Grid concepts.

Another permits participants to practice identifying sales and customer Grid styles. This activity serves as a basis for later feedback on participant styles as observed by others along with the sales results achieved.

The selling experiments include a four-sequence activity. Participants acting as

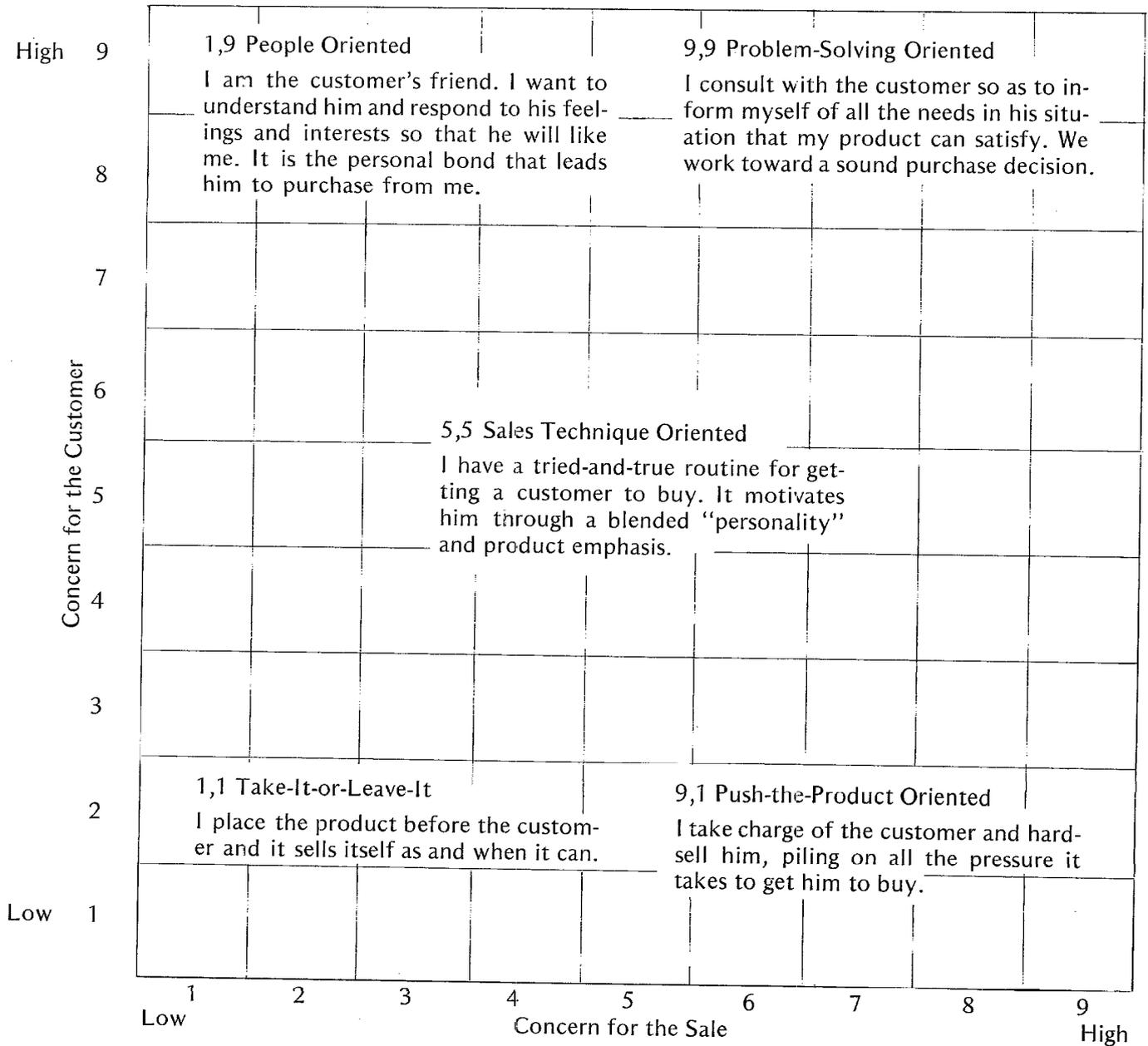


Figure 1
The Sales Grid®

(Reprinted by permission from Blake, Robert R., & Mouton, Jane Srygley. *The Grid for Sales Excellence: Benchmarks for Effective Salesmanship*. McGraw-Hill, 1970, page 4.)

customers buy from salesmen selling different brands of the same products. The experiment is designed so that a customer chooses one of two competing salesmen to do business with. Then comes a double diagnosis. Salesmen identify customer Grid styles, customers identify salesmen styles. The activity

ends with a critique session. Successes or failures of salesmen are analyzed. A second selling experiment takes place the next day. Yesterday's salesmen become today's customers and vice-versa. Summaries of results and the data that are gathered highlight the ingredients of success. Other activities lead to the feed-

back on personal Sales Grid styles, analysis of actual back-home customer interviews, and planning for individual application of what has been learned when a salesman returns to his job.

WHAT THE DATA ARE TELLING

The data obtained permit measurement

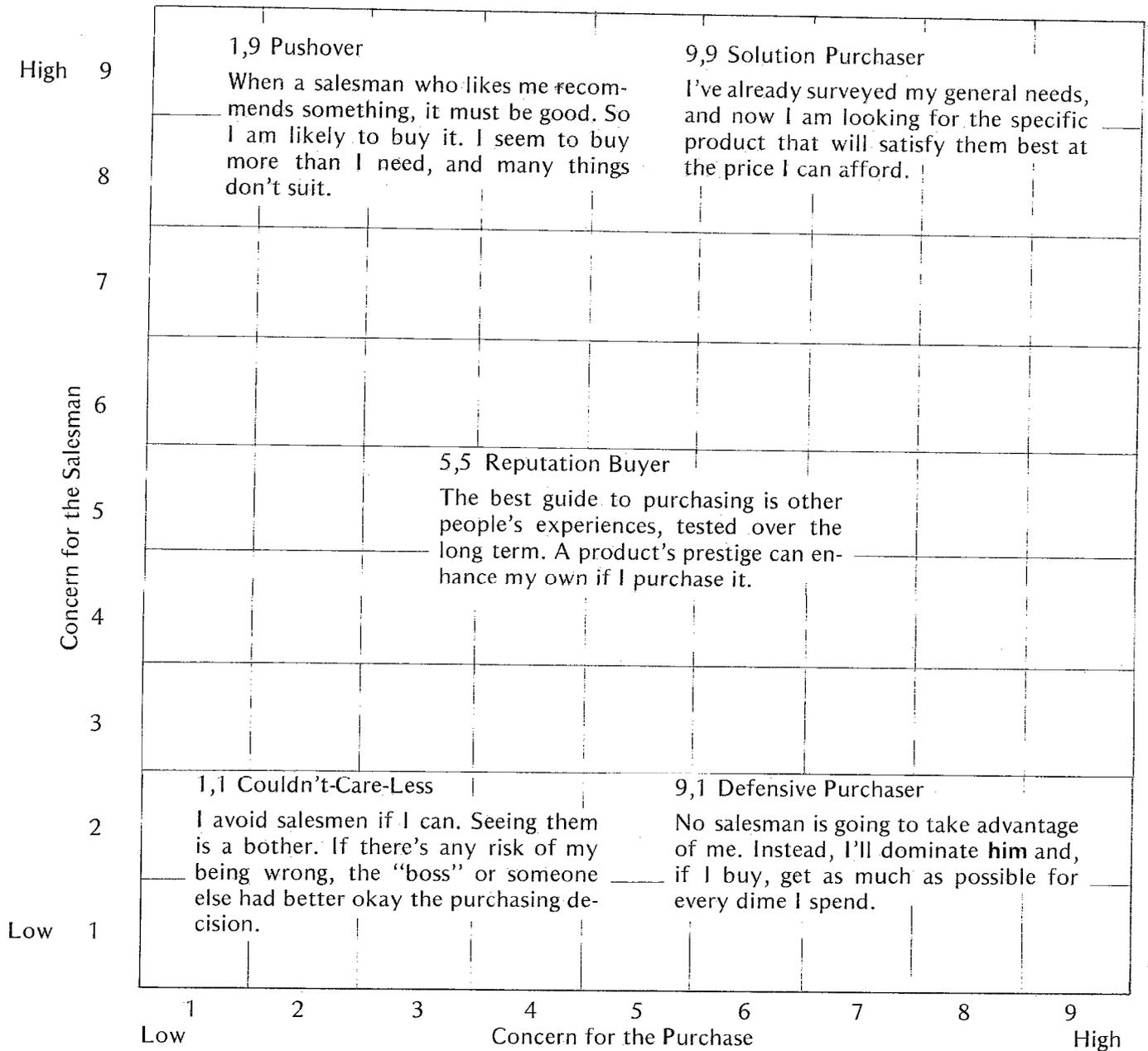


Figure 2
The Customer Grid®

(Reprinted by permission from Blake, Robert R., & Mouton, Jane Srygley. *The Grid for Sales Excellence: Benchmarks for Effective Salesmanship*. McGraw-Hill, 1970, page 10.)

of the effectiveness of each of the Sales Grid styles. As shown in Table I, based on data from 136 participants in both public and in-company Seminars, 61 percent of the successful sales were made by salesmen seen by their custom-

ers as 9,9. The next most effective style was 5,5. Where one of the two competing salesmen is seen as 9,9 and the other is not, 9,9 makes the sale in 94 percent of the instances. This suggests that other styles are rejected when they are compared with solution selling.

Grid Styles	Percent of Sales Made by Grid Style
9,9	61.0
5,5	23.5
9,1	8.1
1,9	6.6
1,1	.8

The data also reveal the effectiveness of the Seminar in stripping away self-deception. As shown in Table II, 61 percent of the participants at the start of the learning saw themselves as having a 9,9 selling style on the job. At the end

of the Seminar, having received personal feedback on their actions during the three-day period, and having related this to their on-the-job selling results, only 32 percent saw themselves as having formerly operated with a 9,9 strategy. They recognized much more 9,1 and 5,5 in their behavior.

During the Sales Grid Seminar the 9,9 selling strategy is not fully achieved by all participants. But most become aware of its advantages and limitations in comparison with other selling styles. This insight is important because in actual practice, they learn that customers choose between types of salesmen, as demonstrated in Table I.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings from these Seminars and data permit several conclusions to be drawn:

1. The Sales and Customer Grids provide a useful way for participants to differentiate between various styles and analyze what's happening during a salesman-customer interaction.
2. The sales experiments, under controlled conditions, provide empirical measurement which shows the effectiveness of different Grid styles for selling.
3. Self-deception among salesmen is high, but can be stripped away to enable them to identify those areas needing improvement to increase sales.
4. Salesmen are provided a conceptual basis for assessing the logic and emotions from which a particular customer is operating.

REFERENCES

1. Blake, Robert R., and Mouton, Jane Srygley, *The Grid for Sales Excellence: Benchmarks for Effective Salesmanship*, McGraw-Hill, 1970.
2. Blake, Robert R., and Mouton, Jane Srygley, *The Managerial Grid*, Gulf, 1964.

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Grid Styles	Percent of Grid Style Self-Descriptions by Participants	
	Pre	Post
9,9	61	32
5,5	24	36
9,1	8	21
1,9	6	10
1,1	1	1