SANDLER®

Why Salespeople Fail

And What You Can Do About It

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Forward Executive Summary

Your company survives on its sales numbers. Sales revenue helps determine the value of your company's stock if you are publicly held. And whether you are public or private, sales revenue helps determine whether your organization is investing in new facilities, entering new markets, and paying bonuses—or closing down operations and handing out pink slips.

This book is all about making and exceeding those all-important sales quotas and forecasts. It's a clear-eyed look at the deficiencies of typical selling systems and sales management efforts and what you can do about those deficiencies.

The fact that you're reading this means you have probably already encountered some of these challenges:

- Painfully long selling cycles
- Unmet sales "forecasts" that turn out to have little or nothing to do with reality
- Too much discounting that erodes margins
- Buyers demanding—and getting—costly concessions, financial and otherwise
- Lack of a common sales language, process, or methodology
- Hiring too many salespeople who don't work out
- Nonstop bidding wars
- Losing too many deals to the competition or incumbent vendor
- Over-promising that creates customer dissatisfaction

When David H. Sandler developed the **Sandler Selling System®** methodology, he did so as a matter of survival. He knew he had to find a better way to sell. The stale, worn-out, high-pressure methods he had seen from so many amateurish salespeople simply weren't working for him. So he began to research, innovate, and track his results.

Sandler's experiments extended far beyond developing new sales techniques. He re-examined sales processes and strategies, and he looked closely at his own behavior. He even consulted with clinical psychologists about the attitudes and belief systems of buyers and sellers. Drawing on all of this work, Sandler gradually created a **comprehensive professional sales methodology** that included valuable self-management rules and tools. This was a completely new sales, management, and business communication philosophy—and it was decades ahead of its time.

Today, over 50 years later, the Sandler® organization continues to build on his legacy through a **worldwide network** of over 250 sales and leadership experts, the Sandler Research Center, and our work with thousands of clients, ranging from entrepreneurs to Fortune 500 companies. We have also collected and curated best practices from world-class partners like HubSpot, Gong, Vidyard, Highspot, and others.

Whether it's face-to-face, virtual and hybrid selling, sales leadership, sales enablement, or customer success, Sandler delivers results for industry leaders such as EDS, Oracle, Cap Gemini, Ernst & Young, Minolta, DaimlerChrysler, Essilor Optical, US Bank, Iron Mountain, Sage, KPMG, Microsoft, and many more.

The Sandler sales methodology provides an honest, no-nonsense, dignified approach to selling, an approach that gives the salesperson equal business stature with buyers. It inspires honest dealing and mutual respect between sales professionals and their prospects and clients. It aligns with the modern buyer journey and the way people want to be sold.

Our world has changed. Buying and selling processes continue to evolve. But the timeless psychological principles discovered by David Sandler, which we will share in this book, continue to point toward success for with countless sales professionals in every imaginable industry— because they are rooted in human nature itself.

> It's possible that you've heard about Sandler, and have asked yourself, at some point, what's all the fuss about? **For the answer, read on.**

What Happens to Promising Salespeople?

People don't go into sales to be "**average**".

It seems like everyone in this line of work is an optimist. They could have settled for an easier job, but they went into sales because they believe they can be a top producer and earn the highest possible compensation. And "earn" is the operative word there. After all, salespeople face a career that consists largely of **hard work**, **difficult conversations**, and lots of **rejection**.

Yet, according to a 2018 Salesforce survey, well over half (57%) of all salespeople fail to hit their quotas. Most salespeople, in our experience, are not getting in front of enough qualified prospects. Most of them have a close ratio that is not what it should be. And far too many of them rely on discounting and other marketing gimmicks to close sales—a habit that cuts margins and hurts the organization.

What's going wrong for so many people in sales? And more importantly, what, if anything, can you do about it?

This report examines why salespeople fail. It looks at what keeps so many otherwise talented, capable people from reaching the top of the selling profession. It explains why some sales careers rocket to great heights and then suddenly sputter—and why others never quite get off the ground.

We base what follows on data and best practices from the **Sandler Research Center**, and on countless interviews with salespeople and sales managers performing in every industry and at every conceivable level of sales success. What you are about to read is based on more than five decades of frontline sales and sales management training experience with over 1 million salespeople in over **25 countries** and **15 languages**.

The good news is that sales performance can be improved— dramatically and permanently. But to make that happen, you must know where to begin, and that means understanding the root cause of the problems. Too many sales leaders and experts focus on treating the symptoms of sales struggles, and not the causes.

While the telltale signs of sales underachievement may appear endless, the true causes are generally quite specific. Often, their roots can be found in the approach we choose to take to the selling process itself.

> "
> Traditional selling always left me feeling that I was underpaid, overworked, and worn out. I had to work too hard to get a sale.
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

57%

all of salespeople miss their quotas

Who's in Control of the Sales Call?

In his best-selling book, You Can't Teach a Kid to Ride a Bike at a Seminar, Sandler tells of a breakthrough moment: his realization that buyers had his number. They knew what he was going to do and say before he even opened his mouth. Not only that, they had also already developed a system to defend against what he wanted to do in the meeting. Sandler had lost the battle before it began. That, he realized, is what happens to typical salespeople.

Sandler realized that in what he called the "**buyer-seller dance**," there are always two systems at work: the **buyer's system** and the **salesperson's system**. To lead in this process, you must lead the dance, which means knowing and applying a selling methodology that actually works. Merely showing up at the sales meeting, serving, and educating your buyer is not enough.

> "
> The key to successful selling is to have a better system than the one your buyer has been using on you for years.
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

Ideally, the sales process should be viewed as a win-win situation. But as any salesperson who has spent time in the trenches knows, buyers often see themselves as individuals with something to **lose: their money**, **time**, and/or **reputation**. As a result, they adopt an adversarial approach to salespeople.

Most salespeople tell us they are not even aware of the manipulative measures buyers take during sales calls. Most salespeople fail because they do not know how to **take control** of the selling process and lead buyers through it as a trusted consultant.

Contrary to popular belief, selling is a noble profession, the sales process can be something both parties enjoy, and helping others through your sales process is a **real**, **tangible**, and **teachable skill**.

David sandler developed the sandler sales methodology holding these truths to be self-evident:

- Salespeople are professionals and deserve respect.
- The buyer must qualify for the salesperson's time, not the other way around.
- Salespeople must follow a repeatable and scalable system.

Salespeople really can take the **uncertainty**, **worry**, and **pressure** out of the sales process— if they understand the psychology behind the sale and the qualifications necessary to make an opportunity worth their time. They must know where they are in the sales process and have a good idea about what will happen next.

When salespeople take a systematic approach to their work, they lead the dance. They regain control of enough variables to make positive outcomes more frequent and predictable. And last but certainly not least, when they establish a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship, both parties can operate from a foundation of trust.

Professional salespeople (as opposed to amateurs) are ready to ask themselves these questions, and then change their behaviors, attitudes, and techniques if they don't like the answers:

- Does the way you are currently selling make your actions measurable and your results predictable?
- Do you ever find yourself chasing unprofitable or unqualified deals?
- Do you ever give away unpaid consulting or discount to win deals?
- Are you worried about missing quota or frustrated with the amount of effort it takes?
- Are you stressed out or concerned about looking manipulative?

Amateur salespeople rely on their "**people skills**" in an attempt to control the situation. This usually fails. They end up feeling subordinate to the buyer, chasing them down, and doing anything to make the sale. They make the mistake of believing that **high-pressure** selling is the way top salespeople exceed quota. **It's not**.

The amateur approach gives the buyer more control and leaves the salesperson in reactive mode with all the pressure. None of the responsibility is on the buyer, which ends up stressing out both sides.

What is needed is an effective, efficient sales methodology that changes the games. One that shows you how to work **smarter**, **sell more**, and **sell more efficiently**.

To sustainably succeed, salespeople must observe These three simple rules:

1. **Talk to the best possible buyers** – and weed out those who will not buy.
2. **Hold the best conversations possible** – by leading a mutually beneficial discovery process to uncover the buyer's motivation, budget, and decision-making process.
3. **Close the sale or close the file** – present the solution, get a decision, and avoid wasting time chasing people who will not buy.

You may not always win every sale, but you will at least know what's happening on each sales call. And more importantly, you'll know what to do about it!

Most of the time, amateur salespeople do not know what is happening on the sales call. That's because they are letting the buyer lead the dance. Let's take a closer look now at how and why the buyer's system works so well.

Chapter ③

The Prospect's System

You may not have realized it, but at the beginning of each sales relationship, you have a choice. You can become part of the buyer's process, or you can make the buyer a part of yours.

Over the years, through exposure to countless sales pitches, buyers have learned enough about the selling process to thoroughly undermine it. They rely on a surprisingly small, but effective, bag of tricks to seize control of and rapidly derail sales efforts—to their benefit as consumers.

> "
> The buyer's system is engineered to turn you into an unpaid consultant.
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

Step 1

Buyers Play Their Cards Close to the Vest

The buyer typically volunteers **little or nothing** about their situation or intentions. They will not talk about money. They rarely talk about how they will go about deciding whether to buy your solution or which competitors or alternatives are looking good.

Think about a poker game. What would you do if someone leaned over and asked, "Before I raise the bet, can I see what you have?" You would automatically pull your cards back.

Buyers don't want salespeople to gain a perceived advantage from information about their situation. They are **protecting** themselves from pushy salespeople and preventing the salesperson from manipulating their wants and needs. Otherwise honest, upstanding individuals believe they can say anything they want to salespeople. (And when they are communicating with you via digital platforms like text or email that make them feel anonymous, they may be even more likely to shade the truth.)

They do not mislead you because they are bad people; they do so out of a desire for **self-preservation**. After all, buyers know that while they're busy managing their affairs, you're off attending workshops on how to become a killer salesperson. They know you're learning how to maneuver them into making purchasing decisions, and they **fear** being taken advantage of by a slick, savvy salesperson. With each new sales encounter they grow a little bit smarter as your competitors continue to wear out the same collection of time- honored closing techniques.

Buyers know one of your first goals is to generate interest in your offering, so they either say they have no interest at all to get rid of you quickly, or they feign interest to pump you for information.

Your buyer might start off by saying, "We've heard wonderful things about your company's ability to..." or "We'd like to know how you can help us with..." They may tell you their current solution is working fine, when, in fact, it is in shambles.

Meanwhile, they'll volunteer as little information as possible about their true situation or intentions. They will offer no hint about how much they really need your solution. They won't talk in specific terms about how much money they have to spend. They won't even tell you how they go about making buying decisions. What you must understand is that the information the buyer reveals is **incomplete**.

Remember, you're not the first salesperson your buyer has encountered. You may be a great, sincere professional with a wonderful opportunity to share. But your buyer doesn't know this. Your buyer sees you as just another typical "salesperson," with all the **negative** imagery that term implies.

Step 2

The Buyer Wants to Know What You Know

This would be great news—if the buyer wanted to pay for the information. But they want it for free. Why does the buyer want to know what you know? Because you are a professional! You know more about a possible solution than they do.

Your buyer assumes that you somehow have the capability to **improve** their **life** or **business**. Otherwise, why would your company have taken the time and trouble to bring your goods and services to the marketplace?

The buyer figures you are good at what you do and that you have something of value. Your buyer wants to extract your knowledge and **secure** your very best price, but not necessarily because they want to buy anything from you. Your buyer may want to use your price as a **bargaining chip** with a current supplier. They may need your numbers so they can say to their boss or your competition, "I've got a better price than the one you are giving me."

And believe it or not, there are plenty of salespeople out there willing to give insincere buyers all the free information and competitive price quotes they can handle. That's what corrupts the marketplace and helps turn valued solutions into cutthroat commodities.

You'll recall that we call this kind of selling "**unpaid consulting**". And as you can well imagine, the long-term outlook for unpaid consultants is not very good. Lots of salespeople retire early from selling each year when they discover unpaid consulting does not put food on the table. It's the buyer's system that takes advantage of the salesperson.

Step 3

The Buyer Commits to Nothing

Even after your buyer obtains the pricing or information they want, they may not be through with you. They may need you to do a little more "unpaid" work for them, so they **mislead you** about what's going to happen next. They dangle the hope before you that a sale may be imminent.

"I need to think it over."

"I'll get back to you."

"This is very interesting. I'd like to take this to the committee."

"We're thinking about putting together a task force to study the feasibility..."

"Call me after the holidays. Oh, not those holidays, I meant the next ones."

They'll hold out just enough hope to continue to string you along as a willing and subservient unpaid consultant. You're walking around saying, "Boy, oh boy, I got one!" when chances are you have nothing. Eventually, when your buyer has all the free information they need from you, as far as they're concerned, the process is over.

Step 4

The Buyer Disappears

Suddenly, you find yourself ghosted, held at bay by voicemail or e-mail. Your connection has been severed, but you don't know it yet because no one has bothered to tell you. Meanwhile, you continue to follow up, as you've been taught. You're stuck, hoping you've still got a shot at a sale. But of course, the deal's already dead. You just haven't admitted it, because you've already invested so much time and effort chasing this **"phantom" opportunity**.

It doesn't help that the deal is already in the CRM; everyone has seen the pipeline numbers and sales forecast. That makes it doubly hard to let go of the opportunity.

If you don't have an effective plan of your own to break the patterns of typical salespeople, establish equal business stature, and lead a collaborative sales process, your buyer will follow this system and use it to take the lead by default. You will be roped into a game that **you can't win**.

Why do buyers play this game? **Because it works!**

Typical Selling Systems

Most sales training follows certain traditional conventions. These include telling salespeople to:

— Sell **features and benefits**

— Rely heavily on **presentation skills** to close the deal

— Withhold **vital information**—such as price and terms—until a clear sense of "value" has first been established

— Anticipate and handle **buyer stall and objections**

— **Always be closing**—employ a broad array of time-tested sales closing techniques

> "
> Most salespeople today use techniques that were popular before the advent of jet airplanes.
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

This is **stereotypical selling**. It can work, sometimes; that's why it has survived as long as it has. Usually, though, it only works often enough for salespeople to keep spinning the roulette wheel, hoping that it pays off. We need to understand: People buy despite this approach, not because of it.

With the modern educated buyer, who has access to a world of information with just a few taps on a smartphone, these sales techniques are less and less effective. And unfortunately, the most evasive, manipulative, and pushy tactics are still out there, and continue to create an adversarial relationship with buyers and a poor reputation for the selling profession.

If you use a typical sales approach, you will find that your buyers do not enjoy the sales process, do not deliver the close ratio you want, and do not show up as repeat customers as often as you'd like.

Here are a few reasons why:

▶ You may be selling features and benefits, but people don't buy them. They buy **solutions to their problems.**

▶ If you rely too heavily on your presentation skills to seal the deal, you could devote a lot of time and energy to a sales call only to discover the necessary **interest level was never there.**

▶ By waiting until the end of the sale to disclose information about price and terms, you may **waste valuable time** pursuing dead- end sales opportunities.

▶ By focusing on handling objections, you perpetuate a negotiation system in which the buyer almost always assumes a **negative role,** expressing only reasons why it will not work.

▶ And finally, your typical closing techniques are probably well known to your buyer. The **"Impending Event"** and **"Alternate Choice"** closes, for example have lost their potency.

The buyer's system and the stereotypical sales system have matched up and danced in lockstep for over **100 years** now. The salesperson is looking for interested buyers; the buyers are seeking free consulting; they find each other, and a connection is made.

The buyer wants information, prices, proposals, drawings, projections, and more, and the salesperson is all too glad to get a willing dance partner after getting so many other rejections. The salesperson finally gets a chance to give their best pitch, and the two are dancing beautifully together.

Good salespeople will attempt to close and sometimes make a sale. More often, though, the buyer commits to nothing, and the chase begins. The buyer requests even more information or uses tired put-offs such as, "I'll get back to you" or "I'll think it over." The buyer stays in the dance because they may need something additional in the future. The salesperson stays because they think they have a "hot one" or because they have invested so much at this point that they are hoping and praying for a win to show to the boss. However, both are getting tired of dancing.

Nevertheless, the salesperson pursues and pursues, but it was already over. The jilted salesperson is the last to know.

If you've done this buyer/seller dance, you should know that your sales skills and methodology have let you down.

You've been swept around the dance floor by your buyer until you're dizzy, and then left alone on the sidelines. Occasionally, you may get your feet on the floor and make a sale. But even when you win, you don't feel respected, and it isn't much fun.

> **Beware. If you follow the typical selling system, you will fall into the buyer's system and wind up doing what the buyer expects.**

To succeed in sales, **don't do what everyone expects**. Most salespeople are not consistently succeeding. Do something different. Do something better.

With the Sandler sales methodology, you learn to lead your buyers without deception, assisting instead of pushing them through the steps of your sales process. This leads to a firm decision and a timely (and clear) conclusion of the dance for both parties.

The Sandler® Selling System—A Better Way

To win at sales **consistently**, you must employ a selling system that breaks down the patterns of the typical buying and selling processes. The **Sandler Selling System** is a direct, no-nonsense approach to selling that frames the sales call as a business meeting among equals. It involves strategically building trust, setting up a mutually beneficial arrangement, qualifying buyers as ideal clients, demonstrating a unique value proposition that matches their needs, and confirming the agreement.

In the Sandler system, the salesperson behaves like a highly paid business consultant. Instead of treating your buyer to yet another sales call, you offer an honest, non-manipulative exchange of information. The effect is both refreshing and disarming.

> "
> Of the 50 selling programs I have been exposed to, Sandler works best—hands down. This system has brought me overwhelming financial and personal success.
>
> **—C.R. Bedrosian, Director of Sales, K'NEX Industries, Inc., Hatfield, PA**

The guiding principles behind the Sandler® Selling System are simple:

- Professional selling is a **noble profession**. Do not let the buyer treat you with disrespect.
- Be sure to understand the buyer's **needs, budget, and decision- making process** before you try to sell them anything.
- Help the buyer discover the real reasons for their **problem**—and that you are the **solution**.

Imagine delivering presentations only to **fully qualified buyers** who match your ideal client template. Imagine having the best sales conversations possible with people who respect you and actually want to talk to you. Imagine being invited in, instead of begging for appointments. Imagine no longer wasting any time or money on people who will not buy.

Selling things people want to people who have money and decision-making authority is not cheating! It is the way sales should be.

When you stop trying to sell to everyone, you can invest your time and effort to build real, **ideal client** relationships with qualified buyers. You can work smarter instead of harder.

Here's a Brief Overview of How:

Step 1

Establish Rapport (Stop Acting Like a Salesperson)

Buyers erect a **defensive "wall"** when they think you are trying to sell them something. What you must do at this point is get the buyer comfortable with you and signal that you are different from the typical salesperson. Help them know that you understand their problem from their point of view. Begin to establish a relationship and continue to build that rapport and trust throughout the entire selling relationship, not just during the first five minutes.

Step 2

Establish an Up-Front Contract

Before every baseball game, the umpire calls the managers from the two teams together at home plate. The rules of baseball are discussed, including the foul lines, the foul poles, and the home run fence, and any unusual circumstances that may apply to that particular ballpark. When a batter hits the ball off the catcher's head and it lands on the screen behind the catcher, there can be no question about that being a foul ball. And when the batter hits the ball over the fence between the left and right field foul poles there's still no problem: It's clearly a home run. Can you imagine the confusion that would ensue if the managers and the umpire did not agree—upfront—to what the ground rules for the game would be?

At Sandler, this step is called the **Up-Front Contract**. It establishes a clear understanding between the salesperson and the buyer about what each has a right to expect from the sales process. **Ground rules** establish behavioral boundaries, decision-making steps, and the necessary actions that must be taken to fulfill those expectations.

You will also want to get permission to engage the buyer and set the agenda for the meeting. If both parties agree upfront to participate freely, they can feel safer and avoid confusion as they begin to establish the relationship.

Remember, your sales process is going to be different than what they are expecting. People put up fewer defensive walls when they feel **safe** and know what is going to happen.

Step 3

Uncover and Probe Your Buyer's "Pain"

Steps 3, 4, and 5 of the **Sandler® Selling System** are for buyer qualification. When do you want to know if the buyer is qualified—before or after your presentation? Before, of course!

Determine if your buyers have a problem or pain that you can **solve**, that they want it solved, and they want you to solve it. If that's not the case, they are disqualified, and it is over for now.

> ### People buy emotionally—they make decisions intellectually.

The most intense emotion people experience is pain. If your buyer has no pain, there will be no easy sale. People will continue to do what they've done all their lives until the pain of maintaining the status quo is greater than the pain of making a change to something new.

If you do not learn how to uncover the buyer's pain, you will continue to sell using the most difficult of all antiquated principles: the law of averages! Most salespeople take as their goal the chance to give a presentation and then try to close a sale. The Sandler Selling System® makes that a thing of the past. Your new goal is to **uncover** the **buyer's pain**. You must know why people will buy!

Step 4

Get All the Money Issues Out on the Table

You must not only address the cost of your goods or services to get a sale, but more importantly, you must address the cost to your buyer if they do nothing.

> - What is the **financial impact** of the issues **(pain)** you have uncovered?
> - Do they have the **money**, **time**, and **resources** necessary for you to fix their problem?
> - What happens if they **don't take action?**
> - And are they willing to spend it on a **solution** to this **problem**?

Step 4 can be a lot more complicated than just asking, "Do they have the money?" Time and resources can also be disqualifiers. Do they have the time, information, or other situational requirements you will need to solve their problem? If not, they are disqualified.

You must deal with this step before you make a presentation in order to make sure that you can get paid for what you do.

Step 5

Discover Your Buyer's Decision-Making Process

It is essential that you understand the buyer's decision-making process so you can know how you can best position your solution as the obvious choice. Does the person you're speaking with have the decision-making authority? How, when, where, and why will they make their decision? Do they make decisions on their own?

Do they get help from an associate or a spouse or a committee? Do they think things over, or can they decide now? Is this buyer truly willing to spend the money and make the other investments necessary to get rid of their pain?

If you like the answers to these questions and the odds are in your favor, continue the process. If not, stop and disqualify them. Close the file.

> **If you can't discover the buyer's Pain (reasons for doing business), Budget, and Decision process, then anything you do going forward, besides walking away, is going to be wasted effort based on misinformed guesses.**

If you know the buyer has a problem that you can solve and a sufficient budget to fix it, and you know the who, where, when, why, what, and how of their decision process, then coming up with a proposed solution which they will accept should be relatively easy.

Step 6

Present a Solution That Will Solve Your Buyer's Pain, is Within Their Budget, and Matches Up With Their Decision-Making Process.

Of course, using this new system, your presentation has little to do with the features and benefits the marketing department fell in love with. Instead, it has everything to do with showing your buyer how your solution can get rid of the pain. People do not buy features and benefits— they buy ways to avoid or overcome pain.

This step, **Fulfillment**, is where you deliver that solution and secure your sale. Most sales training calls this part of the discussion the presentation. However, it could be a proposal or even an informal discussion, depending on what fits your buyer's decision-making process and your organization's sales process.

A critical part of the Sandler sales methodology is to take the pressure off the presentation. If we have correctly implemented the system so far, Fulfillment should just be a confirmation of the agreements made along the way. This step is not a high-pressure, high-stakes piece of performance art that we pray will stumble upon a reason for the customer to buy. There should be an agreement for the buyer to decide, one way or the other, at the end of this step, but there should not be any pressure or impending events designed to manipulate them into doing so.

The buyer's needs, the buyer's urgency to solve their problem, drive the momentum required for closing the sale or closing the file. Your presentations should deliver a lot of yeses, a few nos, and nothing in between—no stalls, objections, or think-it- overs. If you do get something in between, you probably didn't build enough trust or perform enough discovery earlier in the sales process. Late-stage objections are a good indicator that you missed something in qualification.

Step 7

Reinforce the Sale With a Post-Sell Conversation

Once you get a yes or a no, then you move on by setting up an ideal client onboarding and referral relationship in step 7, the Post-Sell step.

When most salespeople get a "yes," they grab the check or contract and get out before anything goes wrong. That doesn't make the new client feel appreciated, doesn't prepare them for the transition they're about to experience, and it doesn't do anything to keep them from buyer's remorse.

At this stage, you can also deal with any unresolved issues (like existing vendors or competition), ask for referrals, or begin a conversation about repeat business. If you hang in there for a few more minutes, a lot of potential problems can be avoided. This strategy will also firmly separate you from those stereotypical salespeople, and position you as a trusted consultant.

The Moment of Truth

Business is NOT won or lost at the end of the sales process. Business is won and lost at the **very beginning**. That's when you determine whose system is going to prevail: yours or the buyer's. If you give up control, become subservient, and follow the buyer's system, even if you win the sale, you will have lost your influence, margins, and dignity. This is why salespeople fail. They bungle the **Moment of Truth**.

If you are presently involved in a selling cycle and you realize you're not leading the "dance," what can you do? Not much! Relax and enjoy the ride. Look at this experience as a valuable part of your professional education. The sale was lost right after the introductions, when you lost your nerve.

But next time, you'll do better. Next time, you'll apply the **Sandler principles**. Next time, you'll make the sale. Commit now that never again will you or your sales team surrender the initiative and sell out your goals, your income, your family, or your future.

Chapter 6

The Challenges of Sales Leadership

Sales management is one of the toughest jobs in any organization. You are often stuck between the goals and expectations of leadership and the challenge of delivering on them through your team, even though you have little or no direct influence on sales.

> "
> There are no bad salespeople... only bad sales managers!
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

- ▶ Do you feel you are as good a **sales manager** as you were a salesperson?

- ▶ Are you still **fighting** to get your team to hit their monthly numbers?

- ▶ Are you still trying to transfer the people skills you've **mastered** to other people?

- ▶ Are you still searching for the **formula** for finding and hiring the right salesperson?

- ▶ Do you ever wonder how successful your team might be if you **got help** on these issues?

Sales management is one of the **toughest** jobs in any organization. You are often stuck between the goals and expectations of leadership and the challenge of delivering on them through your team, even though you have little or no direct influence on sales.

If you're like most sales managers working today, you probably started your career in sales. Yet the managerial skills you learned through selling are of only limited value to you now. As a salesperson, you had only yourself to manage and motivate. But as a sales manager, you now have to effectively **manage and motivate others**. As a salesperson, you had to hit the sales targets you were given. But as a sales manager, you now must get your department to make the company's numbers— no matter how unreasonable or unrealistic they may seem. And you must achieve those numbers by effectively **redistributing** your sales quota to your sales team, according to the varying capabilities of each member. As a salesperson, you worked to be the best member of the team. But as the sales manager, you now have to **recruit, assemble, direct, and inspire** that team to greatness. And the odds are your organization gave you exactly zero training and support in preparing for this critical role.

Where once you could afford to be fiercely independent, you now rely completely on the performance of others—the very same people who are depending on you! These demands can make the position a lonely, frustrating, and discouraging one.

Unfortunately, most sales managers attempt to get help and guidance from general management books and training, which may or may not apply directly to their situation. Now there's a more effective alternative: sales leadership training from Sandler.

Our sales leadership training is grounded in proven **theories, hard skills, and workable strategies**. It emphasizes active skills training for coaching and leadership with direct applications to your sales management, day to day.

Assembling Your Team

Master the interviewing skills and techniques necessary to help you **identify winners** each time you field a new pool of sales recruits.

Coaching Your People

Learn to apply Sandler sales coaching techniques to achieve "buy-in" from your sales team members. Discover how to **teach and lead** rather than manage and reprimand. Sandler will teach you how to motivate your salespeople to become self-directed sales closers.

Managing the Process

Build your own uniform sales management system based on the Sandler model by breaking the sales process into templates. Learn to set **realistic goals, monitor progress, and handle paperwork**. Improve your team's ability to gather and analyze competitive market intelligence.

Managing the Numbers

Master accurate sales forecasting methods and learn how to teach them to your salespeople. **Improve** your ability to develop budgets. Your Sandler trainer will show you how to establish performance measures that **provide useful feedback** and that foster process improvement.

Your ability to find and hire the best salespeople, accurately evaluate their performance, and motivate them to succeed affects your team's ability to succeed. Outstanding sales performance at the team level requires a **realistic sales plan**, including personalized goals at the individual level and the strategies for accomplishing them. Learn to debrief your salespeople, grow your sales through networking, and manage a territory, while developing the best practices vital to managing, maintaining, and maximizing business with existing customers.

Like all Sandler programs, the sales leadership series helps you master your new managerial skills with **powerful reinforcement, support, and adult learning methods**. What's more, this program has been tested and refined through application in real-world sales management situations with our clients around the world.

You'll find your sales leadership training to be:

Interactive

You work in a classroom setting with your Sandler® trainer and fellow participants, using role-playing exercises and active discussion.

Customized

You'll apply Sandler techniques to training issues and situations directly from your sales team's daily work environment, and then further hone and refine them to meet **your specific needs**.

Led by Superior Trainers

Sandler trainers lead every session as they take you on your own personal journey of discovery and enrichment. Meanwhile, you reap the benefit of **Sandler "best practices"** gleaned through workshops with clients from every type of organization and industry.

Most management programs often revolve around "ivory tower" concepts and theoretical contextual frameworks. Participants learn the "what," "when," and "why" behind management theories. They are left, however, with the burden of discovering how to put theory into practice in real-world situations.

Sandler's sales leadership program brings both the "how" and the challenges of the real world into the training experience. The program emphasizes active skills training exercises and skills application specific to your actual goals. It covers the attitudes, behaviors, and strategies of top sales leadership.

If your team members are like most salespeople, their first inclination when they encounter problems may be to blame their lack of success on the quality of your leads, the quality of your solution, or a softening of the marketplace. By seeking to place the blame elsewhere, most people cheat themselves out of a valuable opportunity to learn. Don't allow that. Instead, use the Sandler methodologies to create a team culture of full accountability.

Sandler's sales leadership program shows you how to transform the career paths, and the performance, of salespeople who are:

1. **Insecure** about being a pushy salesperson.
2. Investing too much time with buyers who want to **"think it over."**
3. Easily turned away by **gatekeepers** or **decision-makers**.
4. **Not using** voicemail or digital media platforms to reach and engage with decision-makers.
5. Not **assertive** enough, too **empathetic**, and too **subservient**.
6. Having trouble understanding **the real emotional reasons** people buy.
7. Not asking **tough questions**.
8. Not bringing **enough value** to sales conversations.
9. Failing to turn **negative** or **neutral** buyers into opportunities or referral sources.
10. Taking rejection **personally** and letting that affect their performance.
11. Blaming their problems on the **manager** or the **organization**.
12. Discounting routinely and/or selling at the **lowest** possible price.

Why Most Sales Training Doesn't Work

Have you ever attended a half-day, full-day, or even a two-day sales training seminar? Did it make you feel good? Did you leave all fired up with new ideas, slogans, and one-liners, determined to put them to the test? Well, now that a little time has passed, how much of that training would you say you continue to use? If you're like most people, the answer is, "Not much."

Acquiring new information won't improve sales performance; only **applying** it will! Selling is applied knowledge. **It's behavior**. And changing behavior is difficult. It takes time—and practice—to alter behavior, improve attitudes and outlooks, and master new techniques. And time and practice are two things you just don't get enough of at a typical sales seminar. In fact, psychological studies have shown that most people forget most of what they learn at seminars within the **first 48 hours**.

Just as a bandage cannot heal a broken bone, a "quick fix", pump-me-up sales training seminar will **never be sufficient** to positively redirect a languishing sales career.

To master the Sandler sales methodology requires a behavior change process. Using a traditional lecture format was, therefore, always out of the question.

> "
> You can't teach a kid to ride a bike at a seminar.
>
> **—David H. Sandler**

Instead, Sandler has based its training initiatives on an **adult learning model** designed to facilitate lasting change through performance improvement. This model includes:

— **Multiple sessions** incorporating both real-time and self-paced instruction facilitated by professional sales coaches who have first-hand sales experience

— Remote and live options for all **real-time** training sessions

— **Interactive** role-playing practice simulations

— Support group dynamics for **peer-to-peer** learning

— Sales manager **accountability** and **follow-up coaching**

— Cutting-edge **e-learning** modules

— **Support materials** and tools for on-the-job learning and application

— **Ongoing support** and reinforcement from the coach

Each type of learning combines to create a powerful program of ongoing reinforcement training— something no sales training organization can match. Though Sandler emphasizes ongoing reinforcement training for lasting change and success, we also offer several shorter-term curricula, which pinpoint specific business issues.

The Sandler methodology works, which is why we have grown into the **world's largest** and **most effective** sales training organization. Our approach focuses on all three components for sales success: attitude, behavior, and technique. We have the sales methodology that enables sales professionals to succeed and a proven learning experience that positively impacts performance in a measurable way.

Performance Through Learning

At Sandler we are committed to providing **innovative** customer-focused content, tools, and resources designed to increase the performance and stature of those involved in generating revenue.

We have curated timeless, proven success principles from best practices collected from around the world over the last 50 years, and updated them for today's highly competitive and more complex sales landscape. The insights shared here have helped millions of sales professionals take their careers to the next level. They use the Sandler methodology, strategies, tools, and tactics every day, in virtually every industry, and have succeeded in every economic environment.

> To get to the top of the sales profession, you've got to practice, practice, practice. Find a system that works and learn it.
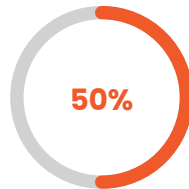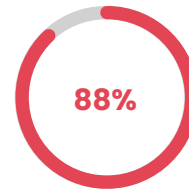>
> **—David H. Sandler**

30,000
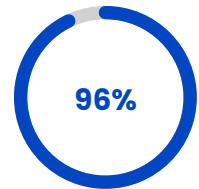
30,000+ people trained per year

500,000

500,000+ hours of training around the globe each year

50%

50% more salespeople hit quotas than those without Sandler

88%

88% of salespeople said their sales strategy improved

96%

96% of clients polled would recommend Sandler

> As a seasoned sales professional, I have to admit I was a bit skeptical about the Sandler program and how my team would receive the information. We have been through quite a few sales trainings over the years! However, I can say without reservation that the Sandler training we received was simply amazing. The methodology and content were phenomenal, but I would be remiss if I didn't let you know how wonderful the trainer was. He demonstrated a sincere passion for the program and was the most engaging trainer I have ever worked with.
>
> **—Meghan Montesanti, District Service Sales Manaer, KONE**

Our clients' primary goals for their sales teams' performance typically include:

1. **Higher comfort level when selling:** Develop a sales mindset and toolkit that quickly give you the expertise to build credibility at the highest levels by establishing rapport, meeting agendas, and clear expectations for the sales process.

2. **Weeding out non-buyers earlier:** Learn how to qualify your buyers based on whether their needs, budget, and decision-making process justify your effort to propose a solution.

3. **A shorter selling cycle:** Develop and define a step-by-step sales plan that will bring the process to an outcome within a mutually acceptable time frame.

4. **Less discounting:** Gain the confidence and skill to shift the buyer's focus from the price of your solution to the cost of not implementing it, and their return on investment by solving their problem.

5. **Higher per-sale average:** Develop the confidence, patience, and control required to do a thorough needs analysis and budget discovery before proposing any solution.

6. **Better relationships:** Create a climate of trust and respect through the utilization of a sales methodology where every conversation differentiates you from the stereotypical, self-centered, pushy salesperson. Truly understanding your buyer, their challenges, and their vision is far more powerful than demonstrating your product knowledge.

7 **More effective management of complex, high-dollar deals:** Learn how to successfully navigate situations involving multiple decision-makers from multiple departments, outside consultants, committees, and other unexpected participants.

8 **Higher closing ratios in competitive situations:** Through a superior understanding of your buyer's needs and the precise execution of the Sandler methodology, differentiate yourself and your solution, and compete effectively with incumbent vendors and other providers.

9 **Lower cost per sale:** With a more precise qualification of prospective buyers, allocate your precious resources more wisely. Make free consulting a thing of the past.

10 **More effective team selling:** Experience the power of a sales team where every member knows and executes the same sales process, language, and methodology—and every communication moves the deal forward.

11 **More accurate forecasting:** Achieve meaningful milestones throughout the selling process and more qualification of opportunities, making the projected probability of a deal fall within a significantly smaller margin of error.

12 **Higher activity level per salesperson:** Execute clearly defined tactics and strategies that deliver wins on a minute-by-minute basis.

13 **Better internal communication:** Ensure that all conversations that affect your sales cycle are more productive, regardless of who is taking part in them.

14 **An overall increase in employee engagement:** Experience higher engagement and lower turnover—because employees feel good about themselves, their organization, and the marketplace.

About Sandler

Sandler Training is the world's leader in sales development training programs for salespeople at small, medium and Fortunesized businesses, as well as solopreneurs, entrepreneurs and independent consultants. Delivering an estimated 92,000 training hours per year, Sandler specializes in solving complex business challenges through proven systems for communicating with, developing and motivating people.

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