

The 5 Types of Salesperson

Sales people shouldn't sell!

That is a provocative opening statement – I hope I now have your attention.

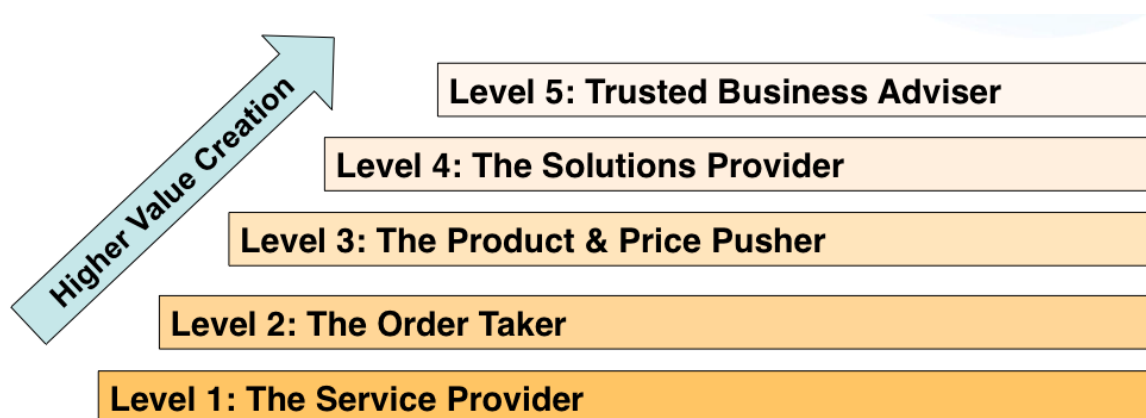
Q. If sales people shouldn't sell, then what is their role in business to business (B2B) selling?

A. In B2B selling the focus should shift from communicating what we have to offer, to a fastidious dedication to ***helping the customer to buy.***

Ok, so it's more about aligning to the customer's challenge and less about our intended gain. But how do we get rewarded and make our sales budgets you might ask? Easy – get higher up the value staircase. If you can create more customer value, you will enjoy greater rewards in selling.

The 5 Types of Salesperson

The 5 types of salesperson model explains the differences in where sales people are positioned and the corresponding reward they can expect from the customer.



Level 1: The Service Provider

“Service Providers” rarely sell at all. They are too busy ensuring that the customer is receiving what already has been contracted. They check for compliance, they deal with service fall downs and attend to housekeeping items. Their role is often contracted into service level agreements (SLA’s) as a result of someone else’s sales activity. Service providers don’t make sales; they invariably are deployed to avoid loss of business and can become expensive if their “cost to serve” has not been sufficiently budgeted into the contract.

Summary of the Service Provider:

Skill level	Lower end
Relative cost to business:	Medium to High
Focus:	Avoid loss of business, keep customers happy
Value to customer:	Low to medium
Typical salesperson:	Skinny and subservient

Level 2: The Order Taker

“Order Takers” are also skinny sales people. Why? Because they just seek fill in orders from existing customers. The customer typically decides the size of the order with little influence from the sales person. The order is usually limited by what has already been purchased in the past. The greatest exposure for Order Takers is that without creating a need for the customer or their business, it is all too easy for them to say “nothing this month thanks, we’ll wait to business improves”.

Summary of the Order Taker:

Skill Level:	Low
Relative cost to business:	Low to Medium
Focus:	Fill in order on already purchased items
Value to customer:	Low
Typical Salesperson:	Hungry and hopeful

Level 3: The Product and Price Pusher

“Product and Price Pushers” tend to eat better than their colleagues mentioned above, however they could be doing a lot more for themselves and their customer. The major skill upgrade is in product knowledge but this is still too inward focused.

This type of sales person loves the presentation, the product demonstration or the use of the sales collateral. The customer however is often left asking the perennial question ...

“So what? What’s in it for me?”

The opportunity for “Pushers” is to establish the link where a customer can enjoy more pleasure or less pain as a result of owning your product or service. Without sufficient questioning to uncover the customers present and future preferred states, these needs will be assumed or ignored altogether.

Summary of the Product and Price Pusher:

Skill Level: Low to Medium
Relative cost to business: Low to Medium
Focus: Describing how good the product or service is
Value to customer: Low
Typical Salesperson: Tap dancing spruiker

Level 4: The Solutions Provider

At level 4, selling becomes a lot more sophisticated and far more rewarding. Remember we said earlier the degree of reward is commensurate to the amount of customer value created by the sales person.

The Solution Provider leaves the catalogue in their briefcase for early meetings and invests more time asking better quality questions.

Typical quality questions:

- How happy are you with your current situation?
- What is not working for you right now?
- What are you doing about it?
- Do you need some help to solve the problems?
- If you were to get it right, what would that mean to you, your business, your shareholder, your end user? In other words what is their need behind the need.
- If we could suggest a solution and help you to maximise the outcomes would you like to explore this together?

Note all of these questions are about creating value for the customer in reducing “pain” or increasing “pleasure”. If these improvements are not compelling or the customer’s current state is bearable for them, then the prospect is unlikely to be motivated to make a buying decision.

That’s where the Solutions Provider comes in to help the customer make a buying decision. As a result they are typically far better rewarded for their efforts.

Summary of the Solutions Provider:

Skill Level: Medium to High
Relative cost to business: Medium to High
Focus: Win, retain and grow business
Value to customer: High
Typical Salesperson: Well fed, achiever, lifetime learner

Level 5: Trusted Business Advisor

There are very few true advisors that are trusted. They have earned their position at the top of the value staircase by consistently delivering high value outcomes. They are typically the supplier who gets the first phone call and the discussion with their client is rarely around price.

To enjoy this status, and the rewards that go with it, Trusted Business Advisors need to develop the following:

- A clearly differentiated offer that creates superior outcomes for the client and their stakeholders
- A long list of “raving fans” who can validate the outcomes they enjoyed
- In depth industry knowledge and expertise
- Excellent probing and listening skills
- Ability to cut through complexity and conceive holistic solutions
- Low risk of achieving promised outcomes

Summary of Trusted Advisors:

Skill Level:	Very high to expert
Relative cost to business:	Medium to High
Focus:	Best in field, highest demonstrated value, long term associations
Value to customer:	Very high
Typical Salesperson:	Embedded, networked, revered

So, what level for you?

All sales people should aspire to reach the highest levels of the stairway as they improve their worth. Your reward is reflective of the value you create for the customer. This progression will only come due to the following:

- A commitment by the sales person to become better at their craft through continuous learning and self awareness
- An investment by their employer to train, coach and develop their people
- Experience earned in helping customers to buy
- Never halting the quest to find value for the customer

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