

You Sell Like a Second Grader: Grade School Lessons to Help You Sell More

Chapter 1

If you had read the introduction you would know you sell like a second-grader. Let it sink in, and then take a few more seconds to get over what you're thinking: "What the hell does this guy know about how I sell? Who does he think he is? I'm a professional salesperson. I don't sell like a second-grader!"

You do sell like a second-grader and are either A) not listening to yourself or not critically reading your own pitches, or B) the one in a thousand other salespeople look at and wonder how you knock down so many deals. If you are in the A group you really need to read this book. If you are in the B group, you are still going to want to read this book, because there is a ton of other cool stuff you can learn, with research to back it.

There are some good aspects of selling like a second-grader. But unfortunately those bad second-grade habits seem to stick more. If you want the money, new car, nice clothes, security or whatever else motivated you toward the proud, and I do mean proud, profession of sales in the first place, you better pay attention. Face the facts, Junior. You sell like a second-grader. Don't worry though. Now that you know you sell like a second-grader you can use this book to break your bad second-grader habits. You will also get a refresher course on all the good lessons from second grade that you have forgotten.

Would you like some proof that you sell like a second-grader? Think about your last cold call, sales letter or presentation. Bet it sounds a lot like my toy pitch for new Keds. I bet you say something like this:

"Hello, Mr. Prospect, my name is Pat and I'm calling from XYZ Corp. because I was hoping you might have a minute to talk to me about my product. We work with this important company, that important company and the other important company. I would love to show you what we do. Would you have a few minutes? I would love to come meet you."

OK, OK, that example is probably a little too simplistic and my aim isn't to insult you. Truth is I made that example up. It couldn't be that bad, could it? As sure as Keds it can. Here are just a few real—word for word no lie— messages, emails, cold calls and letters from my collection. (What can I say? I'm a sucker for punishment.) You will find them throughout the

book, labeled as either a “Crappy Cold Call” or a “Cool Cold Call.” Yes, there are some very rare good ones in the pile of crappy ones like these:

Crappy Cold Call: The Confused Caller

“Hi, Chad, this is [Name] with [Company] And I’m calling with regard to electronic editions? I spoke with the receptionist and she said you did have some magazines that have e-editions, but I’d like to talk to you about [Company] technology. (What’s due, the car payment or second mortgage?)

You can also visit us at the website which is [Company].com. I’m hoping to hear from you. [Number given], [Name].”

Crappy Cold Call: The “work on my schedule” (and sort of confused) Caller

“Chad, Hi, this is [Name]. I’m with [Company] and I was calling to introduce myself. I’m not sure if you’re familiar with [Company]; we have a product that I wanted to talk to you about — it is a lead-generation, business-development tool (Why would I want to try it if I don’t know how it will help me?) And, um, what I was hoping to do is send you out a free trial for you to test it out. I’m not sure what you use for resources for sales initiatives and business development. (Didn’t you already tell me this?) However, I did want to forward it to you for tomorrow. If that doesn’t end up being a good day, let me know. (It’s on the top of my list!) The password is only good for one 24-hour session, so I’d like you to use it when you think you have some time. My number is [Number]”

Crappy Cold Call: The Bully

Hi, Chad:

We’re on our second year of the (Conference Name) (Gold star for you!) This year we want [your company] included as one of the sponsors who will take part in the event. Cost should not be a factor. (Really? You’ve seen my budget or can we get it for free?)

As the publisher of record for senior marketing executives in hospitals and health systems, (Company) has the lock on the very desirable end of the target audience you need to engage with, senior marketing leadership. Our marketing programs, which target these executives, bring you through the awareness, consideration and preference stages of the sales

process. With the addition of the (Conference Name), you're at the point of the sales funnel where your programs come to life and engagements get sold, face to face. Unlike [Other Conference], who we work very closely with, the (Conference Name) goes for a higher-level attendee who typically reports directly to the CEO of the hospital or health system.

Let's talk after you've had an opportunity to review the attached. We want two representatives from [Your Company] at The Art Institute of Chicago on Oct. 15, to be in the midst of 100-plus top award-winning hospital marketers. (Why? Oh, that's right, so we can give you what YOU want.) I'll call to follow up. Please let me know if you have any questions before then. Thanks!

Crappy Cold Call: The “creates work for you” Caller:

Hi, Chad,

I am confident this introduction could be a good resource for your team. (Like you really care if I don't think it's a good resource.) Let me know your thoughts either way.

We work with two types of companies, providing national video production services and support: The first being companies and agencies that know they need a reliable national partner for video projects/production.

The second would be companies/organizations that have a video project need and require a reliable partner to make it happen with national or local resources.

Please refer to [Website] for additional information. (That's twice you have asked me to do your job

If you see a fit in either of these categories, simply respond to this email and we will set up a short call with one of us to determine if we are a fit.

If not, wish you the best of luck! (Crap! The hex is on if I don't respond!)

Do yourself a favor. Stop reading and go take a look at your latest email pitch to a prospect. Go ahead, I'll wait. See any similarities? Would you love to meet with someone? Introduce yourself? Say “hi”? Don't worry, we will break you of those second-grader habits and give you a refresher course on the good things from second grade that you have forgotten.

You hear the same thing in live pitches, presentations, phone calls and contract negotiations. Some of my personal favorites are preconvention mailings, which incidentally not

only look very similar to the emails you just read but have the same second-grader message. The most interesting thing about my collection is that the company I work for is usually exhibiting and not a viable prospect in the first place. Despite that, salespeople are still blindly knocking on my door, kind of like the 8-year-old me trying to get a new pair of Keds.

Crappy Cold Call: The Convention Pitch

Stop by and visit us at Booth 3

Build loyalty, increase market share with unique membership-based CRM loyalty programs and (Name) technology.

Patient relationships depend upon the loyalty of each individual consumer. Successful patient relationships are established and maintained by creating a sense of belonging. Patients need to feel significant to the provider. (Hey, I know, let's lecture them instead of mentioning great client results!) They also need to be connected to their provider — not just while they are in the hospital, but before and after treatment. Loyalty programs are proven to ensure that an organization becomes the provider of choice within a market.

(Name) Association is now bridging membership card programs with (Brand) technology, creating a complete marketing strategy package with multiple benefits — streamline patient admissions, decrease data errors and medication interactions in addition to improving ER and first-response information (Yep, this sentence is nothing but product-puke and makes absolutely no sense). Ask us how we can affordably build or enhance your current marketing program using the latest technology.

We look forward to discussing your needs in Orlando!

Whew! Can you imagine all of that packed on two-thirds of a postcard? They even had a lady pointing to her head. What does all that verbosity have to do with me and my needs? Absolutely nothing. Why on earth would I waste my time at their booth when I can't even figure out what the heck they are talking about in the first place?

Unfortunately, the second-grade sales curriculum doesn't stop with direct mail. It's prevalent in cover letters of people looking for sales and executive level positions too.

Crappy Cold Call: The Second-Grader Cover Letter

Dear Mr. Rose:

Professionally, I have numerous years of diversified experience and demonstrable results as a senior executive in startup businesses and also the reorganization of existing businesses.

(Gold star! Okay, now why are you wasting my time again?)

Some of my accomplishments are:

- *Managed a four-state region for the nation's fifth-largest mortgage banker/multiline financial organization and turned it around to profitability within two months.*
- *Led three multimillion-dollar acquisitions from analysis through negotiations, due diligence, closing and integration of production platform.*
- *Founded multiline financial company which grew from one to 11 branches over an 11-year period servicing over \$1.5 billion.*

(Is there a point to this letter? What does this have to do with helping our company?)

- *Researched, structured and managed a multimillion-dollar title insurance joint venture in a three-state region.*
- *Created and managed several real estate and builder joint ventures.*

Enclosed is my resume elaborating on my accomplishments and results: However, a few well-worded statements cannot adequately describe what I have accomplished and what I can do for your company. (And if you don't believe it, just ask him. Dude, really?)

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and to discuss my qualifications and how I can be a valued addition. Please call to schedule an interview or contact me via email. (Why do people always want me to do their job? Isn't he soliciting us?)

Gosh, isn't he wonderful? The only thing he left out was "my dad can beat up your dad." This letter came to me, unsolicited. Three times! This guy is asking me for a job, yet all he does is talk about how amazing he is and not about how he can help our company. What's more unbelievable is that after his glorious corporate experience, he became a consultant. No wonder he is now looking for a job. Is he kidding? The icing on the cupcake is his final line: Please call to schedule an interview or contact me via email. Gosh, what an honor — I get to email him. How many of you have written a similar closing line in a sales letter? Be honest!

Let's back up a little. Why do those real examples suck so badly? It all boils down to that powerful one-letter word "I" — the center of a second-grader's world — whether stated or implied, that permeates sales. If you are in sales, you should start looking at "I" as a four-letter

word. A filthy habit. You started it in second grade and you still do it now. “I” is the thief who steals your big-screen TV, sports car, kid’s college fund or that sweet-ass pair of Manolo Blahniks. “I” is the worst habit learned in second grade. It’s the dead weight that pulls you down and sets you back.

I was hoping I could schedule a demo with you. I wanted a few minutes of your time. I’d like to talk to you. I’m hoping to hear from you. I hope you will have the opportunity to attend. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and to discuss my qualification and how I can be a valued addition. Would you like to buy a toy so I can get some shoes? Ahh, the second-grade school of sales where “I” comes before “you.”

Really it’s no wonder. Salespeople are under incredible pressure to make goals (some help with that later); they are often working for crappy bosses (juicy stuff about that coming up too); they have to make presentations that make their knees knock (help is on the way); and they play mind games with themselves (seriously, don’t you have enough external pressure). We will cover these topics and more, which I’m sure you know because like most readers who size up a book you checked out the table of contents. Or maybe you bought this simply because of the snappy cover. (In any case, thanks!) But let’s get back to you.

On top of all those pressures just mentioned, you also have the pressures of paying the mortgage, putting food on the table, buying your kid the latest video console or your wife that Hope Diamond-sized anniversary ring. Sheesh! It can make a salesperson turn to ... well, selling like a second-grader. Face it — even you are guilty of putting your needs before all others in a sales situation. Otherwise, why would you say something silly like: “I wanted a few minutes of your time?”

Don’t beat yourself up, kiddo. Not only are you under all that pressure, professionally and personally, to get what you need, but you are also living in an “iSociety.” UrbanDictionary defines it as “a society that thrives on products with the letter “i” before them.. But I think the iSociety is the “me first” self-centered society in which we live. According to wordspy.com the definition of iSociety is:

I society noun. A society in which people emphasize independence and individuality.

That’s not a bad thing. After all, the United States was conceived on those principles. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has made us the richest, greatest nation on earth. But there should be a another definition too: a society in which personal needs come before all

others. Perhaps all the “i” products amalgamate these definitions into self-pleasing, me-first nirvana.

Has everyone been out for their own interests first? Absolutely. Society has always been this way to some extent. But technology has caused it to spiral out of control. Apple didn’t start it all with their revolutionary iPod, but it’s hard to argue that Apple didn’t capitalize on the iSociety and put it into warp drive. Those are a bunch of brilliant dudes in Cupertino, Calif., because they caught the “I” wave at the perfect time and have stayed on the crest. At the writing of this book, Apple had sold 18.65 million iPhones in one quarter!

Instant stardom, get rich quick, secondlife.com, entitlement and mass customization are all part of the iSociety. Individual ring tones, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, working from home, flextime, DVR, iReport. Instant polls and satellite radio are all part of the iSociety too. The list goes on and on. It’s just the world we live in, where people ask for and expect what they want right now. Yes, we love to make ourselves happy, don’t we? We want it now and we want to fulfill our needs first. It’s cool, almost expected, to let everyone know it.

Which is fine as long as your profession isn’t sales. Sure you can have all the “I” crap you want too. What’s bad is when this attitude seeps into your sales technique. Your customers live in the iSociety too and they could give a crap what you want. Let the iSociety dominate you like a second-grader on too much sugar and prospects are going to show you the door.

That’s why this book is all about you. If you are looking for a guru who talks about how wonderful he is, you won’t find him here. That should make you happy, because you want to satisfy your needs first, right? Cool. And that’s how it should be. Didn’t you plunk down some of your hard-earned cash to get a copy? Even if you didn’t pay for it (nice boss) this book should still be all about you.

Herein lays the focus of this book: to break your bad second-grade selling habits and give you a refresher course on your good second-grade habits. If you are selling something, everything you talk about needs to be about your prospect and not “I.” There’s that word again; “I.” Why is that especially the case in sales? Because deep down, despite the guru nonsense and whatever crap your mission statement might be feeding you about saving the world or helping people live a better life, you are a slave to the iSociety. You want those killer new Nike’s and you want them now. You want your kid to go to a great private school. You want the new BMW 3 Series convertible (sweeeet!). Just like I wanted a new pair of Keds in 1977. Not much has

changed. Otherwise, why would you put up with all the rejection, canceled flights, cookie-cutter hotels and dinners at Applebee's? It's all about the iSociety.

You might get enough sales to take care of some of your needs, but if you dropped one word out of your mindset you could crush your goals. You could make your sales manager squeal in delight at the prospect of raising your goals even higher next year. (Why do they do that anyway?!)

If it was only that simple. From what I see out there in the sales world, through observing hundreds of salespeople doing their thing, to recording every cold call, to doing tons of research, to learning the secrets of two of the greatest salespeople in the world — my dad and my father-in-law (you will meet them later) — to coaching my own sales team and listening to tape recordings of the bad habits I had, most of us got it all wrong.

This book shares all of that to help you sell more. Chances are there are some things you have never heard before. And here's the thing, by giving you the knowledge in this book, I am serving you. And when I serve you, you help me put my kids through college, replace my broken water heater, buy a new couch and hook up the wife with the latest hand bag. So unless it's absolutely necessary, that is the last you will hear of the "I" who wrote this book. This book is about YOU. I actually tried to write this book without using "I" but it's damn near impossible and drove my editor crazy.

Do you really care what I'm going to do with the money earned from this book? My guess is no. It's the same reason why more people aren't buying from you. You talk about what you want too much. Think about how many times you say "I want" in your process of landing a sale. It's a lot more than you think. What you want is sabotaging deals in your mind. Oh, your mind!

How it can be your worst enemy and affect you, well, just like it did in second grade. We will cover all of that too. This book will show you how to increase sales more than you ever imagined. You will learn far more than from self-serving gurus and make more money than ever before. On top of it all the lessons are backed not only by years of experience but real scientific research. It's time to break those second-grade bad habits and relearn the good!