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1 THE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU NEED TO CREATE A **SUCCESSFUL** CAREER IN SALES



WELCOME



Throughout my career, I have had numerous conversations with people seeking advice about joining the sales profession. People worry about selling as a career choice for a variety of reasons, but many people are simply looking for direction or encouragement.

Recently, in just such a conversation, I was asked the following question:

“If you could only offer only one piece of advice as I start a career in sales, what would that one thing be?”

I started. I stopped.

Huh.

Good question.

I’m rarely at a loss for words, but just **one** piece of advice? I have about 1,200 answers and you want me to narrow it down to just ONE?

So, I did. I finally settled on one single piece of advice for someone who would consider a career in sales. I will share that with you

shortly; but first, let me tell you where that one question led me.

THE EXPERTS

I am fortunate to be affiliated with a large group of professionals who teach, train, consult, or coach in the profession of selling. Following the conversation in which I was asked the \$64,000 question, I was driving back to my office, thinking about how



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someone else might have answered, and it dawned on me that I have access to this rather large cadre of sales experts.

So, I decided to see how they would respond to the question.

I presented the scenario, posed the question asked, and asked each of them how they would answer.

20 people responded. Frankly, I did not expect that many replies. These people are extremely busy training and writing and consulting, and are involved in all manner of projects. But they responded in force, and, as one might expect, they provided a wide variety of answers.

I found their answers to be fascinating. These sales experts represent a wide diversity of backgrounds, a variety of sales positions, a whole world of experiences, and many different attitudes about selling. That diversity led to – in some cases – wildly different answers, but – in other cases – remarkably similar answers.

Taken all together, I would suggest that their responses form a valuable framework around which anyone, I think, could assemble a very good notion about what it takes to be successful in sales, and what their specific chances for success might be.

Each of their answers fall with five different categories:

- Unique Answers (3)
- Discovery (5)
- Learning (3)
- Relationships (3)
- Mindset (6)



“THESE SALES EXPERTS REPRESENT A WIDE DIVERSITY OF BACKGROUNDS, A VARIETY OF SALES POSITIONS, A WHOLE WORLD OF EXPERIENCES, AND MANY DIFFERENT ATTITUDES ABOUT SELLING.”

I think you will find their ideas, though not necessarily earth shattering or never-before-heard-of, to be valuable and quite useful. A few of the answers, I assure you, will cause you to stop and think.

The list of contributors to this project are as follows:

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Mark Hunter (@thesaleshunter)

Anthony Iannarino (@iannarino)

Mike Kunkle (@mike_kunkle)

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Lori Richardson (@scoremoresales)

Kelley Robertson (@kel_robertson)

Steven Rosen (@stevenarosen)



Richard Ruff (@saleshorizons)

Todd Schnick (@toddschnick)

Elinor Stutz (@smoothsale)

Robert Terson (@robertterson)

Dan Waldschmidt (@danwaldo)

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As I present their answers, I will also provide their credentials and contact information. Clearly, if you're in sales, you should be following and reading every one of them.



MY ANSWER

I did, finally, put together an answer to the question. To begin with, the idea that there is one single piece of advice that would guarantee success in the sale profession is a little over the top. But, that's not really the point.

The point is to find a pearl of wisdom that may have a positive influence on someone's career, perhaps to save them from a silly mistake, or, from another perspective, provide them with a time-tested success habit.

Maybe it's just to give them a proper perspective of the challenge they are about to undertake.

Here is my answer to the question:

"I believe you will need to learn a number of critical skills to be successful in selling. And, you will most certainly endure challenges and setbacks in the years to come. Frankly, selling is a tough profession and it isn't for everyone."

So, my one piece of advice is that you first "count the cost," and then measure it against your own desire and personal discipline.

Measure your desire to succeed regardless of the numerous obstacles, barriers, heart-stopping failures, and negative opinions you will inevitably encounter.

Measure your discipline to learn and practice and hone your craft in balance against the many other things that will compete for your time and attention. This balance will be critical to your success, AND to your enjoyment of that success.

This, I think, will provide you with a pretty good understanding of whether or not you have what it takes to be successful in sales."

20 MORE EXPERTS AND THEIR ANSWERS

So, you now have my answer, based on 30-plus years of successful experience in the sales profession. Let's move along to the other sales trainers and consultants and see what they have to say.

In order to avoid getting two-page responses – these are, after all, very bright people who all write sales books and blogs for a living – I asked for short, direct answers with a minimum of explanation.

Some took that instruction very literally.



Some, on the other hand, dealt with it very *liberally*. [On a side note, not one expert listed that particular idea – "Follow instructions very carefully" – as the critical one piece of advice they would offer to a new salesperson.]

So, we start. 21 professionals. 5 perspectives. Taken altogether, they present the beginnings of a success schematic for the new sales professional.



MEASURE YOUR DISCIPLINE TO LEARN AND PRACTICE AND HONE YOUR CRAFT IN BALANCE AGAINST THE MANY OTHER THINGS THAT WILL COMPETE FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION."

1. JACK MALCOLM (DISCOVERY)



Jack spent ten years in the banking business before beginning his career in sales training in 1991. In 1995, he founded [Falcon Performance](#) to design and implement complete sales process improvement initiatives for companies like Qualcomm and Verizon Wireless. He is the author of two books: "[Strategic Sales Presentations](#)" and "[Bottom-Line Selling: The Sales Professional's Guide to Improving Customer Profits.](#)"

Jack has combined his successful sales background with an interest in behavioral economics and cognitive psychology to create a powerful approach to influence and persuasion. His world-class presentation skills, which he shares in his book "Strategic Sales Presentations," have taken him to more than two dozen countries.

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[Note: Click [HERE](#) to listen/download my interview with Jack Malcolm in the Business LockerRoom Episode 4, "Presenting the Right Things.")



“JACK'S WORLD-CLASS PRESENTATION SKILLS, WHICH HE SHARES IN HIS BOOK "STRATEGIC SALES PRESENTATIONS," HAVE TAKEN HIM TO MORE THAN TWO DOZEN COUNTRIES.”



Jack, I have learned, is not fond of using two pages of four-dollar words when three simple words will suffice. His short-and-sweet response to the question was this:

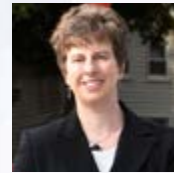
“*Learn to listen.*”

As advice goes, it is short, memorable, and powerful. What salesperson isn't measurably more effective when he/she is focused on listening to the customer? And what experience do sales managers have in common if not the fact that salespeople talk way too much and listen way too little?

It is probably way too easy to dismiss Jack's pithy advice. In two decades of training salespeople, my experience is that salespeople feel in control when they are talking. Great salespeople – the record-breakers and the quota-busters – have learned that control is derived from carefully worded questions that lead to phenomenal information.

If you're listening.

2. LYNN HIDY (LEARNING)



Lynn is a recognized expert at creating profitable telesales salespeople and organizations. Her 15-year telesales career has been highlighted by awards, including back-to-back achievement of the prestigious “President’s Club” status before she transitioned to inside sales leadership roles.

In 2008, she founded the training firm, *UpYourTeleSales*, to provide sales training and behavior reinforcement coaching to telesales people and managers. She also hosts a live radio show each week called, “Sales Coaching Over Coffee.”

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“Inside sales” is a different animal altogether. It’s not an environment I have direct experience in, so I was especially curious to hear Lynn’s perspective. Although today’s inside salesperson has far more tools to work with, there is still the basic limitation of communicating by phone, which places extraordinary importance on individual language skills.

Here is Lynn’s answer:

“My one piece of advice is to never stop learning! Would you go to any other professional if you found out he or she never learned one more thing since their initial training? I know I wouldn’t. I want everyone from my hairdresser to my mechanic to my accountant, doctor, or lawyer to continuously be honing their skills to be the BEST they can be to help me. So, throughout your sales career make sure to keep honing your sales skills. It is your profession – you owe it to yourself and your customers to keep up with the latest tools available, to try techniques as you hear about them, and to continuously making yourself better at sales.”

There is the old fable of two people who worked at a particular company for ten

years. One, it was observed, had ten years of experience; the other had only one year of experience ten times.

In sales, it is fairly easy to distinguish between those two people.

The first knows everything about the product and its varied applications; understands the industry and the way customers in that industry do business; and, ultimately, he or she will become a valuable resource to clients.

The second individual, who stops learning and growing the first year, is rarely helpful to the customer’s business. Instead, they are a sales representative with a business card, a product, and a price.



“THE INDIVIDUAL, WHO STOPS LEARNING AND GROWING THE FIRST YEAR, IS RARELY HELPFUL TO THE CUSTOMER’S BUSINESS. INSTEAD, THEY ARE A SALES REPRESENTATIVE WITH A BUSINESS CARD AND A PRODUCT.”

3. DAN WALDSCHMIDT (MINDSET)



Dan Waldschmidt is an international business strategist, speaker, author, and extreme athlete. His consulting firm, Waldschmidt Partners, solves complex marketing and business strategy problems for savvy companies all over the world. The Wall Street Journal called his blog, “[Edgy Conversations](#),” one of the Top 7 sales blogs online.

He’s a contributor to *Forbes*, *Inc.*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Vanity Fair*. He’s been profiled in *Business Week*, *INC Magazine*, *Business Insider*, and on dozens of radio programs. Hundreds of his articles on unconventional business strategy have been published. His best-selling book, *Edgy Conversations: How Ordinary People Create Outrageous Success*, was released in 2014.

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Nothing about Dan is typical. His experiences aren’t typical. His hobbies aren’t typical. His perspective isn’t typical. He has enjoyed extreme success, but he has crashed and burned, a journey he chronicles in his new book, *Edgy Conversations*.



But don’t miss the critical point. Dan knows how to be successful – both in sales and in life – and his perspective is balanced with the understanding that success just for the sake of success is not enriching or genuinely rewarding.



doesn’t mean that it’s not the right thing to do. Amazing people keep doing the right thing until it starts working.”

Prospective and philosophical, Dan’s answer doesn’t address talent or technique; instead, it focuses on attitude. Do the right thing. Do it until you get it right.

Which isn’t at all typical of the average salesperson.

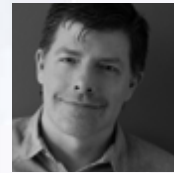
[Note: Click [HERE](#) to listen to my interview with Dan in the Business LockerRoom Episode 1, “The Edgy Side of Business.”]

His response to the question focused on developing a specific mindset:

“*The best advice I ever received in sales was from my father: ‘Just because something isn’t working right away*

“PROSPECTIVE AND PHILOSOPHICAL, DAN’S ANSWER DOESN’T ADDRESS TALENT OR TECHNIQUE; INSTEAD, IT FOCUSES ON ATTITUDE. DO THE RIGHT THING. DO IT UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT.”

4. TODD SCHNICK^(RELATIONSHIPS)



Todd is a marketing, sales, and business strategist who has advised hundreds of organizations, ranging from tech start-ups to multi-million dollar organizations. Since 2008, he has published four books, has been a successful writer/blogger, and hosted thousands of business talk show interviews on shows like Intrepid Radio, Manufacturing Revival Radio, Business in the Morning, The GoodLiving.club, Healthcare Insider, and The Incubator.



Todd also spent many years as a political strategist, managing races from governor to magistrate judge. During the 2000 Florida Recount, MSNBC's Chris Matthews predicted Todd would go to jail. To be thought of this way by Matthews is Todd's crowning achievement as a political operative.

- 2014 Top 50 Sales & Marketing Influencer (Top Sales World)
- 50 Sales Pros to Follow on Twitter (Base CRM)
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“JACK'S WORLD-CLASS PRESENTATION SKILLS, WHICH HE SHARES IN HIS BOOK "STRATEGIC SALES PRESENTATIONS," HAVE TAKEN HIM TO MORE THAN TWO DOZEN COUNTRIES.”



nameless, faceless line item. Treat them like a human being, communicate to them like a human being, and remember that they are dealing with all kinds of problems: their own, and that of their organization.”

Many salespeople, with their focus achieving a sales revenue objective, can be guilty of forgetting that business is about people.

Perhaps it is his political background, perhaps it is the hundreds of interviews he has conducted, but somewhere along the way, Todd gained a specific appreciation for dealing with customers as real people, and not as “targets” or “quotas” or “objectives.”

Great advice, as success in selling is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of relationship that one develops.

[Note: Click **HERE** to listen to my interview with Todd in the Business LockerRoom (Episode 16, “The Intrepid Life.”)]

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It is amazing to see the many different paths that lead to sales and entrepreneurial success.

Todd is another one of those individuals with a wildly different background: Politics. Radio. Failed Felon (thankfully).

Here is his answer:

“*Behind that database entry in your CRM is a real human being, not some*

5. STEVEN ROSEN (UNIQUE)



Steven knows sales inside and out. He's been in the trenches and commanded "troops" for over 20 years. He is the founder of [STAR Results](#), a sales leadership coaching, training, and consulting organization dedicated to leadership development.

With over 15 years of executive experience, his expertise is aligning sales and marketing initiatives to achieve key business results. He is the author of "52 Sales Management Tips – The Sales Manager's Success Guide"

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Steve's answer is unique in the sense that it doesn't fit the other four general categories, although you might be tempted to place it in the "mindset" category. Here is his response:

“*Effort is the great equalizer. Put in the effort if you want to be successful.*”

All of the answers in the "mindset" category are about attitudes and perspectives in one's approach to selling, while Steve's advice is both observable and measurable – you either put in the effort or you don't. It's great advice, for no other reason that many salespeople fail, or fall short of their potential, only because they are unwilling to do the heavy lifting. They aren't willing to put in the hours, the study, and the practice that marks the sales champion.

As a salesperson, I never claimed to be the smartest guy in the field, but I always believed I could – and would – outwork every one of my competitors.

So should you.

6. MIKE WEINBERG (DISCOVERY)



Mike Weinberg is the CEO of [The New Sales Coach](#). His passion is helping sales teams acquire new customers and he is known for his blunt, practical new business development and sales management consulting. Mike's first book, "[New Sales. Simplified. – The Essential Handbook for Prospecting and New Business Development](#)" is a #1 Amazon Bestseller and spent an entire year as the #1 top-rated book in its category.

Mike has been named to OpenView Labs' Top 25 Sales Influencers for three consecutive years and Forbes named him a Top 30 Social Sales Influencer for 2014.

- 2014 Top 25 Sales Influencers (OpenView Labs)
- 2014 Top 30 Social Sales Influencer (Forbes)
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Mike is a smart guy. And hugely successful. He has been the top salesperson at three different companies, and has over 20 years of high-performance sales experience. One reason for his own success, by his own



admission, is the first-rate coaching and mentoring he received along the way.

In 2010, he decided that coaching and mentoring was his calling as well, so he formed his own sales consulting company. Just two years later, he published his first book, *New Sales. Simplified*. In an ocean of business books, it jumped to #1 in the Sales & Selling category, and stayed there for three months.

But “smart” doesn’t necessarily equate to success as Mike is quick to point out in his answer to the question:

“*No one cares how smart you are, or how great you think your company or solution is. They want to know what’s in it for them. Said differently, your prospects and customers are not interested in what you or your company does, only what you can do for them. So, whenever you communicate with clients or potential clients, make sure to frame your conversation around their issues, not your offerings. Most salespeople don’t do this well, but if you do, customers will immediately perceive you as someone who can bring them value, and they’ll be much more receptive to spending time with you.*”



“Smart” salespeople get that way because they understand that discovering a client’s issues is far more important than showing the client how smart you are – a snare that traps a significant number of salespeople.

Most salespeople make the mistake of connecting their *presentation* of a product or service – its features and benefits – to real value. Mike’s answer, on the other hand, connects *discovery* to customer value. In other words, the client finds value in the salesperson who seeks to understand before advocating a solution. I’m reminded of Zig Ziglar’s famous quote: “Prescription before diagnosis is malpractice.”

Sounds smart to me.

7. MILES AUSTIN (LEARNING)



Miles is the “Web Tools Guy.” If it has a button, a switch, or an Internet connection, he has probably used it! He is recognized as one of the leading authorities on online sales and productivity tools, and his company, [Fill the Funnel](http://www.fillthefunnel.com), helps sales leaders, managers and business owners with the selection and implementation of those tools.

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Miles is a regular on my radio show, “[The Business LockerRoom](#).” He provides the content for the “X’s and O’s” segment of the show, which is where we discuss critical sales and productivity tools for businesses and salespeople. Listeners benefit from the enormous amount of time Miles spends learning about the new software tools and applications that drive increases in productivity and sales performance.

Not surprisingly, his answer to the question is centered around consistent learning:



“Never stop learning! Seek new thinking from people within your industry and from other industries. Read and re-read books about selling. Seek out conferences, speakers and workshops that challenge you and your habits. Always keep an open mind and learn from both the seasoned leaders and the rookie reps.”

In my experience, the best salespeople are life-long learners. They typically know more about the product and its applications than their lower-performing colleagues. They are usually the go-to resource when others are looking for answers. They consistently have more ideas and better solutions to customer challenges.

I am always surprised to see how few salespeople understand this very basic idea. Here is a great example: as I train sales teams, I make it a point to identify the top salespeople in the company in the various product lines they sell. Then, I ask the remaining salespeople if they have talked to those sales leaders and learned as much



as they can from them. Consistently, the number of reps who have done so is exactly zero. That's right – zilch.

It's a rookie mistake, and one that high-performance salespeople do not make.

“IN MY EXPERIENCE, THE BEST SALESPEOPLE ARE LIFE-LONG LEARNERS. THEY TYPICALLY KNOW MORE ABOUT THE PRODUCT AND ITS APPLICATIONS THAN THEIR LOWER-PERFORMING COLLEAGUES.”

8. LEANNE HOAGLAND-SMITH (RELATIONSHIP)



Leanne describes herself as a “Heurist for the Next Generation of Talent Management.” She has over 30 years experience in sales, and has authored of over 1,600 articles about sales and sales leadership.

She is a weekly business columnist for the Post-Tribune of Northwest Indiana, a regular contributor to NBiz Magazine, and the author of *Be the Red Jacket in a Sea of Gray Suits*.

- Top 50 Sales and Marketing Influencers in 2014 (Top Sales World)
- Top 10 women in sales to follow on Twitter (Sales Gravy)
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“WITH OVER 30 YEARS OF SALES EXPERIENCE AND BETTER THAN 1,600 SALES ARTICLES UNDER HER BELT, LEANNE HAS TREMENDOUS CREDIBILITY IN THE SALES PROFESSION.”

With over 30 years of sales experience and better than 1,600 sales articles under her belt, Leanne has tremendous credibility in the sales profession.

She is very analytical, and, like many of the sales pros contributing to this series, possesses a strong strategic business perspective. As a strategic thinker, one might suspect her answer would deal with planning or process or preparation; instead, it deals with connection:

“*Be authentic, because sales starts with that first smile, that first handshake. Because people buy from people, not from strokes on a keyboard, and not from some fancy glossy brochure or 30-second glitzy commercial.*”



Success in selling requires a willing prospect, which, in turn, requires a credible salesperson. Many salespeople miss how important it is to connect with a prospect and develop a good relationship, which, as Leanne points out begins at the very first meeting.

According to extensive research conducted by HR Chally Group, buyers credit the effectiveness of a salesperson as being almost 40% of the reason they make a decision in a company's favor. You can't fake credibility, and you can't fake authenticity. If you're not interested in connecting with your customers, consistent success will elude you.

No matter how good your commercials are.

9. NANCY NARDIN (MINDSET)



Backed by nearly 30 years of sales and marketing experience, Nancy is a pioneer in sales prospecting technology. Before launching her company, [Smart Selling Tools](#), in 2006, she had, at one point or another, worked with more than 30 of the largest high-tech, and telecom firms in the country.

She has consulted with executives at leading marketing automation, pipeline management, lead management, and forecast analytics firms. Her customer list includes Fortune 100 companies such as Microsoft, Intel, and Hewlett Packard.

- Top 30 Social Sales Influencers in the World (KiteDesk)
- Top 25 Sales Bloggers in the World (HubSpot)
- Top 50 Sales and Marketing Influencers of 2014 (Top Sales World)
- 20 Women to Watch in Sales Lead Management in 2014 (Sales Lead Management Association)
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Like Miles Austin, Nancy knows sales tools. Like Leanne Hoagland-Smith, she is highly accomplished and widely respected as a sales authority. Chances are, you don't pick up clients like Microsoft and HP if you're not a spectacular salesperson.

From her perspective, success in selling begins and ends with the way you view the profession:

“Don't do it unless you're an optimist by nature, or if you don't truly enjoy challenging yourself.”

Sales professionals recognize that there are good days and bad days. Highs and lows. Home runs and rally-killing double play balls. And, most often, the road ahead looks pretty steep. After all, the competition is fierce and never-ending.

If you can't see the positives in a career that will, most likely, have plenty of negatives, it's better to find another line of work. Clearly, there are many, many things that will contribute to your sales success, but Nancy chooses (not unlike Steven Covey in the 7 *Habits of Highly Effective People*) to begin with the end in mind.



10. TOWNSEND WARDLAW (UNIQUE)



With tours of duty at AT&T, BDM, TRW Technology Services, Lucent, and Avaya, Townsend Wardlaw had experienced his share of large corporations, so he left a secure job and a hefty salary to start his own company.

For six years, Three Value Logic delivered millions of cold calls and many more millions in revenue for clients. Since shutting the company down in 2009, Townsend has lived the (allegedly) glamorous, profitable and relaxing life of the sole proprietor. His boutique consultancy works with founders and CEO's of companies earning between \$1M and \$10M to help them lead happier and more profitable lives.

- Website: www.townsendwardlaw.com
- Blog: <http://townsendwardlaw.com/category/whiteboard-wednesday/>
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Occasionally, something happens early in one's career that leaves a mark, and permanently changes the way they do things. For a salesperson, it might be losing a big

sale – one that was already chalked up in the “win” column – that leads to the proverbial I'll-never-make-that-mistake-again experience. Or it might be a huge “AHA!” moment – when something unexpectedly works for the very first time – and it becomes the gold standard for the future.





Who knows exactly when and how we experience tectonic shifts in our thinking?

I'm not sure why each of these sales jockeys chose the advice they gave; I didn't inquire as to the background of their answers. Townsend, whom I have come to know as an innovator, someone who always finds ways to get things done, and a guy who is willing to share what he knows with anyone, chose a very interesting response to the question:

“Always schedule the next meeting! Never leave an interaction with a soft or vague follow-up step. Close for the next scheduled conversation or move on to the next prospect.”

Frankly, I admit that my first reaction was a tad on the dismissive side. But Townsend is ridiculously good, so I stepped back to rethink it.

Then it hit me: if you're always scheduling your next meeting and your follow-up steps are rock-solid, your pipeline is always full. Make no mistake; a full pipeline is an absolute necessity to success in selling. This is critically important: most salespeople don't achieve their revenue objectives for a very simple reason – they don't have enough opportunities in their pipeline.

The last part of his answer is just as important: If your current prospect won't schedule your next meeting, find someone who will. Your time is too valuable to waste.

11. RICHARD (DICK) RUFF, PH.D. (DISCOVERY)



Dick spent 30 years developing sales training for the Fortune 1000 – first at Huthwaite, then as co-founder of two sales training companies. Dick spent the first part of his sales training career with Neil Rackham, and then, in 2000, he and Janet Spierer founded Sales Momentum. In 2010, he created his current sales organization, [Sales Horizons](#).

Dick's expertise ranges from targeted sales training efforts for launching new products to international sales training engagements with organizations like UPS, McKinsey, Apple, and Smith & Nephew. During his career Dick has authored numerous articles related to sales effectiveness, and he has co-authored three books: "Managing Major Sales," "Parlez-Vous Business," and "Getting Partnering Right."

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I am particularly fascinated by the perspectives of older sales professionals. In part, I suspect, because I am older, but mostly because of the changes imposed on the sales profession over the past 20 years by rapid advances in technology. It seems ludicrous today to think that my primary sales tools once consisted of a Daytimer, a phone book, and an Excel spreadsheet.

Still, the *basics* of sales success never really change, as Dick notes in his reply to the question:

“IT SEEMS LUDICROUS TODAY TO THINK THAT MY PRIMARY SALES TOOLS ONCE CONSISTED OF A DAYTIMER, A PHONE BOOK, AND AN EXCEL SPREADSHEET.”



value. Make sure you know what they expect from salespeople in today's environment."

While Dick's answer focuses on discovery – understanding the client and the ways in which each specific client defines value – notice his reference to adaptability: "what worked yesterday" may not work today.

The reality is that great salespeople consistently demonstrate the ability to adapt to changes in the sales environment, which are omnipresent. If you fail to change and upgrade your game, your competitors will quickly help you find a new career.

At the same time, some things never change; some things will always be critical to achieving a successful sales career. Like knowing your customers and understanding their expectations.

“My advice is to recognize that we are living in a time of compressed history. What worked yesterday is a bad predictor of what will work in the future. So a lot of ‘the-good-old-days, it-has-always-worked’ type of advice isn’t so good. Rely on really understanding the client – better than anyone else. Know how they buy. Understand how they define

12. KELLEY ROBERTSON (DISCOVERY)



Kelley Robertson began his sales career in a men's clothing store in the mid-seventies. He worked in a managerial capacity for over a decade, hiring and training almost 1000 employees for approximately 16 new restaurants. In 1995, went to work for Sony of Canada to provide sales training for the retail division.

The sales training programs and sales training resources he developed are recognized around the world within the Sony organization and have been used by Sony Latin America and Sony Mexico. Kelley created his private sales training practice in 2002, The Robertson Training Group. He specializes in helping businesses increase their sales, develop better negotiating skills, coach and motivate their employees, create powerful work teams and deliver outstanding customer service. Kelley is the author of two sales training books, "Stop, Ask & Listen-Proven Sales Techniques to Turn Browsers into Buyers" and "The Secrets of Power Selling."

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While there are wide a variety of skills any successful salesperson must develop, the one that is most visible to customers is the face-to-face encounter. Whether it is simply a meet-and-greet opportunity, or a full-fledged sales presentation, credibility and trust can be gained or lost while in front of the customer.





Kelley gets right to the heart of the matter in his response:

“Resist the temptation to launch into a sales pitch until you have thoroughly assessed your prospect’s situation. It sounds simple, but most sales people only scratch the surface when conducting a discovery conversation. Learn to ask tough, deep, thought provoking questions that make your prospect or customer sit back and really think about their situation. Develop the ability to become comfortable asking probing questions that uncover the prospect’s pain AND the implications of that pain or problem.”

Kelley’s formula for selling success is to assess, discover, probe, and uncover.

Then, armed with an understanding of the prospect’s pain *and* the implications of that pain, proceed with the solution presentation.

Kelley implies that “deep, thought provoking” questions are learned, and I agree wholeheartedly. Yet, how often do salespeople sit down in a face-to-face conversation and conduct an interrogation, using rapid-fire questions that elicit data and information but provide little in the way of real understanding?

It’s not the person with the best information that wins; it’s the person with the best *understanding* of that information that wins.

13. BARBARA WEAVER SMITH, PH.D. (MINDSET)



Barbara Weaver Smith is now in her third career. She was first a professor and college dean, and then became President of a statewide non-profit agency. Her eclectic background has provided 17 years of experience in leading diverse groups of stakeholders and she raised much more than \$100 million in gifts, grants, and earned income.

In 1994, she took the entrepreneurial plunge to become Founder & CEO of The Whale Hunters, a company whose mission is to lead small and mid-sized companies to make more money through bigger sales to bigger customers. She is the co-author of “Whale Hunting: How to Land Big Sales and Transform Your Company.”

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- Twitter: [@bweaversmith @thewhalehunters](https://twitter.com/bweaversmith)

It is not unusual to see a former salesperson turn to some type of teaching as a second career; however, it is rare to see a former teacher (and college dean!) turn to *selling* as

a second career! I would have expected Barbara to have a different thought process as it relates to success in a sales career, and she did not disappoint:





Like Dick Ruff, Barbara can reference an extensive panorama of experiences when considering a response to the question – three careers worth, to be exact. And, just like Dick, you see the element of adaptability in her answer when she speaks of a journey that “morphs” or changes.

I suspect this is not a coincidence. As salespeople gain experience, they rapidly find that the sales profession is considerably demanding in terms of adaptability, flexibility, and responsiveness. Salespeople are challenged almost daily to react to challenges that materialize out of the blue – from customers, from the evolution of technology, and from wholesale changes in the marketplace.

Barbara’s answer to success reminds me of Steven Covey’s concept of “begin with the end in mind.” Success is an “approach.” It requires purpose; a purpose that finds harmony with the other things in your life.

How many salespeople are truly *joyful* in their careers?

“‘Career’ is a great keyword. Your career is your life’s work, even if it morphs along your journey. Approach your career with the same purpose, and experience it with the same joy, that you find in your life’s other gifts – family, friends, talents, community.”

“APPROACH YOUR CAREER WITH THE SAME PURPOSE, AND EXPERIENCE IT WITH THE SAME JOY, THAT YOU FIND IN YOUR LIFE’S OTHER GIFTS – FAMILY, FRIENDS, TALENTS, COMMUNITY.”

14. ROBERT TERSON (MINDSET)



Robert Terson is the author of “[Selling Fearlessly: A Master Salesman’s Secrets For the One-Call-Close Salesperson](#).” After a highly successful 40-year career of selling advertising to small businesspeople – 38 years of which he was the owner of the company – Bob finally retired in January 2010.

Now, he writes, speaks, and works hard to help others succeed. In his own words, he is using his retirement “to give back for a lifetime of blessings.” In his second career, Bob has received numerous accolades for his work, which he studiously avoids publicizing. Among those awards is recognition of his sales blog by Top Sales World as one of the Internet’s “Top 50 Sales & Marketing Blogs.”

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In a relatively short time period, Bob has come to know hundreds of key people in the sales industry. Part of that is attributable to the ease in which social media allow people to become aware of others, but most of it is

attributable to Bob’s dogged determination to build relationships with people.

Those that know Bob well universally use the same words to describe him: giving, thoughtful, and generous. He is, in fact, from all outward appearances, a very gentle, laid back man, right up to the point where you hit one of his hot buttons. Then, all the lights come on, the generators fire up, and you catch a glimpse of the passion that made Bob a force to be reckoned within his industry.



I have come to know Bob pretty well, and I would have suspected that I could nail his answer to the question fairly easily. Turns out I swung and missed completely. Here is his response:

- “ 1. *Never take “no” personally!*
2. *Meet your prospect as his equal, not his subservient lackey. Equality begets respect.*

No one who has spent more than a few weeks calling on customers has failed to hear the word “no” on multiple occasions. Add up all the times a one-call salesperson like Bob has heard that word, and I’m convinced the sheer weight of it all would be enough to send most people looking for a nice, boring job.

You just can’t afford to have thin skin in selling. It certainly doesn’t mean you have to like it, or even accept it easily, but you can’t let it get to your head or your career will end quickly. It reminds me of a quote from the venerable Vince Lombardi: “Show me a good loser, and I’ll show you a loser.”

“ YOU JUST CAN’T AFFORD TO HAVE THIN SKIN IN SELLING. IT CERTAINLY DOESN’T MEAN YOU HAVE TO LIKE IT, OR EVEN ACCEPT IT EASILY, BUT YOU CAN’T LET IT GET TO YOUR HEAD OR YOUR CAREER WILL END QUICKLY.”

Attitude is everything.

But, it is the second part of Bob’s answer that really illustrates the need to adopt a particular mindset in selling. Salespeople are often prone to viewing themselves as unequal to their customers. Most likely this view is developed either from the stigma that surrounds certain aspects of selling or from the fact that salespeople are *dependent* (in their own view of themselves) upon their customers.

Dependency breeds inequality, and inequality breeds desperation. And nothing kills sales quicker than desperation.

If you want to see Bob get fired up, just ask him about it.

15. ANTHONY IANNARINO (MINDSET)



Anthony Iannarino has been posting to his sales blog (appropriate titled as “The Sales Blog”) every day since 2009. He also hosts the popular “In the Arena” podcast.

Anthony is the President and Chief Sales Officer for SOLUTIONS Staffing, a best-in-class regional staffing service based in Columbus, Ohio. He is also the Managing Director of B2B Sales Coach & Consultancy, a boutique sales coaching and consulting company that helps salespeople and sales organizations improve and reach their full potential.

In addition, Anthony serves as an adjunct faculty member at Capital University’s School of Management and Leadership, where he teaches Personal Selling in the undergraduate program and Persuasive Marketing and Social Media Marketing in the MBA program.

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Anthony’s credentials speak for themselves: 5 years of blogging every single day. 35,000 Twitter followers. Harvard Biz School. Entrepreneur. International speaker. He’s got success written all over him and people pay close attention to what he has to say.

So, lean in close and listen to this sage advice:

“ *Conquer your fear. Be valuable. Be relentless.*”

I think the cynical reader would be tempted to dismiss this answer as simplistic and clichéd, but I would caution against that response. There is enormous wisdom in Anthony’s observation that merits consideration.

First, most people – in any endeavor, but especially in sales – fail to meet achieve their goals simply because they cannot overcome their fears. In sales,



call reluctance (the fear of cold-calling or prospecting) is very, very common and is a guaranteed ticket out of the sales game. But, can it be conquered? Yes.

Second, there are very few two-word pieces of advice that are as powerful as “be



THE FEAR OF COLD-CALLING OR PROSPECTING IS VERY, VERY COMMON AND IS A GUARANTEED TICKET OUT OF THE SALES GAME. BUT, CAN IT BE CONQUERED? YES.”

valuable.” The sum total of the profession of selling is to provide value to customers at every available opportunity – in the solution presentation, in the process of building relationships, and in adding of value outside of the products and services you sell.

Third, “relentless” encapsulates the mindset of every successful person I have ever known, without exception. As others in this series have observed, there will be plenty of hurdles and obstacles in your path, but only the relentless survive and succeed in the sales profession.

Anthony would be a prime example.

[Note: Click [HERE](#) to listen to my interview with Anthony the Business LockerRoom (Episode 10, “The Hustler’s Playbook.”)]

16. TIM OHAI (DISCOVERY)



Tim Ohai is the founder and president of Growth & Associates, a community of experts that specializes in sales enablement and sales transformation solutions, with an emphasis on maximizing the most critical of resources: people.

With well over a decade’s worth of experience in developing sales team performance, he consistently helps Fortune 500 companies design and implement selling solutions internationally, build sales systems that increase revenue and customer loyalty, and create genuine coaching cultures.

As a researcher, author, and emerging thought leader in modern selling, Tim’s expertise and enthusiasm have taken him to Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as both consultant and keynote speaker. He is one of the Top 40 Sales Influencers on Twitter globally and he has recently released his new book, Sales Chaos: Using Agility Selling to Think and Sell Differently.

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Tim, like many of the experts in this series, is highly involved in the advancement of the profession. He is currently working with the Association of Talent Development (ATD, formerly known as ASTD, the worlds’ largest training association) to revise their professional selling competency model. According to Tim, it is “a massively important work as it provides the biggest, most unbiased, most academically rigorous definition of what selling is.”



Translation: Tim knows a thing or two about selling.

In his answer, he expands on the idea of “value” and its importance in the sales process:

“*Know the top conversations you will engage in. Do your homework in advance. Know every possible aspect of the top sales conversations you will initiate and be asked to join. Who are you talking to? Why would/should they talk with you? What perspective are they coming from? How can you help them see beyond the obvious? Know the promises you can make and the promises you cannot make. Know the impact you can make and the impact you cannot make.*

Because that is what sales is about today. Value-creating conversations. Not email campaigns, web sites, or search terms. Leave that to Marketing. You are in Sales. You must become the master of relevant conversations. Yes, there is more than this – much more. But you are about to join the ranks of millions who have complained about the other stuff for decades. And will continue to complain about for decades more. The complaining is a distraction standing in the way of excellence.

Master relevant conversations and you will thrive in sales.”

This is an incredibly insightful bit of advice, this idea of mastering relevant conversations. Extensive research reveals what customers already know – that salespeople love to talk, but they rarely create a conversation. The dialogue is usually one-sided and relevant mostly to the salesperson.

The savvy salesperson understands that information is derived from dialogue, not interrogation. The right questions lead to “value-creating conversations” – for both parties. The salesperson learns what the customer values, and that ultimately leads to a solution that provides value for the customer.

But don’t breeze past another very important idea from Tim – that complaining is a distraction. Salespeople can find a dozen excuses for failure, none of which are usually helpful. Skip the excuses. There is absolutely NO value there.

17. ELINOR STUTZ (RELATIONSHIPS)



Elinor Stutz, the CEO of Smooth Sale, delivers inspirational keynotes at conferences and has authored three books, including the international best-selling book, “Nice Girls DO Get the Sale: Relationship Building That Gets Results.”

Community service led to the writing of her second best-seller, “HIRED! How to Use Sales Techniques to Sell Yourself On Interviews.”

2014 CEO World Magazine “Brightest Minds in Sales to Follow on Twitter”

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Elinor has a rare perspective on life – an accident that nearly took her life and left her with a broken neck. By her own admission, it made a tremendous impact on her career. She enjoyed success in her sales career (including an international best-selling book), but the near-tragic accident caused her to see a need to become much more involved in community service.



However, early in Elinor's career, as a complete stranger to the world of selling, she received very little in the way of guidance, and you will notice that her answer to the questions reflects that experience:

“*[My story is that] not knowing how to sell, no knowledge about what I was selling, or how to do the job, whenever invited in I asked clients why they agreed to the meeting and got to know them personally. After a few meetings I was told to please bring in a brochure so they could purchase from me (I was so green I didn't even know to do that!) Remarkable as this may sound, I was the top rep by the 4th month and held that title through my career.*

The short answer to your question is develop your personal brand – your values, priorities, and how you serve your clientele differently from everyone else – and leverage it.”

In the absence of sales training, Elinor intuitively moved towards understanding people and developing relationships with them. Getting interested in others resulted in something remarkable – customers saw her as a person, not as a “salesperson.” She

was a person who wanted to help, not a salesperson chasing a commission.

The selling skills, I'm quite certain, developed over time, but the truly important skill – building relationships – came first. It reminds me of Dale Carnegie's timeless quote: “You can make more friends in two months by being interested in people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”

Since people generally buy from people they like and trust, I would suggest that Elinor is on to something.



18. MARK HUNTER (RELATIONSHIPS)



Mark spent 18 years in the sales and marketing divisions of three Fortune 100 companies before starting his consulting business in 1998. He travels nationally and internationally 240 days per year working with global leaders like Coca-Cola, Kawasaki, Sara Lee, Mattel, Unilever and Godiva. His strategies are in place with many leading companies, including Fortune 100 corporations in the U.S. and around the world.

In 2012, he published “High-Profit Selling: Win the Sale Without Compromising on Price.” He writes extensively, and is also a contributor to the salesforce.com blog.

- 2014 Sales Engine “18 Sales Blogs You Should Be Reading”
- 2014 Top Sales World “Top 50 Sales Influencers”
- 2014 OpenView Labs “Top 25 B2B Sales Influencers”
- CEO World “Brightest Minds to Follow on Twitter”
- Website: www.TheSalesHunter.com
- Blog: <http://thesaleshunter.com/category/blog>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.Linkedin.com/in/MarkHunter>
- Twitter: @thesaleshunter



Mark has worked at the highest levels of business, and he currently consults at the highest levels of business – Fortune 100 corporations. Clearly, you don't do that as long as Mark has without producing results. His book, “High-Profile Selling,” is a must-add addition to your sales library, and his credentials are on par with anyone in the sales training and consulting profession.



His answer to the question is also oriented around relationships, but he offers a little different twist on the idea:

“*Build relationships with strong sales leaders with whom you can meet and learn from. Not only will you learn incredible insights from them, but you will be building a network that will, in turn, create significant opportunities. Remember, you become who you allow yourself to associate with.*”

Mark's idea of 'building relationships' is in regard to other sales professionals

rather than customers. That is not to imply that Mark doesn't value the customer relationship as well, but his focus in answer to the question is on developing a network of mentors in the sales profession.

Great idea.

In many respects, it is also a way of getting around the limiting aspect of "one piece of advice" as presented in the question. Surrounding yourself with successful people in the sales profession provides you with the opportunity to continue to learn and grow, and to benefit from the successes and failures of others as your career develops.

A network of strong sales leaders. Active relationships with those mentors. A lifetime of learning.

Brilliant.

[Note: Click [HERE](#) to listen to my interview with Mark in the Business LockerRoom (Episode 24, "Hunting for Sales.")]

“**SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE IN THE SALES PROFESSION PROVIDES YOU WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE TO LEARN AND GROW.**”

19. LORI RICHARDSON (MINDSET)



Lori Richardson is the founder and CEO of Score More Sales. She is a thought leader on B2B front-line sales growth and works with technology brands worldwide. She is active in the inside sales community and in the local B2B tech sales + marketing community, having been in professional B2B sales roles for 20 years prior to launching her company.

Beginning her career in technology sales for companies like Apple, IBM, HP and Siemens, Lori rose through the ranks from retail to corporate accounts, then from individual contributor (closing millions of dollars worth of business) to sales leader.

In addition to coaching and training frontline sales leaders and sales reps she writes and blogs for technology brands on selling.

- 2014 Forbes "Top 30 Social Sales Influencers"
- 2014 "OpenView Top 25 Sales Influencers"
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It has been fun to watch how each of these experts have approached this very simple question. Lori's answer struck a nerve with me because of my own personal experience.

When I first started in the sales profession, I struggled. I received some good training, but I worked for a couple of companies that I was not passionate about.



It wasn't until I transitioned into medical sales that I found a company and a product that I found to be personally motivating. With that idea in mind, I was especially pleased to see Lori's answer to the question:

“Understand that sales is one of the most admirable professions there is; that companies go out of business if their products and services are not sold. You must sell something that you believe in, and find the people and companies that will benefit from it. This solid foundation will allow you to be successful.”

I believe that Lori hits on two critically key points. First, why work in the sales profession if you can't believe in it and derive satisfaction from your work? Many people are convinced (sadly, by the actions of a few) that the selling profession is less than noble.

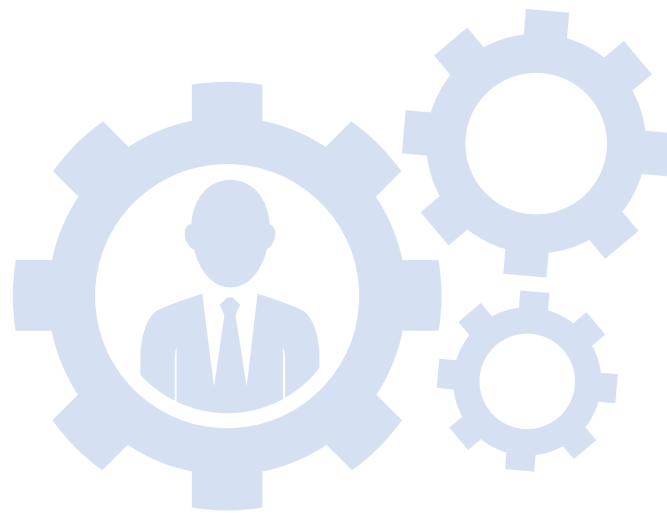
However, as Lori points out, nothing happens until someone sells something. It's not the profession; it's the actions of some within the profession. But isn't that true in just about every line of work? If you don't understand the value of selling and believe in it wholeheartedly, don't waste your time – success will forever elude you.

Second, cannot be effective in sales you have to believe in your product or service. It is extremely difficult to passionately represent something you're not bought into. That was my problem at one point in my career – I worked for a great company, but I did not enjoy the products or the nature of the business.

Here are three critical questions for any salesperson:

1. Do you work for a good company?
2. Do you have a good product (or service)?
3. Is it worth what your company charges?

If you can't enthusiastically say "YES!" to all three, start looking for your next position.



20. MIKE KUNKLE (UNIQUE)



Put a middle-aged, balding guy with glasses and a goatee in a blender with 20+ years of sales force transformation experience, a healthy dose of training and development, organization effectiveness, leadership development, process improvement and performance consulting expertise, then sprinkle in 3 step-kids, a cat, an unruly Dachshund, a patient wife, Internet research, social media, elliptical and resistance training, and a Venti Starbucks Americano with an extra shot, steamed soy milk and Truvia, and you get Mike Kunkle.”

After his initial years on the frontline in sales and sales management, Mike spent the next 19 years as a corporate manager or consultant, leading departments and projects with one purpose – to improve sales results. Today, Mike works for a Fortune 10 company in a sales excellence role, but freely shares his own sales transformation methodology, speaking at conferences and writing online.

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- Twitter: @mike_kunkle

I've met very few people in the sales profession who possess the depth of

background knowledge and experience that Mike has. Like many of my colleagues who have weighed in on this very simple question, he is way, WAY smart in the field.



His recent four-part series on **“The Path to Sales Growth Through Customer Focus”** is must reading for sales managers, as is his excellent article on **“The 4 Pillars of Sales Value Creation”**.

I was excited to see what direction Mike’s answer would take, but, I must say, he completely surprised me:

“*I don’t want to participate in a “tip” session of 25 words or less. ‘Focus on the customer’ is entirely trite and benign, in my opinion, and exactly why I hate tips and tricks. This is a pet peeve of mine, [but I] wish you absolutely the greatest of success with it and hope the ideas help in some way.*”

Mike is a guy who is passionate about everything “sales.” And he aligns everything he says and does around a core set of principles. So, I understand Mike’s response; in fact, I agree with the whole idea, although it was a bit of a letdown since I had anticipated an especially erudite response!

In retrospect, however, it is exactly what I would expect from Mike: Thoughtful. Insightful. Uncompromising.

I admire Mike’s avoidance of the “quick fix” or “the tactic of the day.” I think, in fact, that we can derive a more specific answer from Mike’s response:

Avoid the one-sentence, quick-fix, solution to anything. If the sales profession is worth pursuing, it’s worth pursuing in all of its complexity – and that is what will lead you to success.



“IF THE SALES PROFESSION IS WORTH PURSUING, IT’S WORTH PURSUING IN ALL OF ITS COMPLEXITY – AND THAT IS WHAT WILL LEAD YOU TO SUCCESS.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



A highly acclaimed platform speaker, Kelly is recognized as a dynamic thought leader in the fields of leadership, sales development, and strategic planning. He is a business performance coach for executives and companies throughout the United States, working with organizations that range in size from \$3 million to over \$5 billion in annual sales revenue.

A national award-winning sales representative and sales manager, Kelly has spent the last nineteen years teaching and training organizational leaders in sales and executive management.

He has written two books: *1-on-1 Management™: What Every Great Manager Knows That You Don’t* (2008), and *Quit Whining and Start SELLING! A Step-by-Step Guide to a Hall of Fame Career in Sales* (2013).

For more information, visit www.BizLockerRoom.com.



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