

Excerpt from E-Book

Stop Selling! Accelerate Your Business in Asia
- The End of Long Sales Cycles and Depressed Prices -

By Charlie Lang, Executive Coach & Trainer @ Progress-U Limited



Excerpt from E-Book "Stop Selling! Accelerate Your Business in Asia"

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Prologue – About Selling

What is the purpose of selling? For all of my corporate career I understood selling as an activity which aims to get people to buy what I have to offer. I defined successful selling as being able to outsmart my competitors and make my customers believe that the best they could do is to buy from me.

Luckily, in most cases I honestly believed that to be the case, so I usually didn't have to sell in a dishonest way. The few exceptions made me feel quite bad, so I tried to minimize such situations by focusing on the products or services where I felt we were the best in the market. Obviously, I was quite biased...

After completing my degrees in Mechanical Engineering in Germany and International Marketing in France almost two decades ago, I started my corporate career as a Sales Engineer for the world market leader in metal decoration equipment for the metal can & cap making industry. I was lucky that this company was so well-known in the industry which gave me instant credibility anytime I mentioned its name, no matter if I was in India, Vietnam, South-Africa or France (some of the countries I was responsible for at that time).

Four years later I moved to another technology company, this time as Export Sales Manager, my first management position. For various reasons, I left after a bit more than two years for the number three world wide in high precision measuring instruments. My role in that company required much more general management skills as I was responsible for all international sales and service subsidiaries. However, even though I was the Director for International Sales and later VP Sales & Marketing in Hong Kong for APAC, I was still involved in

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selling to some major key accounts like BOSCH, VW, Toyota, Hua Wei, Daimler-Chrysler, etc.

Then in 2002, I met a lady called Sharon Drew Morgen, the author of the New York Times bestseller "Selling with Integrity"¹ and developer of the Buying Facilitation[®] method. I arranged for her a public training program and a few meetings with potential clients in Hong Kong.

Meeting Sharon Drew Morgen coincided with the completion of my formal coach training and the start-up of my company Progress-U Ltd.

When I attended the public training program and began to understand the principles of her approach, it struck me that what Sharon Drew was actually teaching were coaching skills to be applied with potential buyers. She never called it coaching because her understanding of coaching was obviously different from mine.

Furthermore, during this program and in the next months, the following became increasingly clear to me

- Why sales cycles were often so long
- Why most buyers don't trust most sellers
- Why price seems to be the key decision making factor for most buyers
- Why sales forecasts tend to be extremely inaccurate
- Why lead-conversion rates are so low (average across all industries: approx. 7%)

The last point particularly motivated me to dig deeper into this issue. Only 7% conversion into business from 100% leads, i.e. potential buyers who expressed some first interest in buying from the seller!

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Looking back at my previous corporate jobs, we were a bit better than that, typically in the 15-25% range. This was due to a highly specialized and narrow market where we had already a great brand recognition that certainly helped gaining sufficient credibility with potential buyers.

But even a conversion rate of 25% - which is normally considered as rather high - means that we waste our time with 75% of the leads because they either don't buy or they buy from our competitors.

Did you notice that sales is perhaps the only area where a 25% productivity (or much lower than that) is an acceptable level?

I started to understand where these low productivity levels came from and which major shifts would need to happen in the thinking of a seller to considerably increase the productivity.

But there was another, perhaps the most important point that became truly clear to me only about two years ago and which finally led to the "Stop Selling!" approach as we came to call it: I began to understand why 'selling' has such a bad image and we made it one of Progress-U's missions to help achieve a positive change for the image of sales.

You will gain most from this e-book if you read it with an open mind and if you are ready to embark on a journey with me that might lead you to a considerably new understanding of your role as a seller.

Endnotes

- ¹ 1. Morgen, Sharon Drew. *Selling with Integrity*. Berkeley: Berkley Trade; 1999



Charlie Lang is an Executive Coach and Trainer who founded Progress-U Limited in 2002. His mission is to achieve a positive change of the image of sales. He is a passionate and professional Executive Coach, Mentor Coach, Trainer, Public Speaker and Author of articles related to leadership, change management and innovative sales.

In 2004, Charlie initiated the Master Coach Alliance (see <http://www.master-coach-alliance.com>) in Hong Kong, a network of professional Life, Business and Corporate Coaches. End of 2004, he started authoring the book "The Groupness Factor" (see <http://www.progressu.com.hk/Groupness-book.htm>) which got published in August 2005. Charlie wrote over 100 articles since 2003 and over 20 of them got printed in publications like Human Resources, FZ Magazine, Banking Today, SCMP, Effective Executive and CareerTimes.