



HOW ABOUT MAKING A SALE IN THE FIRST MINUTE?

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A true BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) is clear and compelling, serves as unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a clear catalyst for team spirit. It has a clear finish line, so the organization can know when it has achieved the goal; people like to shoot for finish lines.
—Collins and Porras, 1996

Speaking about sales cycle: will it ever end?

That's probably in your mind: customers usually like to think; rethink and think again and again before making a buying decision, right?

How long will it take to get him/her signing the agreement? Forever?

How about if you can make a sale within the first minute of meeting each customer?

Do you think this is too ambitious and too BIG of a goal?

No wonder your sales cycle takes such a long time, because your sales plan is always designed for this long cycle: dance with them until the music stops.

In our "Stop Selling!" approach, we said that the goal of each sales call, even your first call – should be to get as close as possible to a buying decision. Ideally, the goal should be to get the buying decision.

Ironically, many sales people actually finish any conversation prematurely before customers would have wanted to – simply because they think they have achieved the goal of that call.

To illustrate this simple point: say if your objective for a phone conversation with

your customer is NOT to reach a buying decision but to set up a meeting, then your whole conversation will work towards this goal, and once that schedule of the meeting is confirmed, imagine who will end the call first?

Definitely it is not the customer. Usually, once this goal of getting an appointment is achieved, the salesperson is thinking that the finish line has been reached, the party is over, and will then stop the dance and leave the ballroom, a.k.a. the call.

Meanwhile, your customers will definitely think again, thinking why they should be doing business with a salesperson who comes but doesn't seem to understand their needs or assist in their decision making and as a result they'll find the way to the decision by themselves – with or without that salesperson.

Don't ever blame the customer for stretching the sales cycle no more. Just look at yourself in the mirror.

It really sounds unbelievable, but this is just human nature.

You see, we humans focus on intention. We typically start with the end in mind and we consequently execute the plan, and we work towards the finish line – our goal.

So in order to efficiently shorten the sales cycle, any salesperson or business person should think about setting a goal for all sales calls to be something like “making a sale in the first minute.” It has to be a goal that will somewhat excite you once you reach it, something really big, monumental, and audacious.

The term **Big Hairy Audacious Goal ("BHAG")** was proposed by James Collins and Jerry Porras in their 1996 article entitled *Building Your Company's Vision* and the

subsequent book *Built to Last* (1997). According to the article, a BHAG encourages companies to define visionary goals that are more strategic and emotionally compelling; something that keeps you going, and working on it every single time for your sales team or any of your staff towards achieving that goal.

Remember what people say of the one-hour sales meeting: the customer actually has made the decision to buy or not to buy from you within the first minute or even by the time when you walk in ... and the remaining 59 minutes of conversation is to justify and reassure that the first minute decision is actually the right one.

Remember what they say about making a 'big bang' when you start your presentation – creating a grand entrance every time.

Remember that the significance of making a good first impression because you will never have a second chance to make a good first impression?

Think about it: in reality, you only have several seconds to catch the attention of a potential customer. So make it count! It is suggested that there is somewhere around one minute for the salesperson to give a “commercial message.”

But here is the key: it is not YOU – the salesperson -- who would be best to make that commercial message. If you are smart enough, and with the coaching mindset, it is even better to have THEM - the customers - make that “commercial message” to you!

In order to close the deal, you HAVE to know what your customer's buying propositions are! So, a good way to give a good impression is, as we said it again and again: show you true CARE for your customer by ACTIVE LISTENING, even in the first minute.

Only if you can do this consistently (not only in the first encounter) with your customers, can you shorten the sales cycle. After all, it is the customers who need to be taken care of, and the only way you can give a big bang, and make a grand entrance is – remember who actually plays the music and leads the dance – oh yes, by giving your customer his rightful place in the show. It is the customer who makes the show! The customer is the main attraction, the theme. The customer should be at the centre stage – not you, not the salesperson. Your competitors always tend to forget about this, they always start by introducing themselves and what they can do, and so on, from the very beginning.

You can kiss your competitors goodbye, because you know who the most important person should be – the customer, indeed. You know who should steal the thunder and who should be given the leading role.

Only if this is done appropriately, can your BHAG will have a chance to become true – possibly within the first minute!



William is a senior veteran in the business world, also helped to attract and confirm investors to set up overseas companies; and was involved in a few merger and acquisitions throughout his career. He earned his stripes through his practical experience in the actual market.

He is keen to help and coach companies to explore their own potential, understand their core competence, and ride through the adversity of the economy. He is especially interested in situation where companies have to deal with constant changes, new market developments, multicultural environments, fierce competitions, and leadership development, particularly in sales. His expertise lies in building and managing sales and marketing teams, key account management, tactical negotiation and closing deals, forming alliances and partnerships through training and coaching within the organization to develop a sales- and subsequently results-oriented culture.

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