

JAMES
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CALVERT

STOP SELLING & START LEADING

How to Make *Extraordinary*
Sales Happen

THE BUYER-BASED BLUEPRINT FOR
INCREASING YOUR SALES

PRAISE FOR *STOP SELLING & START LEADING*

“Separately, I’ve admired Deb Calvert’s outstanding sales book and blog and the legendary leadership writings of Kouzes and Posner. Together, they have found a ‘chocolate meets peanut butter’ combination that is so needed for the sales profession in our current buyer’s market and VUCA business environment. They have—through research—validated an approach that has the potential to elevate the sales profession. *Stop Selling & Start Leading* is truly a roadmap for evolving seller behavior to radically transform your organization’s sales results.”

—**Mike Kunkle**, VP of Sales Transformation Services for Digital Transformation, Inc., a division of Fast Lane

“The chasm between how buyers want to buy and how salespeople sell is a mile wide and seemingly impossible to cross. Until now. This book sheds much-needed light on how to ditch ineffective old-school selling tactics and adopt the leadership behaviors that buyers crave from today’s sellers. Based on eye-popping buyer research and a proven leadership model, the authors present a clear roadmap for navigating the B2B sales process with integrity, credibility, and dignity for a true win-win experience.”

—**Julie Hansen**, author of *Sales Presentations for Dummies* and *ACT Like a Sales Pro!*, speaker, founder, Performance Sales and Training

“I’m a long-time fan of Kouzes and Posner’s leadership expertise and Calvert’s perspective on what it takes to succeed in sales. What a thrill to see them apply these proven leadership principles to professional selling! *Stop Selling & Start Leading* offers a powerful perspective on why sellers who lead well will thrive and then provides clear, practical guidance on how to gain credibility and respect that will move buyers to act. Read. This. Now. to set yourself apart from the typical, ineffective salesperson who is perceived as nothing more than a vendor/supplier.”

—**Mike Weinberg**, author of *New Sales. Simplified* and *Sales Management. Simplified*

“*Stop Selling & Start Leading* is not the normal sales book, which is what makes it so powerful. Too many salespeople think sales is about techniques. High performance selling has little to do with technique; it’s all about leadership. It’s helping customers solve their problems, aligning the buying group, and helping them mobilize to take action. Great sellers are great leaders—with their customers and within their own organizations. *Stop Selling & Start Leading* is a thoughtful discussion about how salespeople provide this leadership. It focuses on the five practices critical for leadership, providing great case studies and lessons in each practice. Make these practices the core of your approach in providing great sales leadership.”

—**Dave Brock**, author, *Sales Manager Survival Guide*; CEO, Partners In EXCELLENCE

“*Stop Selling & Start Leading* shows sellers precisely how to differentiate themselves from the pack and turn customers into clients for life. If you’re looking for a way to break out of the traditional sales mode and become a valued member of your client’s team, this book gives you the five steps to do exactly that.”

—**Kendra Lee**, author of the award-winning books *The Sales Magnet* and *Selling Against the Goal*; president of the KLA Group

“Every leader, sales leader, and individual who wants a successful career in selling should read this book. What you’ll discover is the liberating truth, backed by brand-new research that proves leading is the new selling. *Stop Selling & Start Leading* not only reveals new science behind how customers want to be sold, it tells you exactly how to do it. It contains insights that ascend sales process, and it supersedes old-school selling behaviors. For those who truly want the highest levels of success for themselves and their clients, I offer my highest recommendation.”

—**James Muir**, CEO, Best Practice International

“In *Stop Selling & Start Leading*, the authors have delivered a beautiful masterpiece that is guaranteed to make you a more effective and respected sales professional.”

—**Jeb Blount**, CEO of Sales Gravy and author of *Sales EQ*

“The authors start with a chapter on credibility, which in their view creates the foundation for leadership and selling. That’s why their book simply ‘rings true.’ You won’t find an ounce of counterfeit data or advice. Exemplary research illustrated by wise practitioner stories makes for great reading and solid guidance. An instant classic for every B2B seller.”

—**Barbara Weaver Smith**, founder and CEO, The Whale Hunters

“In today’s world so much about sales focuses on processes, CRMs, and systems, when in reality the most important thing in sales is PEOPLE—always has been and always will. In professional selling PEOPLE buy from PEOPLE. *Stop Selling & Start Leading*’s research with both buyers and sellers provides a treasure trove of information to help salespeople lead and sell more effectively and buyers to once again enjoy the experience—while their companies benefit with improved behaviors and better bottom-line results on both sides.”

—**Debbie Mrazek**, founder and president, The Sales Company

“My favorite line in this book is super simple: ‘The seller becomes a trusted advisor.’ The principles and steps required to achieve that level of buyer confidence are outlined in *Stop Selling & Start Leading*. Read it to make extraordinary sales happen.”

—**Tom Hopkins**, author of *How to Master the Art of Selling* and *When Buyers Say No*

“If your customers don’t see you as a leader, then they don’t need you. The game of selling has changed, and the customer is rewriting the rulebook. Be seen as a leader or you won’t be seen at all!”

—**Mark Hunter**, “The Sales Hunter,” author of *High-Profit Prospecting*

“The research supporting The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® is powerful. Buyers have spoken. They want sellers to stop using old-school sales tactics that make them feel unimportant. The authors clearly outline the behaviors buyers not only want, but so desperately need. Sellers who exhibit them and create value with every conversation will win.”

—**Nancy Bleeker**, author of *Conversations That Sell*

“If you are in sales and not happy with your results or simply trying to achieve more, what behaviors are you willing to change? *Stop Selling & Start Leading* is a great read on how sales execs can make simple tweaks in their behaviors that will generate significant results. But it all starts with you taking the first step and reading this book, which I highly recommend.”

—**Ron Karr**, author, *Lead, Sell, or Get Out of the Way*

STOP SELLING — & — **START LEADING**

How to Make *Extraordinary*
Sales Happen

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STOP
SELLING

&

**START
LEADING**

INTRODUCTION: HOW YOU MAKE EXTRAORDINARY SALES HAPPEN

STOP SELLING & START LEADING is a book about how to make more sales. How? Our research shows you can make more sales by abandoning sales-y behaviors buyers resist and replacing them with *leadership* behaviors buyers desire. This book is about the extraordinary things sellers do when they stop pushing people to buy before they're ready, and they start guiding buyers by transforming values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. *Stop Selling & Start Leading* is about ennobling the sales profession and dignifying buyers, a shift that turns tedious transactions into exciting customer experiences.

This book is focused as much on buyers as it is on sellers, which represents a truth every exemplary leader understands: it's not about you, it's about your constituents—their needs, hopes, dreams, and aspirations—and leaders can't make anything happen all by themselves. Today buyers have enormous power and information and more choices than ever before. They dodge sellers, delay decisions, demand price concessions, and expect more but give less. Buyers scarcely tolerate sellers and often unfairly stereotype them, erecting barriers to entry without giving sellers a fair chance.

Stop Selling & Start Leading is aimed directly at sellers. It's for sellers who work diligently but still struggle to mobilize buyers and meet

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ever-increasing quotas. It's for sellers who face buyer cynicism, despite their best efforts to differentiate themselves and their sincere intent to help their buyers. This is a book for sellers who are looking for ways to build relationships with buyers and to succeed in reaching mutual goals.

This is also a book about leadership. Leadership is not a formal position or an official place in the organizational hierarchy. Leadership is not a genetic trait or limited by gender, ethnic or racial background, family or social status, appearance, or nationality. Leadership is an observable and learnable set of skills and abilities that is accessible to everyone. Research clearly shows that in the highest performing organizations *leadership is everyone's business*.¹ Similarly, evidence abounds that the most exemplary sellers engage most frequently in the practices of leadership. Leaders, like extraordinary sellers, are change brokers. They are guides who show people the way from where they are now to where they aspire to be in the future. Leaders make extraordinary things happen. We believe you can, too.

When you lay down your old-school selling behaviors and mindset, buyers will see you as something more than the stereotypical fast-talking, high-pressure, know-it-all seller. When you choose, instead, to behave as a leader, buyers will respond favorably. Buyers will want you to lead them to an ideal place.

How do we know what behaviors buyers want to see from sellers? We asked them. Our groundbreaking research with more than five hundred B2B buyers provides a blueprint of behaviors sellers can follow to book more meetings and close more sales. We also asked hundreds of sellers to tell us stories about their own *personal-best experiences* in selling. In story after story, the same behaviors appeared. Sellers succeeded the most when they demonstrated behaviors associated with leadership.

Our research with buyers and sellers is new and reveals some surprising findings; however, the research we'll share about leadership is not new. Long before we asked buyers to tell us what behaviors they wanted to see more frequently from sellers, Jim and Barry started conducting research with leaders from around the world, in every

industry and discipline. Their research pinpoints the behaviors exhibited by people when they were at their personal best as leaders—when they made extraordinary things happen. It also shows the impact of these behaviors on constituent engagement. In other words, we know through this research what makes leadership effective. Jim and Barry call this framework The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®, and it consists of ten leadership commitments.²

The Five Practices gave us a great starting point and foundation for investigating the relationships between sellers and buyers. In our research with buyers, we asked what would happen if sellers exhibited these same leadership behaviors in their relationship with buyers. We also asked how frequently sellers already behave in these ways and how often buyers would ideally like to see these behaviors used by sellers. The findings make a compelling case for a behavioral shift. Sales effectiveness, like leadership effectiveness, can be significantly increased by choosing to behave differently.

We use the terms *buyers*, *sellers*, *leaders*, and *behaviors* deliberately throughout this book. *Buyers* is used to represent all people at all phases of the sales cycle, from suspects to prospects to clients. *Sellers* refers to everyone who sells, regardless of role, from Sales Development Rep to Major Accounts Manager. *Leaders* refers to everyone who makes a choice to lead. This word is not intended to suggest a management-level role in the organization. We're using the word *leader* to talk about you, a seller, who decides to utilize the behaviors of exemplary leadership when working with your buyers. Finally, we talk a great deal in this book about *behaviors*, the actions people perform when they are leading. That's because the actions you take matter much more than what you think, feel, say, or intend.

As you read sellers' stories and buyers' comments, you'll get first-hand examples of how to modify your behaviors to be more effective with buyers. You'll see what it means to become an exemplary seller who guides buyers to a better place.

In Chapter One we review shifts in buyer desires and demands. We identify the five buyer preferences that originally led to our hypothesis that sellers would be more successful if they replaced traditional selling

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behaviors with the behaviors of exemplary leaders. This is where you'll find a deeper dive into the research that proved this hypothesis.

Selling, like leading, is based on relationships with people. To go straight to the core of what people need in order to follow someone *willingly*, we devote Chapter Two to a single characteristic that is the cornerstone of leadership: credibility. It's also the one characteristic that buyers most emphatically told us was lacking in sellers. We describe what it is, why it matters so much, and how buyers assess—beginning with the first encounter—whether a seller has this essential quality.

The ten chapters that follow describe the Ten Commitments of Leadership—the essential behaviors that leaders employ to make extraordinary things happen—and explain what sellers must do to shift their behaviors within each of The Five Practices. Stories from sellers describing their personal bests provide examples of these Ten Commitments in action, and buyers' comments magnify the key points. Evidence from our studies and sellers' reports make the case for adopting these behaviors. Each of these leadership practice sections ends with ideas for you to *Take Action*, suggestions you can implement immediately to liberate the leader inside you. None of the recommendations in this book requires a budget, hierarchical approval, or organization-wide change. All that's required is your commitment and discipline. It's all up to you.

In Chapter Thirteen, we talk more about that choice. Your choice. We call on every seller to be a leader, to rise to the challenge of becoming the leader that buyers are looking for. Sellers shouldn't feel ashamed of the work they do and the profession they represent. You can choose to shed the stereotypes and become a different kind of seller, one who leads with pride and serves as a partner with buyers.

We recommend you first read Chapter One for the background information. As you do, think about the reception you've had from buyers and put yourself in their shoes. Consider the case for changing your behavior. When you're ready to take the plunge, move on to Chapter Two to understand why this behavioral shift is critical. As you proceed through the remaining chapters, look for ways to become a leader with

your buyers, with your internal partners, and even with yourself. Even though buyers rank some leadership practices as more important than others, remember that buyers want to see something more or different from sellers in every one of the practices. Each leadership practice and commitment is essential.

Your buyers are eager to see you make these changes. The sales profession needs more people to step into their full leadership potential. The world beyond selling needs leaders, too, in every sector, in every community, in every country. We need extraordinary leadership, and we need people to provide leadership now more than ever. There is so much amazing work yet to do. We need leaders who can ignite and unite us.

When you stop selling and start leading, buyers will respond. You will, too. Becoming a leader is one of the noblest and most energizing things you will ever do. We fervently hope this book will enrich your life and the lives of your buyers, your family, your colleagues, and your community. Are you ready?

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March 2018

**WHAT IF SELLERS
BEHAVED AS
LEADERS?**

1

WHEN SELLERS ARE AT THEIR BEST

AMY SPELLMAN MADE A MID-LIFE CAREER CHANGE. She became an insurance agent because she wanted to help people. Amy was excited about the fresh start, income potential, and opportunity to make a difference in people's lives.

Six months later, Amy left sales. For her, the role was unfulfilling despite the higher income. Following up company-generated leads and making cold calls felt like dialing-for-dollars, and calling people multiple times felt like an imposition. Selling in a high-pressure environment meant spending less time helping people in the way she'd envisioned. Instead of feeling supportive, she felt pushy. Instead of enjoying connections with clients, she felt inauthentic, rushed, and slightly manipulative when using sales tactics she had observed and learned from others.¹

Perhaps you've felt the same way at some time in your sales role. Maybe you've sensed that buyers seem suspicious and guarded when you contact them. Or possibly your friends and family are cynical and question your character and integrity because you are in sales.

REDEFINING THE B2B BUYER EXPERIENCE

The pervasive, negative stereotypes about sellers affect how people initially react to you, even, on occasion, family and friends who know you well. The *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Wolf of Wall Street* movie personas of sellers are reinforced in real life often enough to put buyers on the defensive. As Amy said, “It didn’t feel like I could win. The people I called assumed I was going to take advantage of them. They didn’t even give me a chance to show how I would be different.” What’s a seller to do?

More of the Same Behaviors Results in More of the Same Reactions

Too many sellers simply shrug their shoulders and adopt these stereotypical behaviors. Others defuse buyers’ negative perceptions by operating with integrity, the more challenging path to be sure.

For buyers, the challenge is to separate the wheat from the chaff, determining which sellers are trustworthy. An overwhelming refrain from buyers in our study was, as one person said, “All sellers seem to be saying and doing the same things.”² Sellers, despite their intentions, are failing to behaviorally differentiate themselves.

As buyers become increasingly self-sufficient and more resistant to advances, sellers scramble to find more leads, make more calls, and get in front of more buyers. Engaging in more of the same old sales behaviors exacerbates the problem. All sellers seem the same, because they’re all behaving the same way.

Something Different, but What?

There must be another option. Retail researchers Robin Lewis and Michael Dart concluded that winning people’s wallets requires

delivering “such an awesome connecting experience that they will go out of their way to come to you.”³ “An awesome connecting experience”? Now that’s something different in selling! It’s a phrase that’s more likely to be associated with leadership. Let’s break it down.

✓ **Awesome.**

When we’re using the slang definition of *awesome*, it means the sales call is going to be “very impressive.” Jaded buyers won’t rate even the best selling behaviors as “very impressive.” Quality is a weak differentiator that may go completely unnoticed. The dictionary meaning of *awesome* is more applicable: “causing an overwhelming feeling of admiration or respect.” Now that’s something that would certainly capture a buyer’s attention and clearly be differentiating.

Anthony Iannarino, the founder of The Sales Blog, says such a response only comes with genuine caring for your buyer.⁴ He believes the power of caring is unmatched and that those who care deeply about their buyers “will stand out from the crowd and be welcomed as trusted, valued partners.” Empathy, intimacy, and presence, he asserts, create the caring experience that keep buyers coming back for more.

✓ **Connecting.**

Connecting, too, aims for differentiation. *Connecting* means joining or linking. To be clear, connecting means much more than a social media link. It involves more than the initial rapport-building you do with prospects. A connection isn’t just a name in your CRM. Connections aren’t sufficiently made by automation and artificial intelligence (AI). In human interactions, there’s a need for *emotional* connection.

Jeb Blount, CEO of Sales Gravy, says the point of connecting in sales is to “win other people over by making them feel that they are the center of your attention, to make them feel significant or important,” and then to “nurture a deep emotional connection [because] people buy from people they like, trust, and believe will solve their problems.”⁵ Buyers want authentic connections, not superficial ones that evaporate when the sale is closed.