

Introduction

This is a book about relationships. More specifically, it is about managing relationships as assets. I know, I know -- you thought it was about sales. It is. I once heard a speaker named Lou Heckler say, "Business moves at the speed of relationships." He's right. You may have heard the term *relationship asset management*.¹ If you constantly manage your relationship assets, your business will move at a constant speed. If you shift your focus or divert your attention, even for a moment, from Relationship Asset Management, you will find that your business will slow down proportionately. If you think of sales as the vehicle that propels business, relationships are the engine and you are the driver. This book is your road map. How fast and how far you want to go is up to you. There are no limits. As Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else." Selling professional services does not have to be one of those happenstance, if-you're-lucky kind of things. You can have a plan, you can have systematic steps to get there, and you can have a road map to follow.

What's in It for You

You are great at what you do. You are so good at it, you've entered the world of self-employment and you have your own business as a consultant, a coach, a therapist, an attorney, a facilitator, an accountant, a chiropractor, a project manager, a trainer, an advisor, a whatever! Do you have a selling system that integrates networking, marketing and sales? Where will your next clients come from? Where will your leads come from? Do you think of yourself as a consultant, a coach, a counselor, an advisor, a chiropractor, a project manager, a whatever and not as a sales person? As a sole proprietor or small business owner, chances are you are not only the president/CEO, but you are also the janitor, receptionist, CFO and COO! And, you are, whether reluctantly or not, the SALES EXECUTIVE for your business. As Sam Horn of TongueFu has said, "a sole proprietor is a SALE proprietor." Likewise, if you are a solo practitioner, you must also be a *sale* practitioner.

You may be an experienced solopreneur looking for a structured format for sealing the deal and supercharging your sales to take your business to the next level. (A system is defined as a set of connected things or parts forming a complex whole, and as a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done; an organized scheme or method.)² The system set forth in this book applies equally well to seasoned practitioners as well as the newbies. In fact, I was already doing a six figure business when I started applying the ten

¹ See *Business Is a Contact Sport*, by Tom Richardson and Augusta Vidauetta. (Indianapolis: Alpha Books 2002).

² Oxford American Dictionaries

steps I've laid out for you and in the first year of using the system I saw a 95.6% increase in revenues. Either way, this book is for you!

Or maybe you're a retiring baby boomer looking for your next avocation. You may be an employee, tired of slaving away for someone else's gain, ready to break out on your own to join the global, networked economy of free agents. Either way, you've probably considered some form of consulting as an option for what you can do to leverage and apply your corporate experience as a free agent. This book can help you make it a reality.

Your success is hinged on your sales ability. 'Sales' is not a dirty word! Selling executive coaching, consulting, or any professional services to corporations can be challenging, particularly given the abstract, intangible nature of those services. Complicating that is our sometimes-negative perception about sales and selling. For many of us the concept of sales conjures up images of sleazy used car salesmen, pushy telemarketing calls during dinner, the onslaught of catalogs that clog our mailboxes, or hearing a pitch from a door-to-door solicitor or vendor. Worse yet, we think of spam, phishing and other e-mail evils. For others of us, the activity required to generate sales causes us anxiety or feels intrusive or uncomfortable. We don't want to force ourselves on others -- we want to help them! Particularly for the coaching industry -- which in spite of itself is a \$1 billion industry and second in growth only to information technology -- generating business is a major stumbling block. The only way to impact this reality is to recognize that we can't afford to be naïve about what it takes to create business opportunities. We have to get good at it so that it will take us less time to get the clients and we can spend more time doing what we love, which is working with the clients. Most of the helping professions are a lot like coaching...they don't want to sell. They love the client work, but hate the work of getting clients. Yet we know that no clients equals no business. The most important part of running a business is keeping existing clients and acquiring new ones.

Developing New Business, Your Way

Seal the Deal will guide you to take new actions and alter your mindsets about business development in a way that will open the door for you to grow your coaching/professional services business in the way YOU want. Once you understand and can use its systematic process, concrete approach, and focused format for selling professional services into organizations, you can easily Seal the Deal using your own natural style and personality. The steps are easily customizable and user friendly. If you picked up this book looking for tips, tricks, gimmicks, magic, secret formulas, or other marketing wizardry, you won't find them here. There will be no manipulative or pressure techniques, fear tactics, or slick shadiness of any kind. The system in this book is about honor and integrity, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty. It is a straightforward, no-

nonsense approach, which is why it works for everyone who applies it in a way that is true to his or her natural self. There are no shortcuts. If you are willing to do the work, take the risks, and shift your perceptual framework, you will see results.

Many of the points in this book are discussed in terms of coaching and consulting, but these steps apply equally well to any professional service. Also, the discussion is primarily organized around the idea of a sole practitioner or small partnership selling into organizations at the executive level or to Human Resources; but with only slight shifts in mindset it can also apply to B2B selling or to selling large scale multi-coach interventions, large scale change initiatives, or large scale strategic implementation projects. None of the concepts presented here is rocket science, or truly new information -- but you may not have thought of them in the context of business development before.

A notable feature of this book is that you will learn an action-oriented selling system through an edited transcript of our Seal the Deal telecourse. The telecourse is a mastermind group of coaches and consultants who are taking their Networking, Marketing, and Sales to the next level (the participants' names have been changed to protect the innocent). There are ten sessions of live group coaching conversation, and while we've edited out the small talk and personally identifying information, we've left the course content essentially intact. I have also included some of our most popular worksheets, templates, samples, and tip sheets for you to use as you create and fulfill your own Personal Strategic Business Development Action Plan in three distinct domains: Networking, Marketing, and Sales. If you wish to listen in, audio of our telecourses is available for purchase. You can contact us for one-on-one sales coaching as well.

Overview of *Seal the Deal*

Each step begins with the dialogue from the corresponding telecourse session for that topic, and it is followed by additional guidance, strategies, worksheets, and guidelines. I recommend going through the sessions in order, as they build on one another, but each chapter is also usable on its own, so if you prefer to skip around you will still benefit. At the end of the book you will find additional resources and your own Strategic Networking Marketing Sales Plan template. If you approach this book as a self-study course, you will alter your mindsets about sales and walk away with actionable steps for building your business your way.

Why do I know this stuff works? Here's a bit of my story. When I left my career as a schoolteacher, I learned how to network by spending six months engaged in informational interviews -- meeting everyone I could possibly meet to figure out what I would do next. How would my teaching skills transfer to the corporate workplace? The pattern that emerged from that experience was that people kept saying I should get into consulting and coaching. In fact, a few of the folks I met

during that six months of interviewing wanted to hire me as the coach for their employees and clients! Thus, I started my business because I had clients. After two years, the initial engagements came to their natural conclusion, and I had to quickly learn how to generate new business. Applying what I knew about networking, and integrating a few marketing activities, I was able to go from \$10K in debt at year 2, to generating sustainable six figure revenues by year 3 of my business. Then I learned how to integrate sales activities into the game. The first year that I used the whole system in an integrated way in my own business, I was already 6 years into self-employment. I formatted the selling system by combining my networking and marketing experiences with the core concepts from sales training that I had been co-facilitating for lawyers and legal service providers –and I began to apply it to my own business. The system works for experienced consultants as well as those just starting out. How do I know it works? Because I’ve sealed the deal in more than 110 companies and firms worldwide, and I started as a schoolteacher!

In my first year of applying the selling system you are about to learn, I saw a 95.6% increase in annual revenues. Does that sounds like something that would interest to you? If so, I encourage you to systematically do the homework actions and answer the questions in this book, and treat this book as if it were your personal sales coach. Here are some of the basics we’ll be exploring more fully:



Exploring Barriers to Effective Business Development

- Mindsets
- Perceived Obstacles
- Real Approaches
- Strategies for Authenticity

Barriers to Effective Business Development

What are your current mindsets about Sales and Marketing? About Business Development in general? About Networking?

What gets in your way? What are the obstacles that prevent you from making lots of sales?

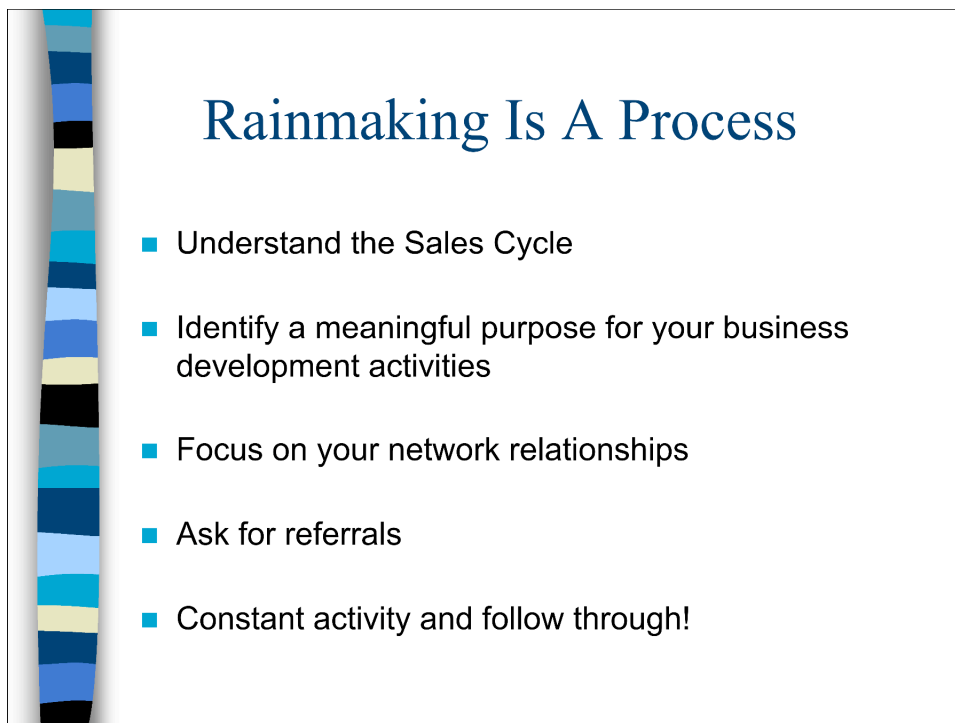
Where do you get in your own way?

Where are you repressing your real and authentic self in an effort to fit in, impress partners or clients, manage others' perceptions about you?

What strategies can you employ that will allow you to bring forth your full and authentic self toward a meaningful purpose?

Who are your allies?

Where can you deepen relationships or create partnerships that will expand your sphere of influence and forward your business development goals?

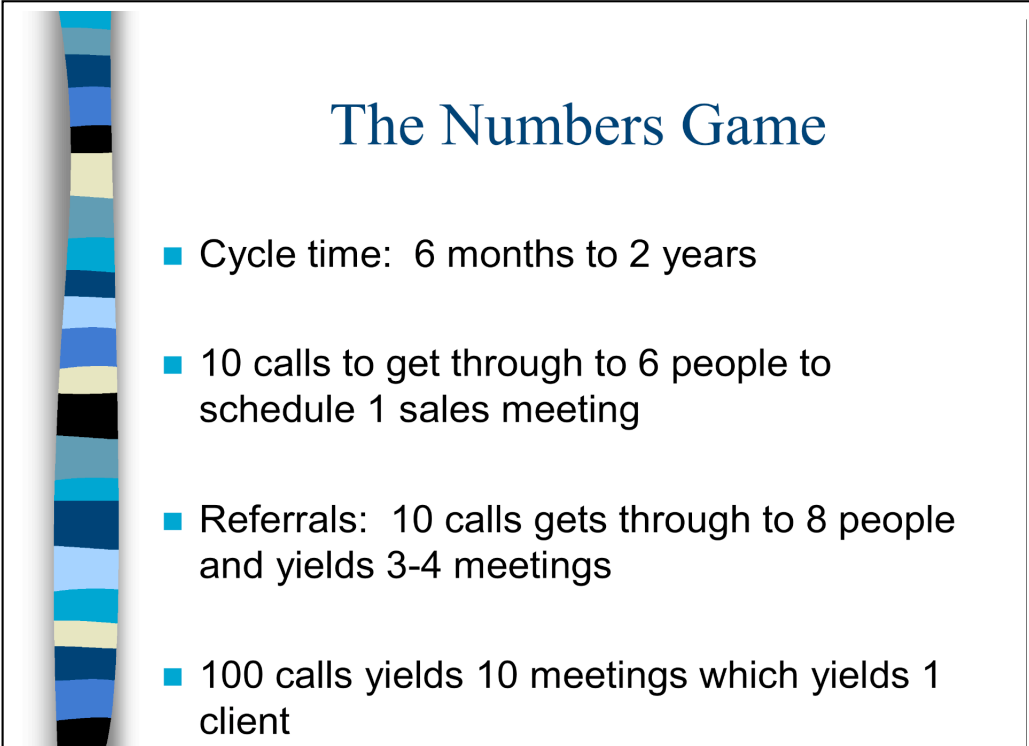
A graphic titled "Rainmaking Is A Process" featuring a vertical stack of colorful horizontal bars on the left side, resembling a stylized rain cloud or a stack of papers. The colors include shades of blue, teal, yellow, and black. To the right of the bars is a list of five bullet points, each preceded by a small blue square.

Rainmaking Is A Process

- Understand the Sales Cycle
- Identify a meaningful purpose for your business development activities
- Focus on your network relationships
- Ask for referrals
- Constant activity and follow through!

The Power of Rainmaking

Successful rainmaking begins with developing your own concept of what result you want from your business development efforts -- you can't get there if you don't have a clear idea of where *there* is. Know where you want to go with your business and design steps to take it in that direction. The first step for many of us is to perfect a deep understanding of the sales cycle -- and when and how to bring our best targets into it. Key strategies are to zero in on prospective clients you have identified in or through your network and to never, ever fail to ask for referrals. In other words, rainmaking means you are in perpetual business development mode -- continually networking, marketing, and selling.



The Numbers Game

- Cycle time: 6 months to 2 years
- 10 calls to get through to 6 people to schedule 1 sales meeting
- Referrals: 10 calls gets through to 8 people and yields 3-4 meetings
- 100 calls yields 10 meetings which yields 1 client

Playing by the Numbers

Allow me to explain. The numbers I quote throughout *Seal the Deal* are based on general research, and of course vary greatly depending on the individual, but you can use these numbers as a baseline for understanding the numbers game involved.

It takes 10 calls to get through to 6-7 people to set up one meeting.

It takes 10 meetings to get 5 second meetings to get 1 client.

Therefore, it takes 100 calls to get 10 meetings to get one client!

The figures for referrals are much better. 10 calls will get through to 8 or 9 people and yield 3-4 meetings or more.

The entire process, from meeting a prospective user of your services to getting business from them, could take anywhere from 6 months to two years. That means that if you stop making calls to set up meetings to get new clients, in roughly six months you will find yourself with a paucity of work.

This is why you need to engage in constant activity and follow through! Much of the sales process is about momentum.



Know When To Get Out of Your Own Way

- Silence is leverage
- Don't PITCH, analyze
- The 80/20 Rules



Getting Out of Your Own Way

An ongoing theme throughout *Seal the Deal* is avoiding self-sabotage -- learning ways to get out of your own way. For example, know when to stop talking. Listening is the key to getting golden nuggets of information from your prospects as well as to eventually getting the business. Use silence to put the ball in their court.

No one likes to be pitched. It is better to use the time to determine with the prospect if it makes sense to do business together. Analyze their needs, their situation, what they are committed to doing/accomplishing, and where you might help. Approach the conversation with the assumption that you may not be the best match for their needs -- and a willingness to walk away..

In the long run, 80% of your business comes from 20% of your clients, so focus on providing excellent customer care and seeking repeat business from current clients. Ask them for referrals frequently throughout the engagement life cycle. Do not just ask for referrals at the end of a project but plant seeds at the beginning and make referral requests throughout your service cycle with a client.

In any sales meeting, the talking/listening rule is 80/20...you should do 80% listening and only talk 20% of the time; the client should do 80% of the talking. Thus, to prepare for client meetings, you will be well served to prepare questions that will open up the client responses.

Apply the investigative, inquiry skills you already have to the sales meeting. Don't assume they can use your services, investigate the possibility with the prospect of where it makes sense to work together in a way that best serves their commitments/ goals/objectives.

Tell stories that illustrate your results, wins and successes with other clients, so that your prospects can see themselves in your story and assume your services are the solutions to their needs.

Create Space, Be Real

Trust yourself. Listen. Create space to breathe. Align with your authenticity and commitments.

People Buy from You for a Finite Set of Reasons

Once you understand that there is a set number of possible reasons someone might buy your services, you can step aside from the personal attachment to the outcome of getting clients. Once you know the finite list, you can have more control over your reactions to the process. Your list may be like what the Sandler Institute teaches: people either buy from you because of their pain and the belief that your products or services can eliminate that pain for them, or they buy from you because they believe that your products and services will increase their pleasure or joy in some way.³

While the Sandler training is very powerful and useful, my list is a little bit different. Inquire within yourself to determine what your list looks like. People buy from you because:

- They like you.
- They trust you.
- They value the service you provide.
- They want your products or think your services will help them.
- They have some problem that you can help them to solve.
- They trust the person in their life who told them about you.

If you keep your list in mind during your sales process, you'll know that once one or more of those things are sufficiently present in the other person (organization, etc.), then you can close the deal. The list above provides your

³ See their website at www.sandler.com/

litmus test for readiness to approach the close. Likewise, if none of the above is present in sufficient quantities to score the sale, it would be foolish to ask for business at that time.

No One Is On the Bench

Networking and business development are not spectator sports. Not only do you have to be in the game, on the court, out in the field, or whatever metaphor speaks to you...you must think of everyone else in the world as also being in the game with you. There are no benchwarmers, which means that none of your interactions with any other human being are ever wasted. Every moment is an opportunity for building relationships, for speaking your vision to everyone all the time. Another critical piece of this mindset is to operate from the assumption that everyone wants to help you. This assumption will allow you to make big, bold, outrageous requests that will encourage and invite people to contribute to your growing business and blossoming self.

How do you actively stay competitive in this rapidly expanding market? If you are not networking all the time, what is in the way of that? Even if you spend most of your time with fellow coaching or consulting colleagues, they can be great networking and business development resources for you. Staying competitive in the market may not actually be about competition.

Competition

Think about competition for a minute. In a personal services business like consulting or coaching in organizations, even though you and all your would-be-competitors offer similar or even the same services (assessments, 360's, MBTI, individual coaching, team coaching, situational leadership, presentation skills, etc.), so much of what you do is unique to you as an individual. When you think about it that way, do you truly have competitors in your market?

Here's a mindset that better serves coaches to expand our offering into organizations and be able to provide larger scale interventions than individual coaches: I've heard it referred to as *coopetition*, an amalgam of cooperation and competition. The idea is one of collaboration with competitors, or turning competitors into partners by building alliances and joint ventures as a business development strategy. If you struggle with staying competitive in the market, identify those you perceive to be your biggest competitors and approach them to create coopetition arrangements that serve everyone and the greater good of the client organization. It is the old win-win concept that we facilitate our clients to attain...now applied to your own business growth strategy.

There is a psychology of selling, and it is equally important to manage your own psychology as well as understand the game from the prospective buyer's perspective. Selling coaching and other professional services is very different

from selling products or programs. These services are abstract and intangible – it's not like you're selling Fuller brushes or Girl Scout cookies! You're selling concepts, competence, confidence, a host of outcomes that often are years in the making.

Navigating the System

The *Seal the Deal* process uses clear navigation points and basic foundational elements. There's an assumed baseline of credibility...you have the training, experience, education, and credentials to deliver the service (whatever it may be) and get results. You have a track record of proven value (results/worth). You understand and can facilitate a sophisticated interview. You recognize when your prospective client is an educated and savvy consumer/user of your services. You are aware of and can manage your mindsets and attitudes during the process. You understand and can keep all your activities clear and consistent within a specific sales cycle. You constantly fill and track your pipeline of leads. You know your numbers and what it takes to play the numbers game to move people through your sales process. You build your business routinely using the technology of referrals, and you are always networking.

These are the basics. Of course, there's much, much more to each one of these elements, hence this book. Read on and have fun!