

# What's possible...

...in your business

## How the Best Connect and Win in High Stakes Sales

Here's what legendary author and business guru Tom Peters thinks of Jeff Thull's 'Exceptional' book:

"Exceptional Selling zeros in on the key ingredient of sales... the book has something profound to teach each of us, regardless of profession, from the pizza parlour to the pulpit"  
– Tom Peters.

So you know Jeff's pedigree – Jeff has designed and implemented business-transformation programs for companies such as Shell Global Solutions, 3M, Microsoft, Siemens, Citicorp, IBM as well as many fast-track start-up companies.

### You know what it's like...

As you go about your daily life, you will have experienced sales tactics being used on you as 'sales people' attempt to 'ease your decision' into buying their product or service.



Think about how you feel when these kinds of sales tactics are used on you. Cheesy? Disappointed? Untrustworthy?

Exceptional Selling helps restructure our thinking to completely revolutionise our approach in order to really connect with customers.

### It ain't what you say...

*"If you don't know how to effectively structure and conduct customer conversations, what you talk about doesn't make much difference."*

It isn't what you say it's the way that you say it that matters most.

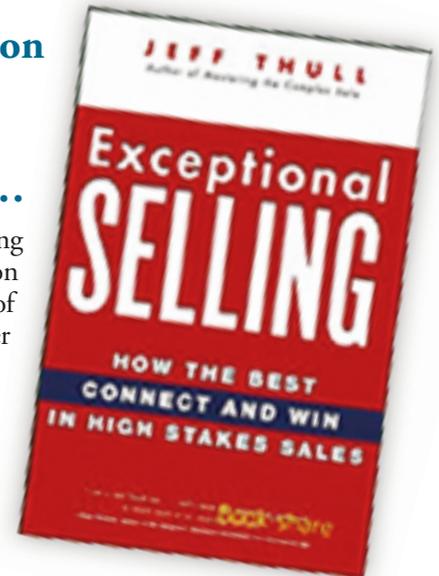
*"...successful professionals win customer loyalty and trust through respectful, honest and diagnostic-based communications."*

What Stephen Covey (7 habits Of Highly Effective People) would call 'seek first to understand and then be understood.'

Your presentation can make you irrelevant and hold you back...

When your focus is getting your sales presentation made, you run the risk of sounding like every other sales person.

When your focus is on your presentation you do not take into account whether the value on offer is of RELEVANCE to your customer. And like Jeff says:



**"Salespeople are guilty until proven innocent."**

Yes the burden of proof is with you – you are responsible for demonstrating that the value you have on offer is relevant to the customer in front of you. So...

"...the compulsion to have an immediate answer for everything..." is understandable.

However this compulsion to present...

"...creates a significant barrier to listening and understanding customers' situations."

We all want to ride in on our big white horse with sticking plasters (temporary solutions) when we think we know the answer!

Focus on presentation and you too will be 'guilty'.



### Stating the blindingly obvious...

We need a FULL perspective of the problems, issues, symptoms, consequences and implications before we saddle up our white horse! This requires an emphasis on diagnosis.

# What's possible...

“When salespeople neglect the customer’s perspective, they put both their CREDIBILITY and RELEVANCY at risk.”

And so to avoid this Jeff suggests you help your prospective customer work out your relevance to them!

Let me explain...

## Exceptional selling success – it’s all in YOUR mind!

“In studies of exceptional sales professionals, the number one characteristic they have in common is that they think differently than their less successful colleagues.”

And diagnosis plays an important if not vital role in this way of thinking.

*“The diagnostic mindset is the antithesis of a presentation mind-set.”*

Here’s why diagnosis is more effective than presentation because:

1. It’s always focussed on the customer
2. It’s about observable symptoms of problems
3. It engages the customer as a collaborative partner
4. It promotes ownership
5. It differentiates you from your competition
6. It’s something you do WITH your customer not TO your customer

## Think diagnosis not presentation...

How good you diagnose determines your sales success.

Here’s five traits that Thull suggests support value diagnosis:

1. **Value relevance:** Creating value with customers is like helping them work a connect-the-dots puzzle.

Connect your customer to the value in your product, the value in the process of using your product and the value of the resulting performance. You’ll then BE RELEVANT!

2. **Change leadership**

*“Successful selling is about managing the customers’ emotional acceptance of change.”*

Focus on change with your customer and it supports your diagnosis mindset.

3. **Mutual Self-esteem.** It’s how you construct and conduct your conversation that matters most!

**WARNING 1:** Ask your customer ‘what’s keeping you awake at night?’ or ‘what types of pain are you experiencing in your manufacturing process?’ and you’re in danger of insinuating that he doesn’t know what he’s doing. He’s not up to the job!

Maintain and protect both your own AND your customers’ self esteem when crafting your questions. You’ll then oil the wheels of respectful and honest diagnosis.



4. **Mutual Self-interest.** Acknowledge that you’re simultaneously responsible for serving your customer, your employer and yourself. This is an unavoidable juggling match all sales people face. Be aware of it. Accept it.
5. **Emotional Maturity.** Salespeople should be professionally involved, but emotionally detached. Easy to say. Hard to implement. Be aware and work at it. Seek emotional detachment in your sales meetings.

## Putting it to work...

Jeff suggests we now live in selling era 3.

We’re no longer a ‘persuader’ (era 1).

We’ve even moved on from ‘problem solver’ (era 2).

Era 3 is about delivering ‘business advantage’

	ERA 1	ERA 2	ERA 3
SKILLS	SALES SCRIPTS	QUESTION LISTEN ANALYSIS	BUSINESS
TOOLS	PRESENT CLOSING	NEEDS ANALYSIS	PROJECT MGT
ROLE	PERSUADER	PROBLEM SOLVER	SOURCE OF BUSINESS ADVANTAGE
VALUE	OBVIOUS VALUE	AUGMENTED VALUE	COMPLEX VALUE NETWORKS

You engage in delivering ‘business advantage’ and live in era 3 when you adopt Thull’s Prime Process:

a. Discover; b. Diagnose; c. Design; d. Deliver.

## a. Exceptional success starts with DISCOVERY...

*“Effective preparation and credible initial conversations lead to successful sales and they start with symptoms, not solutions... The first conversations we should be having with customers are not sales conversations, they are discovery conversations.”*

Work out a structure for your conversations. Work out well-crafted questions to assist your discovery and diagnosis.

## WARNING 2:

*“When salespeople ask customers to define their own problems, they fall prey to the implicit and erroneous assumption that customers understand the scope and severity of all their problems and all the opportunities they are not acting on.”*



Customers need help with discovery and diagnosis. A dentist does not allow a patient to self-diagnose! Neither does a doctor. Nor should you!

**NB** In most surveys on trust doctors rank very high – sales people do not!

The onus and responsibility is on you to construct and conduct an exceptional discovery and diagnostic conversation.

Construct a series of well crafted indicator questions/conversations, such as:

- Tell me more about ...?
- Tell me more about the behaviours you are looking for?
- Could you give me an example of...?
- When did you first notice ...?
- What seems to be the key contributing factors to ...?
- How has this affected...?
- Have you had a chance to look at what this might be costing the business in terms of ...?



## b. The DIAGNOSTIC Conversation...

There are five important parts to this process:

1. Focus the field of inquiry on a job process your buyer is responsible for
2. Have the customer begin a review of the process
3. Describe (together) the optimal outcome of the process
4. Protect the customer's self-esteem by acknowledging her achievements
5. Capture the thought process you have just guided your customer through. It is the springboard into an in-depth Diagnosis.

You and your customer drill down into an issue to confirm that symptoms exist. Together you determine their causes, consequences and priorities. Just like a doctor or dentist would do.

## Your 3 must-have diagnostic conversations...

Exceptionally successful sales professionals tackle the conversations that less successful sales people avoid or ignore.

Here's three must have conversations if you want to achieve exceptional sales success.

**1. Expectations and outcomes conversation:** While we should always start by asking customers to define their expectations, we also have to recognise that they may not know enough to cover all outcomes themselves. Then we have to seek out additional outcomes.

We also need to recognise that outcome expectations vary with perspective. Managing Directors expect different things from Operations Managers. When working with multiple individuals within the customer organisation, we will discover contradictory expectations.

Discovering/diagnosing expectations and outcomes is your job!

**2. Resources and timing conversation:** Resources and timing are critical issues with regard to winning the sale.

Yet salespeople tend to avoid or underestimate these issues because they are afraid to acknowledge these often difficult realities. It pays to take a leaf out of the Good To Great research by Jim Collins, it pays to face these 'Brutal Truths'. Discuss these brutal truths with your customer.

**3. Two financial conversations.**

**a. The cost of the problem.** If you can't establish the cost, you don't have a problem.

Ignoring the cost or asking the customer to establish the cost is risky business. If you don't establish a credible cost of the problem (together), customers are far less likely to buy.

**b. The second financial conversation** defines the financial impact of your solution.

It pays off to construct a return-on-solution conversation. ROI must be crystal clear in your customer's mind for a decision to be reached in your favour.

Tackle these two financial conversations and you help your customer see their 'negative present'.

You help them also see their 'positive future'.

And therefore you help them define the value they will get and the appropriate investment required.

# What's possible...

...in your business

## c. Next construct a DESIGN conversation...

The design conversation enables customers to value a 'positive future' by:

- Clarifying expected outcomes
- Choosing the optimal solution
- Identifying the resources required to implement the solution and achieve its value
- Establishing the time frame in which the outcomes will be achieved

## d. DELIVER or else!

Fail to deliver on the solution agreed with your customer and your reputation will be in tatters.

Yes, better conversations is what exceptional selling is all about. But you have to deliver.

Master the prime process...

Discover, Diagnose, Design and Deliver provides a simple but powerful structure for your conversations.

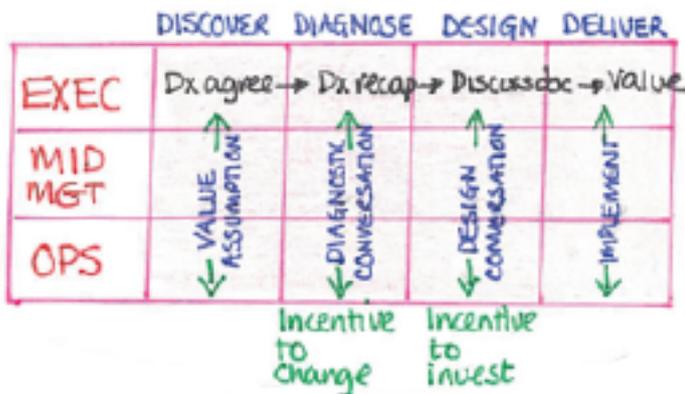
## Your thoughts...

## Your Actions (next steps)

1.

2.

3.



## IMPORTANT: Only two reasons why customers don't buy:

1. They don't believe they have a problem, so they don't have incentive to change
2. They don't believe the solution proposed will work or be valuable enough

When customer problems are made clear and then resolved by your offer and the economics all stack up (because you've had the two financial diagnostic conversations already) then they'll buy!

Connect the dots between your (mutually identified) diagnosis and your value proposition/offer and you'll be exceptional at selling.

Go on then...

