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## **Ten Lessons for Success: How to Sell Oneself during a Career Transition**

by Mary Anne Davis

In the job environment today, there are a lot of people who are: out of work, or wishing to change careers. No matter the situation, it is hard to get motivated to begin the process of transitioning to a new career or different work. Learning to sell oneself with confidence may be the best catalyst to move forward.

Selling is a learnable skill and selling oneself is essential to life's success. I believe **the definition of selling is to persuade people to your way of thinking as it relates to an idea, product or service.** Selling your idea is essential to moving ahead in life and in business. Those who cannot sell their ideas, wind up frustrated, often angry and caught in a rut. Those who can move fast and move up; you know who I am talking about, they are in your life, they are in your organization. They may not be the brightest, and their ideas may not be the best, but somehow, somehow, they manage to get their ideas sold. Why do sales people get such a bad rap? Because most have never professionally mastered the art of selling and try to push and persuade with sales tactics or even charm and each one of us has been the victim of this

amateurish behavior and have been turned off. Selling is extremely rewarding, it's engaging and it is a two – way process that follows some logical steps. So, let us get started with the ten lessons to help you sell yourself, and your ideas to the next interviewer.

1. **Manage activity:** What gets measured matters. Success in sales and the job search lies in activity and the monitoring of that activity. Numbers tell a story and that is what a coach looks at; the results and the statistics. It is important to keep track of all work and career related activities, regardless of whether it is the mailing of a resumes, scheduling interviews, or requesting and getting assigned to new projects or teams, or applying for an advanced position. . If the resume is not getting calls for interviews, let someone with experience review it. You might know someone in Human Resources, your local Workforce Center or even a peer who can provide suggestions. If there have been many interviews, yet no offers then consider doing simulated interviews with someone who will give you candid feedback on where there may be problem areas. If not getting assigned to the desired projects, team or position, find out why. Ask the project manager, team leader, or department manager what knowledge or skills are required to get accepted. If additional experience or new skills are necessary, ask for input on how to accomplish what is needed. Then set a goal for achievement and create a plan to reach the goal. When trying to build a plan for career transition, always consider working backwards to figure out why the current process is not working. The main point of the lesson on managing activity is to plan work and then work the plan.
2. **Know what you are selling.** Each step or transaction in the job search has a different outcome. You should know the purpose and the end result of every step. Think about it like this: when a resume is sent out, what should it accomplish? In other words, what sale or

outcome should happen from your resume? If you answered “to sell me”, you are wrong. The resume never gets the job. The objective of the resume is to get your phone to ring. If that happens, your resume part of the process is working. It should generate enough interest that someone calls to setup an interview with a person, team, or a manager at the company. There are several mini-sales in the overall sales and interview processes. Therefore, you should always ask, “What is the desired outcome of this activity?” This is the only way to truly know what to sell during a step and to plan how best to sell it.



- 3. Prepare to be engaging:** Why are most sales people rejected? Quite frankly if you summarize a great deal of the statistics out there; it boils down to one thing. They are boring. If you want to be successful in selling, you must find ways to capture attention and create interest: Understand people have different reasons for not buying an idea, product, service, or hiring a potential employee. It' is up to you to find out, so you can create interest and create a presentation that is far from boring. **There are only two reasons people do not buy your idea, product or service and that is; they are not aware they have a problem or they are not sufficiently disturbed to do any thing about it.** An example related to the job market is an open position exists at a company; the hiring manager has reviewed a stack of applications, and only set up one interview. Why? Most likely that person's resume was the only one that looked interesting You must prepare to create engagement; in other words, what will make your resume stand out from the rest or you once in the interview? Ensure you stand out from the rest. You can do this through small thought-provoking statements and

questions and/or what is referred to as a 30- second commercial; also know as the elevator speech. Use it in a resume cover letter or at the beginning of an interview. An example in an interview might be saying something like “Before we begin, I want to thank you for your time today. I am excited for this interview as I believe I have the talent, competencies and skills needed to be successful on your team. So please feel free to ask me any questions and I also have brought some examples.” Start now, write down a good message for the cover letter or for the start of an interview after the handshaking is complete. Practice using the interview statement so it becomes natural when needed.

4. **Build a relationship** by building rapport early at the start. You want to capture people’s attention in a way that immediately sets you apart from the crowd. This is such a simple step, but so many overlook it. Two simple ways to build rapport include: the use of a referral name up front when you have it, and identifying the name(s) of people you will be interviewing with so you can learn a little about them. It is amazing what Google and LinkedIn can tell you about someone. During the interview, compliment or show an interest in something specific. I am not talking about simple flattery that will backfire. I am talking about a sincere compliment that will show you did your homework and you found out something good about them. It might be their growth, an award, their promotion, their humanitarian work. The more you know about interviewers in advance, the better chance you have at making an early connections. Before leaving, try to get the interviewers’ business cards so you can call back later or mail a thank you card. A hand-written note will definitely stand out from the crowd in this age of electronic connections! These ideas may seem unimportant; however they can really help to build a relationship. Be remembered – if you are not a right fit for the current opening perhaps you will be called back for a future

position. Another way to build rapport is to tell the truth; this applies to your capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. If they see you are upfront, honest and are working or have worked on these deficits, they will know your risk. And that gives you a better chance than people who will tell them they can do everything. Oh, and by the way, do not forget that those gatekeepers, which might include administrative assistants or even security guards, are your first informal interview. I have stories of candidates who did not make any attempt at building rapport with these people and how that influenced their interview.

5. **Ask the right questions** so both the seller (potential employee) and the buyer (hiring person) have a mutual understanding of what's involved and how you can be the solution to their problem. In interviews, the interviewee is always asked if they have any questions. Be sure to ask questions that are both interesting and show an interest in the organization. Make a list of the questions that would apply to the specific job or industry as well as a few generic questions. Take the list to the interview so no questions are unanswered, using notes will show the interviewer that preparation and thought went into the job seeking process. Example generic questions might include:



- “What do you believe is the biggest challenge of your business?”
- “What do you believe is the biggest challenge for the person in this role?”
- “How important is it to have a person that fits into your culture? I know some companies are unique and I would assume you are too.”
- “How would you define success in this role?”
- “How do your people work as a team and how can a new person best fit into the current team?”
- “How would communication work between us?”

6. **Make the presentation** in such a way that it sells the value you bring to their organization.

In other words, when reviewing work history from the resume an explanation may be requested. When presenting what has been done in past work history, always state how it relates to the current position. You see, most facts are like a plate of onions, and most people have a lot of onions in their resume. Your interview is the chance for you to give them a little meat and sizzle to digest it. Most people only care about the past when they can see how it builds a better future. Remember the acronym WIIFM: What's in it for me? Help them to envision that possible future for them by presenting "value to you" based concepts when stating work history and past accomplishments. Examples of how to start explaining value-based work history are: "In my last role; I <fill-in-the-blank>. What that means to you is I am able to <fill-in-the-blank>." and "My strength include: <fill-in-the-blank> and what that means to your organization is <fill-in-the-blank>."

7. **Know where you stand.** At any point, you can see how you are doing by learning to read body language or by asking questions specifically designed to find out how you are doing. 55% of all communication lies in the non – verbal. I challenge you to learn all you can about body language. You will be amazed what people are really saying. If you can read what they are thinking you can gear your questions accordingly. Professional salespeople, those who really are successful at selling products, ideas and services, leave nothing to chance. They do not answer objections they know do not exist and they master every detail of communication and presentation skills. Learn to ask interviewers' questions that get their opinion about you or your skills or if you meet their expectations. For example, say something like "In your opinion, which job skills that I have shared with you are the most important to this position?" "Based on what I have shared today, does this meet your

expectations?” Try it; you will be amazed at the candid answers you may receive. Now is your chance to really sell. Only when you know where the gap is, can you fill it. “The Sales Messenger” refers to this lesson with the question “are they buying what you’re saying?”

8. **Manage objections** is not as scary as it sounds. Most objections are simply questions in disguise. If you can find a way to turn the objection into a question, well then, you can answer it. Also, knowing common objections and having a planned professional response, will keep you on track and more importantly in control, yet not obvious control. If



possible, address the anticipated objection up front, especially when changing careers. When addressing the objections or concerns, watch your “fighting words.” Words like “but “and “however” will shut the interviewer down. Just replace them with one simple word, “and”. Using “and” will likely cause you to say the right thing most of the time. Now think about common objection experiences and come up with appropriate questions to help manage them. Asking questions the right way to manage objections can increase the success of a future sale. An example for salary related objections, is to ask something like “Just suppose salary was not a concern; then in your opinion do I really have what it would take to be successful in this position” For experience or skill objections, consider asking “How long do you think it might take to build the necessary skills (or experience)? If I could acquire the skills during a set time period and gain experience while working on-the-job, how do you think that might work?”

9. **Pulling it all together** is where everything learned so far gets pulled together to create a winning plan to sell yourself. When it is time for an interview to end you want to summarize

what was discussed and why they should hire you. This should take no more than 30 seconds. If the interview went well, there is a lot to think over and remember they may have other candidates scheduled that day. Seal the deal with some concrete language which will leave a lasting impression. To do this well, you might summarize what they said they needed and how you can fill the gap. Then, walk them into a point in the future stating what it looks like if they hire you. For example: “Thank you for your time; once again, you said you needed person with attention to details and a knack for problem solving. I truly believe I am the one that can do that. If you hire me; you will have no regrets and a year from now, you will feel glad when you look at your report and the numbers have improved and your boss says, great job. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.” Your meeting up until now was all based on logic; this is a 30 second emotional statement that allows them to connect to you.

10. **Maintain a winning attitude** is the final lesson as it is important to job seekers and those changing careers so they stay motivated. You know the stress involved and you can get disillusioned or down; it will show in your presentation. If there are two candidates equally fit for the job; it is attitude that will tip the scale. Attitude shows through in how you treat the gatekeeper from the first point of entry. If the attitude is put on (which sometimes we have to do), make sure the sun is shining over you and not a cloud. Being down shows through in your body language, speech and your meet and greet. No matter what challenges are in front of you, take care of yourself. A few tips to help maintain a winning attitude include taking care physically by eating right and exercising regularly. Feed the mind like you would the body. Fill your mind with motivational messages from books, friends, or social networks and inspirational music on tape, MP3 player, CD, or via the internet. If you find yourself feeling down, then plan to get up early the next day, get dressed in a great



outfit, and be sure to smile. Just doing something to get going can often make you feel better.

Use the ten lessons for success to gain confidence and propel you forward in the career transition process. You will see that you have more interviews on your calendar, more meaningful dialogue in those interviews, and the opportunity to get the role you really want versus the job you have to take. Good luck and God speed in your search.



**About the Author:**

Mary Anne Davis is the President and Founder of Peak Performance Solutions, and author of "The Sales Messenger: 10 Lessons for Sales Success in Your Business and Personal Lives" ([TheSalesMessenger.com](http://TheSalesMessenger.com)).

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