



ADVANCE MANUSCRIPT

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1

As a special BONUS, enjoy a sneak peek of *The Sales Game Changer*! Note, it's an advance manuscript without book-formatting or images/graphics. You'll want the finalized edition coming out this year, which is packed full of content and includes additional features at the end of each chapter.

If you want to persuade, influence, educate, motivate, or inspire, THIS book is for you. **Order at Amazon.com. Search: the sales game changer.**

To get ALL the details about transforming you or your sales team into sales game-changers that produce immediate RESULTS, let us know how we might help. With an ever-growing list of resources and tools, Rob Cornilles and Game Face are partners you can trust to move your sales up the revenue escalator.

WWW.GAMEFACEINC.COM/CONTACT

©2020 Rob Cornilles
All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

THE SALES GAME CHANGER. All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages and/or show brief video clips in a review.

THE SALES GAME CHANGER

How To Become the Salesperson People Love
By Rob Cornilles

INTRODUCTION Life Is Sales Is Life

I am a salesperson.

Yes, I am a salesperson!

And so are you. Yes, you.

The person next to you in line at the coffee shop or in traffic is a salesperson too.

All those folks you follow on social media are salespeople. So are the people in the store, at church, in the airport, on television.

Does this offend you, suggesting that everyone's in sales? If so, I'm sympathetic. Before I really understood what "sales" is, I let this kind of talk ruffle me, too. When I was in my early 20s, an older brother unwittingly made a comment that scarred me for years. To quote him (not that this has been seared into my brain or anything), he cut to the bone with, "Rob, you ought to be in sales."

Ouch! What a low blow. Had we been a little younger, I most certainly would've run to mom. I usually got over his dunking me in the pool or stealing my bacon, but I was sure the wound this flip remark caused would never heal. What did he mean, after all? Was he saying I was dishonest, that I could spin a yarn with the best of them? That I looked good in plaid?

To hear the end of the story, you'll have to read further, a lot further. You'll discover that when I say you're a salesperson, it is not my intent to offend. Nor was it my brother's. He understood, and I declare unapologetically and with complete confidence, that everyone's in sales: from coddled toddlers to retired seniors.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You see or hear the s-word — sales — and immediately think of The Seven S's: sleazy, slimy, shady, slick, sneaky, self-interested, self-centered.

When people who aren't technically salespeople (and even many who *are*) conjure up their image of sales, it's seldom a pretty picture. The lighting is usually dim and the eyes shifty. (Hey, another s-word! That makes eight.) The dialogue is full of "What's it going to take?" and "Let me talk to my manager" and "If I can get that for you in blue, do we have a deal?"

Salespeople are usually portrayed in literature, plays, and movies on a scale somewhere between pathetic (Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*) to unethical (David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*) to inept (Chris Farley's *Tommy Boy*). Best case, salespeople exist to bother you. Worst case, they exist to browbeat and even cheat you into buying something you don't really want.

Ask 10 people if they'd rather be locked in a room with a snake or a stereotypical salesman, and nine will pick the snake. The tenth will ask, "There's a difference?"

Suffice it to say that sales as a profession isn't exactly up there on the general public's respect meter with astronauts or quantum physicists or a really good plumber. But that's because 96.4 percent (my unscientific estimate based on personal experience) of the general public have not met a sales *game-changing* salesperson. Or, in other words, someone trained in the ideas you'll find in THIS book.

In *my* mind's eye, if I say, "sales", this is what I see:

A well-intentioned and properly trained person influencing another. An individual inspiring or motivating someone to think differently, to change, to act, to *do* (or *not* do) something, hopefully all for good.

Since selling is *educating*, I see teachers, clergy, doctors, accountants, therapists, coaches, lawyers, hair stylists, counselors, mechanics, consultants, tech supporters, mentors, first responders, tour guides, authors, managers, politicians, mothers-in-law (better stop there...), and so many other occupations and role-players.

The fact is, they, like us, are all in the business of influencing, persuading or motivating. It happens every day. “I know the perfect place for lunch.” “That sweater looks good on you.” “We should hurry, we’re going to be late.” “If you want to know what I think...”

I decided some time ago that while it’s nice to be inspired or motivated by others, it would probably serve me well to get better at positively influencing the thoughts, decisions, and actions of others. And it’s doubly nice when you get paid to do it! (Editorial note: compensation for moms and dads, undisputedly the world’s best salespeople, is watching their kids grow to lead meaningful lives.)

Not to get all soft, but a true salesperson in business is a dedicated, ethical professional, happily helping others work better, manage better, and live better. If I’ve just described you, then you are my new favorite (sales)person.

Having said all that—and I hope I said it well—it’s likely that a few paragraphs ago when I brought up the s-word, along with it came some of the following *preconceived* notions. Do any of these fit?

1. As an educated person, you view sales as entry-level, a stepping-stone to something greater. No worries. Before witnessing thousands of salespeople in my own career, I thought the same.

So, put aside the s-word for a while. What this book is REALLY about are principles and practices that will bring *you* the results and rewards you want in your business or life *if* you bring others the results *they* want. I know that sounds frighteningly greeting card-ish, but for now, indulge me. It’ll be worth it.

2. You think sales is too difficult. You could never do it, at least not well, consistently. I used to think that. In fact, for a while I tried pretty hard to prove it. For those of you in this camp, stay tuned for a story I think you’ll appreciate.

3. Maybe you’re a salesperson already at the top of your game – even your industry. Cool! Since my background is in professional sports, let me ask this question: Do you think hall of famer Michael Jordan sometimes listened to his coach, Phil Jackson? Do you think Tom Brady would be a four-time Super Bowl MVP without Coach Bill Belichick?

This isn't to take anything away from these great athletes – or you, as a great salesperson. I'm just saying sometimes an experienced, objective coach can make the difference between being a good player or a legend.

4. Perhaps you believe you're far removed from sales, that it has nothing to do with your job or role or responsibilities. (You folks, especially, deserve a fist-bump for picking up this book.) My goal in these pages is to demonstrate that whether you're a rocket scientist, a nosy neighbor, or a middle school band teacher, if you are in the world, *you are selling*.

Every day. I really don't care if you're running a Fortune 500 company, working out of your garage, managing a sales team, or running a house full of kids, I believe what you're about to take part in is a collection of valuable insights that will help you be better at *whatever* it is you do. Even if you don't for one minute, think that what you do is sell.

I'll admit, there are salespeople out there who fit the stereotype and give the profession a bad name. Just as there are less than stellar rocket scientists and nosy neighbors and middle school band teachers. But if I wasn't proud of what I do as a sales coach — if I didn't believe that sales is life, that very little happens in our world until someone sells something — then I wouldn't be able to look my children and grandchildren in the eye and tell them that I've spent the last 25 years training tens of thousands of professional salespeople to be more effective, happy, and successful.

I love what I do, I love what the people I train are able to do after we work together, and I love what one National Basketball Association executive said to me after a few days with his sales staff, "You just trained my people to sell the way I want to be sold."

Okay then, you're wondering, if sales is so great, why do so many people despise salespeople? And how can I go from being despised to actually becoming the salesperson people love?

**The answer lies in an experience that not only
changed the way I looked at sales,
but one which literally changed my life.**

Yes, it's that dramatic. Sit back and read on. I was born in a cabin in the woo-, Wait! Maybe we should skip the bio....

Let's cut to the part where I learn to speak Japanese, graduate from college and move back to Japan to work for the Japanese Ministry of Education helping public school teachers instruct more effectively. *That* was a sales job, believe me.

When I returned to the U.S., I headed to Los Angeles and eventually worked for Universal Studios, where I was one of those hilarious tram tour guides who shows open-mouthed vacationers a bunch of movie stuff like King Kong and Mrs. Bates' house from *Psycho*. It was all interesting and fun, especially when, because of my language skill, I'd be asked to escort Japanese VIPs (they owned Universal back then) around the backlot.

But I felt I needed something aimed a little more towards a career. Besides, by then I had married my high school sweetheart (a six-year negotiation, by the way, the best sale I ever made), and I wanted to be a reliable provider for Allison and our soon-to-be firstborn.

So, what would a young married college grad do in 1991 to earn a stable income? Why, take a commission-only job for the lowly Los Angeles Clippers basketball team selling season tickets, of course!

Brilliant, eh?

If you don't follow sports or the NBA, let me explain that the Clippers in the early 90s played across town from the vastly more successful, more glamorous, more famous, and more *attended* Los Angeles Lakers. Conversely, the LA Clippers would go on to be recognized on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* magazine as "the worst franchise in sports history!"

The "Showtime" Lakers had a sold-out arena full of movie stars and Magic. The "Clip Joint" back then possessed the worst lifetime record of any franchise in basketball. We played in a rundown arena where people wouldn't question why a tumbleweed was rolling across the court as much as how it got to South Central LA.

Most teams pipe in music to excite the crowd. We did it to simulate a crowd. Such was my career choice. Which proves that I'm not exactly the brightest pixel on the Jumbotron.

I began at the Clips three months before the start of the season. *How hard could it be?* I thought. Just slightly harder than selling cases of poison ivy, I discovered. How high was our profile in the community? I remember one of my first cold calls, confident my enthusiasm would be irresistible:

“Hi, I’m Rob Cornilles with the LA Clippers!”

“I don’t need a haircut,” she replied. Click.

I struggled for weeks, making little to no money. *What a catch I’ve made*, was no doubt running through my very pregnant wife’s head each night as I walked in the door of our tiny apartment. We were the sole tenants of a building that was slated to be demolished but which served as our shelter due to a sympathetic landlord who knew that my wife was pregnant and that I was a commission-only salesperson for “YOUR Los Angeles Clippers!”

Opening Night came (hey, at least the players showed up!), and I was ready to quit. In fact, I was planning on it.

But something happened that night that changed my life. Really. I mean seriously, cue the music swell, changed my life.

Standing at the end of the court as the game was about to tip off, I was thinking this was one of the supremely few perks of my job: walking around at floor level during an NBA game. It was very cool. Or should I say, I was!

But watching the action on the court that night wasn’t what changed my life. For some reason, I turned around and began observing the admittedly sparse crowd in the stands. I saw a few families together, I saw some friends socializing, I saw businesspeople huddling with their clients, I saw co-workers mingling—I was observing genuine human interaction.

A dad was teaching Billy about basketball, about teamwork and effort. A troop of Boy Scouts was there, maybe being rewarded for community service or to promote their cause. A large corporate group was together, perhaps as a team-building exercise, or as a reward from the boss. (Or, might it have been collective punishment?) A church group was holding a fundraiser. A businesswoman was hosting a top recruit while a businessman was thanking a long-time client.

Suddenly, I got the message. People weren't coming to a Clippers game to see a *win*. Who's crazy enough to do that?

They were coming to achieve a higher goal, like to teach some life lessons, to create a partnership, to reward hard work, to share quality time.

Call me naïve, but it literally changed me. It made me understand that the Clippers weren't simply a sports team, they were a *tool* to bring about a desired *outcome*. They were a teachable moment, they were a thankyou gift, a kind of person-to-person bonding agent. That realization changed the way I sold season tickets forever.

In fact, I stopped selling tickets and started selling results. Nothing has been the same for me—or the way I look at sales—since.

Now, to be clear, my new approach to Clipper sales certainly didn't make this perennial loser a championship contender. But it's worth noting that the Clippers finished that season with the best record in team history to that point.

You're thinking, *Okay, hotshot, let me get this straight. You're telling me you made an entire career from a sales approach that began because the LA Clippers had one good season?*

Well, since you put it that way, let's turn to that sage of sales wisdom, the one person who can confirm I was on to something. Enter stage right: Danny Manning, the Clippers' star forward in the 1991-92 season.

Within months, to recognize my newfound sales achievements, the Clippers sent me on a road trip with the team (to *reward* me, not to get rid of me!). I remember thinking, *Six months ago I was wearing a cheesy name tag on a Universal Studios tram, leading sunburned tourists in singing 70s sitcom theme songs. Now I'm riding on a fancy private team jet with NBA players and coaches.*

The team had been on a bit of a roll lately – which meant we were enjoying more than a two-game win streak. Following a momentous road victory, we sat around a private terminal waiting to board for the next town. Somehow, I found myself at a small table with our two big starting forwards, Charles Smith and that sales sage, Danny Manning.

Danny had been the NBA's number one draft pick in 1988, and Charles had been picked just two spots later by the Philadelphia 76ers, eventually ending up in Clipperville. The two of them were joking about this and that. I was enjoying the free food.

Suddenly, Charles spun his gaze to me.

"Hey Rob, you know why you guys are selling so many tickets back home?"

Wh-, what's happening? I nearly choked on my Spanish olive. Did one of our best players actually mention ticket sales? I had no clue he'd even noticed what we did in the sales office – or that I was part of it. In fact, it kind of startled me that he even knew I was sitting there at the table with him.

Thinking this ought to be interesting, I cleared my throat and asked, "Why, Charles? Why do you think we're selling so many tickets back home?"

"Because we're playing so well!" He grinned as if to say, "How do you like them apples?"

I set down my Sprite, wiped the pretzel crumbs from my shirt and began heaping all kinds of praise his way. For real.

"You're right, Charles, you guys are playing awesome ball lately. There's no question about it, when you play well, it makes our job a lot easier. In fact..." At that instant I felt a big hand on my chest.

"Yeah, but Chuck," Danny cut in, leaning across the table. He took control as if he was ripping down a monster rebound, "You know why we're playing so well? Because Rob and his staff are selling so many tickets!"

As if I had just witnessed one guy challenge another to a brawl, I slowly turned my head to see Charles out of the corner of my eye. He was giving Danny a hard look, as if struggling to find a good comeback. He couldn't. He then looked at me. I kind of shrugged, like, *What he said*. And then Charles' face formed an expression like you do when you know you've been beaten but enjoyed the game, nonetheless. He smiled and leaned back on the stool.

Yo, yo, yo! Go Danny! Go Danny! Go Danny!

Now, I ask you. Can there be any doubt as to why Mr. Manning was College Player of the Year and chosen #1 by the Clippers (besides the fact they owned the worst record and got to choose first)? In that tiny airport lounge, our sales sage understood that in sports, not only does winning create fans, fans also create winning. Success is having a competitive team on the court or field or ice – complemented by an equally assertive, well-trained sales operation.

In reality, the common denominator among ALL successful businesses or non-profit organizations is the blending of a great product or cause with a tremendous sales force.

Fans might suppose that success in sports is determined by how many banners hang from the rafters or how much hardware sits in the trophy case. But the industry's practitioners know that the true measurement of success in the business of sports is the number of sellouts the team and staff create together.

By the end of that first season at the Clippers, we sold out 14 games, a huge improvement from previous years. It was such an unlikely outcome that I was invited to represent the club in making a presentation to the other NBA teams at a league meeting.

I'll never forget my first attempt to diagram this sales approach with a grease pen on stained plastic transparencies atop a massive overhead projector. But at least I had a sophisticated erasing device, one of my infant son's used but laundered cloth diapers! Eventually, little by little, I was able to put on paper the principles and practices that aided me in selling a record number of tickets for the "worst franchise in sports history."

Within a few years I departed the Clippers to accept an invitation to join a sports consultancy led by renowned sports marketer Jon Spoelstra. Two years later, I became convinced that more than another junior consultant, the sports world needed a sales coach.

So I founded Game Face, Inc. Today, I am humbled to say that no executive has been invited into more business offices of professional sports organizations. Game Face has worked with 300 plus sports teams around the world, and we have been the sales coach to some 40,000 executives and growing.

Like the classic sales book title by Frank Bettger, *How I Raised Myself From Failure to Success in Selling*, I went from loser salesperson to a career for which I

will forever be grateful because I learned to become a salesperson with whom people want to do business.

Abraham Lincoln was a loser...until he learned to influence. Ray Krock was a loser...until he figured out how to persuade. Steve Jobs lost a lot of money until he learned to motivate those around him.

When all is said and done, brands can be fallible, marketing plans may be flawed, and products might fail. But *properly* trained salespeople can rise above it all. I guess you could say, from someone who found a way to sell an abysmal sports product, the approach I'll outline in the following chapters is team-proof.

But before you errantly conclude that these ideas are confined to sports, know that over the years **we've expanded our reach to train salespeople in a wide range of sectors and markets**: tech, retail, manufacturing, media, nonprofit, professional and financial services, higher education, and the list continues to grow.

Principles are principles. They are universal truths when proven to be valid and enduring, regardless of time and place. But the way we apply those principles differs from market to market, product to product, salesperson to salesperson. The principles and compatible practices in *The Sales Game Changer* work anywhere and everywhere.

The methods I teach and coach are used by championship organizations as well as perennial cellar-dwellers. In short, they're used by tens of thousands to sell anything from tickets to technologies. While they're increasingly common practice in the sports industry—and any place where competition is fierce and customers have the final say—users understand that **it isn't about the *thing*, it's about the things that *result* from the thing.**

Salespeople who people love, figure out that it's putting the right ideas and words to who you are and what you believe. By that definition, when you make your point, you're selling. When you tell a joke, you're selling. When you teach or preach, you're selling. When Wilbur told Orville in Kitty Hawk, "You first," he was selling.

When President Kennedy challenged the country to put a man on the moon, he was selling. When pharaoh Khufu ordered the great pyramid built, yep,

he was selling. When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, when Einstein presented his theory of relativity: selling, selling, and selling.

I'll even claim that selling is the oldest profession in the world. Just ask Adam, who was persuaded by Eve to chomp into that apple. Not much happens in this life until someone sells something. Without selling, people don't fall in love, they don't innovate, they don't secure the help of others for noble causes, they just don't do great things. *Life is sales is life.*

These ideas will change the way YOU sell, and hopefully the way you view those who do it tirelessly, passionately, correctly every single day.

Okay, enough of the pre-game talk. Let's get out there!

Join the ranks of those who are true sales game-changers and become the salesperson people love!

CHAPTER 1

Principle 1: Results-Centered Selling

The End

In the early 21st century, as the popularity of women's soccer in the United States was rising, the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) was born. The world's first professional women's soccer league debuted in eight markets, from Boston to San Diego and San Jose to Atlanta.

Early on, I was invited to provide a "how to" workshop for this fledgling league's executives as they gathered to discuss the best ways to build a national following and fan base. Or, in other words, how to sell women's soccer following Brandi Chastain's historic winning goal at the 1999 Women's World Cup.

At the completion of a couple of days of extensive sales coaching, Kathryn Hamm, an executive for the then-Washington (D.C.) Freedom, approached me as I was packing up my things for the ride to the airport. I don't recall all that we quickly chatted about, but I will never forget her description of the training she had just received. It is one of the nicest things anyone has ever said to me in my professional career.

"Rob," she said, "thank you for teaching us how to articulate the intuitive."

Uh, wait. Wh-what was that?

"Thank you for teaching us how to articulate the intuitive."

Call the pilot, hold the plane! I thought. I have to write that down:

"...how to articulate the intuitive."

Though Kathryn, to this day, claims that what I said made her say that, I couldn't have said it any better.

YOUR NEW GAME PLAN

That's what *The Sales Game Changer* is all about. It's how to tap your instincts as an inherent salesperson and articulate an approach that feels natural and right. My goal as your sales coach isn't to give you fancy tricks or clever twists of a phrase. Nor is it teaching some slight of hand. It *is*, though, sometimes correcting your slip of the tongue.

So, why do I begin with The End? For the same reason—as you’ll discover a few educational and entertaining chapters from now—I’m going to end with The Beginning. Yeah, I’m playing word games, but mostly, I hope to get you thinking about perspective, about preconceived notions, about looking at what we think we know in whole new ways.

Remember my experience in the airport lounge with Danny Manning of the LA Clippers following a rare road win? Danny corrected his teammate by saying, “We’re playing so well because Rob and his staff are selling so many tickets.”

Danny had a fresh perspective. He understood that for any losing organization to have success, all functions have to properly function. And if I was going to raise myself out of loser status, I had to learn how to become a salesperson people wanted to buy from, even if I represented an almost unsalable product.

This isn’t rocket surgery...or brain science. (Grr. I can’t keep ‘em straight).

**NOTHING MUCH HAPPENS ANYWHERE,
AS YOU MAY HAVE READ SOMEPLACE BEFORE,
UNTIL SOMEONE SELLS SOMETHING.**

Another reason I’m beginning with The End is that I hope you will think about a particular end or ends you’re hoping to achieve by using the process we’re about to reveal in these pages.

In other words, what do you want?

Are you hoping to sell people the way they want to be sold, to help them reach the goals and have the experiences THEY seek? Are you after success? Achievement? Happiness? Good! Those are excellent answers.

Just don’t say “money.”

Because, as your sales coach, it is my job to teach you the skills of results-centered selling, which means you aren’t selling a *product*, you are selling the *results* of that product.

And part of learning how to sell the results is understanding that to sell in the right way – in the way that improves peoples' lives at the same time it improves yours – you are not after money. Money is a *thing*, not a result. A better life for you and your family: *that's* a result. Don't devote your time and your career to a thing. Things change, they come and go. They don't bring lasting satisfaction. But results are timelessly valuable, meaningful and appealing.

That being said, let me assure you that I have absolutely nothing against the results of making *more* money, which brings me to a leafy little metaphor I like to call...

THE REVENUE TREE.

The Revenue Tree represents any organization that can only survive and prosper by generating revenue – be it a sports team, a startup, a global enterprise or a nonprofit group.

Depending upon where you are as you're reading this, you may be able to look to your left or right or through a window and see a blooming tree at this very moment. (If you're on an airplane or in a mine shaft or hanging out on an aircraft carrier, close your eyes and imagine).

Take a look at that tree. Where does your gaze go? You follow the branches up to the top, right? That's where the beauty is, that's where the fruit grows and the leaves sparkle. I'll venture a guess that your gaze didn't lock in on the trunk of the tree or that you stared at the ground to find the roots.

But the two things that likely didn't grab your attention are the very things that support the tree and allow it to exist at all.

Here's what I mean:

The branches of our Revenue Tree represent all the sources of revenue that a thriving organization relies upon to live and grow. If you took business courses in school, they probably called these revenue streams, but for the purpose of this metaphor we'll call them branches.

The branches are different for each organization, but they include everything that makes the organization profitable (and even a *non*profit must be

profitable, in the sense that you can't give away money or provide valuable services if money isn't flowing in).

In the case of a professional sports franchise, the branches include TV and radio rights fees, corporate sponsorships, venue naming rights, suites and other premium areas, concessions, parking, club merchandise — the list seems to grow longer by the year, just like trees tend to get bigger with time.

The branches of the tree for, say, a software company includes retail and wholesale software sales, licensing fees, contracts with hardware and firmware makers, etc. For a nonprofit, the branches include contributions, bequests, planned giving commitments by donors, revenue from special events, auctions and more. You get the picture.

When you put all branches together, you've got a tree. Or do you? Yes, the branches are sturdy and strong, and the fruit is beautiful and tasty. But what holds them up? What supports them? **It's the trunk, which we call SALES.**

All the hefty branches and the pretty leaves, all the sweet, delicious fruit, everything relies on sales. There would be no tree without a trunk (that's called a bush). And there would be no organization without sales (that's called a nice idea).

When I asked you to gaze upon that lovely tree outside your window, you looked upward. Yet it's the unsung TRUNK that keeps it up. Unfortunately, within too many organizations, it's not much different. The products and services are the darling branches, and sales is the overlooked trunk.

Sports is a perfect example: No young sports exec wannabe grows up dreaming of being a ticket salesperson. Can you imagine making such a pronouncement around the dinner table? No. Aspiring sports executives want to work with athletes. Reality check: you're more likely to be a television star than actually representing pro athletes. Or, these future execs want to negotiate huge TV deals, or work with the corporate high rollers marketing suites or sponsorships or interacting with media and PR agents and broadcast partners.

I'm certainly not dismissing any of that. I've worked with and trained people in all those areas. The bottom line is, every athlete who's ever played under the lights will admit that their performance is only enhanced when the

stands are filled. You don't maximize TV contracts when vacant seats are visible in the lower bowl of the arena or stadium. After all, who bothers to watch a game three time zones away if no one locally cares enough to attend?

You don't generate buzz about suites when those in them are peering down on a ghost town below. And media isn't interested in talking to you if the t-shirts being shot into the crowd are landing in vast spaces of empty seats. **In sports, most believe ticket sales drive it all.**

And it's the same in ANY industry.

Writing the computer code or designing the advertising strategy or flying the plane or doling out the big charitable grant — that's high-profile, smile-big-for-the-camera stuff. So, where does sales fit in?

Well, without obtaining the funding to write the code, or acquiring the client for whom the ad campaign is designed, or selling the passengers to ride on the plane, or raising the money that feeds the grant, there would be no photo op!

Sales makes it all happen. Just as in sports, where tickets hold everything else up, your organization must identify your Revenue Tree trunk. Is it a single product or service, or is it sales in general?

But wait, there's more!

Let's get down and dirty, literally. Every solid tree, in order to stay healthy and vibrant and enjoy a long life, must be planted in fertile soil. That rich earth, as it relates to our Revenue Tree, symbolizes the culture of an office, a team, an organization – the whole of the environment in which people are working. As we turn that soil, what do we find? A *sales culture*.

To draw fans to a game, to get people to buy a product, to persuade donors to write a check, to motivate volunteers to help — they must be "sold" on an *idea*.

Every function requires a sales component, so everyone associated with the organization needs to have some level of sales skill. You already know that, but it simply can't be emphasized enough, especially when many do not want to see themselves as "salespeople."

Finding the dirt on your organization

Professionals looking for the best culture needn't strain their neck to look high in the Revenue Tree. They should instead look for the dirt on their organization – the dirt that constitutes their sales culture, that is.

In the world of production, one critical component of “lean manufacturing” is CI, or continuous improvement. It puts forward that an organization should never stop innovating. Improvements can be made in such simple things as wait times for customers, wait times for delivery, even wait times for the employee restroom. Yet with all the areas deserving of continuous improvement, sales may be the most important.

A salesperson knows they've joined a great sales culture if continuous improvement comes in the form of continuous coaching.

Beyond product knowledge, is skills training an imperative before customer engagement is expected? For more than a decade at the sales department of the New York Mets baseball club, no new hire was permitted to even pick up a phone until they had received no fewer than 40 hours of Game Face training.

After initial training is completed, does your management provide constant mentoring, troubleshooting and oversight to ensure high performance of those charged to represent the brand?

Just because a sports team looks great on the highlight reel—a handsome tree, perhaps--doesn't mean they possess a culture where people are nurtured and are on a clear path to improvement and career advancement.

The best organizations in every industry dwell in a fertile and nutrient-filled environment. Those organizations planted in rock-infested, parched clay are where salespeople often die, hungering or thirsting for improvement.

Underneath the organizational soil, our Revenue Tree relies on the unsung, out-of-sight, often out-of-mind ROOTS. These roots symbolize the sales force. Sometimes salespeople feel a little neglected, a little tucked away in the outer edges of an organization. But leaders know that regardless of how salespeople are perceived, *their* success dictates the success of the rest of the organization.

AS SALES GO, SO GOES THE TREE.

At the risk of pruning this poor metaphor beyond recognition..., as the vital roots of the tree, salespeople need consistent if not daily watering, sunlight and nutrients, which, as mentioned above, is part of continuous coaching.

This is not to say my sales friends should act like a chick with its mouth open, waiting for someone else to feed it skills. Salespeople have a responsibility to stretch, to go above and beyond. In fact, you need to be like Ron Harper.

Ron Harper? Yes. LA Clippers aficionados (two words rarely seen side by side) will remember him as the shooting guard who regretfully—or mercifully if your name is Ron Harper—left the hapless Clippers to become a teammate of Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls during that team’s historic run of consecutive championships.

Before his departure, I was given the chance to sit behind Monsieur Harper on a team flight aboard our private jet on a particular road trip. After take-off, the flight attendant asked if there was anything she could do for me. “Yes, in fact,” I said, “Could you hand me my bag in the bin above me?” She cocked her head and forced a grin as if to say, “Of course, you lazy dolt. I’d be happy to grab your infantile item since you appear incapable of doing it yourself.” And she did.

Happy with the service in my overstuffed lap of luxury, I then witnessed something in front of me I never thought possible. Without calling that same attendant for help or getting up, Ron Harper, who apparently had an itch to start a card game, extended his arm—his long, long arm—above his head, opened the overhead bin, felt around until he found a familiar bag, unzipped it, reached around inside, pulled out a deck of cards, zipped the bag back up and, looking around the cabin, asked, “Who’s in?”

I sat there, mouth agape, stunned. I knew Harper had long arms for a shooting guard—one thing that would after he departed the Clippers make him an outstanding defender. (That, and because Michael Jordan told him to play defense.) But I had no idea he could do *that*. Whenever I fall short of a goal or task, I often think of Ron Harper. *I need to extend myself like he did. I need to reach higher, even when stretching might be uncomfortable or a bit painful.*

I’m satisfied that you’re not satisfied with the skills you currently possess or bring to your own Revenue Tree. As evidenced by your holding this book and reading this page right now, you are probably continuously asking yourself, “How can I get closer to the goal line and develop more skills?”

That's what it means to be a part of a sales culture. Hopefully you do—or will—work for an organization, led by a management team, that treats its roots with care. That is not to say you should expect pampering, but you should be challenged and provided tools and resources to meet those challenges to help you feed the Revenue Tree. Because if the roots are regularly nourished, free from entanglements that choke them, the rest of the tree benefits.

It may go without saying, but I must add a word here about bad roots that sometimes strangle an organizational Revenue Tree. No matter one's situation or bad sales day/week/month/year, no one has the right to adversely affect the work of a colleague due to what my wife calls a "baditude."

Sadly, I have seen organizations where one malcontent root effectively poisoned all the others. If that's happening where you work – or manage – it's time to either rehabilitate the root or extract it from your culture. If poisonous roots can't compose themselves, maybe it's time they be composted.

The Tree is more important than one renegade root.

During a downturn?

Many years ago, when I first started providing sales coaching to what has turned out to be the most loyal of all Game Face clients, the St. Louis Cardinals of Major League Baseball, they were just beginning to build the kind of sales culture I've described. Oh, sure, the Cardinals are renowned for excellence, for the "Cardinals way," which has reaped huge rewards for the city, the fans, and the record books. 11 World Series titles, baby!

Nevertheless, their sales department was still maturing because of a traditionally overabundant emphasis on the baseball product rather than the results the baseball product brings.

I began our first day in 2003 with an explanation of the Cardinals' Revenue Tree as I envisioned it becoming. There was unanimous consensus that the ideas I was sharing were relevant and legitimate. But then, as the staff was nodding in agreement, Dan Farrell, the senior vice president of sales and marketing, raised his hand.

"Rob, your metaphor certainly applies to the Cardinals organization. But what if the team isn't playing well? How does that affect the Revenue Tree?"

Hmm, good question! Hope I can answer it, I thought. You see, at the time, the Cardinals had just experienced one of those rare seasons when they didn't make the playoffs. Not even close, really. And, as a Clippers alumnus, I could relate.

"Dan," I proffered, "I'd equate a poor season on the field to a stormy season outside. Like in any business, a sports team is going to encounter a product defect or economic hiccup or downturn. That's analogous to a storm whipping through your Revenue Tree.

"We'll all encounter a storm now and then. Despite a rosy forecast, it may come unexpectedly, and the leaves and fruit are blown off the tree, leaving many of the branches bare. In fact, you might even lose an entire revenue source when one of those branches breaks and falls away.

"But, if the tree's roots are solid and planted in stable soil, when the sun shines and the birds start chirping, you'll be okay. New branches will grow, leaves will bud and fresh fruit will appear. Sales *will* save the day."

The product—its performance or demand—may change, but the best organizations know THEIR Revenue Tree and do all they can to plant it in a manicured sales culture, then prune it when necessary while feeding it with constant care.

How is it done? First, we can make greater efforts to articulate the intuitive. But, if we are still falling short, perhaps we take the advice of Esu Ma'at, senior manager of diversity and inclusion of the Eastern region of the United States Tennis Association, who, after learning of Kathryn Hamm's comment years earlier, said,

**"UNTIL THESE TECHNIQUES BECOME SECOND NATURE,
IT'S ABOUT ARTICULATING THE *INTENTIONAL*."**

Whether the tendencies of an appropriate and proper salesperson come naturally to you, join me in the next chapter as we lay the foundation for becoming the salesperson people love.