

# Professional Selling Skills® Prework

## Customer Application Exercises

Throughout the *Professional Selling Skills*® program, you will have an opportunity to plan how you will apply the skills you have just learned. Using one of your current customers, you will develop a plan for an upcoming sales call. You will then use that same customer for all planning exercises throughout the program.

In preparation for these application exercises, please identify below two to three of your customers with whom you plan to have a sales call in the near term. Consider those customers with whom you are in your first cycle *and* those customers with whom you have a long-standing relationship.

**Customer 1:**

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.....

**Customer 2:**

.....  
.....

**Customer 3:**

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.....

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**NOTE:** If you are new to Sales or new to the position, meet with your manager to obtain information on a customer that you can use to complete these application exercises. Obtaining some detailed information on the product(s) you will be selling also will be of value to you.

# SALES CALL CHALLENGES

The statements that follow reflect challenges often encountered by salespeople during sales calls.

- Read through the statements, and in the spaces provided, add any additional challenges you encounter on sales calls.
- Then, rank the statements in order of their challenge to you as a salesperson, with 1 representing the most challenging item. Remember to rank any additional, “other” challenges you wrote in the spaces below.

..... The call is over before I can discuss everything. I do not get the chance to present all of my thoughts and ideas.

..... The customer won’t commit to anything. He/she wants more time to make decisions.

..... The sales call starts off slowly. I cannot capture my customer’s attention fast enough.

..... The customer raises objections/concerns.

..... The customer is fixated on price. It is the biggest factor impacting his/her buying decision.

..... The call gets off focus. I cannot keep my customer on track with our discussion.

..... The customer is happy with his/her current situation and sees no reason to change. For example, he/she is satisfied using our competitor.

..... At the end of the call, I’m no further along in the sales cycle than before I started.

..... Other: .....

..... Other: .....

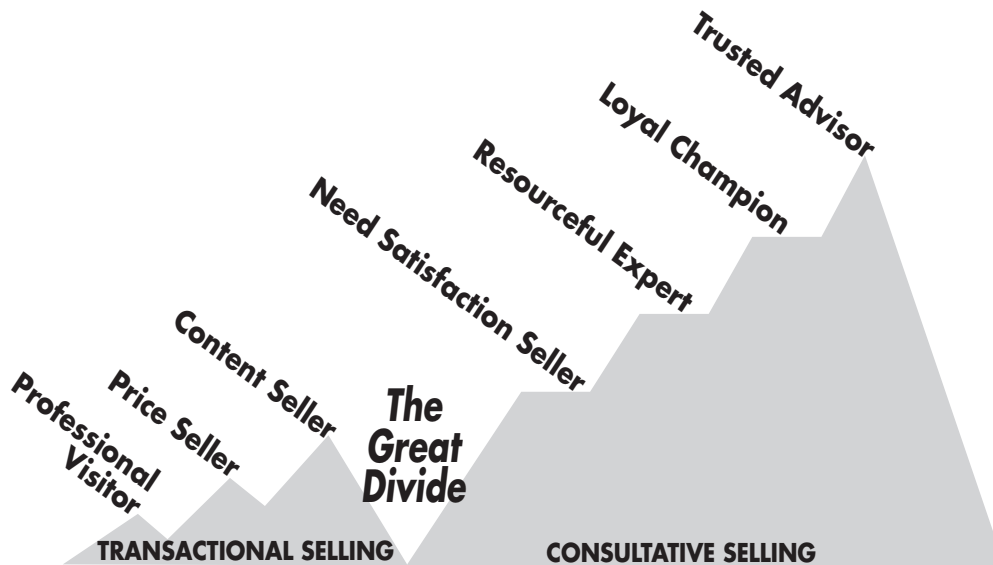
..... Other: .....

**We will be using this list in the program.**

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE GREAT DIVIDE

Think of sales as rugged terrain, two peaks separated by a great divide. The diagram below draws on this image to illustrate two types of relationships that customers have with their salespeople: **Transactional Selling** and **Consultative Selling**.



To cross The Great Divide and reach the higher peak, you must interact with customers in new ways, beginning with your very first interaction.

### Transactional Selling

Transactional Selling focuses on short-term interactions between a customer and a salesperson. Relationships here include:

- **A Professional Visitor** succeeds on personality or shared interests, forming limited relationships with customers rather than long-term alliances that promote future sales.
- **A Price Seller** highlights costs, deals, and quotes. While price sellers may meet customers' financial needs, only coincidentally do they meet other needs, reinforcing a perception of their products or services as commodities.
- **A Content Seller** emphasizes product or service features, often without linking them to key issues for the customer. This "feature focus" is long on technical information and short on explicit benefits to the customer.

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## Consultative Selling

Within The Great Divide, you find today's key sales challenges, among them commoditization, globalization, and increasing customer demands. Crossing this chasm to Consultative Selling requires skills, product and industry expertise, knowledge of customer circumstances, and more time and effort than with Transactional Selling. On this peak, however, you'll have greater impact on the buying process through one of four relationships with the customer:

- **A Need Satisfaction Seller** creates mutually beneficial relationships, uncovering a customer's critical needs and tailoring solutions to each customer's situation. When customers view the salesperson as a Need Satisfaction Seller, a new world of sales possibilities begins to emerge.
- **A Resourceful Expert** applies in-depth product and industry expertise to configure solutions that meet customer needs. This deep knowledge often creates value for buyers at different organizational levels who interact with the solution in different capacities.
- **A Loyal Champion** possesses deep insight into the customer's business and industry. As a result, the customer views a Loyal Champion almost as an employee, often providing access to strategic plans and other inside information. In these close relationships, the salesperson often acts as an advocate for the customer within the sales organization.
- **A Trusted Advisor** has achieved the ultimate customer relationship. Trusted Advisors consistently use their in-depth knowledge and highly developed sales skills to the customers' benefit. Over time, they earn the right to influence all stages of the buying cycle. A Trusted Advisor discovers and meets critical needs in unparalleled ways by providing not only products and services, but also advice and assistance.

Any relationship, Transactional or Consultative, may exhibit features of less complex relationships. For example, any salesperson must establish rapport, offer competitive pricing, and display content knowledge with every customer. Still, it isn't necessary to master each type of relationship before moving to another. In fact, with requisite skills and knowledge, a new salesperson may begin as a Need Satisfaction Seller.

You may succeed financially in any type of customer relationship. However, crossing the divide to Consultative Selling helps protect you from commodity pricing and otherwise aggressive competition. While Consultative Selling requires more of your time and effort, it makes you part of the value proposition, a differentiator in the purchase decision.

To help ensure long-term success, it's important to be capable of Need Satisfaction Selling—even if it's unwise to invest the effort to become a Trusted Advisor with every customer. Selling to needs also helps you recognize unique business conditions and develop an appropriate relationship with each customer.

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Based on the relationship you have with the customers you listed on page one, where on The Great Divide would your customers say you are?

|                          | Customer 1 | Customer 2 | Customer 3 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Professional Visitor     |            |            |            |
| Price Seller             |            |            |            |
| Content Seller           |            |            |            |
| Need Satisfaction Seller |            |            |            |
| Resourceful Expert       |            |            |            |
| Loyal Champion           |            |            |            |
| Trusted Advisor          |            |            |            |

What evidence do you have?

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