

The “Ex” Files: George Ludwig Debunks Twelve Common Sales Assumptions That May Be Holding You Back

OLD FILE: Only outgoing, talkative, aggressive extroverts can “do sales.”

NEW FILE: Actually, many of the very best salespeople are introverts. In fact, many buyers are suspicious of salespeople who rely on the “gift of gab” instead of knowledge and preparation. Character is the most important asset a salesperson can have, and that means much more than personality type.

OLD FILE: Money’s not that important to me. I just want to sell enough to be comfortable.

NEW FILE: When we say that something is not important, we don’t take steps to achieve it. Therefore, money *is* important to me. In shooting for sales superstardom, I must be willing to move beyond my comfort zone on a regular basis. “Comfortable” is the death rattle for sales success. If I commit myself to becoming wealthy, ending up merely comfortable is the worst-case scenario. There is nothing immoral about wanting to increase my income. Money can be a positive tool for improving my own life and that of the people I love. Money is not “evil.” In fact, in the hands of someone with the right intentions, it can be a force for great good.

OLD FILE: Salespeople are sharks and manipulators. I just don’t have that “killer instinct.”

NEW FILE: Some of the most wonderful, generous, spiritually centered people in the world sell for a living. Sales superstars care deeply about their customers and are driven to meet their needs. Selling is not manipulating. In fact, the word originates from the Scandinavian root *selzig*, which literally means *to serve*. Selling is serving.

OLD FILE: I can make only \$50K (or any number) per year in this market, territory, industry, or economy.

NEW FILE: I can make as much money as I want to make. The possibilities are unlimited. To drive that belief deep into my subconscious, I need to set my “sales thermostat” at a much higher number than the income I earned last year. Once I meet that goal, I will be empowered enough to set a new one. Then, I’ll do it all over again. And again. And again. Soon, I will be making more money than I ever dreamed possible.

OLD FILE: I’ll never overcome this situation and get the business.

NEW FILE: There is always a way to turn sales around, if I’m committed.

OLD FILE: Sales in this business is feast or famine. It’s just cyclical. When I’m in a slow period, I just have to ride it out.

NEW FILE: It’s not really sales that’s cyclical, but rather the behavior of salespeople. A period of heavy prospecting, followed by a period of *no* prospecting (while I exclusively service clients) is what leads to the “feast or famine” phenomenon. That’s why I must keep my pipeline filled with prospects at all times. Consistent, regular prospecting—on a weekly or even daily basis—will break the “cycle.”

OLD FILE: Closing is the most important part of selling, and I'm not a good closer.

NEW FILE: Instead of thinking in terms of “closing”—a word that, admittedly, has a stigma attached—I think in terms of obtaining commitment from the client to advance the sales process. I will not end a client meeting until I get a commitment to call again, to do a demonstration, to meet with a committee, and so forth. It’s all about taking baby steps and winning small victories along the way. If I do that, if I follow the recipe, the “close” will happen naturally. Besides, if I’ve done my job to the best of my ability, I’ve *earned* the right to ask for the client’s business. It’s simply a natural step in the process of serving him or her.

OLD FILE: Selling is just relationships. For the most part you can just “wing it.”

NEW FILE: Strong relationships *are* important. But they are based on truly understanding a client’s needs, and that means lots of research and preparation. I accept that selling is hard work. Anything worth doing is hard work. I value and respect my clients, and therefore hold myself accountable for finding, interpreting, and presenting the information they need to make an informed decision.

OLD FILE: I’m not very good on the telephone.

NEW FILE: The telephone is an incredibly useful, powerful tool. It allows me to connect with people thousands of miles away in a matter of minutes. It brings the entire world right into my office. A carefully scripted phone conversation is often the first step in building strong, mutually beneficial relationships. The telephone is even better than email because it gives the client and me the chance to hear voice inflections and build good rapport. (Plus, a prospect is much less likely to hang up on me than to delete my email!) It is hard to be on top of the sales game without mastering the “phone game.” Therefore, I will work on my telephone skills every day.

OLD FILE: I'm not very good at calling on C-Level executives.

NEW FILE: Selling to CEOs, CIOs, CFOs, COOs, presidents, and VPs is a “must” for bringing home the big sales and fending off competitive threats. I am excited about the challenge of working with these powerful players. My experience and knowledge are valuable to them. Because they are “big picture” people, I will immediately connect my product to bottom-line issues for their company. I will work hard to develop my own confidence and power so that I can interact with them on their level. The more I call on C-level executives, the more effective and successful I become.

OLD FILE: To be the top sales producer in our company, you can’t enjoy your family too. It’s either/or.

NEW FILE: I can be highly productive and successful *and* still spend plenty of time with my family. *I* control how I spend my time. The more focused and energetic I am during my work hours, the more efficient and effective I will become. I will get more done in less time and I will feel good about my accomplishments. As a result, I’ll be able to give my all during “family time,” without worrying about what I “should” be doing on the work front.

OLD FILE: Cold calling never works.

NEW FILE: When I follow the rules of telephone engagement, cold calling *does* work. There are proven telephone scripts that will allow me to break the buyer's preoccupation, generate curiosity, and ask for the appointment. I will experiment until I find the one that works best for me. It's okay if people hang up on me or say no—I know that the more “noes” I hear, the closer I am getting to a “yes.”

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