

# VALUE\$ELLING

Driving Up Sales One Conversation At A Time

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# **INTRODUCTION**

Think of someone you have encountered who makes selling look easy. This person may have sold you real estate, insurance — or a complex business solution. No matter the state of the economy and regardless of what product or service she or he represents, people seem to end up saying “yes” to this dynamo.

You may have attributed this success to the fact that this individual is a natural-born salesperson. Well, while having a magnetic personality or being able to tell a good joke can make doing business more fun, these personality traits are not enough to deliver a record of consistent sales success today.

This is particularly true if you are selling a complex, high-end solution requiring multi-level approvals. Take a minute to think about why you chose to say “yes.” I am willing to bet that you trusted this person — and that he or she offered you just the right solution for what you needed and wanted. Behind the engaging façade of these “naturals,” the pragmatic principles of ValueSelling are at work. This simple yet powerful framework has had an enormous effect on my career and my life and I hope it will do the same for yours.

In 1991, I was a sales executive at Gartner, Inc., the world’s largest information technology research and advisory company. I was a successful — and young — sales representative who had been previously trained in a couple of well-known sales methodologies. In short, I thought I knew how to sell.

When Gartner brought in Lloyd Sappington, the founder of ValueVision, I was introduced to ValueSelling. A couple of things immediately stood out to me. First, it was simple to understand, and extremely intuitive. As a matter of fact, I was already using some of the steps of the ValueSelling process and didn't even know it.

The second thing I noticed was that, unlike many of the sales training programs that I had previously attended, it was tailored to the products and services that I actually sold. Instead of being forced to translate generic process, skills and theory into my day-to-day experiences, we practiced the ValueSelling process on typical buyers with the typical problems and issues that I encountered with my customers and prospects every day. I wasn't practicing the process on widgets and pencils; rather, on the actual high-tech solutions that I sold.

Third, with ValueSelling, being successful did not require a lot of busy work. The process was not dependent on a stack of forms and documentation. Like most sales executives, I found the tedious intrusion of filling out extensive paperwork frustrating and I had no desire to excel at it.

What we are good at is meeting with people ... listening to their issues ... creating needs that may not be recognized ... and linking our products and solutions to the clients' needs. I was excited to find that these skills are the heart and soul of ValueSelling. I had finally found a sales methodology that I could embrace naturally and with enthusiasm.

During my 16-year career at Gartner, I progressed through various sales management and sales leadership positions. ValueSelling continued to be the foundation of my personal success as well as the mainstay of the Gartner sales process. As a manager, my top

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sales executives were those who followed the ValueSelling process. I took every opportunity to reinforce the training and process, and included it in team meetings. During my first year as a sales manager, my sales team moved from last place in the stack rankings for U.S. performance to a close second place. This complete turnaround was not a fluke, but rather a sustainable change.

In 1999, I was asked to take on the role of Vice President of Gartner's Sales Training for the Americas. My responsibilities included managing a team of sales trainers who delivered ValueSelling to the new sales hires at our company. I also became certified in ValueSelling, and my passion and belief in the process continued to grow. Our new hires included sales executives who had previously worked for companies like HP, IBM and Xerox: companies with great reputations for training. These experienced professionals consistently commented that ValueSelling was the best training they had ever received. It was practical and it worked.

In 2003, it was time for me to make a career change and I reached the difficult decision to leave Gartner and my role as its ValueSelling advocate. To me, it seemed only logical that my next career move should be working for ValueVision Associates. To this end, I contacted Lloyd Sappington to ask for a job. But I was in for a big surprise.

Lloyd had reached the point where he was looking toward retirement and free time for more golf. As a result, he was actively working on his exit strategy. He was excited about bringing me into ValueVision — but as the new owner rather than an employee. In stunned excitement, I sat down with my husband, Steve, to review our options. Within six months, and with Steve's total support, we put a plan in place and acquired ValueVision Associates outright.

Since then, as we have all watched the worldwide business climate become even more challenging, my enthusiasm for the effectiveness of ValueSelling has continued to grow.

The chapters of ValueSelling will take you step-by-step through the basic framework of ValueSelling — from introduction to close — including:

- Why it works
- How simplicity and power are built into the framework
- What you need to know from prospects — and how to ask the right questions to get this critical information
- How to craft the all-important VisionMatch to put you and your prospects on the same page
- Developing true value based on hidden business and personal objectives of the decision-maker(s)
- Structuring a mutual plan that positions you for a relationship-building close

My goal in writing *ValueSelling* is to give you a guidebook that will enable you to benefit immediately from the basic framework of ValueSelling. Then, based on your initial success, I hope you will want to continue to add to your knowledge of ValueSelling. You can learn more about our online and in-person sales training at [www.valueselling.com](http://www.valueselling.com).

I have specifically directed this book to sales professionals (sales executives, managers and representatives) who offer complex,

high-end products or services that require multi-level approvals, simply because those sales can be the most challenging. Yet whether your company is large or small, business-to-business or business-to-consumer, selling over the phone or face to face — if you are competing on value and not price — ValueSelling is for you. To succeed, you are competing daily with other highly competitive, confident and passionate individuals.

You must routinely gain and maintain access to busy and elusive executives or senior managers within each customer environment. And because you are often on ever-increasing quotas with a highly leveraged compensation plan, your total income — and your career — are directly related to your sales performance. You are pragmatic and so is ValueSelling.

For those of you who are sales or customer service representatives in less complex arenas, you also will find ValueSelling easy to absorb and highly relevant to your specific business environments.

Before we move into the actual framework of this powerful selling process, I would like to share with you just one of the many stories of how ValueSelling has given a committed sales executive the tools to move to the next level of success.

Karen was a top sales performer when I had the good fortune to become her sales manager. At Gartner, the best sales executives were given an “Eagle” award. Karen had three of these, and had earned her latest Eagle the same year that she gave birth to her second child. Imagine: she was able to achieve this performance in a year that she took three months off of work. She was admired by all of her peers and teammates.

Karen's first year working for me was also a transition year at Gartner because of a couple of significant events. First, Gartner acquired a competitor, DataQuest. The result to the sales organization was that they were now expected to sell a new and very different product line in addition to their core products.

Second, in the middle of the year, the sales leadership team announced that \$22 million would be spent to upgrade every sales person's laptop computer with state-of-the-art technology and a Salesforce Automation Application. The catch: in order to fund this technology upgrade, each sales person's quota was raised mid-year.

As Karen's sales manager, I had the "pleasure" of delivering that message. For most salespeople, when their quota goes up their income will go down if their performance is constant. This was certainly true for Karen. She calculated that the mid-year quota increase would cost her approximately \$20,000 in future commissions that year. As the sales manager, I decided that we needed to focus on the positive; that it was my job to make sure that Karen and everyone on her team were equipped with the skills, tools and process to be successful.

I quickly planned a team meeting to focus on some "retraining" and refreshing of ValueSelling. What happened next was fascinating to me. You will probably agree that most salespeople hate meetings and will find any and every reason to avoid attending. Karen was no exception to this rule. As a matter of fact, in the past, every time I conducted a meeting, a last-minute emergency had kept Karen from attending.

I published the agenda and announced that we were going to refocus on ValueSelling as the key to our continued success. Karen not only

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attended the meeting, but during the ValueSelling portion, I noticed her sitting at the edge of her seat. She was completely engaged, taking notes, making connections and creating actions with her current sales activities.

This was amazing to me. But then I realized: Why should sales be different than any other skill-based profession? No one questions that Tiger Woods or Andre Agassi has a coach, or that they are always fine-tuning their game and re-focusing on the fundamentals. The best salespeople, like Karen, do the same thing. They reach out for coaching and training, and also understand that they can always get better.

Karen went on that year to achieve her fourth Eagle and surpass her earnings from the previous year. She attributes her success not only in sales, but in life, to ValueSelling. Applying the process and the formula gave Karen the gift of time. She consistently qualified her opportunities so that she could be more productive in the office and preserve her personal time with her husband and small children.

As it did Karen's, ValueSelling changed the course of my career and my life in a big way. I know that this will have an incredibly positive impact on your sales career and results.