

Struggling with your first sale? follow these 3 tips.

[Business](#)



Entrepreneurs don't always want to be known as salespeople. They often prefer innovators, leaders and builders. But the truth is, selling is one of the most important skillsets for founders and CEOs and deliberately developing those talents is critical to starting and running a business. Everything revolves around selling - from landing your first account to raising a seed round and hiring employees. To secure any of these, you need to be selling your company - and yourself. But this can be easier said than done.

If you are struggling with the whole sales process, here are three simple tips to empower you to sell effectively.

1. Everything is sales

Who does sales? There is a general misconception by most that sales is only done by the sales group - but that is not the case. The best CEOs and entrepreneurs know that almost everything they do is sales. Raising the next round of capital? Sales. Recruiting the key new hire? Sales. Weekly update of employees? Sales. Presenting at an industry conference? Sales. Crafting the company overview deck? Sales. Getting the tech team on board with the needed timeline? Sales. Negotiating an acquisition? Sales.

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Once you realize how important the sales muscle is, you will prioritize working it out more often. Almost every aspect of a business involves sales skills and company leaders need to arm their teams with the training and tools to sell effectively. Encourage and empower everyone to sell.

2. Listen and help

What can a book written in 1936 tell us about today's world? How to Win Friends & Influence People by Dale Carnegie has sold tens of millions of copies by reminding us that people remain most interested in themselves. People care about their business, careers and families.

So you should too. Take a genuine interest in others. Listen to them. What is on their mind? What do they want? What are their metrics of success? What motivates them?

Understand that people -- employees, board members, investors, business partners -- are moved by a combination of science (things like money and awards) and art (things like ego and belonging). Given the complexity of human decision making, the most effective salespeople ask and listen. Be interested in other people. People will usually tell you what is important to them. It is that easy.

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3. Build real relationships

Businesses are built with people. Some inside your company, but many outside your company. Make sure to spend time to build relationships with people outside of your company. Each week take an audit of your "external relationship time:" how many lunch meetings did you have outside of the office and how many new people did you meaningfully talk with that could help your company?

On the local level, seek help from individuals or organizations involved in the startup ecosystem, tap into the universities that are a pipeline for talent, and ask fellow entrepreneurs to share advice. Continue the relationships you have from college, graduate school, and sports teams as those bonds are typically very strong. There is no shortcut—invest the time.

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Most importantly: quality over quantity. It is about real relationships.

Remind yourself to reach out to the key people in your network about every six months on something that would be of interest to them. Ask how you can help them. Research has shown it takes three times for someone to even remember your name, so imagine how long it takes to build a solid, trusting, working relationship.