Shaping Homeowner Pricing Decisions
Katherine E. Loveland, PhD, Naomi Mandel, PhD, and Utpal M. Dholakia, PhD

Forgiveness on Your Team: Role of Cohesion and Collective Action
Kyle Irwin, PhD, Jo-Ann Tsang, PhD, Robert Carlisle, PhD, and Megan Johnson Shen, PhD

Are Clients Persuaded by Boastful Agents?
Grant Packard, PhD, Andrew D. Gershoff, PhD, and David B. Wooten, PhD

Getting into the Business of Your Buyer’s Success
Charles Fifield, MBA

Is the Customer Really King?
Christopher R. Plouffe, PhD, Willy Bolander, PhD, Joseph A. Cote, PhD, and Bryan Hochstein, PhD

INSIDER: Sales Growth
Erick Huntley, MBA

INSIDER: If the Point of Selling Isn’t Selling, then What’s the Point?
Courtney A. Harris, MBA Candidate
INSIDER: If the Point of Selling Isn’t Selling, then What’s the Point?
Courtney A. Harris, MBA Candidate

Selling to the Point by Jeffrey Lipsius tells the story of Essentials Inc., a mid-market wholesaler of medical supplies, whose board no longer believes the company is adequately capitalized to stay competitive. Instead, the board decides to sell shares to outside investors. In an attempt to make the company appear as attractive as possible to potential investors, Joan, the CEO, has tasked Martin, the CFO, with generating positive reports, especially for the sales department, since profits have been low despite strong sales. Upon examining the sales department expense register, Martin sees a substantial opportunity for savings: cutting the salary of Rick, the sales trainer. However, after meeting with the sales manager, several sales people, and Rick himself, Martin has a hard time with his decision. He struggles to find justification for letting go of Rick, who had turned out to be very popular and beloved within the sales department. Not only is Martin still confused as to why those in the sales department hold Rick in such high esteem, he is also perplexed by Rick’s sales training approach which hinges on ten laws of selling. As the story continues, Martin witnesses Rick use his ten laws of selling to successfully train two new salespeople and even a pitcher on the youth softball team Martin coaches. Eventually, Martin even finds himself employing Rick’s approach to his dating life. Ultimately, Martin comes to agree with those in the sales department and decides that Rick is not expendable. His training approach has been and will continue to be a vital part of Essential’s success.

Lipsius’ creative use of a fictional story to uproot old, unchallenged rules of traditional sales training makes Selling to the Point unlike any other “how-to” book, but Rick’s ten laws of selling are far from fictional. Instead, the ten laws provide a very real and applicable road map to ascertain what your buyers really need from you and how to deliver just that. This article will explain the ten laws, with two laws presented in each think point. Learning how to apply these laws to your selling process will improve the way you work and allow you to get to the true point of selling: buying.

THINK POINT #1: Salespeople will be more successful when they understand that the point of selling isn’t selling. A salesperson’s job is to help his or her customer make a better buying decision.
The point of selling is buying because people enjoy buying not being sold to, so Lipsius resets salespeople’s priority to focus on their customer’s buying rather than their own selling performance. Although traditional sales training only focuses on the selling conversation between salesperson and buyer, there is actually a second, more important conversation occurring at the same time. This is the internal buying conversation that’s occurring between the buyer’s ears. When you sell to the point, you focus on working with your buyer’s internal buying conversation rather than against it or even ignoring it altogether.

Once you get your focus right, you can set customer buying performance as the real primary determinant of your success. Customer buying performance can also be described as decision-making, which is a form of performance. And just like any performance, it can be coached. The salesperson coaches the buyer’s decision-making. Therefore, buyers can benefit from a salesperson being a good coach rather than a good salesperson. In fact, one of the biggest gifts a salesperson can offer to a buyer is guidance with decision-making itself. In this way, the salesperson and buyer are working together as a team to achieve the buyer’s goal. Misunderstanding and potentially missed sales happen when salespeople have a different goal than that of their buyers. Therefore, success lies in coaching the decision not controlling the decision. Successful salespeople don’t need to have control. Because they recognize that the buyer-seller relationship is that of a team, they are comfortable relying on the buyer whom they can’t control.

**THINK POINT #2: Decision-making is an internal process for the buyer and should remain that way. The customer's decision-making performance is more important than the salesperson’s selling performance.**

Internalized decisions are decisions that buyers feel are their own. When salespeople try to exert too much influence on a buyer’s decision, they interfere with the buyer’s attempt to make a good decision and hinder the buyer’s ability to feel ownership of that decision. Salespeople who are too busy stealing the limelight actually distract the customer from the decision-making process. Also, when you attempt to take over the buyer-seller interaction, you make it less internal and more external. This then results in less being revealed to you about the buyer, and the buyer herself is less in tune with her internal wants and needs. Ultimately, when a salesperson focuses on selling, this leaves both the buyer and the seller without a shared, mutually understood goal. Therefore, don’t interfere with your buyer’s internal buying process. Just let the buying happen.

In fact, the relationship the buyer develops towards the home or commercial property is more important than the relationship the buyer develop towards you. A buyer’s relationship with a property will determine the long-term success of your sale. In general, we all tend to overestimate the role we have in what others do and say, thus, it’s false for salespeople to assume a customer not buying is due to them not establishing sufficient rapport. In reality, customers buy primarily because they feel the product or service (property) will be good for them. Opinions
they have about the salesperson play a much smaller role. Therefore, remember you won’t actually get a sale unless the customer decides you will be getting the sale in the first place, and this decision usually stems primarily from whether they decide they like the product not just if they like you.

**THINK POINT #3: The real test of a salesperson’s influence is determined by the customer’s actions after the salesperson leaves. The less a salesperson’s persuasion was involved in a buying decision, the more internalized that customer’s buying decision will be.**

A salesperson’s success depends not on his/her sales pitch but rather how customers behave after s/he leaves. Recall that successful salespeople act as decision coaches encouraging the buyer’s internal buying conversation, and the buyer’s decision therefore endures long after the sales call. Although pushy salespeople may easily get customers to buy the product, the real challenge still remains. That challenge is to get buyers to integrate their buying decision into their personal beliefs, values, and daily routine. This is the epitome of the buyer internalizing the decision. Therefore, salespeople are truly successful if their buyers internalize their decisions after they leave.

So how do you get your buyer to internalize a decision? According to the author, buyers are more likely to internalize decisions if they involve less salesperson persuasion and more customer participation. Buyers must not only buy, but buy in. This requires that the relationship between buyer and product is stronger than the relationship between buyer and seller. The more influence you, as the seller, try to exert, the more the decision becomes salesperson-dependent and the less likely it is to be internalized. As a result, the buyer’s enthusiasm for the product leaves when you leave, and the buyer needs more visits/calls to stay engaged with the product.

**THINK POINT #4: It’s better for salespeople to be learners than to be teachers. Salespeople must address their customers’ objection at the source of the objection.**

When buyers are internalizing their buying decision, they come up with reasons to buy on their own. These reasons stem from the buyer’s internal decision-making conversation. If a salesperson is to present selling points, then the selling points must include the buyer’s beliefs and values and mirror the buyer’s reasons to buy. To do this, you must first learn the buyer's
needs, wants, and interests. Lastly, don’t steer the buyer away from their reasons to buy in favor of your own.

Law #8 highlights that a buyer’s objection can originate at either the internal level or the external level. Salespeople must figure out which it is and deal with the objection on the same level from which it originated. Objections originating from the internal level stem from the buyer’s thoughts and feelings about themselves, whereas objections at the external level come from their thoughts and feelings about other things than themselves. It’s natural to interpret all objections as originating from the external level, but salespeople must know how to distinguish between internal and external objections and how to dress each appropriately. It’s not a one fix for all.

**THINK POINT #5: Customers make the best buying decisions when they have the highest levels of internal confidence, internal choice, and internal clarity.**

Salespeople should use buying points more than selling points. It’s best that reasons to buy come from the customer.

Law #9 explains what’s actually necessary for a sale to happen. A sale requires buyers to have sufficient amounts of the three C’s, which are internal confidence, internal choice, and internal clarity. All of the C’s are internal because, remember, decision-making is internal. As a decision coach, it’s your job to coach and increase these three qualities in your buyer. Be mindful that external confidence and internal confidence are not the same and cannot be substituted for one another. Instead they are both necessary for a sale. While external confidence is the buyers’ confidence in you, internal confidence is their confidence in themselves to make a decision. Instead of striving for your buyers to have a lot of confidence in you, focus your attention on cultivating their internal confidence. Make them feel secure in their abilities as a decision maker. Show them that are equipped to make a decision and they will be more likely to make one.

Internal choice is related to self-limiting beliefs. If a buyer doesn’t feel like she has the authority or ability to make a choice they won’t make one. Maybe she feels she needs to wait for someone else’s approval or discuss the sale with others, when in fact neither is true and they are fully able to make the choice on their own. As a salesperson and decision coach, you must help your buyer move past these self-limiting beliefs. Show them that they do in fact have the authority to choose. The last C is internal clarity, and it is equally, if not more, important than external clarity. External clarity is the buyer’s knowledge of product features and specifications, but those are trumped by the buyer’s knowledge of the value and importance of her decision to buy. This is her internal clarity. A lack of self-awareness interferes with internal clarity. The buyer must know what the product will mean to them. Help your buyers be clear about their needs and their goals.

Lastly, Law #10 asserts the value of buying points over selling points. Buying-points are things about a buyer’s situation that the buyer needs to be aware of in order to make a good decision. In your coaching of your buyer’s decision-making, coach them towards buying points. Introduce the
buying point in the form of a question. This is called a buying point query and allows the customer to come up with their own reason to buy that you can then support and cultivate. Buying point queries allow you to influence the buyer’s decision-making while keeping the decision-making internal and without taking too much control of the interaction. Customer derived reasons to buy arising from buying point queries will always be more compelling than salesperson proposed selling points.

At first, the 10 laws of selling may seem very out there, unrealistic, or just plain fictional like the story they come from. However, when put into practice, they can actually bring you real life success. Using the 10 laws of selling will help you achieve the true point of selling: buying. As a real estate professional, you have undoubtedly built your career on traditional, tried and true selling practices. However, employing all or even some of the 10 laws of selling can help keep your seller-buyer interactions fresh and give you a competitive edge in satisfying ever changing buyers’ needs and wants.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Author**

**Courtney A. Harris, MBA Candidate**

**Baylor University**

Courtney is a graduate student from Valdosta, Georgia. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Duke University in 2016. Before beginning graduate school at Baylor, Courtney worked with The Fossil Group, a North Carolina-based marketing and investing firm, as an intern, and later, junior executive, in their brand management division. Courtney is seeking an MBA degree with a concentration in marketing and plans to work in the entertainment industry.