

Wait...I'll Do My Prospecting Right After I...

By George Dudley, Trelitha Bryant, and Jeff Tanner, Ph.D.

Why do people go into sales? To make money. That's no secret. It fits the stereotype. But, that doesn't make it wrong or improper.

One of the most common motivators for U.S. salespeople is, like people in any profession, to make money. That much is self-evident. But, recent mega-sized studies found that money is the driving force behind only about one-third of all salespeople (Tanner, Dudley, and Chonko 2005). An identical motivational pattern was found in a recent study of real estate agents. Only one-third (33.7%) say they are in real estate sales simply to make more money. So, the lingering stereotype of salespeople as "rapacious money-grabbers" is wrong in general, and wrong in particular for real estate salespeople. Like the members of any profession, what motivates real estate agents is complex and cannot be adequately summarized by a shop-worn soundbite.

Researchers George Dudley and Trelitha Bryant with the Behavioral Sciences Research Press in Dallas, Texas, and Professor Jeff Tanner at Baylor University's Keller Center for Research, examined the motivations of real estate agents across the U.S. For their study, they surveyed 3,319 real estate agents. Approximately 25% were under 30 years old, 32% were in their thirties, 25% in their forties and the remainder over fifty. Women slightly out-numbered men, 51% to 49%.

If it's not just the money, what does motivate real estate salespeople? Many sell because they seek a career setting where they can use a wider range of their talents and abilities (21%) while being of service to others (16%). There are other motivators, too, such as the desire for greater prestige, the opportunity to work in a more creative rather than routine setting, the opportunity to work with people and independence. But, these reasons were rated relatively low (well under 10%), especially when compared to salespeople in other industries and countries. Of special note, there were no overall motivational differences due to gender. But, motivation is just part of the selling exchange.

Each participant in the study completed SPQ*Gold', a well-established computer administered sales assessment used internationally to identify Sales Call Reluctance', sales motivation, goals and other characteristics specific to sales performance. The real estate salespeople in the study completed SPQ*Gold either as part of the hiring process or as part of a developmental program. Data were obtained across real estate offices and companies.

Sales Call Reluctance occurs when emotional discomfort interferes with prospecting activity, inhibiting a salesperson's ability to initiate contact with prospective buyers in sufficient numbers to support personal and organizational goals. Modern Call Reluctance research has moved understanding well beyond arcane notions like the "fear of rejection" and shown that it is not one

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thing like shyness or timidity. Instead, Call Reluctance can limit prospecting in twelve different ways (Dudley and Goodson 2007).

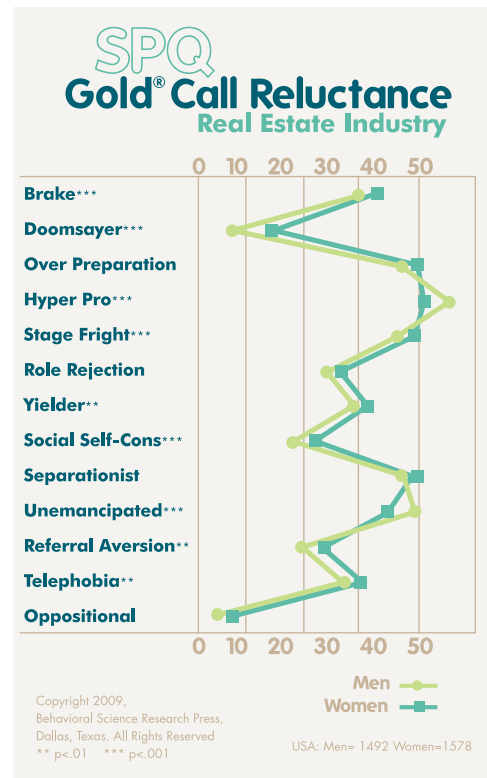
Initiating contact is required for prospecting and prospecting is required to achieve success in sales. If an agent's primary motivation is making money, then any interference, such as Call Reluctance, that impedes contacting prospective buyers and sellers would be catastrophically limiting.

Among the twelve ways Dudley, Bryant and Tanner identified that Call Reluctance limits prospecting include hesitating to contact friends even for networking, feeling discomfort with using the telephone as a prospecting tool, spending too much time preparing to prospect, being unwilling to take input from managers, coaches, trainers, or advisors, and waiting for just the "right instant" to make contact.

The research found that real estate salespeople with higher Call Reluctance scores are more likely to have made fewer contacts initiated the previous week. This finding underscores the toxic role of Call Reluctance as a prospecting suppressor. It also directs sales organizations to examine lost opportunities and potential sales that may be going to less hesitant competitors. Predictably, agents with less real estate sales experience are likely to exhibit more Call Reluctance. This is undoubtedly occurs because agents who enter the profession already Call Reluctant or who acquire Call Reluctance early in their career are more likely to leave as they are unable to achieve success due to inadequate prospecting. Consequently, Call Reluctance is statistically less likely to be found among more seasoned professionals. But, Call Reluctance can occur at any point in a Real Estate agent's career, and the type experienced can differ according to gender.

Males sales professionals are more likely to exhibit signs of "Hyper-Professional" Call Reluctance (best dressed under-performers, "dressed to kill but don't show up for the hunt"). Women, however, are significantly more likely to worry themselves out of prospecting ("Doomsayer"), more likely to avoid public speaking opportunities ("Stage Fright"), more likely to struggle with "Social Self-Consciousness" (intimidated by "up-market" buyers and sellers) and "Emotional Unemancipation."

Emotionally Unemancipated salespeople are emotionally unable to prospect their own family—even to ask for referrals. Believing "business and family should never mix", Emotionally Unemancipated salespeople take longer to build a client base than less inhibited salespeople. Interestingly, the problem here isn't with referrals in general because these salespeople can and



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do generate referrals through other networks. They are simply emotionally unable to comfortably seek referrals or listings from family members, reflexively ruling an important segment of their natural market out-of-bounds.

Socially Self-Conscious agents are uncomfortable prospecting among people they perceive to be wealthier, better educated or of higher social standing. They struggle to sell upscale properties and find upscale buyers for listings. As a result, their productivity remains unnecessarily tethered to moderate priced transactions with fewer high dollar opportunities. Statistically, Social Self-consciousness occurs more frequently in female sales professionals. As noted earlier, females in the study were more likely to suffer from Stage Fright than males. This limitation may not seem important, but consider the relationship between visibility and opportunity. The willingness to speak in front of others raises the market-awareness of the agent. With awareness comes opportunity. As with advertising, public relations, and other forms of visibility management, speaking engagements can raise market awareness and enable a real estate agent to build a personal brand that yields more opportunities to list or sell properties.

Female sales professionals were also more likely to exhibit "Doomsayer" Call Reluctance. Doomsayers focus on potential negative consequences at the expense of positive expectations. The result? Goal supporting activities such as prospecting are suppressed. A component of Doomsayer Call Reluctance may be genetic. However, like most forms of Sales Call Reluctance, it is usually learned.

Interestingly, female sales professionals are significantly less likely to initiate first contact by phone, preferring instead to make contact through networking or by securing introductions. Earlier studies indicated that saleswomen prefer more "rapport-oriented" approaches to selling (e.g. Dudley and Tanner 2005), which use warmer methods than the telephone.

Most salespeople experience Call Reluctance to some degree. The challenge is not in the mere presence of discomfort, but in not allowing that discomfort to interfere with critical selling activities like prospecting. For obstinate cases, there's an array of specialized psychological tools that can minimize or eliminate Call Reluctance. For many salespeople, however, simply being aware of what Call Reluctance is and how it operates is enough to make sure the motivation they have gets directed into the prospecting they need to do.

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About The Authors

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Noted behavioral scientist and author, George W. Dudley, has degrees in research psychology from Baylor University (1969) and the University of North Texas (1974). He began working with assessments while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, and for many years directed the Field Testing & Research department of a Fortune 500 financial services company. His groundbreaking studies of Sales Call Reluctance, Recruiting Reluctance and Close Reluctance begun in the mid 1970's, have been featured in popular and professional media including CNN, The Financial Times of London, The Australian, Straits Times (Singapore), Congress for European Psychotherapy and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. He is the principal author of widely used sales and management assessment applications used today including the Sales Preference Questionnaire (SPQ), Recruiting Preferences Measure (RPM) and the Selling Styles Profile Analysis. The Psychology of Sales Call Reluctance -- an international best seller for over 15 years— is considered the definitive text on the subject. His newest book, *The Hard Truth About Soft Selling: Restoring Authentic Pride and Purpose to the Sales Profession*, written with Baylor University Professor Jeff Tanner advocates radical honesty in selling, and is sure to be a controversial bestseller.

A gifted teacher, Dudley has been a featured platform speaker at many industry and professional conventions including the Million Dollar Roundtable and the Singapore Association of Life Underwriters. Several of his scientific studies have sparked worldwide discussion, including: "Where In The World Can You Find The Most Honest Salesperson?", "What Really Motivates Salespeople: A Multi-Nation Comparison," and "Lying on Psychological Tests: How Mode of Administration Influences Sales Test Scores in Different Countries." His biography is listed in several honorary publications including *Who's Who in Science and Engineering*, and *Who's Who In America*. He is married and lives in the Dallas area with his wife Carol, also a successful scientist, having co-authored scientific articles in physiology and genetics.

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Trelitha R. Bryant is VP, and Senior Research Associate, at the corporate office of Behavioral Sciences Research Press in Dallas, Texas (BSRP). For ten years, she has served as a research analyst at BSRP, completing hundreds of research projects, constructing statistical models to study the relationship of sales call reluctance and effective clientele-building. Bryant supervises the world's largest database on sales call reluctance. She has also presented research on socially desirable responding, which explores the issues, challenges and peculiarities specific to using psychological tests in the sales profession. Bryant's work has been presented at the Southwestern Psychological Association and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). A talented and engaging speaker, she has taught and presented her research to groups of sales management executives, consultants and psychologists in the US and the Europe.

Before joining BSRP, Bryant served as a survey researcher for the Under Secretary of the Navy's Total Quality Leadership (TQL) Office. While there, she helped organize and direct the largest Navy-wide study of quality leadership practices ever conducted, managed the TQL training evaluation program for the Navy and Marine Corps and co-authored a handbook on Total Quality Leadership. Prior to her tenure with the Navy, Bryant authored a handbook on quality management principles, while serving as a civilian personnel liaison officer for the 54th Area Support Group, Department of the Army located in The Netherlands. During her tenure, she also served as an executive trainer and speaker at Army commands in Germany and The Netherlands. Mrs. Bryant has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Creighton University, in Nebraska and has completed graduate coursework at Southern Methodist University. Bryant holds memberships in the Association for Psychological Science, Southwestern Psychological Association and The Society for Applied Multivariate Research. She currently teaches issues associated with modern sales selection and assessment in BSRP's Advanced Management Training Workshops.

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(<https://tanerismsontues.blogspot.com>) covers sales and CRM topics and so far, he's been faithful to blogging at least once a week.