SALES

The New Model of Selling: Selling to an Unsellable Generation

by Jerry Acuff and Jeremy Miner

Today's buyers tune out pressure and pitches. Win them with calm questions that let them sell themselves.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **People hate to be sold, but they love to buy.**

The book's founding premise: pressure triggers resistance in today's skeptical buyers, so remove the pressure and let them feel in control of the decision.

02 **The less you care about making the sale, the more you sell.**

Needing the deal leaks into your voice and face. Detached, outcome-neutral sellers stay curious instead of pushy - and walk away from bad fits without flinching.

03 **Engagement is 85 percent of selling. Presenting is only about 10 percent.**

Most reps rush to pitch and close. In the new model, nearly all the work is connecting, understanding, and building trust before any solution appears.

04 **Selling is not convincing people. It is helping them persuade themselves.**

The book redefines selling as dialogue, not monologue: you guide buyers to discover their own problems and reasons to change, like a consultant, not a pitch artist.

05 **Ask questions in sequence: connection, situation, problem awareness, solution awareness, consequence, transition, commitment.**

Miner's NEPQ order mirrors how buyers think. Skip ahead to budget or closing and you trigger resistance; follow the sequence and buyers talk themselves into change.

06 **Replace 'Always Be Closing' with 'Always Be Disarming.'**

One of six myths the book dismantles, along with 'selling is a numbers game' and 'you must be enthusiastic.' Disarming lowers walls that closing techniques raise.

07 **Your tone of voice can trigger - or kill - resistance.**

Buyers judge your tone in seconds. The book teaches three: a curious tone for questions, a concerned tone to gently challenge, and a calm, confident tone for your expertise.

08 **Listen to understand, not to reply.**

The book's highest level of listening is empathic - hearing how the buyer thinks and feels. It cites research that 95 percent of customers say salespeople talk too much.

09 **Treat the gatekeeper as an ally, not an obstacle.**

Assistants and receptionists protect their boss's time and advise them too. Disarming honesty and respect turn screeners into connectors; tricks get you filtered out.

10 **Buyers act when staying the same feels more expensive than changing.**

The transitional stage uses consequence questions - 'What happens if this doesn't improve in six months?' - so buyers feel the cost of inaction in their own words.

11 **A late objection is usually a request for clarity, not a rejection.**

In the commitment stage, don't argue or re-pitch. Stay curious and ask what they would need to feel confident moving forward.

12 **The close is the starting line, not the finish line.**

The final chapter: keep showing up after the sale with check-ins and useful ideas, and you become a trusted advisor who earns renewals and referrals.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Buyers changed. They research online before ever talking to a salesperson - the authors joke that everyone now attends 'Google U' - and trust in salespeople sits at an all-time low. The old model of pitching, presenting, and closing hard was built for a world where the seller held the information. That world is gone, and the book opens by naming the real problem: the outdated, seller-focused methods still being taught.

Acuff, a veteran sales consultant, and Miner, founder of the 7th Level training company, redefine selling itself. Selling is not convincing or manipulating; it is helping buyers persuade themselves. Their early chapters dismantle six sales myths - that selling is a numbers game, that rejection is inevitable, that you must be enthusiastic, that assumptive closes work, that the sale is lost at the end rather than the beginning, and that you should 'always be closing' instead of always be disarming.

The method runs on Miner's NEPQ - Neuro-Emotional Persuasion Questions - asked in a strict sequence: connection, situation, problem awareness, solution awareness, consequence, transition, and commitment questions. The conversation moves through three stages: engagement, where trust is built and resistance lowered (the authors put engagement at 85 percent of the process and presenting at only about 10 percent); the transitional stage, where layered questions help buyers feel the cost of leaving their problem unsolved; and the commitment stage, where the decision follows naturally and objections are treated as requests for clarity.

How you sound matters as much as what you ask. A whole chapter covers voice tonality - curious, concerned, and confident tones - because an eager, hyped pitch tone reads as a threat and raises defenses. Another covers listening: most salespeople listen only to reply, while top performers listen empathically. And underneath it all sits the book's counterintuitive mindset, 'detached selling': the less you need this one sale, the calmer you sound, and the more buyers open up - including knowing when not selling at all is the right move.

The book also gets practical about the edges of the job: turning gatekeepers into allies instead of tricking past them, and treating the signed deal as the start of a relationship, with follow-through that turns vendors into trusted advisors. Read it as a field manual for selling to informed, skeptical buyers who refuse to be pushed - full of example questions, real call dialogue, and the reasoning behind every step.

DO THIS WEEK

Before your next sales call, write out your questions in the book's sequence - one connection question, two situation questions, then problem-awareness and consequence questions - and ask them in a slow, curious tone before you mention your product. Afterwards, note how much you talked versus how much the buyer talked, and shrink your share next time.

The New Model of Selling by Jerry Acuff and Jeremy Miner, published by Morgan James Publishing in 2023. A Wall Street Journal bestseller. For salespeople whose old pitch-and-close playbook stopped working on modern buyers.