



# *Can You Find Real Meaning in Life Through Sales?*

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While it might be easy for some professions—a doctor, a judge, a firefighter, even a lawyer—to find meaning in their lives, for a salesperson it can be tough. Along with countless negative media portrayals over the years, and tainted social attitudes, a salesperson encounters the highest percentage of rejection of just about any profession out there.

### *How important is meaning to a person's life?*

For at least one significant answer to that question we can turn to Victor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and holocaust survivor, who founded an entire school of thought around a person's search for meaning. Frankl saw this search as life's primary motivation.

It is important to point out that Frankl also said that each person must discover such a meaning for themselves—nobody can give it to them. So while we cannot give each individual salesperson the meaning for their own life, we can certainly point out that they mean a great deal more than they might have been given credit for in the past.

### *So what meaning can be found in the life of a salesperson? Is it something to be ashamed of, or something—as we at Pipeliner believe—that should be a source of pride?*

In this white paper I explore the subject of the Meaning in Life of a Salesperson—the most challenging, yet the most rewarding career available.

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## CHAPTER 1

# Can a Salesperson Find Meaning in Life?

Just based on social commentary, along with incredibly negative entertainment media over the last 100 years (think *Death of a Salesman* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, just as 2 prime examples), it would appear, at least at a surface glance, that the only meaning salespeople could find in life would come from pressuring prospects to buy things against their will, grubbing for money and, in the end, total misery.



No other profession is subject to this kind of negative portrayal. Can you imagine if being a doctor or judge was shown in such a light—that everyone in this profession was a jerk? Even with all the lawyer jokes aside, there are still many hero portrayals of lawyers in films and TV—but not so with salespeople.

These types of portrayals have certainly hit their mark; being a salesperson has a very definite stigma attached to it. I find myself from time to time addressing audiences of young people. I'll ask for a show of hands of how many would like to pursue various careers—I'll say, "doctor" and a number

of hands will shoot up. I'll say, "lawyer" and another substantial number will appear. But when I say, "salesperson" I'll be lucky if one hand is raised.

This is true also when talking to children, too. Ask any one of them "what they want to be when they grow up" and you'll get all kinds of answers ranging from "doctor" to "lawyer" to "astronaut" and beyond. I've yet to hear "salesperson" in response to such a question.

Another common viewpoint about sales that I've frequently read or heard is that someone has to be born a salesperson—they can never learn it. Otherwise, who would *want* to be a salesperson?

This view is reflected in our education system. Have you ever heard of a Master's Degree in Sales? Colleges and universities have, in the last few years, added sales courses, but not real degree programs. At Pipeliner we are working with DePaul University and other schools to improve on this ourselves—to demonstrate that sales is not a simple subject to learn, and more educational help is needed. But where can a person go if they want a real education in sales?

The "shame" over sales goes to ridiculous extremes. I recently ran across, in a book I was reading, advice for salespeople in "coming out" to their friends and family as salesperson! It includes such nuggets as, "Accept yourself" and "Choose your time of coming out to your family carefully."

This stigma extends to companies that refuse to have "sales" in job titles. Titles such as "business analyst" or "system specialist" are used instead, in an effort to try and fool prospects (really?) into not quite believing they're talking to a salesperson and being sold.

*But even with this tainted social view of salespeople, and despite the fact that people do not choose sales as a career at least early in life, an enormous number of people find themselves in it anyway. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the U.S. some 14.5 million people—22 percent of the population—work in sales or related occupations. Extrapolating that same percentage to the world, that would mean that roughly 1.65 billion people are employed in sales and related jobs.*

So what meaning can be found in the life of a salesperson? Is it something to be ashamed of, or something—as we at Pipeliner believe—that should be a source of pride?





## CHAPTER 2

# Slapping Back at Negative Attitudes on Sales

## The Mental Model

There is something called a *mental model*, through which a person perceives the world around them, makes decisions and formulates actions. Part of this model is the view one takes of life.

A sort of extreme example is someone who has fallen in love. Their view of life is going to be highly affected by their emotional state—in the past this has been called "Looking through rose-colored glasses." You could say that the "rose-colored glasses" is a mental model.

Similarly, your attitude about yourself as a salesperson is also a mental model.

How are mental models changed? The short answer: only by *you*, through your own self-determined decision to do so. Your mental models determine, to a large degree, the meaning that you find in your career and, indeed, in your life.

While there are thousands of suggestions out there of what your meaning in life might be, only *you* can decide what your meaning in life actually is. It's different for everyone. If meaning in life was the same for all people, then it wouldn't be a problem finding it, would it? You could just ask your neighbor. But unfortunately it's not that easy.

## Influence of Society

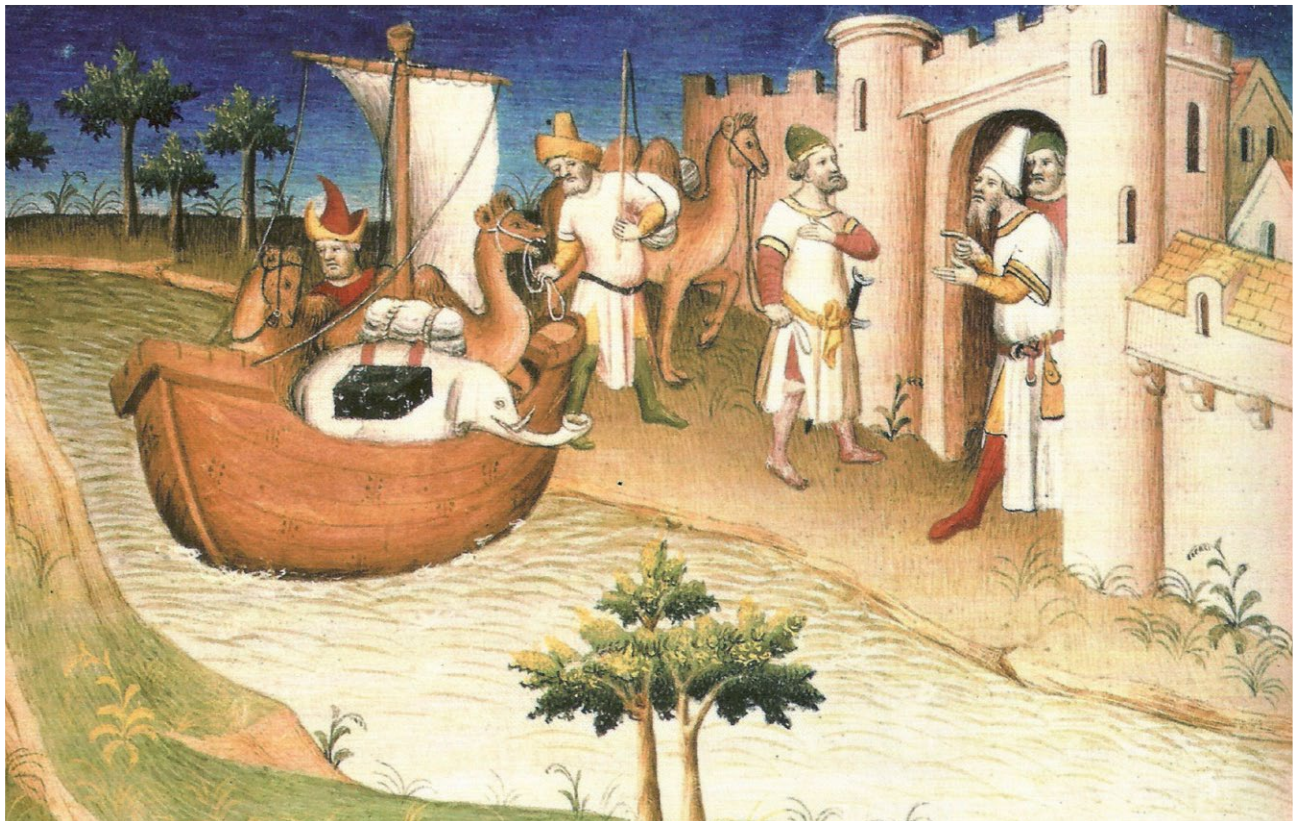
For salespeople, an influence on this mental model certainly comes from society itself. If society is constantly telling you that as a salesperson you're pushy and only motivated by making money, it can become that much more difficult for you to find real meaning in your life.

A parallel could be drawn to an alcoholic attempting to reform—everywhere that person goes, alcoholic beverages are practically shoved in that person's face. Even at the grocery store there are rows and rows of hundreds of different varieties of drink. It's no wonder alcoholics can have such a tough time.

If a salesperson is met every which way they turn by a negative view of salespeople, it's a similar situation. It becomes that much more tough for a salesperson to look at themselves in a positive light.

## Looking Back

If we go back to a time roughly 1,500 years ago, we see that this negative opinion of salespeople was certainly not in any kind of majority. In fact salespeople—at the time known as *merchants*—were very much revered. Merchants were responsible for the incredible power of the Republic of Venice, which was at the center of commerce for the civilized world for a thousand years. Silk and spices became broadly known and used because of these individuals. The name Marco Polo is still well-known because he was the most famous of these merchants, and you won't find anyone with a negative opinion of him.



Trading for hundreds of years was conducted in bazaars—marketplaces in which merchants set up stalls and traded with other merchants and buyers. It was a pleasurable experience for many concerned, all the way from bartering to the closing of the deal. And a deal that was a real win-win for both parties was often celebrated by the sharing of a meal and drink.

## Changing Today

So it's clear that if salespeople are to find meaning in their lives, help from society is definitely required. When our culture looks upon salespeople as the ancient world once did merchants, then businesses will follow suit and also look upon salespeople the same way. And we will have a society that can perhaps reach the fantastic prosperous and even artistic heights that the Republic of Venice once did.

It has been observed—by myself as well as others—that for hundreds of years no real education has been available for salespeople. You could go to a university and obtain a Master's Degree in many subjects, but not in sales. This is still true today, but more and more universities are at least now starting to realize the vital need of an education for salespeople, and are offering programs for them.

We're starting to see changes of the way salespeople are portrayed in media, at least in the hundreds of popular nonfiction books now available on the subject of sales. We're seeing very little of the *Death of a Salesman* type drama and literature being created today, and I'm sure art forms will begin to catch up and...

*...start portraying salespeople as they truly are, and valuing them for their real contributions to society: makers of peace and producers of wealth.*

Also as I noted earlier, other professions such as judge, firefighter, policeman, all have no problem identifying real meaning in their lives. When salespeople can just as easily find such meaning—which they well should—we'll really be on our way.

## Not That Difficult

It really isn't that difficult, if you examine it. If you're in real estate, and you sell a home to a family for a decent price that works both for you and for them, you've created a real win-win. The same is true if you sell a car to someone that they really need, that they can afford, and that you get paid well for selling. Both of these types of transactions have years of positive impact.

For yourself, take a long look at the good you do for yourself, your family, your company and, yes, for society as a whole. You can find meaning for yourself. And as you do, it becomes much easier to overcome the many obstacles that confront a salesperson.





## CHAPTER 3

# Do You Find Meaning, or is it Forced On You?

To find meaning in your role in sales, which is vitally important, you have to understand a bit more about the different approaches on humankind, the whole study of which is called anthropology.

## Two Approaches

We can fairly say that there are 2 primary concepts in anthropology or the study of human beings today, or (better) two different world views on humankind. One is the so-called socialist mindset, and the other is the more entrepreneurial approach. Because we believe salespeople are “entrepreneurs within an enterprise,” this is the one we favor.

The first is based on a concept that was noticed by an early student of the Austrian School of Economics, Julius Friedrich Gans von Ludassy. In 1893 von Ludassy coined a very interesting term: *Homo Economicus*. The word literally means “economic man” and is the “average person” represented in economic theory. It basically says that *Homo Economicus* is going to react to various stimuli the exact same way every time.

If you're laughing, you certainly should be. Humans don't behave that way, and von Ludassy actually invented the term to show that classical economics has an unrealistic view of a human being. While von Ludassy has since been largely forgotten, ironically the term he coined made its way into mainstream economics where it has remained ever since.

This unrealistic world view of the human being as a statistical number is approach number one. It literally means that other people know what is better for your life and what you should do than yourself. Through this view your behavior can be “statistically tracked”, and this is more or less the socialist worldview on the individual.

The second concept runs completely contrary to the first. It says that human beings should be self-responsible. Why should we live in a cage? Why should someone tell us what we should do? We should certainly follow rules, but why should someone else come along and say, “No, you should live this way”?

## Your Way, or Their Way?

This second concept is one much more native to human beings and one which resonates with them. One index of the truth of this is the overwhelming all-time popularity of the Frank Sinatra hit song *My Way*. Why has this song remained so loved? Because at the end of the day it speaks to our hearts: "I did it my way."

Statistical economics taught in most universities today utilize *Homo Economicus*—the model of a human that will react the same way no matter who they are—because they are using statistical models to try and predict economic events. But they conveniently forget that people are driven by making decisions, and the decisions that people make are very hard to predict. This is why such predictions are usually wrong. Back in 1949 another founding father of the Austrian School, Ludwig von Mises, wrote a book on this exact subject entitled [\*Human Action: A Treatise on Economics\*](#), because human action is central to any economy, and can even change the course of a whole nation.

And human action is anything but predictable. As long as a person is capable of thought, statistics based on *Homo Economicus* make no sense. You're not a statistical number. A statistical number can be measured, can be pushed, can be analyzed and targeted. Meaning can be forced on it. But if you are a self-responsible human being (which, in fact, you are), you can change your mind from one day to another. You could decide tomorrow, for example, "I'm no longer eating meat." If a million people did that one day without any kind of manipulation, statistics would be thrown right out the window and the meat industry would have a big problem. Yet this could easily happen.



Interestingly, there is a segment of society—very prevalent today, especially in America—that does attempt to force us to all think and act the same way, like *Homo Economicus*. They are defining "the perfect world" and through mainstream media attempt to tell us how we should live. They will tell you what meaning you should have in your life. Conspiracy theories aside, this is an obvious fact—just look over the magazine rack the next time you're checking out of the supermarket.

On the other hand we have systems such as the Austrian School that assert that every person is self-responsible. You can indeed take control of your life and find the meaning yourself.

## Finding Meaning Doesn't Have to Be Huge

There is also another common misconception in regard to finding meaning—that finding meaning infers that a person must always have a high calling: "I have to change the world," "I have to conquer the universe" or do something incredibly extraordinary or be famous. This really isn't true. Someone's meaning could be found in something like, "I'm raising four children, and I want to be the best mother in the world." I honestly think such people are the most stable in a society. Meaning for you could be whatever really suits you.

There is a beautiful novel written by Michael Ende, called [\*Momo\*](#). One of the characters in this book is a man who just cleans the street on a daily basis, but is the happiest person in the world. Why? Because this was the meaning he found. He's happy when the street is clean, and the people are happy, and this is his job.

In the old days people found meaning while they were actually performing jobs or professions, instead of beforehand. A doctor found meaning through actually practicing medicine and helping people. A judge discovered meaning in making righteous decisions. A lawyer found meaning not in assisting someone in gouging someone else for money, but in settling an issue between parties on a legal ground. A farmer discovered a love of growing things.

On this basis was built the university education. People found meaning through their professions and become more and more skilled, and these skills started being taught in universities. The university didn't provide the meaning—it came originally out of the profession. Today we fit people into something and tell them they should find meaning there, but it didn't begin that way.

I think it's actually a combination—one feeds the other. For example, a person I work closely with in creating content found meaning in creating content. It therefore gives him satisfaction and purpose, and makes him happy.

## What You Love to Do

This brings us to another aspect of finding meaning: My content creator does his job well because he loves doing it. The more he does it, the better he becomes at it. So meaning comes about in something one loves doing. One finds meaning in what they love to do, and this becomes a person's profession.

As a side note, in my opinion if you are raising children, you should take that same look at what they love doing. You can help them find meaning, because then you know they will survive in life.

*This matches up with another point I enjoy making: utilizing strengths. I often point out that organizations waste money in attempting to bolster up weaknesses in their staff. They would do far better to discover the strong points of their personnel and strengthen them.*

The same is true for an individual—they love doing something, and become stronger at it the more they practice it (I've never heard of someone becoming great at something they really didn't like doing, have you?).

Does any of this have anything to do with being rich? Well, I personally know quite a number of rich people. Some of them have never figured out their meaning, and some of them haven't really figured out what it means to be happy. Personally I would much rather have a fulfilling life that simply to have 10 cars in my garage (I know that's not true of everyone, but it sure is for me).

Another way of looking at it is this: What do you find easy to do? There can also be a correlation between doing something *easily* and doing it well. For example if you find it very easy to speak to people, then you might have a natural gift for sales. Can such a thing be learned? Certainly, and many will probably have to. But when you can do it easily and naturally, there is a correlation to meaning.

So the bottom line is: Do what you love doing, and do it well. Go there, and you will find your meaning.





## CHAPTER 4

# What Factor Brings the Most Meaning to Sales?

## Altruism

Meaning in life for a salesperson is tied directly to altruism: the performance of good for others for no other reason than the good performed. When salespeople really benefit others, they not only make repeat customers but they help enhance their own reputations.

I truly believe tapping into a salesperson's altruism is even better than trying to take a moral approach to sales, for altruism is actually a natural, evolutionary approach. This natural instinct is demonstrated in nature, and can even be seen in one of the closest relatives to humans, the bonobo ape; *the bonobo will happily give up their own meal in exchange for simple social interaction.*

## Age of the Buyer

Altruism is needed because we are very clearly in the age of the buyer. Whereas the buyer used to be only informed and educated by the seller, putting the seller in very firm control, today the buyer has all the information they need right online. They are contacting a salesperson when they are well into the buying process. Their alternatives are clearly seen, along with product or service reviews.

This buyer's age has led to a lack of allegiance to a particular brand—something else that existed in the old days. It used to be common for a person to be dedicated to, for example, a particular make of automobile. Today a buyer will have a Mercedes one year, perhaps a Maserati a year from now, a Buick down the road, and so on. It's all down to price and features. This is also true in B2B.

In my opinion the SaaS (Software as a Service) model makes it even easier for a customer to behave in this fashion. With a monthly subscription a buyer can say, "Oh, I only need it for this month" and the following month switch to something else.

All across the boards, in just about every industry, the buyer pattern has changed. For that reason, the seller must also fundamentally change.

## Seller Behavior

Because of this radical shift in buyer behavior, the seller is under enormous pressure and requires sales intelligence to track with the buyer and react to the buyer's satisfaction. We're now in a networked world and, because of recommendations, a salesperson's reputation follows them. Recommendations could be said to be the currency in a networked community.

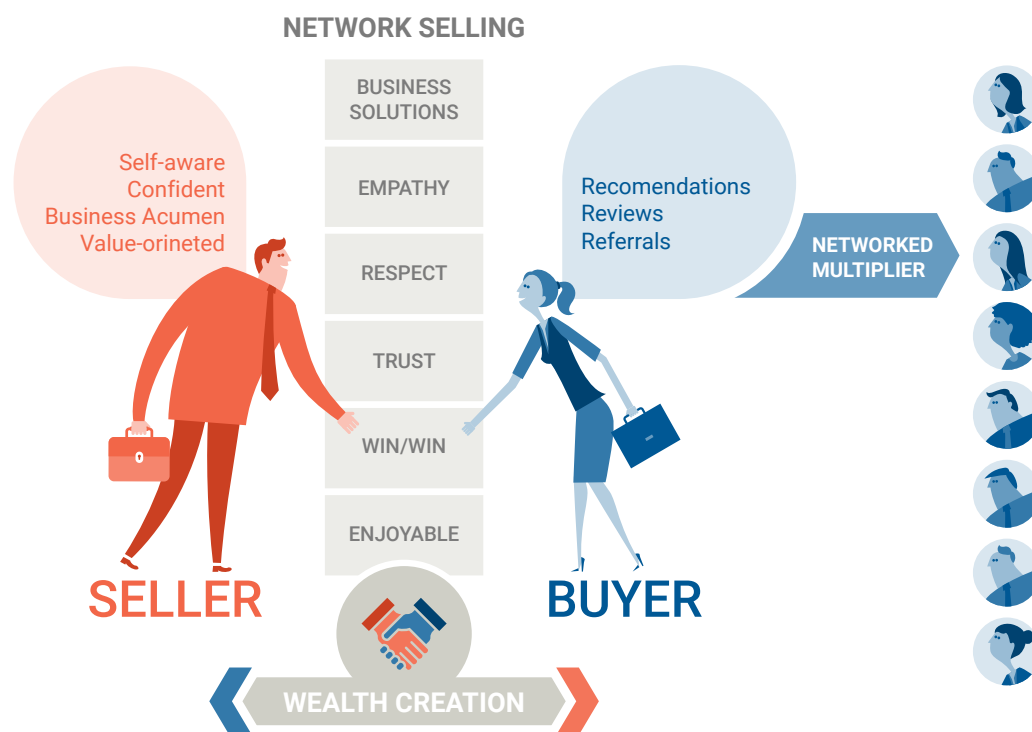
Is behavior change possible? According to many sources, the answer is a resounding yes. Currently at the Sigmund Freud University in Vienna there is a project underway in which [psychotherapy is being conducted by robots](#). It is apparently more effective than human-to-human psychotherapy because the robot is very neutral, and patients have a tendency to open up more because they have nothing to be ashamed of. The primary impetus for this project is to effect a broad change in behavior more rapidly, because that is what is really needed on this planet at this time.



## Network Selling

So, too, the seller's behavior must change, and as rapidly. For ourselves, we have facilitated this change with our [Network Selling approach](#).

The Network Selling philosophy is designed to create a win-win situation, both for the buyer and the seller. When this has happened, the buyer will happily provide referrals to the seller, and as well, will recommend the seller's product or service to others.



Let's take a brief walk through each step of Network Selling.

### BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

As you can see in the graphic, Network Selling starts with a business solution—you're certainly not going to win either way (as a seller or for the buyer) without one.

### EMPATHY

It is vital that you, as a seller, fully understand your buyer's need. That's the only way the next step of Network Selling—empathy—will come about. Empathy is directly correlated to the needs and pain points of the buyer.

### RESPECT AND TRUST

How does respect come about between a seller and a buyer? It comes about through *communication*.

Communication can happen through online meetings, webinars, phone calls or on-site meetings. It is through communication that the seller creates a solid image of themselves and their product or service.

A vital part of this communication—and one which salespeople too often leave out—is *listening*. The seller must hear, understand and rapidly respond to questions.

It is through communication that the buyer will ultimately respect the seller—or not. And through consistent respect comes the next stage of Network Selling: *Trust*.

### WIN-WIN

As the opportunity moves forward through the sales process, it should be heading for a win-win, in which both the buyer and the seller come out ahead. All the Network Selling steps lead up to this one.

### ENJOYABLE

What do all of the above steps result in? An *enjoyable buying experience*—which is something any company, sales organization or sales rep is going to have to create to survive in today's network world.

And as shown in the graphic, the successful establishment of all the Network Selling Steps results in wealth creation on both sides.

## Altruistic Instinct

The seller should embrace Network Selling, and each of its steps, with their *altruistic instinct*, which they will find they natively possess. It is this that leads to the needed radical change in seller behavior. When you start behaving with respect, with empathy, with a joyful experience for the buyer, you then find meaning in what you do. And then you're at the beginning of what we talked about in the last chapter—when doctors or lawyers actually practiced their crafts *and then* found meaning.

*In the end, you'll never find meaning by just sitting there thinking about it. It begins through your own action.*



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