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CAPTURE THE EYE AND

THE CUSTOMER WILL FOLLOW



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Preface

"No one is thinking if everyone is thinking alike."

—General George S. Patton, leading
U.S. Army general in World War II

Before PowerPoint, sellers worked hard to create a persuasive pitch. They won or lost by how well they held and guided the prospects' attention. Unfortunately, PowerPoint changed this scenario. The center of attention is now the screen or even worse, a *handout*. Sellers have become projectionists, throwing words on a screen while listeners read ahead and sellers plod behind, mouthing what's already been displayed. PowerPoint's electronic barrage of words, bullet points, and sentences threaten to turn the art of persuasion into a lost art.

It's likely all this is familiar to you. You have fallen into the PowerPoint routine and your ability to sell has been hurt as a result. You probably have *lost sales because your ability to persuade has taken a back seat to your ability to "project."*

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. By being aware of all the visual tools at your disposal and using them effectively, you can return the prospects' attention to where it belongs—on you. More importantly, you can use these visual tools to increase the persuasive power of your pitch.

This book is written to help you achieve these goals.

Crippling the Seller

PowerPoint can be a powerful tool, but when used incorrectly it undermines sellers in two ways:

1. The screen commands center stage because it displays the message.
2. Prospects read text rather than *pay attention to the seller*.

Consider how PowerPoint presentations cripple even the best salespeople as the selling process evolves. In high-dollar, competitive situations, many proposals are submitted. A weeding process narrows the contenders to a few who are chosen to present. Placing the presentation last happens for good reason. Prospects, buyers, and decision makers all consider it necessary to meet and listen to the winning seller or sales team. Even in an age where we communicate increasingly online rather than in person, people still want to meet and view sellers in person and base their buying decisions on first-hand observations.

As sellers present their ideas, decision makers seek to answer four key questions:

1. Does the seller's logic seem well thought out? People make this judgment based on how the content flows.
 2. Does the seller appear assertive, bold, or confident? In other words, does he or she display a desire to "*make it happen*"? Viewers answer this question by observing the presenter's facial expressions, enthusiasm, and gestures.
 3. Does the seller come across as sincere and trustworthy? The person's bearing, delivery, eye contact, or lack thereof reflects these character traits.
 4. Does the individual reveal a creative side? That is, will the seller offer new insights to a problem or need? Screen visuals can be a key factor in evaluating the presenter's creativity.
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Notice that viewers answer three of the questions by simply *watching the seller*. That's why presenters should be the most important part of the sale. In warfare if you command the high ground, you are in the superior position. If you're selling visually, you also dominate the high ground. In the following pages, we *provide specific suggestions that will help you sell from the one-up position and gain the competitive advantage*.

An Opportunity to Gain an Edge

Many salespeople are so in love with PowerPoint that they don't realize how it's *crippling their selling efforts*. Because it is so easy to use and takes so much of the work out of a pitch, relying on PowerPoint seems like a no-brainer. We're suggesting that this is the perfect time to sell with brains—and with vision. An opportunity exists for any salesperson who recognizes the real value of visual selling. By drawing attention to yourself (or the seller) and shaping images, room environments, and physical appearance and gestures for maximum impact, you can capitalize on this opportunity.

Though you may recognize this opportunity or you would not have bought this book, many salespeople don't see it for two reasons:

1. Using PowerPoint text is like being offered a sample from a box of chocolate—it's very satisfying and you want more. By projecting the message on the screen, you don't even have to rehearse or worry about delivery skills. Just read away.
2. Some people are lazy. If you rely on PowerPoint exclusively, you probably don't want to make the effort that visual selling requires. It's not a huge effort, but it demands that you think about and plan all the visual aspects of your presentation.

A New Direction

To reap the rewards of visual selling, you must consider changes in your approach to persuading others. Some of you may already be

good visual sellers and simply need to make incremental changes in your approach. Some of you may have to make more significant changes in order to benefit. Whatever your situation, this book provides you with ideas and tools to increase the effectiveness of your approach. It does not matter if you sell high-tech products one on one, low-tech supplies to groups of buyers, or professional services to corporate clients. Visual selling works for everyone.

To understand how it will work for you, let's preview the areas this book covers:

- *Recapturing center stage.* As we have emphasized, you cannot allow yourself to play second fiddle to PowerPoint text. For this reason, you must learn how to take center stage when you sell and turn the screen into a support medium. We discuss how you can co-exist with visuals and retain the prospect's focus.
 - *Don't say what they see.* Even if you use PowerPoint less, you can still commit the sin of repeating whatever text appears on the screen. "Verbal mirroring" works directly against persuading prospects. Adults are insulted when sellers read aloud to them. They expect a more sophisticated presentation, and we talk about how to compliment what is seen with what is said.
 - *The handout.* Besides ceding the focal point to PowerPoint and reading screen text, the third common visual mistake sellers make is improperly using handouts. With a handout, viewers don't even need to look up or listen to the seller. If you wish to sell successfully, you'll need to radically change your thinking on handouts and make them work for you instead of allowing them to upstage you.
 - *The "right" visuals.* If you reject PowerPoint text, what could possibly take its place? The answer is images. A picture is worth a thousand words, and we explain how a well-chosen picture can be worth thousands of dollars in sales. We think,
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dream, and retain information in images, and we provide an explanation of why this is so and how you can capitalize on it when making a sale.

- *Choosing and using images.* How do you choose and use an image for maximum impact in a given selling situation? How do you find the visual that reinforces the messages you're delivering verbally? How often do you use an image, and when? We answer these and related questions, helping you sell with the right image in mind.
- *Supporting players.* In a game of chess, the pieces are always positioned to protect the king and queen. A parallel strategy applies to selling. Everything from the seller's clothes to the room set-up has a visual impact and must be controlled to support the seller. Rather than view these visual factors as inconsequential, sellers must understand their impact and control everything from where the presenter stands to how the screen is positioned and angled. We'll look at these and other ways you can exert visual influence on a sale.
- *The critical visual.* Finally, you'll have to master the most important visual of all—yourself. Few sellers realize the huge positive or negative influence that their body language broadcasts to viewers. Delivering a persuasive visual pitch requires as much physical finesse as playing a well-executed game of tennis or golf. Pros continuously work on their swing or follow-through to play a sport better. We examine how you can become more conscious of and control gestures and other aspects of body language to persuade others more effectively.

Visual Selling is divided into three parts: Part I explains the vital importance of positioning the seller as the focal point. If sellers don't hold complete viewer attention, they're seriously crippling their efforts.

Part II discusses how you prepare for a visual presentation and, in particular, how you incorporate images into your pitch.

We describe how to create a visual sequence for your pitch that takes full advantage of your new mastery of images.

In Part III, we look at a variety of selling situations involving groups of different sizes and interests. You'll understand what's visually important in a competitive presentation. You'll also learn how visual selling can dramatically enhance your booth at a convention and how it can reduce the electronic headaches that often plague road shows or heavy travel schedules. You'll read about a high-tech company that conveys its message to research scientists and consumers using image visuals and why the company founders credit a great deal of their success to visual selling.

As you'll discover, becoming well versed in the art of visual selling will benefit you in many ways. This book gives you the details on how to do everything from creating an original visual image to creating an effective selling environment whether you're at "home" or on the road.

We convey all this information using both words and images. Though books are a text medium, they can also take advantage of images as teaching tools, and you'll find more images in these pages than you would in other books on selling. These images reinforce the stories and specific techniques detailed in the text. You will see many examples of text slides converted to image visuals. At the end of this book, we hope you'll have a good understanding of the theory of visual selling and an even better grasp of how to put this theory into practice when you're trying to convince potential buyers.

The authors have been selling and advising others about how to sell for over 25 years. One author, Peg, has a great deal of sales and marketing experience in the investment field. The other, Paul, has specialized in competitive presentations since 1980.

We've watched the appalling growth and popularity of PowerPoint—the shift away from the presenter to prospects reading screen text and handouts. We've also witnessed how those who are overly reliant on PowerPoint text pitches often alienate customers and fail to make the sale. And we've seen that those who sell visually and keep the focus on themselves rather than screen

are usually the ones who win in high-stakes, competitive presentations.

Finally, we'd like you to do a quick assessment of your current visual selling ability. Look at the following statements and note whether you agree or disagree with them:

- Use PowerPoint slides that bullet point your thoughts to keep you and your prospects or customers on track.
- Prepare a handout/deck so your listeners can follow along.
- For an important pitch, place the screen or your visuals in the middle of the room to highlight your information.
- Stand with your visual to your right.
- "Dress down" for a presentation because you don't want people to think you're too formal or what you're selling is too expensive.
- Turn off the room lights to ensure your screen information pops.
- Stand well to the side or sit at the table with your laptop so your slides receive maximum attention.
- If you stand, use few gestures because they are distracting and shift the focus away from your visuals.
- Use an electronic pointer because it helps direct the viewers.
- On a raised platform in a large meeting room, place your lectern to the side, well away from the screen.

The more of these statements you agree with, the less effective you will be as a visual seller. Don't be alarmed if you found yourself in agreement with some or all of the statements. Most salespeople and presenters operate under numerous misconceptions about what does and does not work from a visual standpoint. Correcting these visual errors requires acquiring a bit of information and applying it to a variety of presentation and selling situations. The following pages will communicate that visual knowledge and help you apply it so that you can persuade with greater effectiveness.