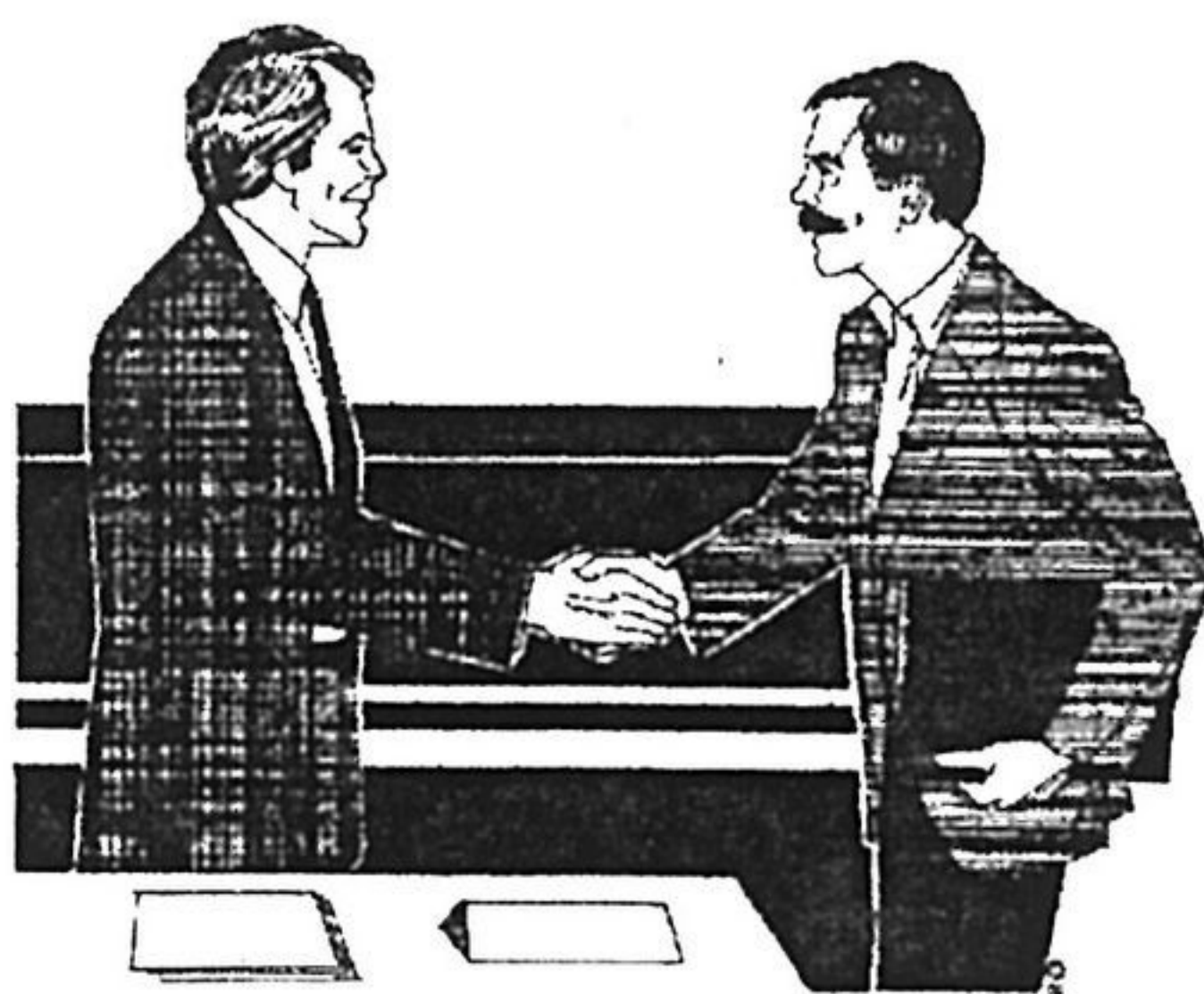


# ICEBOXES TO ESKIMOS?

I recently read an account of a man who bought something that was more expensive than he could afford, more elaborate than he needed, and in light of his financial situation was unnecessary anyway. "The sales pitch was irresistible," he said. What's more likely is that the salesperson kept his mouth shut and let the man talk himself into the purchase. Most successful salesmanship is good listening.

I've known a few unscrupulous salespeople. Like Bucky, who sold vacuum cleaners to people who had filled out a contest entry in grocery stores in the Maritimes. Everybody won a vacuum cleaner, a tiny thing, a toy really, and he'd call at "winning" homes with a sample of their prize (he never had a prize to leave). His job was to sell the prize winner a real vacuum cleaner. He told me once he felt a little bad because he had sold an industrial floor polisher to a old lady in a one room apartment. He was sure when it started she'd rotate right off her feet, and it would burst through the flimsy walls of her place. Bucky only felt a little bad, though, because he was essentially amoral. He thought a scruple was something you ate with potato chips and cheezies.

You've heard expressions like "She could sell iceboxes to Eskimos" or "He couldn't sell the Playboy Channel on a troop ship". Well, much of the salesperson's success is learned and taught technique.



The first thing a salesperson is taught, of course, is listening. Listening carefully, they learn what the customer wants, and what his objections are. Why did the little old lady buy a floor polisher instead of a vacuum cleaner? Bucky listened, and somewhere in the

conversation the woman expressed unhappiness with her unshiny floors. Vacuum cleaner is a no sale, but a floor polisher, oh yes.

To listen, open-ended questions are taught. These are the W-5 questions - Who, What, When, Where, Why. They cannot be answered with a "yes" or a "no".

"Is it important to you to have shiny floors in your kitchen?" This is a bad question because the customer can simply answer, "No.". "What is most important to you in terms of floor cleanliness?" This is a better question because the customer talks, and may reveal that they

feel dust bunnies are the big problem. Now the dust bunny feature of the vacuum can be highlighted.

Once the salesperson discovers what his potential customer wants through astute listening, it's time to describe the product in the right terms. These are FEATURE / BENEFIT / RESULTS.

Most bad salespeople list product feature after product feature, because that's all they know (if they know even that). They most certainly don't know what the customer wants.

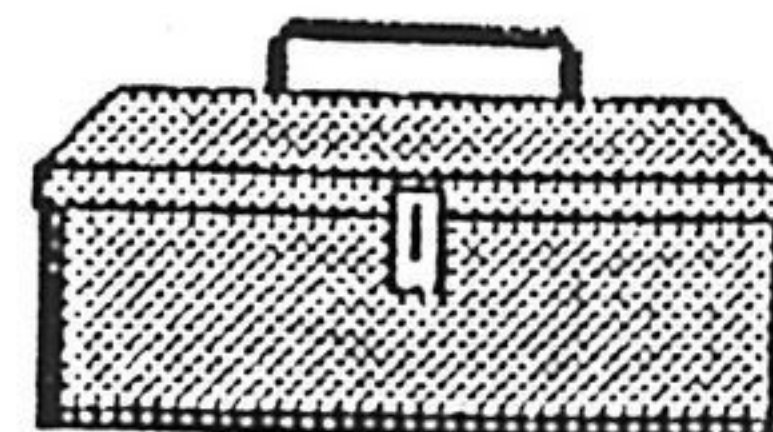
"I need a new watch because mine keeps bad time and I'm always late for meetings," the customer said. The good salesperson would see this as a great opportunity to upgrade the customer from a simple watch to one with an alarm.

FEATURE. "This watch not only keeps excellent time, but it has an alarm." BENEFIT. "When you set the time, a beeper goes off reminding you not to be late for that important meeting." RESULT. "Even if a watch keeps perfect time, you're frequently preoccupied and don't realize you're overdue. You'll never have to be late again, and who knows how much embarrassment that will save you." The salesperson should never assume that the customer can make the bridge between the feature, the benefit, and the result.

A good salesperson welcomes objections, because they're evidence that, if they can be overcome, the sales is made. Salespeople are taught techniques to handle objections. Here are a few:

FEEL/FELT/FOUND - "I understand precisely how you FEEL about the price (empathy, what an astute question). Many of our customers FELT the same way (you're a part of a large group so don't feel bad), but they FOUND that the product is of such high quality the price is actually low" (this large group now knows better). This is infinitely better than body slamming the customer with a crushing answer to each objection.

*Continued on page 11*



## THE TOOL BOX

FIONA PATTON

R.R.#1,

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476-4107

- small jobs and repairs
- blinds and drapes hung
- small appliance set-up
- small electrical jobs
- rods and racks affixed
- hourly rate