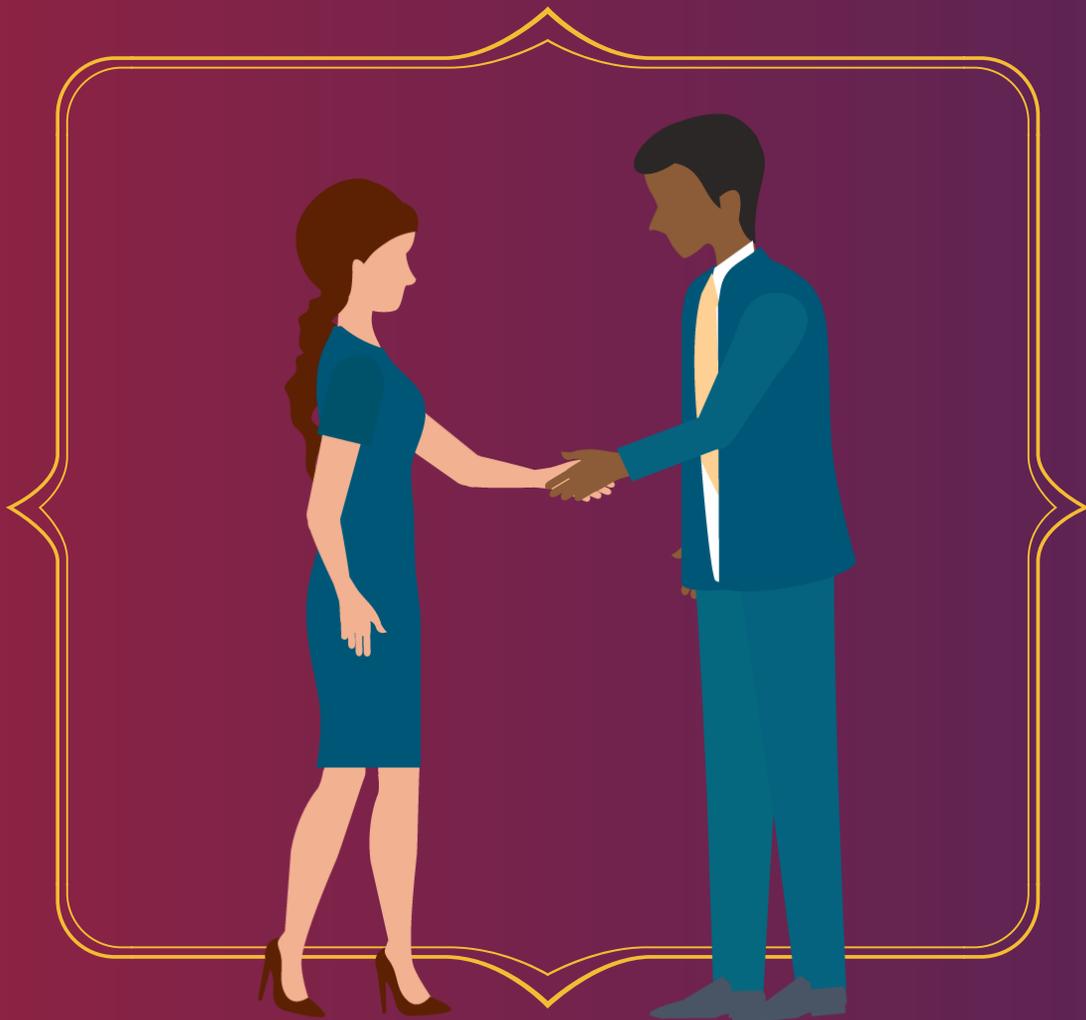


5 TRANSFORMATIVE SOFT SKILLS FOR SALES PROFESSIONALS



How to Make Better Connections, Meet Your
Clients' Needs and Make More Sales

DAN TROMMATER

5 TRANSFORMATIVE SOFT SKILLS FOR SALES PROFESSIONALS

SOFT SKILLS ARE VITAL FOR CREATING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

Unlike hard skills like math or computer programming, many people assume that soft skills can't be measured or quantified. Yet, the results of soft skills like empathy, gratitude, and vulnerability are indeed measurable and have a significant impact on your quality of life and success at work.

This is especially evident in sales, where effective human interaction is the only way to guarantee success.

People with high emotional intelligence average \$29,000 more income per year. - Forbes

The very act of trying to get the buyer to say “yes” can get in the way of building rapport and trust with that potential customer. The pressure of deadlines and sales targets can take the focus away from what's really important – the customer's desires, pains, and needs. The most valued sales professionals are the ones that put their customer's needs first.

With that in mind, I've put together a list of the five most transformative soft skills for sales professionals and how to apply them to your work:

1. Adopt A Growth Mindset (Page 2)
2. Let Go Of Assumptions (Page 4)
3. Harness The Power Of Vulnerability (Page 6)
4. Practice Empathy (Page 7)
5. Always Show Gratitude (Page 8)

Let's get started!

#1 ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

According to Dr. Carol Dweck, a lot of people trick themselves into personal and professional stagnation by having a fixed mindset.

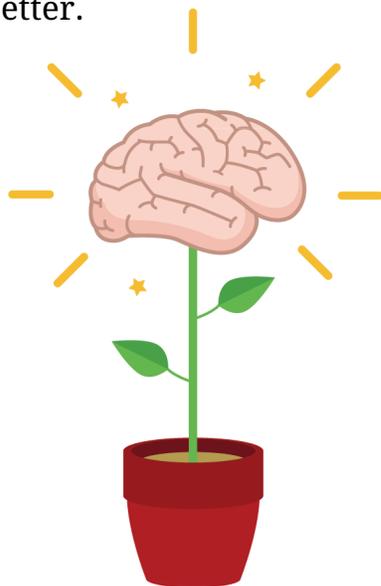
The fixed mindset is based on the belief that our abilities are limited. It's basically a voice in our brain that tells us that we were born with a fixed amount of skills and don't have the capacity to learn new ones.

For decades, this idea was thought to be backed by science. At the time, common scientific belief was that after early adulthood, the human brain can't change, a concept popularized by the saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

But research now shows that we are capable of learning new skills and improving existing ones. And we don't need loads of scientific data to see this is true.

If you've ever played a sport, learned to knit or played a video game as an adult, you KNOW that our brains are pretty nimble and that it is possible to get better.

But if you really want to tap into your potential, you must drop the 'fixed mindset' and shift towards having a 'growth mindset'.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIXED AND GROWTH MINDSET

Fixed mindset is the belief that intelligence, ability, and talent are fixed traits that you're born with (or not.) The fixed mindset makes you believe that success in sales is determined by innate ability.

You can tell if you are suffering from a fixed mindset if you find yourself complaining a lot and adopting a victim mentality. Other symptoms include:

- A belief that you are unable to change your circumstances
- A belief that you're just not good enough
- An inability to deal with rejection or criticism
- The constant avoidance of challenges
- A negative outlook on life and work

Growth mindset is the belief that ability, intelligence, and mastery come with constant learning and effort. Talent helps, but only gets you so far. Success in sales comes from challenging yourself, learning and practicing skills everyday.

You know you are transitioning into a growth mindset when you...

- Focus your efforts on improving yourself
- Encourage self-discipline
- Exhibit a positive attitude and resilience
- Embrace an entrepreneurial attitude

HOW TO SWITCH FROM FIXED TO GROWTH MINDSET

1: BE SOLUTIONS FOCUSED

Put your energy into making things better, not beating yourself up about problems or mistakes.

2: HARD WORK BEATS TALENT

Get to work and get things done.

3: ALWAYS BE LEARNING

- Turn failures into opportunities to learn.
- Learn from others.
- Be coachable.

4: EXHIBIT GRIT

Success doesn't happen overnight, it comes from consistent hard work and determination.

5: CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES

Make sure you are giving yourself a pat on the back for all the things you do well.

Specifically, think of *how* you achieved a success and apply that to the next challenge.

FIXED MINDSET

Avoids challenges

Gives up when challenged

Intimidated by others' success

Ignores criticism (or worse)

"I can't!"

Sees effort as fruitless

Sees failure as a limit of ability

GROWTH MINDSET

Embraces challenges

Perseveres when challenged

Inspired by others' success

Learns from criticism

"I can't... yet"

Sees effort as useful and necessary

Sees failure as an opportunity to learn and grow

#2 LET GO OF ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions can lull us into thinking we have a full understanding of situations. While many assumptions are necessary to get by every day, when we make assumptions about others' words, actions and motivations, we run a high risk of being wrong. This can lead to significant problems when building prospective client relationships.

Assumptions are made when we think we know:

- People's motives
- People's skills, abilities, competencies (or incompetencies) based on gender, race, age, etc
- What information people have been given
- How information has been understood
- That your goals are aligned with the goals of others

We are all susceptible to unconscious assumptions about the world around us. The trick is to remember to check yourself.

WHY WE MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions are mental shortcuts the brain takes to process information quickly.

Assumptions can also stop you from getting all the information you need to make good decisions.

Making quick judgements based on what you **THINK you KNOW** can affect your relationships, your performance and even your safety.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SALES PROFESSIONALS?

Challenging your assumptions will provide better buying experiences for your clients, and will increase your chances of becoming someone's vendor of choice.

Having worked with sales professionals (and worked in sales myself) for years, I've found that these are the most dangerous assumptions made by people in the field:

- That we know who the decision maker is.
- That we know how much understanding a prospect has about our product / industry / company.
- That we know how the prospect wants to be communicated with.
- That the prospect knows exactly what they want.
- That we know what the prospect needs.

By actively abandoning these assumptions to have a frank conversation with a prospect, you are more likely to be successful and make the sale. You'll also have a new soft skill that you can use at work and at home.



3 WAYS TO CHALLENGE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

ASK RATHER THAN ASSUME

Instead of basing your decisions on what you think you know, ask questions to get more information and clarification.

Better questions include:

- What are our goals? Expectations?
- What information were you given about me, the project, the responsibilities? Will you please explain how you understand what I just said?
- What did you want to achieve when you did that?
- What is your understanding of how this would work?
- Tell me more (this is my favourite!)
- What have you mentally budgeted for this?

SHIFT FROM EXPECTATION TO SHARED UNDERSTANDING

An expectation is really just an assumption about the future. Conflicts occur when your expectations differ from those of your colleagues or clients. It's far more useful to convert expectations into a shared understanding of the facts.

To do that, try to:

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Trust others.
- Stay focused on the shared facts.
- Minimize criticism.
- Ask more open ended questions.

LET GO OF THE IDEA OF PERFECTION

Nobody is perfect. Not your client. Not your colleague. Not you.

Remind yourself of this the next time you get mad at someone because they didn't act the way you assumed they would or should. And then challenge yourself for making that assumption.

We are all imperfect, and this means that conflict will always arise. But I'd like to invite you to view this conflict as a constant opportunity.

When a conflict happens, you have a choice. You can fight your way through it and then dread the next conflict, or you can take the time to uncover the assumptions and expectations that are the root cause.

Once you've done that, you create a level playing field with shared understanding and expectations. Then, clear communication takes over and the chances for conflict drops.



#3 HARNESS THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

Many people assume that vulnerability is the same thing as weakness.

In fact, the opposite is true. There's a paradoxical power in vulnerability - it actually helps others relate to you and see you as a more nuanced person.

When you bravely show your own vulnerability, you invite those around you to do the same.

Let's face it, we all feel vulnerable sometimes. When we see others succeed in spite of their vulnerability, we realize that we can too.

When people can relate to you on a human level, they're more likely to trust you with their business.

There are 2 reasons that vulnerability is powerful:

- It shows your human side - this makes you easier to relate to and more likeable. You move from being a *salesperson*, to being a *person*.
- It creates trust, helping other people to be vulnerable themselves. This is how real connection is formed. People do business with people they know, like, and trust.

More often than not, vulnerability is not met with rejection.

Instead, quite the opposite often happens: vulnerability is almost always rewarded with a deeper and more meaningful connection with the people around you.

As a salesperson, success is dependant upon your ability to connect with your prospects. Collaboration and camaraderie is needed with clients and colleagues alike, and vulnerability helps build those bonds.

HOW DO YOU SHOW VULNERABILITY?

Step 1: Move beyond small talk

Talking about superficial things like weather or current events is not a bad place to start, just don't get stuck there.

Move on to a bit of personal talk - let them know who you are in relation to the topic at hand. Personal talk is talking about plans, likes, passions, dreams, hopes, fears, etc.

Step 2: Start slow

If you jump straight to your own deep-seated neuroses, you run the risk of scaring people off. Share a little about yourself and then ask about their perspective on the topic.

- What's your favourite...
- What do you think about...
- What's your plan when it comes to...
- What's your opinion of...

Being vulnerable isn't the same as oversharing. Strangers don't want to know everything about you, but if you give them a glimpse of your real self, they might want to know more about you. Start slow, and gradually move on to more personal things.

#4 PRACTICE EMPATHY

Empathy is the ultimate soft skill for a salesperson.

Empathy can be summed up as the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and relate to the way they feel.

Having empathy is central to success in sales. It allows you to see the world through the eyes of a prospect, giving you the chance to understand their needs and wants. It can also allow you to predict their reactions, and adjust your sales strategy accordingly.

Some benefits of empathy include:

- Better understand the needs of your customers.
- Make better connections with people.
- Better understand how people view your actions.
- Read people more easily, and predict how they will act or react.
- Learn from other people's experiences.

EMPATHY BUILDS TRUST

Any Sales Pro will tell you that trust is absolutely necessary to build lasting relationships.

Empathy shows that you care about their business and you want to help it.

The more you show empathy to their situation, the more trust you will build. Don't underestimate the power of empathy in this regard.

EMPATHY IS A DIFFERENTIATOR

Being empathetic will help you stand out from the dozen other sales people that your prospect has met with. This is because you are showing them from the very beginning that you are here to help, not just make a sale.

EMPATHY BUILDS CREDIBILITY

This relates to the trust factor mentioned above. Showing empathy ensures that you take the time to listen and understand before ever offering a solution to their problem.

UNDERSTAND WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT TO BUY, RATHER THAN WHAT YOU WANT TO SELL

Blockbuster lost its business to Netflix because its executives failed to empathize with how customers wanted to consume their content.

To really understand your customers, you have to put yourself in their place to know what they want. And remember...don't assume anything! Ask, research, talk.

Doing these things will have a definite impact on your relationship with your clients and prospects, and will give you insight into what they need and want.

#5 ALWAYS SHOW GRATITUDE

Gratitude has been shown to be a powerful tool in increasing both productivity and happiness-- two things that are central to sales.

But gratitude is not necessarily what you think it is. It's not about thanking a person or deity every day (although these things can be really effective). It's simply taking a bit of time to stop and acknowledge the good in your life. If you want to thank someone or something for that good, that's cool, too. But it's not what it's all about.

Taking a few moments to be grateful for what we have has been scientifically shown to have a big impact on quality of life. According to research done at the University of California, Berkeley, people of all ages benefit physically, emotionally and socially from being actively grateful.

Most participants of this research spent three weeks simply writing down a list of things for which they were grateful. By the end of that short time, they had stronger immune systems, were more alert/awake and felt less lonely and isolated!

Gratitude changes our focus to the positive

When we are stressed we tend to focus more on the negative aspects of our circumstances. This negative focus affects our thoughts, communications, and actions. Gratitude shifts your focus to the positive aspects of your life.

HOW TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Be Mindful

Are you being negative or taking people or situations for granted? Shift your focus to what you are grateful for in the situation instead.

Write Down What You Are Grateful For Once A Week

Having a weekly practice has been proven to have even more benefits than a daily practice. Easy!

Remember To Thank People Regularly

A simple thank you goes a long way. Your colleagues, clients, friends, and family will appreciate being acknowledged.



TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Now that you are aware of five soft skills that great salespeople exhibit, it's time to start working on them.

A soft skills workshop is a great way to get you and your sales team thinking about these powerful issues, all while gaining valuable skills that will increase your sales (not to mention improving your quality of life!)

Whether you are looking to drive sales, deal with change, improve communication or ignite creativity, soft skills workshops and team building events motivate and unify your team.

Depending on your team's specific needs, my unforgettable programs are customized to help you reach your goals.



Through the use of world-class humor and magic, some topics I can facilitate with your team include:

SELL MORE WITH SOFT SKILLS

How Sales Professionals Can Tap Into the Power of Empathy, Communication & Cooperation

THE SECRET OF HIGHLY ENGAGED TEAMS

An interactive session that teaches how to cultivate passion, commitment and action in your team.

ABOUT DAN TROMMATER

Dan helps teams improve engagement, better solve problems & boost performance with unique keynotes & workshops.

By using world-class magic, humour, stories & interactive exercises he delivers powerful messages about learning to see things from other people's perspective to improve communication & influence. This provides business and life changing opportunities for those who adopt it.

Find out how a customized program can help your next team meeting, event or workshop.

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