# THE FIVE P'S OF PROFESSIONAL SELLING

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER

The Sales Coaching Institute

Productivity Training for Sales and Sales Management

# KEY POINTS

THE 5 P'S OF PROFESSIONAL SELLING



The Sales Coaching Institute

PRODUCTIVITY TRAINING FOR SALES AND SALES MANAGEMENT

## *Introduction*

Being a sales professional never has and never will be an easy job. A sales professional has to not only represent their products and company, but they have to make a personal connection with their clients, stay informed as to market and industry trends and be seen as a trusted resource and advisor to their customers.

This is true if you are selling directly to consumers or as a business to business marketing professional. It is also true if you are selling into the C-suite of big business.

While the specific sales format or process may be slightly different between direct, B2B and C-level sales, there are still 5 important factors, the 5 P’s that need to be the foundation of your professional sales approach and method.


What often happens with sales professionals, even those with more experience in sales, is that the process or the method of the sales presentation replaces the foundational aspects of professional selling. While this may result in a top presentation, there are the basics missing that are the first things the customer, client or business leader notices.

To help sales professionals of all experience levels, focusing on the foundations of your sales approach, the 5 P's, will ensure that you are not creating a mismatch with the message you are sending in your presentation. These components need to be seen as the central building blocks of creating a great first impression. They will set your company and your professionalism apart from the competition in a very positive way.

## *Punctual*

The first P in professional selling is to be punctual for the meeting. However, unlike many people today seem to think, being punctual is not arriving at the office or location at the designated time of the meeting.

Instead, it means showing up at the meeting location **at least thirty minutes before your meeting time.** This is particularly important if you are traveling in an unfamiliar area of if you are driving where traffic patterns can be unpredictable.

The importance of arriving early is not just to create a positive message about the value of the meeting; it is also to give you the opportunity to get a feel for the business. For a smaller or larger company, it is an ideal time to just observe the number of customers or clients going in and out, helping you to have a perspective on how busy the company may be or if they are in a downturn.

Additionally, by having this time to watch and observe, you may also pick up information on how the business operates, how long meetings tend to last and how positive or perhaps less than positive the "vibe" of the company, building, department or office seems to be. Sitting in the outer office and chatting to the reception staff can often unearth hidden gems of knowledge about the company, the manager, the critical issues they are facing or how happy they are with a current supplier or vendor. Never appear to be digging for information and just keep the conversation genera but listen carefully and be observant.

For a sales professional, arriving early also gives you time to relax after your drive, compose yourself and review the key points of your presentation. There is nothing worse than rushing to get to a meeting, arriving just in time and having to go immediately into the sales presentation without a minute to catch your breath and organize your thoughts.

Additionally, and this is critical, if you are looking hurried when you meet a prospective client, or if you are late and they are a stickler for punctuality, you already have a large X beside your name in their mind. When this is the case, you have an uphill battle to overcome this negative impression that often translates to being unprepared, disorganized or unprofessional in the client's mind.

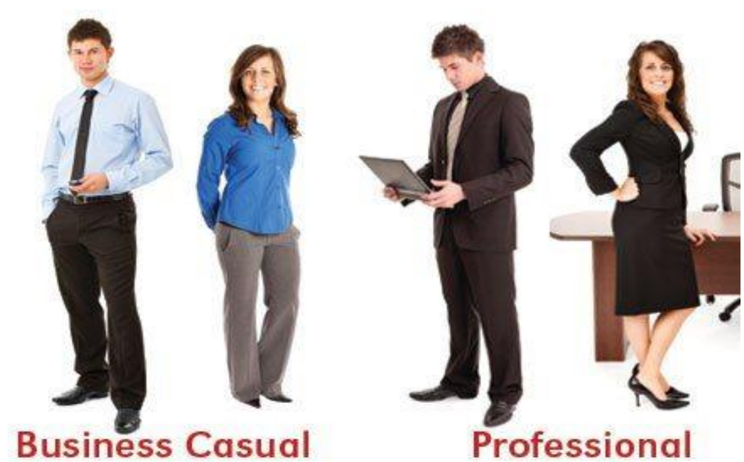
## *Presentable*

According to experts, it takes only seven seconds to make a first impression. If you stop and think about how long seven seconds is you will find it is a very small amount of time. In fact, it is just about the time it takes to walk from the door to the chair or the meeting room table in a typical office setting.

Your ability to be presentable and to look the part of a competent, qualified professional is essential. Remember, it is that initial 7 seconds that counts, so focusing on non-verbal factors as well as the initial greeting is critical to getting the relationship with the client off to a good start. To help, here are several important factors of personal presentation that should be carefully considered:

- **Clothing choice** – it is important to understand how to dress for a specific meeting. Dressing overly formal in a more casual type of workplace or when meeting on a workroom floor can send a negative message. On the other hand, dressing casually for a C-level meeting can be taken as unprofessional, disrespectful or inexperienced. Know what is the typical dress attire for the organization by doing your homework and research in advance of the meeting.

  It is also important to dress appropriately for the meeting with regards to the industry. For example, if you are selling parts or components to a manufacturing plant you may be asked to walk out on the production floor, which means having the right shoes and the right clothing to make this possible. Think ahead and imagine what you may be asked to do to help determine the best clothing choice.




- **Check the details** – regardless of the clothing style; it needs to be clean, fresh and professional looking. Check for stains, undone buttons and zippers and other issues that can make even a tailor-made suit on any man or woman look shoddy.

  It is a good idea if you are wearing a jacket to avoid wearing this as you drive to the meeting. This allows you to get out of the car and have a crisp, fresh jacket that will hide those annoying wrinkles from seatbelts and long periods of sitting in a car.

- **Personal touch** – while it may seem basic, make sure you are personally prepared for the meeting. Check to make sure your teeth are clean, your breath is fresh and you have had a chance to freshen up before your meeting. Take a couple of minutes to relax mentally by taking a few deep breaths and centering yourself. Being calm and controlled is the best way to enter the room.


- **Be certain** – how you walk into the room sends a very loud non-verbal message. Walk in with confidence, shoulders back and with a measured walk. This shows confidence and comfort in the setting without appearing uncertain or hesitant. Try to carry or hold a limited amount of "stuff" as you enter the room. Balancing handouts, laptops, cell phones and a briefcase gives a very disorganized and cluttered look to your entrance. While this may seem to be overly specific, small issues like this can make all the difference.

- **Smile** – smiling is very important as it shows you are friendly, open and it also makes people feel more comfortable and accepting. It is a very good idea to make direct eye contact when smiling and slightly raise the eyebrows to give a more open look to the face. This is just a slight movement. Make sure you do everything in a way that is not artificial, but rather natural and comfortable without looking contrived or as if you are acting a part.

- **Shake hands** – extending your hand to shake hands with someone is more than just good manners. It speaks of personal confidence and assurance but also indicates a person with a friendly and collaborative manner.

Plan your first seven seconds of your meeting. Choose your clothing and plan your entrance into the room to create just the first impression you want.

### *Positive*

Being able to center yourself and put any negative issues aside when you walk into the room for the sales meeting is the 3rd P.

Being positive is not always easy, particularly if you are dealing with a personal issue or perhaps are just having a less than ideal day.

It is important to have a positive personal presentation as well as keep the meeting on a positive tone. This means also taking the time to think about what you are going to focus on with your casual conversation.


Most business meetings, particularly with new prospective clients, tend to start with some small talk and "getting to know you" types of conversations. It is critical to have a mental list of topics you can use to start conversations that stay positive and focused.

It is a really good idea to spend some time on LinkedIn, Facebook or even the corporate website and find out what the manager or executive you are meeting with finds interesting. By focusing the conversations on topics of interest to the prospective client, you immediately put him or her at ease and let them talk about their areas of hobbies and interest outside of the workplace. Remember, everyone is tunes in to the radio station WIIFM – What's in It for Me!

*Keep in mind that these people are very familiar with sales techniques.* They spend some time out of their day being "sold to" by other companies & sales professionals. Having a chance to talk to you about their interests, hobbies and passions sets you apart from other sales reps in the client's mind. It also provides information that you can use in developing a complete client profile and moving forward in the next meetings.

Stay away from topics that are particularly polarizing or charged. **Good examples of topics not to address include politics, religion, social justice or other issues that trigger a very strong response in people.** Also, try to avoid making negative comments about your experiences in getting to the business or the meeting. Don't talk about having to take a late-night flight or dealing with terrible traffic to make the meeting.

*This type of negative focus early in the conversation can easily set the tone for the sales meeting and presentation as well.* By focusing on positive, upbeat types of discussions, there is a more natural transition into an upbeat and positive first impression and sales presentation.

It is important in the pre-meeting discussions and in the introductions to always monitor the body language of the buyer. It is important to be able to pick up the clues and cues that the buyer is ready to move from the introductory talk into the sales presentation. Lingering for too long on small talk can cut short the all-important presentation time and can actually turn a positive into a negative if the buyer becomes distracted or disinterested in continuing the meeting.

### *Personable*

The fourth P is being personable. This is always a difficult concept to define and to assess, particularly as a sales professional trying to assess your own style. In general, people tend to be either comfortable in meeting and talking to new people or they tend to find it more challenging.


Top sales professionals have an ability to be seen as personable by a wide range of different personality types in the buying managers across the table. To accomplish this the sales professional doesn't have to put on an act. In fact, this is often highly counterproductive.

**Instead, to be personable a sales professional has to be authentic.**

This will look different for different people, but it means to have the ability to come across as genuine, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the product and about your role in the business.

Personable salespeople have the ability to find common ground with their clients. It may be in researching the passions and interests of the client or in having a good business sense for the industry. Being able to talk with the client is always important and it creates a sense of working together with a trusted peer that *motivates* clients to want to buy.

One of the forgotten elements of being personable today means actually meeting in person. While it may be logistically impossible to see all your clients on a regular basis, being able to find the time to meet in person or to at least video conference is a great way to break the ice and move a strictly seller and buyer relationship to a different level where you can now put a face to the name the next time you are talking. Remember to share information about yourself as well and when appropriate. Making this an authentic exchange is another positive experience for the buyer that may be very different than what is the norm for working with sales reps in his or her past experience.

Another aspect of being personable is to keep track of the specifics about clients to have things to talk about on your next call. Make a note if the buyer's son plays football or if the buyer has dogs or loves camping. Refreshing yourself on these points before your next conversation gives you both conversation starters as well as a connection to the buyer that makes you more personable, authentic and likable.

Sometimes, people have a very hard time in being seen as personable. The good news is that this is a skill that you can learn, practice and improve upon. Business coaches and communication consultants can work with you to hone your skills at reaching out to people in a way that is natural, comfortable and feels right for your own style.

### *Prepared*

The last of the 5 P's of professional selling is not the least important. In fact, it is the most important. Regardless if you are punctual and presentable and if you are positive and personable, you won't be successful if you aren't fully prepared.

Being prepared for a sales meeting is really at the heart of every successful sales professional. These individuals leave nothing to chance and spend as much time researching and preparing for a buyer meeting as they do making cold calls or following up on prospective leads.

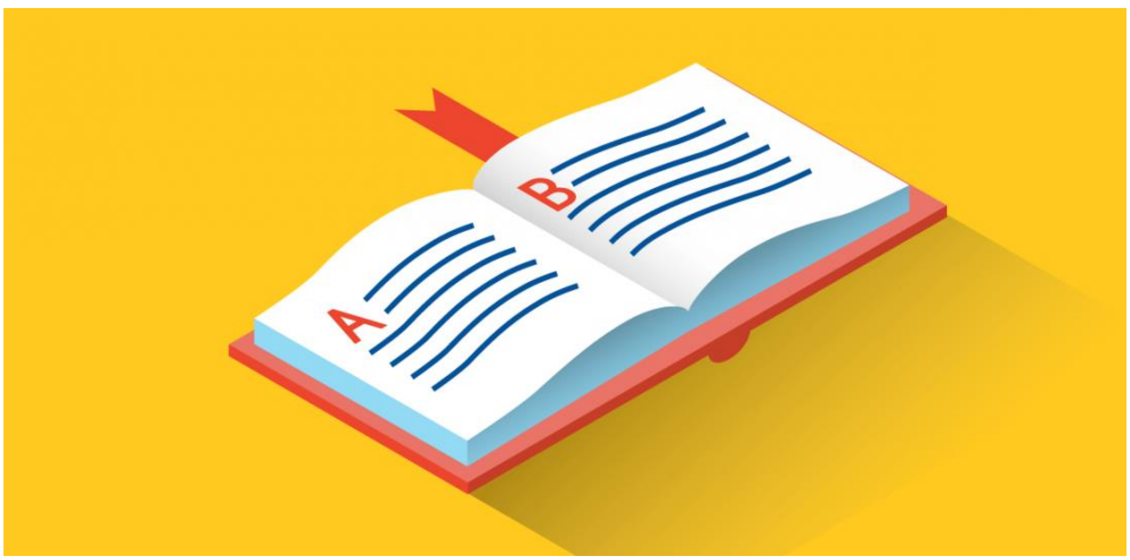
The good news is that the internet has made being prepared a lot easier for a sales representative. There is simply no excuse for walking into a sales meeting "cold" anymore. You want a warm response, which means that you need to research and plan to earn a genuine connection with your audience.

## *There are several important areas that need to be researched and developed in preparation for the meeting. These include:*

- **Know the company** – take the time to get online and find out as much as you can about the specifics of the company. Find out the market they are selling into, any plans for growth and expansion, company structure, company changes and even the company philosophy and mission statement. Look for company Quarterly Reports and press releases that talk about the business. You can go back a couple of years,but try to stay as current as possible and verify the status of any old information before using it to prepare for the meeting.

- **Know the buyer or team** – using LinkedIn, Facebook, Google +, Twitter or other types of sites find out as much as you can about the team or the buyer you will meet with. This is not their personal interests, but to understand their professional accomplishments, their work experience in the field and specific programs, plans or problems their department or company may be facing. If it's a public company, purchase 1 share of stock. This allows you to alter their perception of you from "just another sales person" to an owner who has a vested interest in the financial health and performance of the organization. You then want to determine how your product or service can help them solve a current business issue or problem.


- **Know the industry** – by also researching the industry the sales professional can create solutions to existing needs. Instead of asking the company what they need, providing the solution turns the seller into a trusted resource and collaborative partner in advancing the company or eliminating a challenge they are facing.




This also helps you to plan how your product or service fills a niche or a gap in the current services or products available. With the time to develop creative, complete and compelling examples the sales presentation is tailored to their unique needs without having to come up with brilliant ideas on the spot. Remember, proper planning prevents poor performance.

- **Know the competition** – take the time to find out about the competition. While you don't want to compare this company to their competition in the meeting, knowing what the company is facing can help you to present ideas in a way that demonstrates the inherent value of the product or service in moving above or beyond what the competition offers. *Finding out about the competition is not going to be difficult if you understand the company and the industry.*


Once you have your research completed, develop a polished and professional sales pitch that addresses the issues you have found in your research. Don't plan to spend a lot of time talking about your company, but rather talk about the difference your products or services can make in solving your potential customer's issues in their department, company or industry.

It is a good idea to consider the art of telling a story as opposed to just giving a data dump of details, facts and figures. People remember a story that was interesting and creative and that has relevance to their particular wants and needs. Remember, they already have some interest in your products or service or they wouldn't have agreed to the meeting.

When creating your presentation, be yourself and be authentic in your presentation. If you are using a PowerPoint outline, don't just read the slides. Talk from the heart and from your knowledge of the products and services as it will come across as passionate and authentic rather than rote and automatic. Reading slides will quickly turn off the audience and will minimize the gains you made in a great first impression. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a positive first impression.

Finally, focus in on the people at the table with the experience and ability to make the decisions and to approve the purchase. In many cases, particularly in C-level meetings, the CEO or the CFO doesn't make the decision; it is the department or division manager or even a team of upper to mid-level managers that make the final determination of the supplier.

Identifying these people before and during the presentation will allow you keep looking back to these individuals. By reading how they are responding, you can adjust your presentation to provide more information on areas of interest.

Also, avoid running overly long with your presentation. It is better to finish earlier than you stated and then take questions than to run long on time. For busy teams running long can create problems for those attending your presentation, which will always leave a negative last impression.

By ending early and staying around to answer questions or talk personally with those needing more information, you can create more networking opportunities within the organization. This often results in spending time talking to those most interested in your products and services, helping to have influencers within the company that will be recommending your products to their buying team.

**Authored By: Ken Wyrick**

*Vice President of New Business & Curriculum Development*


*For additional information on [one-on-one sales coaching]() or [sales training]() education on connecting and networking, researching and meeting directly with the decision maker contact [The Sales Coaching Institute]() today.*

The Sales Coaching Institute
PRODUCTIVITY TRAINING FOR SALES AND SALES MANAGEMENT

847 359 6969

ABOUT

# DOUG DVORAK

FOUNDER & CEO OF THE SALES COACHING INSTITUTE

Doug Dvorak is **the CEO of The Sales Coaching Institute**, a worldwide organization that assists clients with sales training, educational methods, and motivational techniques.
He has delivered over 1000 customized sales training keynotes, presentations, and workshops on 5 continents, in over 100 countries and to over 1 million people and growing.

Follow Doug on LinkedIn

Visit Our Website

## Featured Clients

IBM · intel · CISCO · Merrill Lynch · Unilever

Marriott HOTELS & RESORTS · HYATT · WESTIN HOTELS & RESORTS

**1000+**

Organizations have worked with The Sales Coaching Institute to improve their sales