

**GET UP TO SPEED QUICKLY IN TODAY'S  
EVER-CHANGING SALES WORLD**

**AGILE**

**SELLING**

AUTHOR OF SNAP SELLING

**JILL KONRATH**

# INTRODUCTION

**W**hy did it take me so many years to find out what really matters for sales success? Despite having been in the field for decades, I'm not being facetious when I ask that. It's only within the past few years that I've gained the wisdom and perspective to see what really differentiates those who excel in sales from everyone else.

First, a little background. I've been on the "sales effectiveness" bandwagon for umpteen years. In my role as a sales consultant, I've helped salespeople with strategies and tactics they can use to create new opportunities, speed up sales cycles, jump-start new product sales, and expand business in existing accounts. I've even written two bestselling books on the topic: *SNAP Selling*, a step-by-step guide to winning deals with today's frazzled customers, and *Selling to Big Companies*, which details how to set up meetings with corporate decision makers. The practices outlined in those books have been immensely helpful to tens of thousands of sellers who needed this guidance.

Yet I've painted an incomplete picture. Not on purpose, but because of my own blindness to so many things I've unwittingly done that have contributed to my success.

All that changed on the day in 2011 when Andrew Limouris, CEO of Medix, asked me to talk to his young sales force about my early years in sales. He wanted me to share my perceptions on why I'd succeeded when so many others had failed.

“Mmm,” I thought. “Why did I?” As I pondered the question, I was struck with a realization. There were so many other factors, beyond sales skills, that contributed to my success—like how I dealt with fear, my never-fail mind-set, and thinking from my customer's perspective. Because these were just “things” I did, I had totally disregarded their importance. Yet on reflection, they were key contributors to my success.

Since that fateful day three years ago, I've continued to research and deepen my knowledge of what makes salespeople successful. I've queried top performers to learn more about their strategies. I've studied developments in neuroscience to understand how our brain works—and even learned about how our normal “way of working” actually impedes our success. And I've delved into my own career to mine the golden nuggets.

Above all, I realized that my abilities *to get up to speed quickly and rapidly adapt to changing conditions* were what mattered most. Success was contingent on my sales agility—the mind-set and skills I developed that allowed me to rapidly acquire knowledge and develop new skills, combined with the flexibility and strength needed to withstand challenges and leap on opportunities.

You've probably never heard anyone talk about sales agility before. Sales training programs don't even mention the word. But every top seller I know is an agile learner who knows what it takes to dive into a new situation and figure it out quickly.

There's no reason you should be stumbling around trying to

crack the elusive sales code when you don't have to. You can actually learn these agile strategies; there's no magic involved. When you apply these strategies to your sales career, they make all the difference in the world.

So who should read this book? I wrote it for everyone with untapped sales potential who could be so much better than they are today. I'm talking about:

- Experienced sellers who want to jump-start success in their new sales position.
- New salespeople who haven't yet figured out what it takes to succeed.
- Struggling salespeople who want to take their game to a new level.
- Committed entrepreneurs who have a tough time getting new clients.

If you fall into any of the categories above, I guarantee you'll find this book useful for both your short-term and long-term success. Now, I know you're busy selling at this very moment, which is why I kept this book short and snappy, but if you follow the teachings here, you'll find out how to be so much more productive, effective, and best of all, agile.

Let me give you a snapshot of what's coming.

In Part 1: The Case for Agile, you'll discover just how much today's buyers have changed. You'll discover the key to differentiating and winning business in a highly competitive marketplace and find out why your learning agility is the ultimate key to your sales success.

In Part 2: The Agile Mind-set, you will learn about the men-

tality that helps you get better faster, at the same time as it prevents you from failing. I will also unveil strategies to get you in the right frame of mind for sales success. If you've just taken a new sales position or even just started selling, these insights will keep you afloat while you're learning.

In Part 3: *Learn New Info Quickly*, you'll determine how top sellers quickly acquire the depth of knowledge they need to earn situational credibility in just thirty days. This section helps you define what you need to learn, the proper sequence for absorbing new information, and how to make the new knowledge stick in your brain. (If you've just started at a new company or need to launch a new product, go immediately to this section. It will be a lifesaver for you.)

In Part 4: *Pick Up New Skills Fast*, you'll read about all sorts of strategies you can use to get better at selling in record time. This section isn't just for newbies; with today's changing buyer expectations, virtually every seller needs to upgrade his or her skills to approach prospects and close deals. And if your company has a new product or service, you'll want a quick refresher to ensure that what you're doing is maximally effective.

In Part 5: *Success Habits of Agile Sellers*, you'll discover numerous ways to tackle the challenges you inevitably face. The section is a veritable gold mine of tips you can use to motivate yourself, strengthen your skills, manage your time, and overcome your shortfalls. Again, savvy sellers are constantly searching for ways to optimize their time and free up resources for high-value activities.

You don't need to read every line in this book to see results. Personally, I think chapter 6 can alter your life. Then again, so could chapter 15 or chapter 50. There's a wealth of tools and

techniques here that can fundamentally shift your sales thinking, and ultimately your results. The more you embrace these ideas and strategies, the higher your likelihood of both immediate success and long-term mastery.

Time to get learning!



## Part 1

# The Case for Agile

In a world of continuous change and perceived product/service parity, sellers are the key differentiator. Their learning agility becomes a key factor in their success.

## CHANGE, CHANGE, AND MORE CHANGE

**A**gile. Responsive to change. Fleet-footed. Quick-witted. Able to turn on a dime.

I can't think of better words to describe the characteristics needed by people in sales today.

We're working in a world of unrelenting change, much of it totally beyond our control. Yet as sellers, we have to adjust to it, sometimes literally overnight. To further complicate things, we have to do it at the same time we're trying to achieve our sales goals. It's a daunting task, especially when you think of the massive changes we're facing.

For starters, take a look at your own company. It's probably in constant flux, even if you're a small business. Every year, new products and services are brought to market and new strategic initiatives are introduced. Priorities shift frequently, compensation plans are altered, and new bosses come in with different expectations. It's likely that you've dealt with some major reorganization of your company or team in the past year too.



Add to this all the new technology you're expected to use on the job: CRM (customer relationship management) systems, on-line meetings, social networks, alert services, lead generation software, collaboration tools, and smart phone apps, to name a few. This alone brings many sellers to their knees, begging for relief. When you combine this with all the data you're being bombarded with on a daily basis, it's a sure setup for feeling massively overwhelmed.

That's only part of the picture. The marketplace changes as well. Entire industries collapse, while new ones emerge. Our volatile economy either tumbles or booms. Interest rates go up and down. Legislation alters market dynamics. Political and economic unrest on the other side of the world affects decisions being made locally. You can't influence any of these things, yet they have a huge impact on your success. And, we haven't even addressed the biggest elephant in the room yet—changing buyer behavior.

Phew! It's impossible to stay on top of it all. So much to learn in so little time. And it just keeps coming at you. As soon as you think you've got it all figured out, BAM, more change and you're scrambling again.

Adapting to this much change can be painful. Rather than feeling agile, you feel inept and clumsy. Achieving proficiency seems unattainable and unsustainable. When you take a new job, the situation is compounded exponentially. Not only do you have to get up to speed on just about everything, but you may also have to learn how to sell for the first time.

Constant change is the new normal. As sellers, we're challenged to figure out how to thrive in this ever-evolving ecosystem.

You don't have to be at the mercy of all this change. By focusing on new mind-sets, rapid learning strategies, and fresh ways to acquire new sales skills, you can thrive in this environment.

It's tough to be proficient in a  
changing environment.

## 2

# UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S BUYER

If you're frustrated dealing with today's prospects, join the crowd. It's hard to do your job when no one returns your calls or responds to your e-mails. It's exasperating when you invest tons of time with a hot prospect and then he or she decides to stay with the status quo. And when it's finally time to ink the deal, it seems like all your prospects care about is price.

Buyers have changed: fundamentally, drastically, and for good. They don't need you anymore. When they have an issue, they go online to research their problem. They check multitudes of Web sites, looking for information that can help them understand their challenge, how others are solving it, opinions on best solutions, and more. They download white papers, attend online events, read articles, listen to audios, and check out forums.

In short, buyers self-educate, leaving the seller totally out of the loop. When they finally decide to engage, they're often 60 to 70 percent of the way through their buying process! It's only when they know what they want that they call in a few vendors and start negotiating.

Why do buyers keep sellers out? Because in their experience, most are product-pushing peddlers who don't bring any value to the decision process, ask stupid questions, offer minimal insights, and give boring presentations. The last thing they want to do is waste their precious time caught in a meeting with another self-serving salesperson. They're simply too busy for that.

You may think you're different. Buyers don't.

To get on someone's calendar, keep their attention, win deals, and ensure loyalty, you need to understand and deliver what today's buyers want. Your success depends on:

- Knowing more. Buyers expect you to understand their business, direction, challenges, processes, and relationship history.
- Providing value. Every single interaction is evaluated to determine if it is worth the time or effort. Buyers want ideas, insights, leadership, and guidance to assess whether changing makes sense and how to do it best.
- Meeting them where they're at. You're expected to provide what buyers need, when they want it, and how they want it, quickly.

As sellers, we may think we're doing all these things. Unfortunately, our buyers beg to differ. According to a recent survey by Forrester Research, only 15 percent of executives say their meetings with salespeople met their expectations. From that, only 7 percent of execs actually scheduled follow-up conversations. Ouch. That's not good!

Clearly, the bar for salespeople has been raised. Today's buyers have more power than ever before. Unless we meet their expectations, they won't talk with us or buy from us. In many cases, this is a gap of epic proportions. Sellers have learned about their products or services, but remain uneducated about

many things that are important to buyers. But what are those things? And how can sellers learn them quickly?

Without deep buyer understanding, it's increasingly difficult to get business. This is the information that fuels sellers' ability to provide value in their interactions, a key requisite for winning more business. The nature of the interaction needs to change too. You're dealing with educated people who want conversations and collaboration, not pitches of any sort.

Here's the good news. What today's buyers are requesting is not impossible. Every single seller is capable of doing what's necessary. When you do, you get radically different responses.

According to the Aberdeen Group, companies whose salespeople leveraged online resources to learn about prospects saw revenue jump over 21 percent. In CEB's studies, sellers who challenged customers' thinking and brought them fresh insights significantly outperformed their colleagues.

These findings show that engaged, knowledgeable sellers clearly have an important place in today's marketplace. Providing value may look different today, but once you know what buyers expect, it's certainly doable.

As sellers, we need to up our game and become the person our customers want to deal with. Stop doing what's no longer effective and embrace this challenge.

Buyers' expectations have changed;  
sellers need to provide value.

# CONTENTS

Introduction	<i>1</i>
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## **PART 1: The Case for Agile**

1. Change, Change, and More Change	<i>9</i>
2. Understanding Today's Buyer	<i>12</i>
3. Be the Differentiator	<i>15</i>
4. The Agile Imperative	<i>18</i>

## **PART 2: The Agile Mind-set**

5. Make the Pivotal Decision	<i>23</i>
6. Transform Sales Problems	<i>26</i>

## **xii Contents**

- 7. Reframe Failure 29
- 8. Set the Right Goals 32

### **PART 3: Learn New Info Quickly**

- 9. Fast-Track to Proficiency 37
- 10. Leverage Rapid Learning 40
- 11. Map the Terrain 43
- 12. Take the Deep Dive 48
- 13. Focus on “Need to Knows” 51
- 14. Learn the Lingo 56
- 15. Build on Buyer Insights 59
- 16. Embrace the Status Quo 63
- 17. Reverse Engineer the Business Case 67
- 18. Sink into Stories 71
- 19. Interview Customers 74
- 20. Define the Buyer’s Journey 78
- 21. Create Cheat Sheets 82
- 22. Tap into the Triggers 86
- 23. Find the Forums 90
- 24. Cement Your Knowledge 93
- 25. Take the Gobbledygook Test 96
- 26. Recognize the “Enough” Point 100

### **PART 4: Pick Up New Skills Fast**

- 27. Speaking About Sales 105
- 28. Find Your Starting Point 108
- 29. Focus on Personal Bests 112
- 30. Prep with Passion 116

31. Connect with Questions	120
32. Practice Safe Selling	123
33. Remove the Blinders	127
34. Pick the Upstart's Brain	130
35. Observe Top Sellers	133
36. Get Over Yourself	137
37. Increase Your Perceptivity	140
38. Develop Recovery Strategies	143
39. Dare to Debrief	147
40. Prevent Epic Fails	151
41. Minimize the Memory Burden	154
42. Fix the Root Cause	158
43. Tackle New Technology	161
44. Strive for Maximum Impact	164

## **PART 5: Success Habits of Agile Sellers**

45. Prepare for Success	169
46. Put This Plan in Place	171
47. Power-Pack Your Day	175
48. Purge the Pipeline	178
49. Dig Up More Dirt	180
50. Eliminate Distractions	183
51. Upgrade Your Brain	186
52. Optimize Your Attitude	189
53. Teach Someone a Lesson	192
54. Gaming the System	195
55. Change Sabotaging Behaviors	198
56. Get Grittier	202
57. Borrow a Brain	205



## **xiv Contents**

<b>58.</b> Fake It Till You Make It	<i>208</i>
<b>59.</b> Refuel Your Fire	<i>211</i>
<b>60.</b> Pick the Right Role Model	<i>214</i>
<b>61.</b> Recalibrate over Coffee	<i>217</i>
<b>62.</b> Keep Momentum Going	<i>220</i>

## **PART 6: Final Words**

<b>63.</b> Conclusion: The Ultimate Challenge	<i>225</i>
Acknowledgments	<i>229</i>
Appendix	<i>231</i>
Books Worth Reading	<i>237</i>
Have Jill Konrath Speak at Your Next Event	<i>241</i>
Index	<i>243</i>

## Advance Praise for *Agile Selling*

“In a business environment where sales intelligence matters, *Agile Selling* provides a blueprint for quickly becoming an invaluable resource to prospects and customers. Use these strategies to increase your sales team’s productivity and drive rapid revenue growth.”

—Umberto Milletti, CEO, InsideView

“Any small-business owner ready to hire a salesperson needs to read *Agile Selling* by Jill Konrath. This book will give you a road map for how to get your salesperson up and running quickly, adding revenue to the bottom line.”

—Melinda F. Emerson, “SmallBizLady,” author of  
*Become Your Own Boss in 12 Months*

“Your sales force is key to fast growth in today’s evolving economy. *Agile Selling* will give you the tools and strategies to increase sales productivity, minimize turnover, and drive more revenue, giving you a competitive edge.”

—Verne Harnish, CEO, Gazelles; author of  
*The Greatest Business Decisions of All Time*

“Jill has captured one of the key pivots salespeople need to make in the new sales world. This book is for top producers or those who want to be, those people who want to be trusted advisers, not just transaction processors and service reps. Follow these insights to turn yourself into the ‘go to’ source for solving your customers’ business problems and the provider of choice for their bigger buys.”

—Tom Searcy, CEO, Hunt Big Sales; bestselling coauthor of  
*How to Close a Deal Like Warren Buffett*

“Today, successful sales isn’t really about ‘selling’ in the classic sense. It’s about helping, making yourself a valuable resource to the industry and to prospective customers. In *Agile Selling*, Jill Konrath has created the definitive modern playbook for creating new business opportunities. I promise you’ll read it at least twice.”

—Jay Baer, *New York Times* bestselling author of  
*Youtility: Why Smart Marketing Is About Help, Not Hype*

“Every seller needs to read *Agile Selling* right now to learn how to adapt their selling and learning skills to handle the increasingly rapid pace of change. Jill serves up priceless gems of wisdom that are both practical and immediately impactful. This book is excellent.”

—Donal Daly, CEO, The TAS Group; author of *Account Planning in Salesforce*

“Refreshingly honest and relentlessly practical.”

—Olivia Fox Cabane, author of *The Charisma Myth*

“*Agile Selling* is about great sales professionals. Jill looks at what makes them different, how they work, what they do, how they do it, what sets them apart, and what makes them great. This is not a ‘how to do’ book, it is a ‘how to be’ book—possibly the single most important one anyone aspiring to be a great sales professional can read.”

—Dave Brock, CEO, Partners in Excellence

“*Agile Selling* is an onboarding bible! The time it takes to ramp up new sales reps can be measured in lost revenue. This book provides both individuals and organizations with a way to assimilate information and learn the new skills they’ll need to become valuable to their buyers more quickly. It rocks!”

—Trish Bertuzzi, CEO, The Bridge Group

“*Agile Selling* is a crucial guide for the new age of salespeople. Konrath has written a book full of practical and extremely usable practices that everyone in sales, both those just starting out and those with years of experience, should read immediately.”

—Mike Schultz, president, RAIN Group; coauthor of *Insight Selling*

“When Jill first told me about *Agile Selling*, I immediately thought there is no better person to write about that subject. She’s the most agile person I know. Later, when I read the manuscript, I was simply floored. This book is a treasure trove of knowledge about a critical capability for sales professionals and, surprisingly, one that has not been written about before. As always, Jill has done a masterful job. This is a *must-read*.”

—Dave Stein, CEO and founder, ES Research Group

“I became a huge fan of Jill’s when over a thousand of her raving fans signed up to hear her speak at our record-breaking Inside Sales Virtual Summit, the most of any of our sixty-two sales experts. In her third exciting book, Jill captures why some succeed in sales and others don’t—agility. *Agile Selling* convincingly makes the case for the *agile* mind-set

and shares eighteen quick-learning strategies, eighteen causal new skills, and eighteen gritty success habits you must know to turn obstacles into opportunities.”

—Ken Krogue, founder and president, InsideSales.com;  
weekly contributor on Forbes.com;  
no. 1 world-ranked blogger on inside sales

“Whether you are new to your sales role or an experienced salesperson, *Agile Selling* is the book to make you maximally effective in the shortest time possible. From learning new information quickly to tackling your personal sales challenges, this book offers proven tactics and tools to focus on what matters most to you and your customers.”

—Kendra Lee, president, KLA Group; author of  
*The Sales Magnet* and *Selling Against the Goal*

“*Agile Selling* provides the new master entrepreneur skill. The pace of change in all facets of business means those who can adapt the fastest win!”

—John Jantsch, author of  
*Duct Tape Marketing* and *Duct Tape Selling*

“Dozens of books give you yet another new system or methodology to jump-start your sales. But if you want to get better now—and keep getting better in the future—you need to know how to create value for your clients in the blitzkrieg of never-ending and disruptive change. In sixty-three zippy chapters, *Agile Selling* will give you superpowers you didn’t know you needed so that you can be the differentiator that your clients and customers want.”

—Anthony Iannarino, author of *The Sales Blog*

“*Agile Selling* is a must-read book for all new reps coming into a sales team. Today’s seller must know how to learn and how to change on the fly. It’s written in an easy manner with dozens of examples throughout. Definitely the most important book Jill Konrath has authored so far.”

—Lori Richardson, CEO, Score More Sales

“Jill Konrath’s bestselling *Selling to Big Companies* and *SNAP Selling* solidified her position as a thought leader in the sales space. It’s my view that *Agile Selling* will surpass the success of both these books, simply because it doesn’t just address issues facing frontline sellers today, but also those in the future. She shows us how to avoid commoditization, expand our commercial bandwidth, and actually thrive—even in challenging times.”

—Jonathan Farrington, CEO, Top Sales World;  
managing partner, Jonathan Farrington & Associates

“I didn’t think Jill could outdo *SNAP Selling*—but she does in this new book, diving into how the brain works and its ability to rapidly learn new information and skills. Whether you’re new to your job or a journeyman sales professional, you’ll walk away with great insight into how to accomplish more in less time. Combining solid advice on selling strategies, techniques, and management, Jill again has produced a major hit!”

—Michael J. Nick, CEO, ROI4Sales, Inc.; author of  
*The Key to the C-Suite*

“In a world where buyers are empowered with online and social media information, what role is left for salespeople? Jill’s analysis points to the agile seller: individuals who learn rapidly, know their buyer intimately, and transcend what they sell to become creators of business value. Willy Loman and *Glengarry Glen Ross* be damned: the new buying and selling environment has no place for you. This new breed—the agile seller—is the hero of the new economy.”

—Steve Richard, managing partner, Vorsight

“If you’re a small business who wants to grow, *Agile Selling* is a compelling read. Jill has a powerful ability to share the mind-set, tools, and techniques needed for success with today’s savvy buyers. If you’re hiring salespeople—or want to get better yourself—read this book.”

—Anita Campbell, CEO, Small Business Trends

“Have you noticed that buyers have changed? They self-educate and, when ready to buy, call you to negotiate and grind on price. If anyone knows what to do about this, it’s Jill. Want to increase sales? Get inside this book. Fresh, fast, and focused . . . it is exceptionally well written.”

—Oren Klaff, bestselling author of *Pitch Anything*

“The marketplace is changing rapidly and it can be a challenge to stay ahead. Jill Konrath provides tactical, on-the-ground advice for quickly understanding and effectively fulfilling the needs of your customers.”

—Todd Henry, author of *Die Empty*

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## **ABOUT JILL**

Jill Konrath's career is defined by her relentless search for fresh sales strategies that actually work in today's business environment.

She's the author of two bestselling sales books and is a popular speaker who helps sellers crack into new accounts, speed up sales cycles and win more business.

[VISIT JILLKONRATH.COM](http://JILLKONRATH.COM)