

# SNAP SELLING

Speed Up Sales and  
Win More Business with  
Today's Frazzled Customers

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AUTHOR OF *SELLING TO BIG COMPANIES*

*"In this crazy-busy world of ours, Jill Konrath's strategies are just what sellers need to be successful with today's frazzled decision makers."*

—MICHAEL PORT, bestselling author of *Book Yourself Solid*,  
*The Contrarian Effect*, and *Think Big Manifesto*

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# INTRODUCTION

**Y**ou know what it's like to be crazy-busy. Before you're even fully awake in the morning, you're on the computer checking what seems like an endless stream of e-mail. When you look at your to-do list, you wonder how you'll be able to get everything done. You have a dozen people to follow up with on the phone, three meetings with prospects, and a proposal that needs to be finished. Then there's that nagging service issue that you can't seem to get resolved with that customer who's driving you nuts.

Rather than take a break for lunch, you grab a quick sandwich at the vending machine and eat it at your desk. That way you can update your files and take care of paperwork that needs to be processed. Then you head out for that presentation that you wish you'd had more time to prepare for. After the presentation, you have a ton of questions that now need to get answered before the end of the week. At least, that's what you promised your newest prospects.

By the time you get home, you're tired. But rather than

turning in for the day, you work on a proposal for a while, then finish up by checking your e-mail once last time. The next day you get up and do it all over again.

It's a crazy life, even a fragile life, where things such as traffic jams, computer problems, and sick kids can put you over the edge. There's no wiggle room in your schedule for you to learn new things and thus invest in your future. There's no mental bandwidth left for taking on anything else. It requires all of your energy to keep up with what needs to be done today.

You're not the only one who's feeling this way. Your customers are just as frazzled as you are.

They work in lean and mean organizations, consigned to sixty-plus-hour work weeks filled with endless meetings. The last thing they want to do is add one more item to their already overflowing to-do lists. Throw in an uncertain economy, and things get even crazier for these burnt-out people who are now expected to do even more with fewer resources.

Ironically, in this frenetic and high-speed environment, change can be unbearably slow. Your customers may spend hours online searching for answers to their most pressing problems, but when it comes down to the wire, they freeze and can't figure out what direction to take. Everyone has an opinion, no one wants to take a risk, and turf issues abound. Your customers are surrounded by complexity and chaos, and at the same time, they yearn for simplicity and order.

We've never faced tougher sales challenges.

## **Time for a Wake-Up Call**

That's why I wrote this book. Because times have changed, and we must change, too. Because what worked before doesn't work

anymore. Because the advice of many “traditional” sales gurus is now hopelessly outdated. And finally, because things are never going to go back to the way they used to be.

Yet in these challenging times lies great opportunity. Marketing legend Joe Sugarman once said, “Each problem has hidden in it an opportunity so powerful that it literally dwarfs the problem.” I agree with him completely, and intend to show you where to find those opportunities!

Let me give you a bit of background so you know where I’m coming from. My own sales career began at Xerox Corporation, where I had great success in both sales and sales management. From there, I moved into technology sales, and in my first year was selected International Rookie of the Year. After that, I started a sales consultancy firm, helping companies shorten the time to revenue on their new product launches. I loved helping the sales force jump-start their sales.

But all that came to a screeching halt several years back when my two biggest clients simultaneously came under pressure from Wall Street. Forced to cut costs, they immediately chopped all unnecessary expenses. Consultants were the first thing to go! My business collapsed, and I had to start all over again.

What I learned in that comeback period was that everything was changing, and that if I wanted to be successful again I would have to change, too. Over these past few years, my perspective on sales has altered dramatically. In my first book, *Selling to Big Companies*, I shared some of the new strategies that work in today’s business environment. In this book, I take it to the next level as I write about the fundamental shifts we all need to make in order to get in front of this rapidly changing marketplace. Some people won’t like what I have to say. They don’t want to change. They like their tried-and-true sales practices. In fact, right now they’re probably saying, “We need to get back to the basics.”

But this is not the “good old days” anymore, so I’m doing my darndest to be your wake-up call and bring you into the new reality. In the new sales climate, focusing on your FABs (features-advantages-benefits) creates insurmountable obstacles. Using clever objection-handling techniques insults your prospect’s intelligence. And employing “always be closing” tactics is the surest way to prematurely end potentially fruitful relationships.

We’re on the cusp of a new age in selling. It’s a time to create *new* basics and let go of the old ones. For example, it’s no longer a numbers game. You’ll be much more successful making fewer high-quality calls, meetings, and presentations. And having a great relationship with your customers is nice, but no longer sufficient. Today you need to personally bring value to each interaction you have with these people. Also, even if you sell commodities, your new role in working with these well-educated customers is as a “business improvement specialist.”

These are only a few of the many changes we need to make today. If you commit to learning these new basics, you will be unstoppable. And your competitors won’t have a chance.

## **Crazy-Busy Decision Making**

In this book you’ll get an inside look at how your prospects actually make decisions—or don’t—in today’s crazy-busy organizations. Once you can see through their eyes, you’ll be able to pre-evaluate your sales approach and refine it to increase its effectiveness.

First, you’ll need to understand the three distinct decisions your prospects make before they sign a contract with you—or



with your competitor. With the first decision, they evaluate your approach to determine if it's worth their time to meet with you. With the second decision, they determine if making the change will be worth all the disruption it will cause. And finally, with the third decision, their primary concern is selecting the best option for their company.

While we might hope that each prospect will turn into a customer, there are so many things that can derail, defer, or dry up even the best opportunities at any stage of your prospect's decision-making process. This is especially true when you're dealing with people who already have too much to do. That's why I've structured this book around each of these decisions. It'll enable you to isolate the problems you encounter and focus on the best strategies for addressing them.

In this book you'll be introduced to four new factors that need to be at the forefront of your mind when working with crazy-busy people. I call these the SNAP Factors:

**Simple:** Your ability to eliminate complexity and effort from your prospect's decision-making process will improve your chances for sales success.

**iNvaluable:** In a world of copycat products and services, the value you personally bring to the relationship becomes essential.

**Aligned:** You must stay relevant to your client at all times; they don't have time for anything else.

**Priority:** With an ever-changing business environment, you can't afford to have your prospect deem your services non-urgent.

Consciously or not, today's prospects evaluate you on these four criteria in every single interaction you have with them. If you dismiss the SNAP Factors, your sales efforts will become delayed or derailed. Worse yet, you don't always get second chances. Once you're dismissed, you're gone.

In this book you'll discover how to leverage these SNAP Factors across all three of your prospect's critical decision-making stages. Other sales training programs and books totally ignore the massive workloads and continual pressure faced by these people, yet these are the elephants in the room. Failure to address them puts your sales opportunity in serious peril.

Finally, in this book I've included ideas from many other top sellers and sales experts. Why? Because in a time of change, no one person has all the answers. The advice and stories from these savvy sellers with a wealth of experience add invaluable insights I know you'll appreciate.

## **What Sales Really Is**

Before you dig in, I'd like to leave you with this thought: *Sales is an outcome, not a goal.* It's a function of doing numerous things right, starting from the moment you target a potential prospect until you finalize the deal.

So let's get started on this new sales adventure. I want you to see the possibilities in today's marketplace—even amid the incredible challenges—and discover how you can capitalize on them. Yes, it's a little bit scary, but with this book you're getting a blueprint of what you can do starting tomorrow. Start at the beginning so you lay a solid foundation. Knowing as much as you can about your targeted prospect is more important than

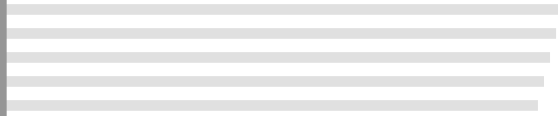
your knowledge of your own product, service, or solution. Most sellers don't realize that, but it's true.

Once you know your buyer inside and out, you can easily start applying what you've learned to create customer-enticing value propositions, messaging, presentations, and proposals. Plus, this knowledge of your customer will be at the heart of all your best, most fruitful conversations.

Now that you're aligned with what they're trying to achieve and have focused on their top priorities, you'll start seeing a difference in your sales right away. Seriously. Then, when you start focusing on simplicity and personally bringing value, your business will really take off. I know you'll be pleasantly surprised.

This book will change how you feel about your job and make you more successful. Best of all, you won't have to work as hard as you do today to achieve significantly better results.





*Part 1*

***SNAP  
Decisions***



# 1

## It's Tough Out There

In today's crazy-busy world, reaching people on the phone is a virtual impossibility, as is finding a free spot in their already overfull calendars. Capturing and keeping their attention requires Herculean efforts. One day a prospect states their desire to change, but the next day they default to the status quo. Then, after announcing their intention to do business with you, they disappear into an impenetrable black hole of non-communication, making you wonder if it was all a figment of your imagination.

The good news is you're not losing it! The bad news? This is reality, and no one ever prepared us for a sales environment quite like this. You probably hoped customers cared about your offering. Maybe you thought they'd jump for joy when they heard about your company's capabilities or your passion for excellence.

Instead you hear them typing on their keyboard on the other

end of the phone or see them checking their BlackBerrys in the middle of your presentation. Overwhelmed and stressed, they don't think twice about being rude as they struggle valiantly to get way too much work done in way too little time.

How can they rationalize this unconscionable behavior? Let's hear directly from one of your prospective customers.

## **A Candid Letter from Your Customer**

Dear Seller,

I have only a few minutes, but I understand you're interested in selling me something. As far as I'm concerned, that's pretty self-serving.

The truth is, you have no idea what my life is like. You may think you do, but you don't—and you need to if you're going to get my business.

I got to the office early this morning so I could have some uninterrupted time to work on a project—something I can't seem to squeeze into the normal business day.

By 9:00 a.m., all my good intentions were dashed when my boss asked me to drop everything in order to put together a head-count reduction plan. Revenue slumped last quarter, and we need to cut costs.

Then Engineering informed me that our new product won't be available for the upcoming trade show. Sales will go ballistic when they hear this. That's the last thing I need to have happen.

Get the picture? Welcome to my world of everyday chaos, where as hard as I try to make progress, I keep slipping further behind. Right now I have at least 59 hours of work piled on my desk. I have no idea when I'll get it all done.



Did I mention e-mail? I get over 150 each day. Then, add to that at least 30 phone calls from sellers just like you who'd "love to meet with me."

In short, I have way too much to do, ever-increasing expectations, impossible deadlines, and constant interruptions from people wanting my attention.

Time is my most precious commodity, and I protect it at all costs. I live with the status quo as long as I can—even if I'm not happy with it. Why? Because change creates more work and eats up my time.

Which gets us back to you. In your well-intentioned but misguided attempts to turn me into a customer, you fail woefully to capture and keep my attention. Let me be blunt: I don't care about your product, service, or solution.

I quickly scan your e-mails or letters looking for any self-promotional talk that glorifies your offering or your company. The minute it jumps out at me, you're gone. Zapped from my in-box or tossed into the trash can. Say it in your voice mail message, and I delete you immediately. Delete, delete, delete.

When you spend an entire meeting blathering about your unique methodologies, great technology, or extraordinary service, my mind wanders to important tasks that need to get done. Sure, I even occasionally check my BlackBerry for messages while you're speaking. But you would too if you were in my position.

I'm not always like this. Occasionally a savvy seller captures my attention, entices me to meet with them, shows me why I should change, and then makes it easy for me to work with them.

What are they doing? They're completely focused on my business and the impact they can have on it. That's what I care about—not their pitch.

If you focus on helping me achieve my objectives, I'll listen to you all day long. But you can't rope me in with the good stuff, then slip back into that trash talk. If so, you're gonzo.

Make sense? I hope so, because I'm late for a meeting, and while I've been writing this, the phone's been ringing off the hook.

Best regards,  
Your Customer

## **Frazzled Customer Syndrome**

While that letter from your prospective customer may seem brutal, it explains why you're struggling. The people you're calling on suffer from a severe case of Frazzled Customer Syndrome, a debilitating condition brought on by excessive workloads, 24/7 availability, information overload, lack of sleep, and job-related stress.

You likely encounter these individuals on a daily basis. They're good people who are doing their best to survive in a crazy-busy workplace. Their calendars are overflowing and they're constantly falling behind, but they feel powerless to stop the unrelenting, escalating demands on their time.

Their frantic pace is both exhausting and exhilarating. They can barely focus on important tasks because their days are filled with interruptions, distractions, and constantly changing activities. One minute they're working on a document. The next, they're checking e-mail, text-messaging, responding to a customer, or doing research online.

This frenetic multitasking fools them into thinking they're accomplishing a lot, but in reality they're doing very little. The

result? More work, unmet obligations, unfinished projects, and chronic feelings of underachievement.

To make matters worse, they don't see an end in sight. Instead, they deal with constant downsizings and reorganizations and rapidly move from job to job, never really mastering their current one—all the while wondering if they're next on the chopping block.

Their personal life is just as frenetic, as they juggle work commitments, family, and personal time until they crash in front of the TV every evening. It's no wonder they don't have time for you.

## Recognizing the Symptoms

How do you know when you're dealing with customers who suffer from Frazzled Customer Syndrome? Typically, they:

**Have a “net it out” mentality.** These impatient, time-starved people want you to get to the bottom line right away. If you don't, they're immediately dismissive.

**Are easily distracted.** Even when they're interested in what you have to say, their attention spans are short. They feel compelled to multitask whenever humanly possible.

**Are forgetful.** Because of their excessive flitting from task to task, much of what they commit to never makes it into their long-term memory.

**Are demanding.** They expect you to jump through hoops to fulfill their requests, yet when it's time for them to take action, they move like molasses.

**Suffer from “analysis paralysis.”** Faced with lots of change, multiple acceptable options, and the lack of time for thorough research, they appear overwhelmed, and nothing makes sense to them.

**Withdraw from contact.** When they’re buried under other priorities, they don’t have any news to report or they have bad news, or they go silent altogether.

Frazzled Customer Syndrome makes your job so much harder. Dealing with overwhelmed people is completely different from working with calm, rational people who have time to analyze their situation and study multiple options before moving ahead. But those people are no longer the norm. To make matters worse, using traditional cold calling, presentation, and objection-handling sales techniques actually creates insurmountable obstacles that can derail your sales efforts.

Your hot prospects fizzle or flame out. They politely (or sometimes not so politely) tell you that their priorities have changed, the budget has dried up, or they have too much on their plate right now.

In most cases, your attempts to get them back on track are futile. They tell you to call back next month, but before long that becomes “next quarter,” and then “next year.” They just want to get rid of you. It’s not personal. They just can’t handle one more item on their to-do list.

## 2

# How Frazzled Customers Think

**W**hat's really going on inside the minds of those frazzled customers that causes them to keep you at a distance, brush you off, dismiss you entirely, or stick with the status quo? Once you recognize how they think, and what you're doing that is bringing them to the breaking point, you can make changes to your own behavior.

### **Complexity grinds them to a screeching halt.**

Overwhelmed people can't take in, sort through, or make sense of massive amounts of information, or multiple variables for a major change initiative. When they sense that the effort required will make their lives even more complicated, they call it quits—even if the change would have been good for them.

**They subscribe to the “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” philosophy.**

Busy decision makers don’t have time for things that aren’t urgent. They may limp along with all sorts of makeshift solutions and work-arounds. Their current way of doing things may even be draining massive amounts of money from their pocket-books or their company. Even though it makes sense to change, they don’t do it. It’s too much work.

**They think that making risky decisions is career-inhibiting.**

Nothing is more off-putting to busy people than the thought of a risky decision that could turn into a quagmire, require additional effort for approval, or potentially put their careers at stake. Even a small whiff of risk is enough for many customers to decide to take no action or to do business with another company.

**Most of their options seem like near-clones of one another.**

Most products and services look pretty similar these days—especially to busy people. Even if you have a marketplace lead, customers believe it’s only temporary and that competitors will soon catch up. When customers can’t differentiate, they default to price as a key factor.

**They suffer no fools.**

In every conversation and interaction, frazzled customers are asking themselves, “Does she know what she’s talking about? How much work has he done in this field? Is the company well

known in my industry?” If they detect insecurity, knowledge gaps, or BS, they will want nothing to do with the seller or his company.

This shouldn't come as a shock. We all think like this when we're really swamped. It's a normal human reaction to a way-too-busy life, but it still makes selling tough. And in a challenging economy, this thinking is exacerbated as your prospects struggle with even greater workloads and fear of job loss.

## When Too Much Is Too Much

Initially, I was stymied when dealing with people who were suffering from Frazzled Customer Syndrome. Yet a while back, when I found myself in their shoes, I began to behave the same way they did. My e-mail system had crashed, so any sellers who tried to set up meetings with me were brushed off as fast as I could say, “I'm not interested.” I didn't act upon nagging problems because they took too much effort. Hot new projects came to a grinding halt, even though they were key to my business success. In retrospect, it is fascinating to note that many of my decisions weren't in my own economic or personal self-interest.

When frazzled customers slam on the brakes, you need to see this as a signal that you're currently on a crash course. Yes, it's painful when you've been counting on an order coming through. Yes, you want to scream when orders disappear into a black hole. And yes, losses to competitors who are “unworthy” (at least from your perspective) make you want to pull your hair out.

The truth is, we need to reframe these painful moments as

calls to action. Your sales success is in direct proportion to your willingness to see these struggles as learning opportunities—and then to dig in to figure out what works.

## **Descent into the D-Zone**

Ever heard of the dreaded D-Zone? It's a place where prospective customers send sellers when they don't want to deal with them, want to avoid making a decision, or have no urgency to change now.

When you are in the D-Zone, your sales are Delayed temporarily or Derailed permanently, as customers Default to the status quo. You are Dismissed or Deleted. Your prospects Disappear or they're Dead to you completely.

In short, it's pretty depressing when you've been relegated to the D-Zone. When that happens, it's easy to blame your "idiotic" customers for making "stupid" decisions. You can also harp on how "rude" they've become. After all, "good" people would have the common decency to return your phone calls and meet their deadlines.

All this may be true. But when you think that way, you're missing the message. What you're doing isn't working. Period. You can blame everyone in the universe, refusing to see your role in being sent into the D-Zone. You can even feel superior to your customers, pointing out how they just don't get it.

But who's actually not getting it? Their decision to delete, delay, or dismiss you is their way of telling you that you need to do something differently. If you want to be successful in sales, you can't ignore this message.

It would be so easy to give up on frazzled customers. But if



you did, you'd be making a big mistake. Remember, they're good people who are simply overwhelmed. They need help. They long for more time. They want better relationships. They're also striving to be successful.

They just don't have time to do a lot of thinking, so they make quick decisions about moving ahead or they slam on those brakes. Either you're in—and get a chance to move to the next step—or you're out. Game over.

Let's take a look at what you can do to increase your effectiveness with these people who could really use your help, even if they don't always know it.