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## **How To Sell A Pencil – And Your Product Or Service**

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If I gave you a pencil and asked you to sell it, how would you go about it?

This is one of the most basic of interview questions for sales reps, and the answer reveals so much about your previous training, your understanding of the sales process, and ultimately about what kind of sales rep you are.

So, what is the most effective way to sell a pencil? Well, first let's look at how most sales reps go about doing it. When I'm interviewing sales reps I love using this technique. After letting a rep tell me how good of a closer they are, I pull out a pencil, hand it to them, and tell them to sell it to me. And off they go!

80% of sales reps start the same way – they start pitching. “This pencil is brand new, never used. It has grade “2” lead and a bright yellow color so it's easy to find. It comes with a built in eraser,” etc.

Some reps can (and do!) talk about it for 5 minutes or more before they ask a question or ask for an order. As the sales rep rambles on, I begin to yawn, roll my eyes, etc. Amazingly, this just makes them talk even more! “What's wrong with these people?” I think.

Now let's look at how the top 20% go about selling a pencil. As soon as I give a top rep the pencil, they pause, and then they begin asking me questions:

“So how often do you use a pencil?”

“How many do you go through in a month?”

“What other locations does your company use pencils at, and how often do they order them?”

“What quantity do you usually order them in?”

“Besides yourself, who’s involved in the buying decision?”

Quite a difference, huh? I’ll tell you right now, I listen to hundreds of sales reps in a month and they can easily be separated into these two groups: Those who pitch, pitch, pitch, and those who take the time to understand their prospect’s buying motives, and properly qualify to understand the entire selling process.

Now let’s see which category you fit in. When you speak with a prospect for the first time, how much of your script is focused on describing and pitching your product or service as opposed to questioning and uncovering buying motives?

If yours is like most scripts I review, then it’s filled with descriptions of what you do and how your product or service helps them. Most scripts attack the prospect with a barrage of “value statements” that turn people off and make them want to get you off the phone as quickly as possible.

**Want a better way?** Then take a tip from some of the best “pencil sales reps” and change your script and opening to focus more on [questioning](#) - discovering

whether you're dealing with a qualified buyer, and what it might take to actually sell them.

Without knowing this, you'll just end up with a lot of frustration and a lot of unsold pencils at the end of the month.