

How to sell well:

TalkWise Worksheet

What is involved in selling? In its simplest form, selling is a process of telling - telling someone what you've got, why it's great, why they need it, why it's a bargain, why they shouldn't miss out, and so on. In VoicePrint terms, this is the Advocate voice at its most basic, making a case for something and then piling on one argument after another to give the case more weight. It is a way of trying to force the other person into agreement.

Clearly, this approach will not always be successful, welcome, or even tolerated. So, there's more to selling than selling. Effective salespeople do more than simply push their products, propositions or services. So what else do they do? How do you sell well? What does that sound like? What voices are involved?

Good sellers start by giving things away.

Information, ideas, insights, the products of your research and experience - sharing value as a way of establishing your credentials. A number of voices can help to do this, particularly Articulate, Advise, Challenge, Diagnose and Evaluate.

Selling well is rooted in exploration rather than advocacy.

The seller needs to provide something which helps to solve a problem or create an opportunity for the buyer, while also contributing to the process of defining the problem or identifying the opportunity. Good selling is a two-way process, a conversation about something that matters to the buyer. This immediately requires a range of voices, and could entail any and all of the nine voices in the VoicePrint model, because you can never predict with absolute certainty where any conversation will go.

This table and exercises below are designed to help you develop a relationship with your prospective buyer/s. They will help you to identify and practise the voices that will best support you in this process. We recommend using this worksheet if you are responsible for 'selling', be that sales or products, services or ideas.

Voices in the good seller's repertoire

Voice	Purpose/s	Sounds like
Inquire	To give the prospective buyer the opportunity to explain what matters to them. To give you the opportunity to understand the prospect's needs. To initiate a collaborative problem-solving rather than a 'selling' relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>How do you think I might be able to help?</i>- <i>What prompted you to make contact?</i>- <i>What would you like to get out of this conversation?</i>
Probe	To get a deeper and more precise understanding of the prospective buyer's, issues needs & concerns. To encourage the buyer to probe too	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>What's your principal concern?</i>- <i>What are your must-haves in this situation?</i>

Diagnose	To work with the client to think through how their needs and concerns might relate to or be assisted by what you have to offer in terms of know-how, services or products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>It sounds as if the problem might be...</i> - <i>If that's the case, then the likely implications are...</i> - <i>What do you think that might be telling us?</i>
Articulate	To play back your understanding of what the client has said. To describe what your business does in an objective and matter-of-fact way. To provide an objective summary of your discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Let me see if I've understood you correctly...</i> - <i>Let me describe what we do and don't do in this field.</i>
Advise	To suggest alternative courses of action for the client to consider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I can see a number of different options. Let me explain them and the thinking behind them and then maybe we can see how you feel about them.</i>
Advocate	To put forward a specific proposal for the prospect's consideration. To give the client the benefit of your experience or expertise by stating a personal view or preference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>My proposal would be this...</i> - <i>If I can give you a personal recommendation, and you'd like to hear why, it would be this...and for these reasons...</i>
Challenge	To re-focus the discussion where it might be mutually beneficial to do so. To correct the prospective buyer if they seem to have a misapprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sorry to interrupt, but are you aware that...?</i> - <i>If I can just highlight the potential problem with that...</i>
Evaluate	To work objectively and systematically through the advantages and disadvantages, pros and cons of different alternatives or possible courses of action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In addition to any specific criteria that you will want to use, let me share with you some considerations that other clients have found to be useful when they get to the point of assessing what's being proposed</i>
Direct	To ensure that the prospective buyer is aware of any standards, conditions, limitations or regulations that might be relevant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What you will get is...</i> - <i>What this will not do is...</i> - <i>So let's agree how we're going to formalise our agreement.</i>

Looking back:

Think back over an occasion when you failed to sell successfully and answer the following questions:

What voice/s did you use?

How did they land with the prospective buyer?

What might you have done differently?

Looking forward:

Think forward to an upcoming occasion when you are expected to make a good of selling a product, a service, or an idea. Answer the following questions:

What sort of conversation is most appropriate at this stage of your relationship with the prospect?

Which voices do you need to bring to that conversation?

Which voices do you need the prospective buyer to bring to the conversation?

What are you actually going to say to facilitate those outcomes? (Make some notes and then practise saying it out loud and adjust your notes as needed.)