



Personal selling skills in international sales

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Teacher – Introducing myself

- **Jonna Koponen**, University Lecturer, Accreditation Manager, Ph.D. in Speech Communication. Postgraduate Certificate in Education.
- Teaching communication at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for 15 years (Finland, UK, France, Japan).
- Cultural director at the City of Oulu; various tasks of customer service.
- Consulting several firms on communication, negotiation, personal selling & sales management.



Teacher – Introducing myself

- Research e.g. on
 - Culture & customer relationships development in B2B sales
 - Culture & consumer-seller interaction in B2C sales
 - Business communication education, Sales Training, Medical students' communication skills training
- Editor 2017-2018 in a peer-reviewed journal Prologi
- Publications e.g. in *Industrial Marketing Management, Simulation & Gaming, Health Education, Communication Teacher*



A definition of selling

”Selling is the phenomenon of human-driven interaction between and within individuals / organizations in order to bring about economic exchange within a value-creating context.”

Dixon, A.L. & Tanner, J.F.(Jr.) 2012



Intercultural communication in sales

- In the current sales and marketing literature, the seller's competence in communication is most often studied and acknowledged in terms of **personal selling skills**.



- Definition

- In marketing and sales contexts, intercultural communication occurs when a message from a buyer (seller) from one culture must be processed by a seller (buyer) from another culture. (Bush & Ingram, 1996)

(Chakrabarty, Brown, & Widing, 2013; Evans, McFarland, Dietz, & Jaramillo, 2012; Homburg et al., 2011; Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Weitz & Bradford, 1999).

Personal selling

- **Origins:** Ancient Greek history documents selling as an exchange activity. The term "*salesman*" appears in the writings of Plato.
- True salespeople who earned their living only by selling appeared during the Industrial Revolution in England (1760-1840).
- Personal selling is defined as "**personal communication with an audience through paid personnel of an organization or its agents in such a way that the audience perceives the communicator's organization as being the source of the message.**" (Ingram et al., 2006, p. 19)
 - In B2B context a salesperson or sales team interacting with one or more individuals from another organization.

Why are personal selling skills needed?

- First, salespeople use their personal sales skills to help customers to assess their needs, offer products that will satisfy customer needs and encourage them to make satisfactory purchase decisions, (Chakrabarty et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2012; Saxe & Weitz, 1982).
- Second, salespeople use their personal selling skills to establish **trust**, to build **commitment** and to **build a customer relationship** (Homburg 2011).
- Personal selling skills are manifested during sales processes, which require appropriate and effective behaviour from salespeople (Homburg et al., 2011; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

Relationship selling

- Relationship selling approach focuses on solving customer problems, providing opportunities and adding value to the customer's business over longer period of time. (Ingram et al. 2006, p. 25)
- Focus is on the customer and customer's customers
- Need satisfaction, problem solving, consultation
- Trust, joint planning, mutual benefits
- Salesperson needs to build long-term relationships
- Communication is two-way and collaborative



Adaptive selling

- "The practice of adaptive selling is defined as the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986).
- Adaptive selling behaviors should improve the performance of salespeople, since each customer interaction represents a unique selling situation requiring the salesperson to adapt his/her sales message to the customer. (Weitz, 1981).



Interpersonal communication

- Interpersonal communication is a process involving a dyad or small number of people in which actors create meanings through verbal and nonverbal message behaviors

(Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, 3).

- Interpersonal communication is

- Dynamic process
- Unrepeatable
- Irreversible
- Learned
- Nonsummative



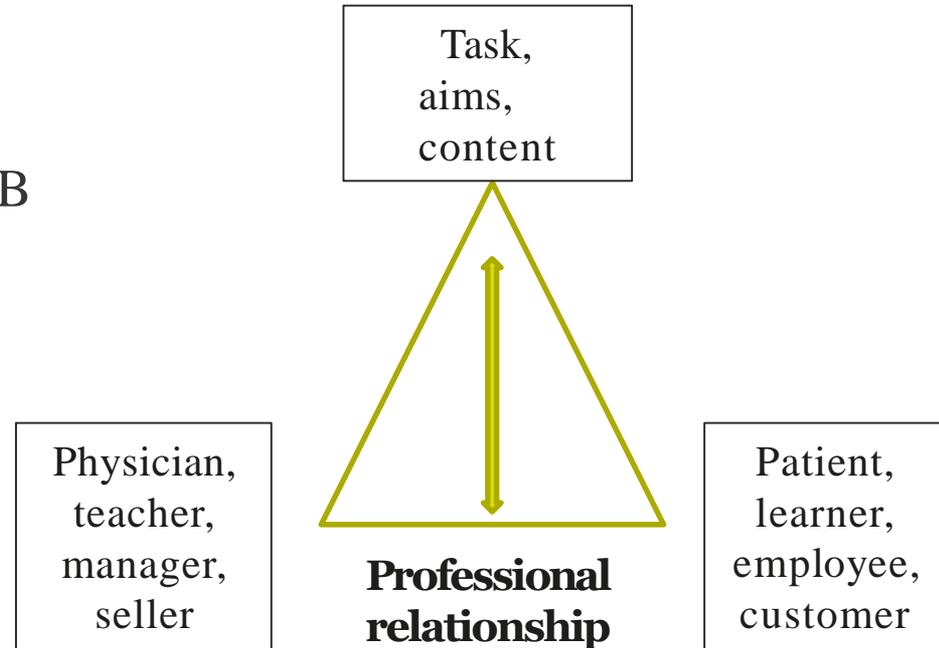
- People themselves, their relationship, context in which communication occurs and **culture** affect the process.

Customer-seller relationship

Professional relationship

- A relationship in which a seller is an expert in a specific subject or actions pertaining to B2B selling compared to a customer.
- Both content and relationship are always present in human communication.
(Relational Communication Theory)
- Evolution via stages.
(Dwyer et al. 1987)

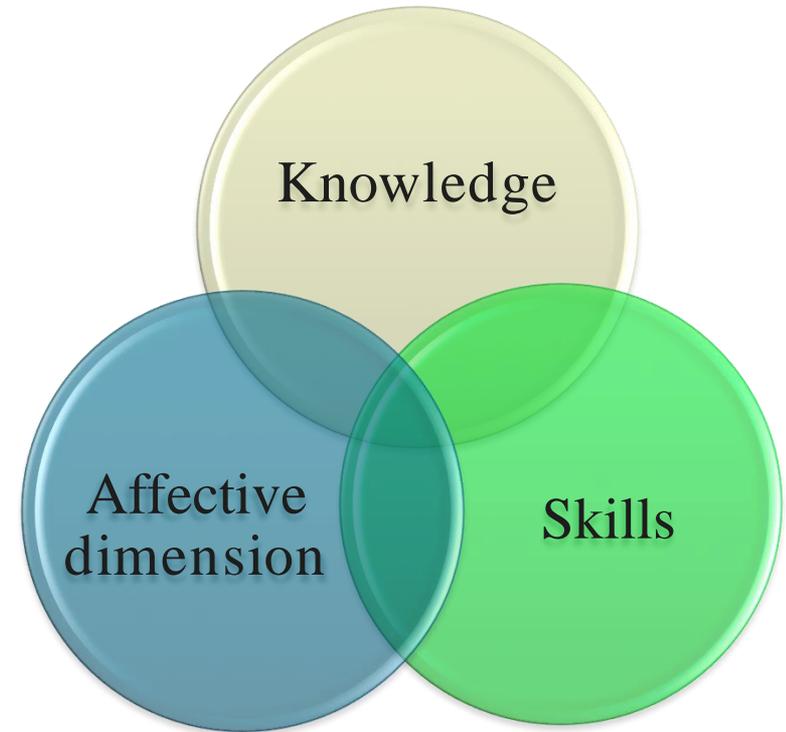
(Gerlander & Isotalus 2010; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967)



Interpersonal communication competence (ICC)

- ICC consists of
 - cognitive (knowledge),
 - affective (motivation, attitude),
 - behavioral (skills) dimensions.
- All dimensions are needed to act in such a way that the parties involved perceive to be effective, appropriate, and ethical.

(see Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002)

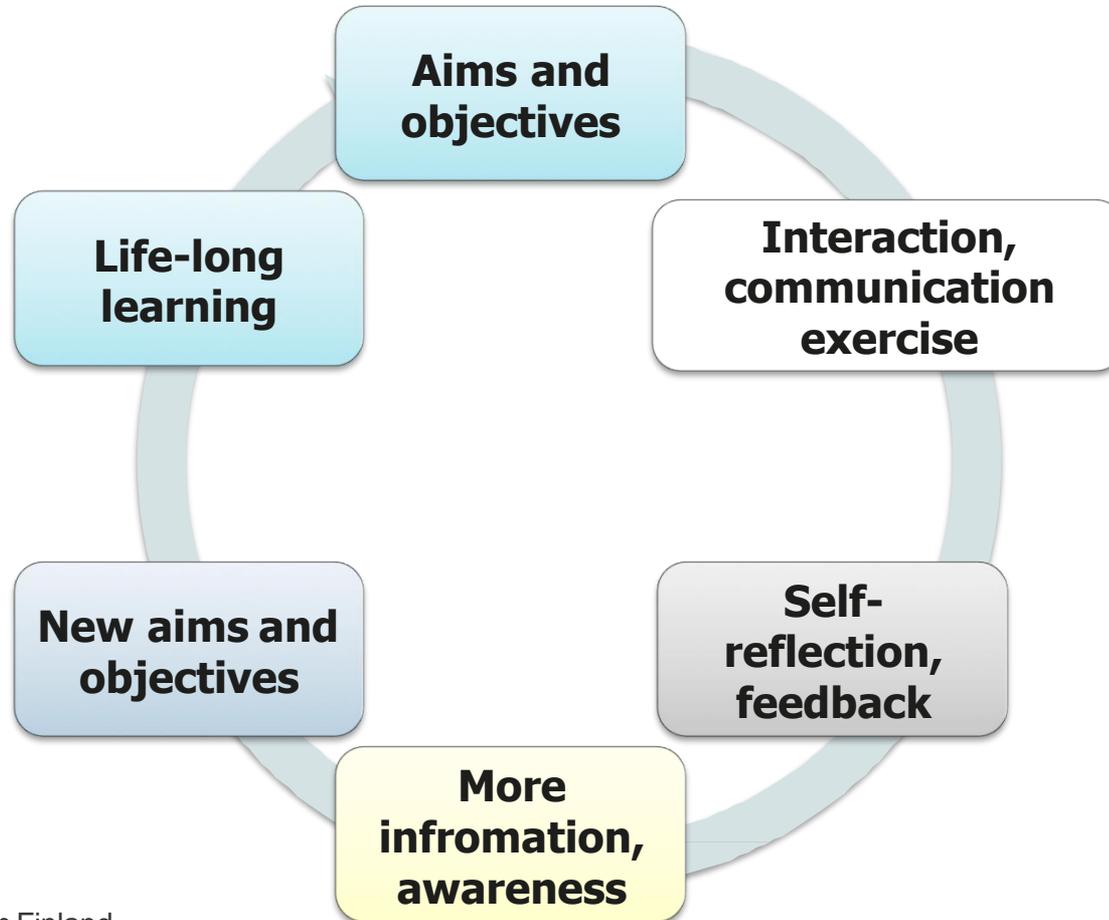


Personal selling skills in international sales

International environment adds another layer to communication

- Intercultural communication competence is viewed as crucial in building trust between partners (Elo et al., 2015).
 - Additionally, due to the high-performance expectations in global sales environments, sellers need the ability to communicate effectively with people who come from different cultures (Barnes et al., 2015; Hoppner et al., 2015; Bush & Ingram, 1996; Bush, Rose, Gilbert, & Ingram, 2001).
 - Language skills
 - Cultural knowledge
 - Sensitivity towards other cultures
 - Curiosity & open-mind
 - Ability to adapt
- 
- Koponen, Julkunen & Akiko
(in process)

Practicing and developing ICC



Self-evaluation

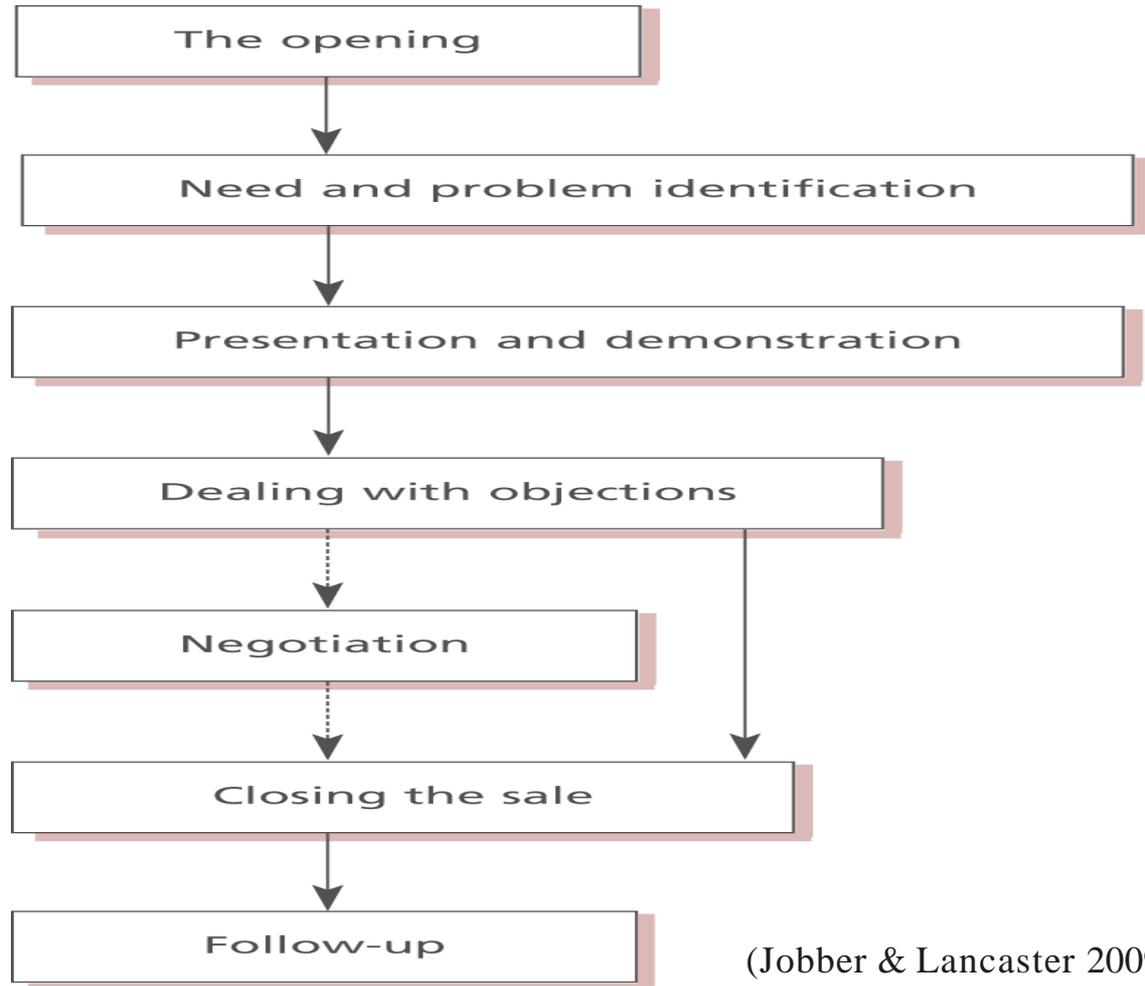
- Evaluate your own interpersonal communication skills pertaining to the selling situation presented in handout.
- Mark 2-3 skills which you see as your personal strengths and 2-3 skills which you think are your areas of development.
- Share your thoughts with a pair.

Seven steps of selling

- Throughout modern selling history, one of the oldest and most widely accepted paradigms in the sales discipline is commonly referred to as the seven steps of selling (Dubinsky, 1980/1981).
- These seven steps present the typical sales scenario as composed of the following:
 - (1) prospecting,
 - (2) preapproach,
 - (3) approach,
 - (4) presentation,
 - (5) over-coming objections,
 - (6) close, and
 - (7) follow-up.



Sales process



(Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 250;
Homburg 2011)

Personal selling skills during sales process

- Creating trust
- Impression management skills
- Ability to ask appropriate questions
- Listening skills
- Presentation skills
- Argumentation skills
- Negotiation skills



Opening

- Take contact
- Create trust
- Create good first impression and feeling
- Never sell anything



First impression

- Please close your eyes.
- When I ask you to open your eyes, please look at the picture for 30 seconds.
- What comes to your mind?



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Impression management

Impressions are affected by

- Appearance
- Gender
- Height
- Colour

- First sentences
- Gestures, facial expressions
- Enthusiasm and voice control
- Clothes, accessories, tatoos etc.



Need and problem identification

- Information part
 - Focus on customer's problems and needs
 - Write notes
- Discuss; ask, agree and answer
 - Types of questions
 - Strengthen trust and good feeling with the customer
 - Remember a background work!
- Listen



Types of questions

Type of question	Example
Open questions	How can I help you?
Closed questions	Do you want to try this?
Leading questions	What kind of model do you prefer, Lexus perhaps?
Follow-up and supplementary questions	Bensin, diesel, hybrid or electric car? ... How about gears, would you like to have automatic transmission?

An exercise on listening skills

- Take a pair. Choose which one of you is A and B.
- A = storyteller
- B = listener

- A: Please think what have you bought lately? Tell one minute about your purchasing experience to B!
- B: Your task is to listen very carefully. After one minute, you may repeat the story back to A.

How can you show that you are listening?

- Concentrate on the other party.
- Maintain eye-contact with the customer.
 - *Is this appropriate in Japan?*
- Comment on what the customer said.
 - *Oh yes, right, this is important to you...*
- Take into consideration the issues raised by the customer to create discussion.
- Show that you are listening to the customer by voice and gestures (hmm; nodding your head).

Presentation and demonstration

- Based on the information on a customer's needs
- Strengthen trust and good feeling with the customer
- Remember that customers are different
 - Visual elements
 - Logical structure, interesting examples
 - Something to do (demonstration)
- Practice before presentation



Presentation and demonstration skills

- Adapt your presentation style to a customer's needs. Avoid delivering “canned” presentations.
- Demonstrate only the products based on customer's needs and interests.
- Discuss with the customers and ask questions.
- Explain the benefits of the product from various viewpoints.
 - ...which means that...
 - ...which enables you to...

Argumentation skills

- **Logic**

- Sellers need reasoned arguments.
- Facts: research findings etc.
- Explaining causes and effects (consequences)
- Experiences

- **Emotion**

- Focus on customer's needs, wishes, values, and beliefs

- Try to predict customer's objections.

Argumentation skills

- Reference selling
 - Use of satisfied customers to convince the buyer of the effectiveness of the product.
- Demonstrations
 - Allow customers to test the product.
- Guarantees
 - Guarantees of product reliability, after-sales / support service and delivery can build confidence towards the salesperson's claims.
- Trial orders (if possible)

Dealing with objections

- Customer is interested to buy if she/he has objections!
- Listen and answer again and again, you need to solve all objections.
- Please do not interrupt.
- Be kind.
- Strengthen the feeling that you are on the same side with the customer.



Negotiation

- Price
 - Your limitations
 - Customer's limitations
- Timing
- Payment method
- Advice/support service
- Supplementary products and services
- Strengthen the customer satisfaction



Closing the sale

- Main goal is to take a moment!
 - Right timing, notice level of buyer's purchase intention
- Better presentation, dealing with objections, and negotiations = shorter closing!
- You have nothing before closing
 - Ask for an order
 - Make a summary and ask for an order

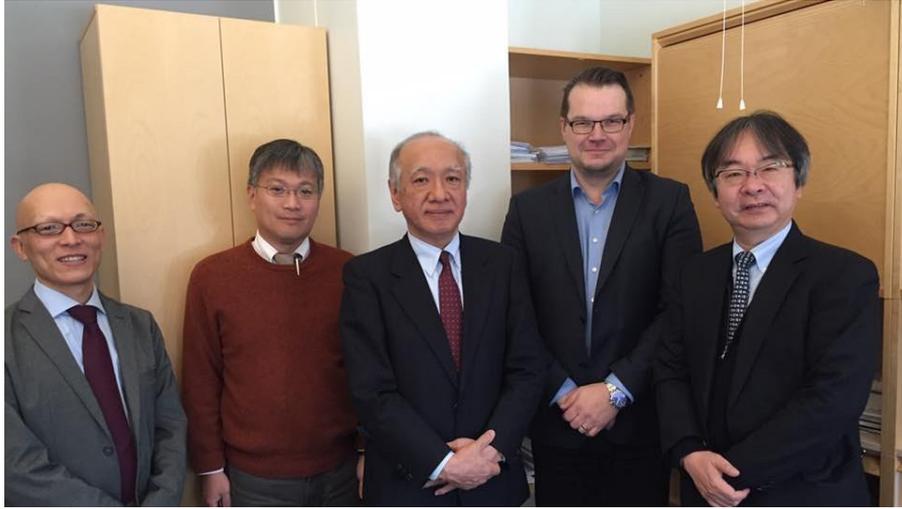


Follow-up

- Contacts with the customer after sales.
 - Ask feedback
 - Advice, education
 - Seasons greetings
- Take care of customer satisfaction (main goal)
 - Possibility to build long-term relationships.
 - Possibility to have more sales.



Thank you for inspiring collaboration!



Thank you for your attention!



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