COCKSURE
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It’s not as simple as
“charge what you’re
worth.”

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Let's all play nice.

Cup of tea?

Selling:

It's a love/horror kind of thing.
(and Sometimes the horror with the w.)

Love, for the obvious reasons (okay, *one* reason): Money.

And absolute, repugnant, paralyzing horror for the rest:

> Nauseousness, nervousness, neurosis. Heart beats. Palm sweats. Word stutters. (*Thank you for, uhhhh, meeting with me, uhhhhhhhhhhh.*) Listening to the jerk voices in your head play a Dirty Harry game of ping pong between, "You sound too salesy!" and "*Sellllllllllllllll them!*" (Said in your best 16th century battle voice as you draw a sword and duel to the DEATH.) And then, of course, the comfort of knowing that at least 94.25% of the time anything comes out of your mouth, you'll feel like you're making a total and complete incoherent ass out of yourself.

Oh, the delightful masochism of it all.

But…does it have to be that ugly?

Does it *have* to feel like we're going into battle with only one true survivor—the person who says no first? Do we *have* to feel guilty for asking for other people's money, asking for a lot of it, and then taking it away from them? (As we watch it populate our Paypal accounts and laugh devious laughs of glee.) Do we *have* to dread the sales process, fear the outcome, and constantly feel the push/pull of lovingly wanting more clients…and then feeling like their our worst and mortal enemy, put on planet earth purely to make us suffer?

And the answer is: Well, maybe.

Because only then can you appreciate *how to do it well.*

Because selling *is* easier said than done. So until you've done it; until you've sucked at it, until you've felt miserably bitter over it, until you've wanted to crawl into a thousand holes and pull eighteen ratty wool

blankets over your head and vow never to come out (unless maybe it's happy hour)…only *then* can you learn how to sell. Because a man whose never been on the battlefield can never know victory. But the one thing he still needs to learn?

Is that the most successful victories don't involve battlefields.

Because the best victories don't have any victims.

…*Only victors.*

Welcome to COCKSURE: Where victors prance, anxiety dies, selling lives and you don't have to be embarrassed anymore in front of your accountant.

(Unless it's Donald Trump's accountant.)

So.

Let me ask you something.

If you had to guess why selling yourself is so hard, why what would you say?

Would you say it's because you actually think what you're selling is a joke? Because there's no tangible ROI to point to? Because you aren't sure it's a good fit for them? Because you're actually a top secret agent scam artist here to suck their brains and their bank accounts?

Or, would you say because you feel intimidated? Scared? Slightly insecure? Maybe kind of amateur and worried you won't know the right thing to say, or they won't get it, or they won't like you, or they'll be mad about your prices, and they'll say something nasty, and you'll feel like a fool, and you'll be forced to face the truth about this reality you've made up in your head that you could actually do this and MAYBE YOU

CAN'T and MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT and MAYBE YOUR WORK IS PRICED TOO HIGH and MAYBE YOU WEREN'T CUT OUT FOR THIS.

All you wanted to do is take pictures. (Dammit.)
Or see people light up when they have that ah-ha moment.
Or get to do for a living what you do out of loving: Write gorgeous words.
Or tinker around on your Macbook with color, shape, layout, lines.

And everything was peaches and cold cuts until you realized that you can only do those things once you've done something else: Sold yourself. Asked for the business. Got the deal. *Got picked*.

And so the love/horror/whoring began. And turns out:

You hate it.

Which might be why you're reading this right now. Anybody who's ever tried those damn Rubik's Cubes knows *we don't like things we aren't good at*. And that's a bit of a tragedy. It's a tragedy because the less we like something, the less willing we are to do it.

And then you end up spiraling headfirst into a suicide sales waterfall, because the less you like selling, the less you'll do it, and the less you do it?

The more it hurts.

Specifically, your business. And specifically, you.

Not to be a beaming ray of sunshine here, but the money isn't even the worst part. The worst part is in your ever-decaying, mummifying self-confidence. The promises broken to yourself, and the agonizing feeling of inadequacy, incompetence, and PATHETIC PERSON in all caps. The D-bags known as disappointment and discouragement. And the sick feeling you get in the pit of your asshole when the money's running out and the bills are running up and you avoid even logging into your bank account because you don't want to have

to think about it because you're paralyzed and scared and desperate and vulnerable, which forces you to go into panic mode and run around picking your finger nails, working for peanuts, popping Xanax, biting heads off, and half-assing everything—including the very work you used to love.

That stuff kills.

And I don't want to see you go down that road. I only brought enough emergency vomit bags for that time in my life when I went down it myself. Fortunately, even though I have been there, I also had a skill set that many people don't: *I could sell myself.*

And selling myself was the only way I got free.

When you can sell yourself, you can do anything.

But of course, there's this sick, twisted law of selling.

That sick, twisted law is this: Most people are no good at selling because they're not confident in what they're doing. And yet, the #1 thing you need to sell yourself?

Is confidence.

Back to the question I asked you in the beginning: *If you had to guess why selling yourself is so hard, why what would you say?*

Most people hate selling because they feel inadequate when doing it—*not* because they actually think their stuff sucks, or because there's no real ROI, or because it isn't a good fit, or because you're actually a top secret agent scam artist here to suck their brains and their bank accounts. (As far as we know.)

And when you feel inadequate, you look inadequate.

People, including the person you're trying to sell to, can smell fear a mile away—and fear is a major turn off.

Why? Aren't I allowed to be vulnerable? What's so wrong with being a little nervous?

Well, let's talk this out. What's a sale, anyway?

A sale is somebody giving you money to be an expert in an area they aren't.

So let's rephrase this: Who want to pay for an expert who's scared? Nervous? Anxious? Would you pay a heart surgeon who seemed a little unsure? Would you buy a house from people who seemed skeptical about the neighborhood?

The thing is, even if you're not selling heart surgery; even if you're "just" selling photography, or life coaching, or writing, or design, or something else as equally "nice to have," your prospect is still coming to you <u>to be an expert in that.</u>

And here's why that matters: Confidence breeds confidence.

Until a prospect feels confident in your expertise, they simply cannot *buy* your expertise.

Because it doesn't exist in their minds yet.

And that is why a projected sense of confidence is the #1 ingredient for selling—

—even when you don't *feel* confident.

…Yet.

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GET COCKSURE

Confidence boils down to two things:

1. Belief in yourself.

2. Being able to accurately predict what's going to happen next.

Which one of these do you think you have more control over?

The answer may surprise you.

The answer is: *Being able to accurately predict what's going to happen next.*

No one, of course, can predict the future. But, you *can* learn how to predict what will happen within your sphere of influence, when you learn how to CONTROL your sphere of influence.

That's the #1 reason people get anxiety - in life, and in selling. Because of *uncertainty*. Lack of control. And not knowing makes you feel out of control. And that's why sales is scary, too. You might not have enough

experience to know what to expect, from prospects OR yourself—how they'll respond, how you'll respond, if you perform well under pressure, or if you won't. And that IS scary. But if you can learn to minimize the unknown by maximizing your control, then you can gain confidence. And that's what we're after. Confidence is the foundation of everything.

When you have the knowledge and the tools to be able to bend & maneuver & guide a conversation at your will, you have control over the conversation. And being in control automatically makes you feel more confident. And that turns into a cycle—more confidence in yourself feeds your sense of control, and a heightened sense of control breeds more confidence.

Control = confidence.
Confidence = control.
Both of these things = a prospect's level of confidence in YOU

And this this is what COCKSURE is all about—getting confidence, and getting control, so you can:

-Look *forward* to sales conversations
-Let your *brilliance* take the center stage—not your nerves
-Use that power to make *your prospect* feel confident & at ease
-Capitalize on that confidence & at ease, allowing your prospect to focus more on *what you're saying*, and less on how you're saying it (a nervous, flustered person is a distraction that'll kill sales)
-Say the things that they *need* to hear in order to buy from you (important)

-And ultimately, lead you to close more deals, more consistently, at a higher closing rate (in laymen's terms, you'll get more clients, more often, and be able to charge more money)

So let's talk about you for a minute.

What do you have the most trouble with in sales, anyway?

Based on feedback from real people in real sales conversations, just like yourself, here are the biggest sales challenges that come up for EVERYBODY:

- You aren't sure what to say / how to say it
- Prospects don't seem to feel any rush to sign up (*would-be-nice* versus *must-have* syndrome that often leads to them forgetting about you completely)
- Prospects think your price is too high
- They want to "think about it" and get back to you

- Not enough prospect inquiries in the first place
- Prospects putting you through what feels like a criminal interrogation to assess your credentials, bark at you to see testimonials/portfolios
- Radio silence after sending proposal
- Not sounding like yourself
- Feeling pushy and salesy
- Selling to someone who isn't really the person in charge (they need 'approval' and often use that as an excuse)
- Prospect balks at your rates
- Unsure how to transition the conversation from nice-nice to "buy now, already"
- Getting inquiries but not hearing back after sending info
- Rabbit in headlights / cold sweat

- Prospects price shops you like wham, bam, thank you ma'am
- Feeling generally uneasy about the whole "asking for money" thing

I'm going to make two columns, and I'm going to assign each problem to either the left side or the right side.

Prospects think your price is too high	You aren't sure what to say / how to say it
Not enough prospect inquiries	Prospects don't have any rush to sign up
Prospect putting you through criminal interrogation / barking for portfolio and testimonials	They want to "think about it" and get back to you
You're selling to the wrong person (someone who "needs approval")	Radio silence after sending the proposal
Prospect balks at your rates	Not sounding like yourself
Prospects price shops you like wham, bam thank you ma'am	Feeling pushy and salesy
	Unsure how to transition the conversation from *nice-nice* to *buy now*
	Getting inquiries but not hearing back after sending info
	Rabbit in headlights / cold sweats
	Feeling generally uneasy about the whole thing

My question to you now is: *What's the difference between the left side and the right side?*

Go ahead, take a look.

Chances are, you have challenges with some on either side. But, what's the difference between the left hand column and the right hand column? *Is* there a difference?

In order to answer that, I'll ask you to first consider something else. Say you need a business lawyer. You find one and book a 60 minute consult. The question is: *Would you expect him to give you a 60 minute consult for free?*

WHY OR WHY NOT?

If you've lived on earth for more than 2 days, you know that the answer to this question is going to be *no.* You would <u>not</u> expect him to consult with you pro bono, at no cost.

WHY OR WHY NOT?

The reason you wouldn't is simple: Because we've been taught to view their time as valuable and expensive. The schema, or story, that we have in our minds about lawyers is that they're educated, successful *and they cost a lot of money.* As a result, you tend to accept that as truth. And so, when you call an attorney's office, the first thing you say when you call isn't going to be, "Are you currently offering any discounts?" It isn't appropriate, nor is it expected.

Now, why is that? Do lawyers really deserve more money than everyone else? Are they inherently smarter, more useful, or more valuable? Are they truly working harder than a 7th grade teacher in the inner city?

The answers to those questions are irrelevant, because the real reason they get paid at the level they do has nothing to do with that. The reason they get paid at that level—without the kind of pushback that you're used to—is because *they're expected to*. And the reason they're expected to?

Is because culture told us that story.

It's the culturally-constructed story we have in our heads about lawyers that sets our expectations.

Now let's compare and contrast that story with that of photography, or life coaching, or design, or writing. What story has culture told us about *those* things? Perhaps:

Creative.	Pleasurable.
Self indulgent.	Art.
Impractical.	Frivolous.
Pretty.	Whimsical.
Privileged.	Fanciful.
Subjective.	Unsubstantial.

Most of these words point to something that isn't necessary, but something that's viewed more as a luxury, doesn't it? You've likely felt this when you've had prospects tell you that they don't have the money right now, but maybe later. They feel no sense of urgency, because the story they're telling themselves about hiring a photographer, a life coach, a writer, a web designer is a story that says: *"I'm only allowed to buy this when I have plenty of disposable income and I have the rest of my responsibilities taken care of because this feels too self-indulgent and the truth is I don't really need it."*

So now what happens?

Well first of all, getting prospects to inquire becomes more difficult, but what else?

The people who *do* come to you? The ones who are interested and have the money, but not yet sold? **They have the same story in their heads.** And that story tells them this:

> *Art is subjective and therefore rates are negotiable, that people who work in these fields are all likely freelancers, and freelancers, in general, are desperate for money - and not in a position to be commanding high rates.*

And so, because of that culturally constructed story, they also have certain expectations about you, too: About the way you'll work, the kind of money you'll charge, and the assumption that everything is negotiable. *'You're a freelancer, after all.'*

So you get the guy who tries to talk you down. You get the ones who tell you your prices are too high. You get the ones who don't respect your schedule, and assume initial consultations should be free of charge. Because, after all, *'you should be grateful for the business.'* Or, so goes the story in their head, anyway.

And selling just got a lot harder. Now it really does feel like a duel, doesn't it?

Here's why: Because the story that people know about you comes with a different set of expectations than the story they know about a lawyer.

So what are you suppose to do?

Run around changing culture? Changing history? Starting protests? Settling for lower prices and slave-like work schedules?

No, because you can't control those things. Nor would that be effective.

What you can do, however, is with regards to the only thing you *can* control.

Your own sphere of influence.

You can control your own sphere of influence: Your website. Your language. Your process. Your activities. Your ideas. And the way you show up in the world.

And *that's* your opportunity to change the story. To set new expectations. To build authority. To shape perceptions.

Instead of calling yourself a freelancer, you use language that feels more authoritative and demonstrates you're a legitimate business owner. Instead of looking like a typical, starving freelancer, you take great care that your website projects the same amount of authority as someone charging what you want to charge. Instead of telling people what you're worth, you *show* them what you're worth through a blog, through case studies, through idea sharing.

And together, each piece comes together to tell a new story about who you are, and more importantly, who your ideal client is. And then collectively, this story serves to shape your prospect's expectations in just the right way you want them, and help you free yourself from the assumption that you're "just another life coach," or "just another website designer" who's desperate for business.

Do you know what all of this is called?

I'll give you a hint. It starts with an 'M' and ends with an "keting."

Marketing.

Believe it or not, modern day marketing is more about telling the right story than it is about getting your story "out there." Because when you learn how to tell the right story about your work and the people it affects, by default it will get shared. Because humans simply can't resist when they've finally found *the one that gets it.*

So decide: What do you want prospects to think about you & your work? What perceptions do you want them to have about you? How do you hope they'll respond when you tell them a price point? What actions would you love them to take? What do you want them to FEEL?

And then use that to figure out how you can reverse engineer those outcomes into the story you tell about yourself. And, of course, by 'story' I mean the collective story. Every little piece comes together to tell this collective story. The name of your business. The tagline you choose. The photograph on the homepage. The very first headline. The way you reach out to prospects. What you send them when they inquire. How you send it.

Every single piece comes together to tell your story, and set the right expectations—or the wrong expectations.

You need to set the right ones.

And so we come full circle.

Let's revisit the initial question: *What's the difference between the left hand column and the right hand column?*

Prospects think your price is too high	You aren't sure what to say / how to say it
Not enough prospect inquiries	Prospects don't have any rush to sign up
Prospect putting you through criminal interrogation / barking for portfolio and testimonials	They want to "think about it" and get back to you
You're selling to the wrong person (someone who "needs approval")	Radio silence after sending the proposal
Prospect balks at your rates	Not sounding like yourself
Prospects price shops you like wham, bam thank you ma'am	Feeling pushy and salesy
	Unsure how to transition the conversation from *nice-nice* to *buy now*
	Getting inquiries but not hearing back after sending info
	Rabbit in headlights / cold sweats
	Feeling generally uneasy about the whole thing

That's right. You guessed it.

The challenges on the left hand column are MARKETING PROBLEMS.

The challenges on the right hand column are SALES PROBLEMS.

If you don't have enough people contacting you. If they're contacting you and then shocked at your pricing. If they're contacting you and then decide it's 'not a good fit' (or vice versa), this is a breakdown of your MARKETING process. *Not* your sales process. Marketing is awareness, yes, but when you do it right, it's

about so much more than that. Marketing is communicating what you stand for, and who should care. Marketing is communicating your value through the story you're telling, through every single aspect of your business. *Good* marketing is getting people excited to pay to be a part of that story. And *great* marketing is getting someone on board with that story…before they even step foot into your inbox.

If you're having problems here, then you need to find ways to *communicate* your collective story in new and interesting ways. If someone finds out about you and inquires, but then seems shocked by your pricing and thinks you're too expensive, what you have is a simple breakdown in communication. That's all it is. A breakdown in communication.

Again, that doesn't necessarily mean verbal communication, or a story in the form of an actual story on your website. It might be visual communication. The quality of your website might not be communicating your value well enough—and your price points then feel like they're contrary to expectation; in another words, they're contrary to the story you're telling. Or it might be your word choices. Your words might not be representing your value. Or maybe the quality of your work isn't communicating your value effectively—and then that turns not only into a marketing problem, but a business model problem.

You have to know where the sale is breaking down in order to know how to fix it.

I wanted to include some notes on this because I know that we all struggle with a little bit from both columns; but I also wanted to help you clarify where you need to look to fix the problems you're struggling with most. If no one is contacting you at all, it isn't because you aren't doing a good enough job selling them—it's because you aren't doing a good enough job marketing to them. Telling them the right story. And making them want to be a part of your story.

I could, of course, design a course on marketing and storytelling alone that would take us an entire year to get through—that's how expansive that topic is—but for the meantime, I'll leave you with this:

> Every single decision you make *says* something to the world. There are no actions that carry a neutral statement. Therefore, make sure the decisions you're making, and the actions you're taking, are collectively all lining up to tell the right cohesive story—the one that will have the people who need to hear it? Listening with their ears—and pocket books—wide open. The only thing left to do?
>
> *Is sell.*

Selling Yourself.

(Not your actual physical body, okay? I can't be liable for these kinds of things, you guys.)

Let's talk about *the right column*. This is where marketing passes off the baton, and the challenge becomes a sales challenge.

If you're communicating your value correctly and getting some inquiries, but then the person says they'll get back to you—and you hear radio silence—**this is a sales problem.**

If they're excited when you talk to them, but then decide to go with someone else—**this is a sales problem.**

If you get on the phone and hear hesitation—**this is a sales problem.**

If they know your pricing already and then try to talk you down—**this is a sales problem.**

If they're waffling to commit—**this is a sales problem.**

If they're interested, but ultimately decide it isn't something they "need right now,"—**this is a sales problem.**

If you don't know how to transition the conversation from nice-nice into "buy now,"—**this is a sales problem.**

You've likely spent a lot of time, money and energy doing things like getting on social media, building a website, writing blog posts, and doing things to communicate & market yourself. So it's a sin, so to speak, when you've spent that time, money and energy to get somebody on your doorstep—and then accidentally lose them. Because you aren't just losing a prospective client; you're losing all of the time and money and energy that went into getting that one person to show up in the first place. You don't want to lose sales you should have had.

So looking at just right hand column, if you had to guess, what are some of the reasons you think these issues are occurring?

You aren't sure what to say / how to say it
Prospects don't have any rush to sign up
They want to "think about it" and get back to you
Radio silence after sending the proposal
Not sounding like yourself
Feeling pushy and salesy
Unsure how to transition the conversation from *nice-nice* to *buy now*
Getting inquiries but not hearing back after sending info
Rabbit in headlights / cold sweats
Feeling generally uneasy about the whole thing

Let's brainstorm some likely reasons:

- Prospect doesn't feel enough of a connection to commit right then
- Prospect doesn't feel enough of a need to commit right then
- Prospect doesn't feel the spark
- Prospect isn't convinced you're "the one"
- Prospect has no way to determine if you're "the one" because everyone they've talked to seems the same
- You aren't versed in selling (precisely why you're here)

Something I want to point out?

None of these reasons are: *"Because it's too much money."*

If they're reaching out to you in the first place, they're expecting it to cost money. If you've got the prices on your website, they know how much money that costs. And if you're telling the right story with your presence, then they believe you that you're worth that much.

What does this tell you?

If you're getting inquiries and losing them, it isn't about your service. It isn't about your pricing. It isn't about your process.

It's about you. How you run the show. How you drive the conversation. How you present your pitch. How you position your services. How you *talk* to somebody. What you say to them. How you say it. When you say it. Why you say it. What you *don't* say.

That sounds harsh, but it's not. It's always about us. And that's why we're here—to talk about ways we can improve our sales process.

Selling *is an active verb,* and that means it requires a subject performing the action. And that subject is YOU.

Sales don't just happen out of thin air. They don't suddenly spring up on your chin. They aren't compelled by the laws of wishful thinking. And they certainly aren't created the same way babies are. (To date.)

Sales are made.

And the language implies there must be *a maker.* And that maker is you.

You might feel a lot of pressure with that statement. You might feel even more nervous thinking that the success of your business depends on you—not just your work. But this isn't something to feel nervous about—this is something to get excited about. This gives you more control than ever. This knowledge puts you in the driver's seat.

Because your stuff will not sell itself.

That's a myth. And it's a dangerous myth. "If you build it, they will come" is one of the most dangerous lines out there. It encourages complacency. Hoping. Waiting. And wishing. The reason it's a myth is for two reasons:

- Your client is buying your services almost sight unseen—especially if you're a coach, mentor or consultant. They aren't buying your 'stuff.' They're buying YOU. So YOU need to show up.

- When you're competing in a market full of lookalikes and people offering relatively the same services as you, clients can rarely tell the difference, because they aren't at the same technical level as you. They don't know if you're using a special lens on your camera, or what it means when you say 'photojournalistic.' And if they don't perceive something to be a benefit, IT ISN'T. So while you might be able to impress your peers with big, fancy talk about your split tests (copywriters) and your clean lines (designers), to the client who's thinking about hiring you, that goes over their head. Which means one thing: They can't use those things to compare you. The only thing they have to compare by? *Is you.*

So it follows that the very first thing we need to learn is: What's *my* role in the sales process? What are the expectations a client has of ME when having a sales conversation? How do *I* need to show up for them?

Ever go to Target?

Let's pretend you're shopping at Target. You see a nifty stick of Arm & Hammer deodorant—with baking soda!—but the price is missing from the shelf. Let's say I'm the manager of Target (I look horrible in red, by the way), and I happen to walk by.

> You: *"Hey red smurf manager Ambirge, do you know how much this costs? It seems to be missing a price tag."*
>
> Me: *"Nice day, isn't it? Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me. Let me see, I believe we typically charge $4.00 for that particular stick of deodorant.* (Pause. Awkward silence.) *But, well, with the economy and all, I know your budget might be tight, so I'm willing to be flexible if that helps.* (Pause. Awkward silence.) *I'd be happy to offer it to you at a discounted rate between $2.00 and $3.50, depending on how often you think you'll need to buy more. Does that sound okay with you?"*

Are you laughing? Grimacing? Looking at that paragraph in horror?

Good. Because while that obviously doesn't happen in a place like Target, **this is what most people sound like when they pitch their services.**

> *"The weather outside is lovely, isn't it? Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I typically charge about $2,500 for a logo.* (Pause. Awkward silence.) *That said, I know with the economy and all, money might be tight, so I'm willing to be flexible if that helps. I'm happy to offer my services for a discounted rate of $1,800 for this project. Does that sound okay?"*

So what's wrong with that picture?

Let's analyze the language there.

It starts off with nervous small talk. It positions the service provider as the submissive party. It uses vague words like "typically" and "about" that take away from your power and conviction. They automatically begin grasping at straws and offering discounts before the prospect has even had a chance to say no (likely because they're so scared of rejection that it's default to just keep nervously talking…until you've talked YOURSELF into giving them a discount). If you consider somebody in demand charging $1,000 an hour for their time, they don't say things like, "I'm willing to be flexible," because people in demand do not need to be flexible. By doing so out of the gate, you're already communicating desperation. (Remember: That's a turn off.) And then they end by giving a discount and severely reducing their value both in their own eyes and in the eyes

of the prospect listening to them stumble through this. And ultimately, the worst, *is that they ask the prospect permission to charge that.*

It's impossible to sell to others if you do not sound sold on yourself.

In this case, the prospect can smell the amateur. And hearing the uncertainty makes the prospect feel uncertain. Furthermore, a prospect's going to start questioning in his mind whether or not the service provider is really any good because it sounds like he needs the business. And ultimately, the prospect starts wondering if hiring you would be a mistake. And then, lo and behold, the prospect decides to go with the default rejection-that-doesn't-sound-like-a-rejection:

"Let me think about it and get back to you."

You are the experience they're buying.

A customer isn't buying your package—they're buying *you*. If you're a photographer and you think they're buying your pictures, you're wrong. They're buying the experience of having someone there who they felt a connection with; someone they trust, who they think they're going to feel comfortable around, who they'd like to remember as being a part of their day.

This is the #1 way that you compete in a saturated market full of people doing the same exact thing as you. You *don't* sell the same exact thing. You sell you.

Nobody can ever replicate that. Think about the experience of buying that same stick of deodorant at Target versus Wal-Mart. Target's had success, not because they offer an entirely different selection of products than Wal-Mart; they've had success because the experience of buying those same products at Wal-Mart *feels better.*

Alright, take out a piece of paper.

Listen to **this sales pitch**. I want you to listen CAREFULLY. As you listen, I want you to jot down anything that causes you to lose confidence in this person. Whether it's a phrase they used, the way they said something, or something else, where does this sales pitch fall flat, and why?

What did you think? While there's nothing inherently wrong with his pitch (in fact, he sounds like most of us would!), there are several things that cause him to lose his power here. For example:

Felt unrehearsed
Disjointed
Uncertainty
Interruptions
Long-winded
No main message - feels scattered
Rambly
None if it feels important/must-have

Cliché language
Unspecific - "huge discounts" "cool stuff"
Inflated value - not believable
Lacking conviction/authority - "I tried to add it all up."
Sense his nervousness.
Bonuses feel irrelevant Feels forced

So consider this for a moment:

Is it possible that lack of confidence makes you sound MORE salesy than less?

Think about that for a minute. Most of us are worried about sounding overconfident, overly arrogant, overly salesy. So we shy away from taking control and stepping into the sales role. Rather, we hope the person on the other side of the table will buy from us because they see we're not out to scam them. We hope that if we err to the side of less salesy, it'll be noticed and appreciated, and we'll be rewarded for it. However:

Sales people are good at selling stuff because they know how to sell.
Not necessarily because they're good people.

Does this mean you need to be a jerk? No. Absolutely not.
Does this mean you need to be unethical? No. Absolutely not. (In fact, please don't be. Ever.)

BUT -

It *does* mean that, while the customer doesn't want to *feel* sold to, they still need to be sold. And that's what we're going to talk about for the remainder of the workshop - how to do this tactfully and with integrity.

Because it is your duty to this person sitting on the other side of the table from you NOT TO WASTE THEIR TIME. It is your duty to run the sales conversation like a pro, and help them make the right decision.

And oftentimes, the hardest part about it is just wrapping your head around this perspective -

Sales is not about taking.
Sales is about giving.

When you sell someone your time, your experience, your ideas, your creativity, your hard work, your focus, your brilliance, your companionship, your devotion to their well-being, you are not taking from them. You are giving them a HUGE gift.

It might not feel like a huge gift, because you're asking for money in return, but guess what? You can't ask for your time in return, so it is a gift. You can't ask to work with other clients at the same time, because there's opportunity cost involved, so it is a gift. *Time* is the most valuable commodity of all.

TRY THIS

Anytime you're feeling guilty about selling your services, I want you to picture yourself as the most in-demand person in your industry. Would that person be apologizing for taking someone's money? And furthermore, would the person giving the money feel resentful…or blessed? Grateful? Excited?

This is the mentality that you need to paper clip to your brain.

Selling is a form of service. You just showing up to the table is enough. You do not need to discount, or apologize, or feel guilty, or back pedal. You. Are. Enough.

If you're still lacking confidence, I encourage you to consider this: Whether you're new at this, or you're a seasoned industry vet, there are many things you simply cannot know. You can't know if a particular client is going to like you. You can't know if you'll have personal chemistry together. You can't know if they're going to love the work you do for them until you do it. So you can put all of those worries out of your mind right now.

So what *do* you know?

You can only know that you are doing your absolute best. That's the only thing you can ever be sure of, ever.

When you offer up yourself for service, and truly do everything you can to make a client have a beautiful, successful experience, internal confidence is born.

On the other hand, when you're half-assing it, you know you're half-assing it—and guilt is born.

There's too much pressure these days to have four hour work weeks and 'work smart,' that people have started prioritizing not working over the actual work they *do* do. That seems to be the focus, doesn't it? How little time you managed to spend in your inbox, or how you streamlined your processes so you don't have to talk to anyone on the phone anymore. But this is where guilt sets in, because you're acting more in service to you than your client. **And guilt erodes confidence like quicksand.**

Since confidence is the #1 ingredient in sales, then it follows that the #1 thing you need to be doing to maintain confidence in yourself?

…Is honest work.

2

GET CONTROL

Bachata.

Ever heard of it?

It's a Latin dance, and one of my favorites of all time.

So to get started:

Watch this bachata video very, very, very carefully, and decide one thing when you're watching it: **Who plays the most important role in this dance? Him or her?**

Did you watch it? How 'bout those legs, eh?

So, who did you think? Who played the more important role: Him, or her?

Most people, when prompted with that question, end up choosing the female. She's clearly the star of the show, and the male seems to just be along for the ride.

But a closer inspection into Latin dance and you'll find out that the male has just an important role: That of making her look like the star.

How does he make her look like the star? By *leading.* The man leads the woman gracefully and with authority. It is not the woman's job to lead. And, in fact, if she were to try and take over the lead, she'll ruin the dance. Rather, *it's her job to follow*. But here's what's important to note: **Even though she isn't leading, that doesn't mean she isn't the star.**

Now, which one of these roles do you suppose is yours when you're having a sales conversation?

Are you the female? Or are you the male?
Are you the star? Or are you guiding the star?

Right here is precisely where a lot of sales conversations go wrong: Because the person doing the selling assumes they're the star.

Bzzzzt. You aren't. :)

Rather, in any sales conversation, you are, by the power invested in me, *Ataca*, the male from the video you just watched, because it is your job to gracefully and authoritatively lead your prospect exactly where you want them to go.

Your prospect follows your lead. And even when they accidentally step out of line or try to take control of the conversation, it's your job to gracefully guide them back to center. It is your JOB to take back control. Doing so is not overbearing. It's not offensive. It's not pushy. It's expected, and it's necessary. Because if you don't, the prospect will get lost in the sales conversation if you do not lead her. And just like an entire dance would fall apart, the entire sale falls apart. Sales conversations *need structure*, and they need you to lead them, just like this bachata dance. In fact, your prospect IS DEPENDING ON YOU to lead them.

And when you do that leading, it isn't just about directing a conversation the way you want it to go—which we're going to talk about shortly—it's about directing *the entire experience*. Standing behind your pricing. Understanding that your prospect is RELYING ON YOU TO CUE THEM HOW TO ACT.

Back to the Arm & Hammer example: Target is the one and only entity responsible for how much they charge for a stick of deodorant. They charge more than Wal Mart charges for the same exact stick of deodorant, yet plenty of people buy deodorant from Target every day.

The customer is never in charge of pricing Target's inventory. Nor are they qualified to do so. If you were to ask customers to tell you what they think the stick of deodorant should cost, you're not only confusing the roles—you're forcing them to select an uneducated price point based on the only reference point they have: *How much it costs at Wal Mart.* NOT what Target's really competing on: The experience of shopping there.

Similarly, your prospect should not be in charge of your pricing.

You're the only person qualified to judge how much your time is worth, and the impact that time investment can have. By putting the ball in your prospects court and saying things like, "Well, what kind of a budget did you have in mind?" you might think you're being nice, or accommodating, but what you're really doing is *royally* screwing your prospect. It is not their job to figure out and analyze what your services—something they are not an expert in—should cost, and on what terms. Not only is it inappropriate - it's uncomfortable. How should they know? Now, you've put them in the position of having to insult you if they go too low, while risking paying more if they go too high. Don't pass the discomfort buck onto your client.

And this highlights a really important truth:

Controlling the conversation does not make you controlling.

It's expected of you. Your clients are paying you to be the expert. They're paying you to be led. Directed. Helped. Told what to do—and told what it's worth. This leadership needs to show its face right from the beginning.

We've talked about why confidence is so important to the sales conversation, but now we're going to move on and talk about the second most important piece: Getting control over the conversation.

What's the difference between these two introductions?

Phone Call #1

"Hi, Sara, it's Ashley Ambirge! From House of Moxie? Thanks for agreeing to get on the phone today! How are you? Oh, you're in San Diego? That's so nice, I've never been to San Diego but I've heard great things My brother has a friend there. Yeah, you know. One of these days I'll make it out there. [Keeps rambling until client brings up business.]

Phone Call #2

"Sara, hi, it's Ashley Ambirge. Sara, I'm really glad we have a chance to talk—I did some preliminary research prior to our call, and I love what you're up to. I just have to know: What was the straw that broke the camel's back and convinced you to hire a copywriter?"

The biggest difference is that in conversation number one, *there's no one leading it*. You're not leading the conversation; you're waiting for it to unfold organically. And that's a no-no. Why? Because remember: Without a leader, the sales conversation falls apart. Just like the bachata dance does.

What's different about conversation number two? Two very important things:

1. I take control over the conversation immediately. I make it clear that I'm the one driving this conversation, and I do so with confidence.

2. I guide the conversation in the exact direction I want it, which is prompting the prospect to talk about *why she needs me.* Do you know why that's what I want her telling me about? Because by getting her to tell me why she needs me, she, in part, sells herself. Then, it's just a matter of positioning myself in the right way to align with those needs.

These are the two laws of starting any sales conversation: Take control out of the gate, and guide the conversation in a way that will get the prospect telling you exactly what you need to know in order to align yourself with their needs. Because only then will you be able to become "the perfect fit." Anything else, and you're going to be left with no other option than blabbering about every single service you offer and how much it costs and what it includes. That's not selling. That's spraying.

Some other great phrases for taking control right out of the gate:

"Hi, _____. I'm so glad we could find the time to talk. Why don't we start by you just telling me: Why are we having this conversation today?"

"It's great to talk to you, _____. Tell me: How can we help one another?"

"_____, so great to hear from you. Please, I'd love to hear: What's rolling around in your head over there? Why do we need a new redesign?"

By the way, is there anything in particular you notice about these?

I'll give you a hint: It has to do with one little word.

And that little word is?

WE.

> "Hi, _____. I'm so glad **we** could find the time to talk. Why don't we start by you just telling me: Why are **we** having this conversation today?"
>
> "It's great to talk to you, _____. Tell me: How can **we** help one another?"
>
> "_____, so great to hear from you. Please, I'd love to hear: What's rolling around in your head over there? Why do **we** need a new redesign?"

This one little word has much more power than you ever knew. In fact, it was one of my all-time greatest sales tools—and still is.

Why?

Because when people hire you, they're looking for *relief.* They're looking for someone to HELP them. They're looking for a sense of trust, of security. And they're looking for a sense of companionship so they don't have to figure it out all by themselves.

By speaking in terms of "we," you automatically communicate that you guys are already a team. Believe it or not, there's a big psychological difference between saying, "So tell me, why do you need a new redesign?" and "So tell me, why do *we* need a new redesign?"

So once you take control, the idea isn't just to get them talking; it's to get them talking about the reasons why they need someone like you. The reason for that, again, is so you can actively listen and then, the next time it's your turn to talk, you can cater the discussion toward what they're interested in hearing. And the reason for this is simple:

You can't sell somebody something
if you don't know what they want to buy.

This is different from *what you think* they should buy, and *why you think* they should buy.

And this is why you need to steer the prospect into telling you what matters to them most: Because selling requires you to be able to MAKE SOMEBODY FEEL LIKE THEY MATTER.

Conversations before conversions.

This comes naturally in the real world—you don't ask somebody to hop into bed before you know them. (Most of the time.) But the minute we know we're having "a sales conversation," our brains do this funky thing where they forget all human etiquette and just start blurting out a whole bunch of things we think we're 'suppose' to say:

"Thank you for meeting with me today!"
"I offer a wide range of solutions to fit any budget!"
"Packages range from 5 dollars to $500,000!"
"Customizable based on your needs!"
"We provide excellent service!"
"I look forward to hearing from you!"
"Thank you for your time!"

Raise your hand if you're guilty of doing the sales pitch vomit of death? Blah, blah, blah, talking to fill the silence, talking to fill the silence, talking because I'm nervous, talking because maybe if I keep talking they won't have any idea I have no idea what I'm doing, blah, blah, blah.

Too often, we rush through the sales process because the whole thing makes us uncomfortable, because we're nervous about being judged on our sales skills instead of our real talents, because we have no idea how to "do it" right, and because we're all way too nice when it comes to taking other people's money.

We need to take control.

After we've taken that control, at that point we've only got one duty:

Listen to them, and figure out what the one thing is that they're hoping for.

They might not come out and say it. You might have to read in between the lines. But your next job in the sales conversation is to actively listen for the one thing they're hoping for, and then mentally calculate how you can ALIGN YOURSELF.

I get a lot of questions like, "Well what do I do if I sell a bunch of different packages and things and I'm not sure which one to pitch?"

This question becomes irrelevant when you're actually listening to the person you're selling to.

Because selling is actually HELPING in disguise.

But you can't help somebody who you aren't listening to.

Let's imagine you're sick. Not *that* kind of sick, but physically sick. So you pull it together, throw on some sweats, and somehow force yourself down to your doctor's office.

You walk in, and this is what the doctor says to you:

Hi! Great to see you! Well, judging by the fact that you're here, something must be wrong. Let me guess. I bet it's laryngitis. Or maybe a kidney stone. Or—wait—how about this one? Herpes. It's not herpes, is it? You know anyone can get that these days. You really should be more careful. Here, let's do this: Let me write you a prescription for everything I just mentioned—and I'll even throw in some lupus meds to boot. Mmmkayyy? You know you can come to me for ANYTHING ANYTIME.

Ridiculous, right?

The doctor needs to listen to the patient in order to make a proper diagnosis.

Just like *you* need to listen to your prospect in order to figure out what they need. And then your next goal is to use language to position yourself as just that: **What they needed…all along.**

The Art of the Angle

(Sort of like when you insist on tilting your head to the left in every single picture ever because IT'S OBVIOUSLY YOUR GOOD SIDE.)

You do that, right? The good old head tilt? I know I do that. Admittedly I'm not the most photogenic person in the world so I have good reason, but I have a feeling I'm not alone here. We're all a bunch of head-tilting, Facebook posting, Instagramming ANGLERS. <—Somebody call up Merriam-Webster. We've got ourselves a new definition for 'angler.'

Why do we do that, anyway? You know darn well why we do that: Because we want our exes to regret every single minute of the rest of their lives when they see the picture on Facebook, that's why!

Kidding. I think.

But, yes. We want to look gorgeous, and we want to show off our best side.

And when you're in a sales conversation, you need to do the same thing: Angle your approach to show off your best side. Or, perhaps more appropriately stated: **Your most relevant side.**

Why?

Because this sales conversation is not about you. This sales conversation is always, always, always double underlined and wearing a giant foam finger…about the prospect. About the person who's money we're talking about here. And you need to keep the prospects' interests at the center of everything you say. Because only then will they (and can they) ever feel any kind of connection with you.

We connect with the people who are interested in us;
not the people who talk out of their hoo ha.

It's a law of human nature. And that's why, when you go into a sales conversation spouting off everything about your product, your service, your process, your you, you, you, you lose 'em. "Let me think about it and get back to you." THE DREADED BRUSH OFF.

So for example, let's say you're a wedding photographer, and you're having a meeting with a prospect for the first time. There are five other wedding photographers this bride is interviewing, and so you're already nervous because you know that everything's riding on this one meeting. Here's how I would run this conversation if I were actually trying to connect with her:

You: Jenna, it's a pleasure. Glad we could find the time to get together. I'm going to ask you the question I ask all of my clients on our first "date". Are you ready? (Pause.) *What would your absolute worst nightmare wedding photographs look like, Jenna?*

Jenna: (Laughs.) My worst nightmare wedding photographs, huh? Jeez, hard question! I guess I would have to say stuffy and all formal and posed. I hate those pictures, which is half of the reason I called you—it seems like you do a good job capturing spontaneous moments in fun, creative ways. I hate when I see the same old engagement photos 30,000 times over again with the couples making hearts with their fingers and stuff like that. Over it.

You: Ick! Let's talk about that. You mentioned in your email that you wanted to do a fun photo shoot at the old stone quarry overlooking all of the city—such an original idea! I was just thinking: What if we [insert idea that showcases your talents and speaks to her desire for spontaneous, fun & creative?] Would something like that sound like something you'd dig, or would you hate it?

Jenna: Oh gosh, that would be great! I would actually love that—my friends know me for being the clown of the group. That's why we wanted to do the session in a quarry—we're actually having the wedding itself in this ancient castle! What can I say —I never did like following the crowd.

You: Get out—an ancient castle? We don't even know each other yet but I can somehow already tell that's the perfect venue! The lighting in the castle should be really neat for photos—do you think there'll be candles?

Do you feel the difference between this conversation, and the typical sales conversation that sounds something like:

You: Hi, Jenna! Thanks for taking the time to speak with me today.

Jenna: No problem! Thanks for taking the time to speak with *me!*

You: Of course.

(Awkward silence.)

You: So, when's the big day?

Jenna: May 24th, 2089.

You: Let me see—yup—looks like I have that date available! Nice!

Jenna: Oh, good!

You: Yeah, so, did you have any questions about my packages? About how many hours of coverage were you looking for?

Jenna: Well, you know, to be honest I really don't know. We're on a budget…

BZZZT. Buzz kill.

Not only is she having similarly generic & apathetic conversations with every other photographer she's talking to, but the photographer in this instance is making her do all the work of picking up the conversation and figuring out what she wants. *And it needs to be the other way around.*

In the first conversation, we were able to get Jenna to open up a little bit about herself and her expectations for the wedding and specifically the photography, which gave us a great opportunity to chime in with a fun idea that shows that you're the person for the job—and that you're listening, you're engaged, and you're just as enthusiastic about this as she is.

In the second, however, the photographer was visibly lost and unsure what to say or where to take the conversation—likely hoping the customer is going to start asking questions and all they have to do is stand by to answer them.

It's in the first scenario that we see—we can use our prospects to help us figure out how to lead the conversation. Remember what you're looking for: The one thing they're hoping for.

In this case, Jenna's one thing is spontaneous creativity—so we reflected that back to her in an idea for her photographs, while at the same time inserting ourselves into her vision, and creating a sense of "we" instead of "she" versus "you."

Use their language to build your sales pitch.

This is one way you get control. You don't have to strong arm a conversation; sometimes the greatest form of control happens in the most subtle and beautiful of ways. If you can learn to make someone feel important, by actively listening and then reflecting back to them what they're hoping to hear from you, you're in the driver's seat. You're leading the conversation right where you want it. And you're doing it with your prospect's help.

Uh oh! Interrupty Irene Rears Her Impatient Head

You know Interrupty Irene: The prospect who doesn't have time to participate in a sales conversation; she just wants to know your prices. This kind of behavior can manifest itself through a number of statements, such as:

- Before we go any farther maybe we should talk pricing—I'm not even sure I can afford you.
- Not to interrupt, but I should probably ask: How much is all of this going to cost?
- Wait, hang on—on your website, you had three packages listed, right?
- Could I get a ball park figure before we talk details?
- Are you able to give me a quote so I know what we're looking at?
- I noticed you didn't list your rates on your website—how much does X cost?
- I'm just gathering some information today…

Ah, she's slick, that Interrupty Irene.

She's trying to take the lead in the bachata dance. But you have to remember—even if she doesn't mean to take the lead, and even if she wants to lead—it's going to screw up the ~~dance~~ *sale* if you let her. Remember: She might not even realize she's doing it, so never feel like it's a personal slight. But always learn to recognize it, and then take back control.

You take back control here by performing what I like to call: *The Elegant Redirect.*

Remember: You're Ataca in the bachata video, and even if your partner steps out of line, it's your job to guide them back effortlessly and elegantly and regain the lead—without it being forced, awkward or noticeably pushy.

So, how?

Well, there are a few ways you can take back a conversation without sounding like a pompous, arrogant jerk. That said, these might take practice, because they're going to feel unnatural for a while. You're going to want to let the client talk. You're not going to want to appear rude. You're going to want to just answer their question and move on. It will be very tempting to do so.

Here's why you should politely resist:

Because you want to avoid getting price shopped like the plague.

And that's what Interrupty Irene is trying to do. Because as humans, we have this need to categorize things. We do. It's the only way we know how to make sense of the world. It's why we instantaneously judge others we meet—oh, he's a nerd. Oh, she seems like a drinker. (Stop judging me!) Oh, she must be educated. We're programmed to do this. So in that same sense, Interrupty Irene is just trying to do what comes natural to her: Figure out the only way she knows how to judge you (price), so she can quickly categorize you into yes, no, or maybe.

But again, we don't want *I.I.* (let's call her that for short) to have that leverage yet, because it's not a fair comparison. She assumes that judging you by price might be a fair comparison, but only you know what you're really competing on: YOU. (Remember?)

So the sales conversation, whether this takes place over the phone, in person, or even via email, is designed to help you sell the prospect on YOU.

Once you've made that emotional connection, price becomes much less relevant. And figuring out how to make it happen gets priority.

Introducing the one and only Ashley Ambirge list of emergency key phrases you can use to Elegantly Redirect any conversation in times of desperate need:

(There's nothing wrong with old-fashioned memorization, folks.
If it makes you feel more confident, and sound more confident, DO IT.)

- Sure! I have an oh-so-very-Queen-of-England-like policy to talk numbers over tea / a cold beer; talk with me while I walk over and turn on the pot / grab one out of the fridge, and in the meantime, let me ask you this: [Redirect conversation where you need it to go. For example: *"In the meantime, let me ask you this: What's the #1 thing you hate about the copy on your site right now?"*]

- With all due respect, Heather, let me finish up this thought and then we can go frolic in the land of tigers and lions and quotes, oh my. As I was saying, [finish

thought / ask question].

- You know what? Glad you brought that up, because I actually have a question for you, too. Make you a deal: Let me ask mine first, and then we can crunch all the numbers you want. [Redirect conversation to get the prospect talking about what they need from you.]

- Typically when I have these types of conversations it helps to talk about that last. So anyway, as you were saying a moment ago, you [redirect].

- Ah ha! Look at you trying to get ahead of me, Eddie. [Use your tone of voice to lighten the mood and take the focus off of your answer & buy yourself some time.] I see what you're doing there. ;) Listen—I promise I'll bore you with that stuff in a minute. Before I do, though, I had one more question / I'm just dying to know the answer to this: [Redirect conversation].

- Sure, we can talk about that. But first, pop quiz: [Redirect conversation.]

- Oh! You went and did it. You asked the one question I'm prohibited from answering before you answer this one for me: [Redirect.]

- Well, James, I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is that I think you'll find the rate to be extremely fair. But the bad news is that I'm going to make you wait approximately 3.47 more minutes before we talk official numbers. Mostly

because official numbers require me to get up and go get the calculator. ;) Before we go there, [redirect with a question].

- Ohhhhh, you're putting me in between a rock and a hard place, Leslie. You know us writers break out in hives the minute numbers come up, don't you? It's a fact. While I go get my itch cream, and before we sit down and discuss our options, tell me this: [Redirect].

- Fortunately if I tell you, I won't have to kill you, but I will have to bust out a calculator and burn through at least 400 brain cells I only reserve for Jeopardy and quoting clients. Give me a minute to get squared away with that, and in the meantime, I'm curious: [Redirect].

- All the hard questions, huh? ;) Okay, let's make a deal: I'll give up my fees on the first date, if you answer me this: [Redirect].

- I appreciate your curiosity and certainly will address that in just one moment—before, though, here's what I need to know: [Redirect.]

Once you've redirected your little heart out...

(Also known as the sub-section that would have started with, "Meanwhile, back at the ranch…" if I didn't think tucked-in plaid shirts were so creepy.)

…and you've kept them talking about them and their needs, it's time for your moment.

Your turn in the spot light.

Your turn to talk, for goodness sake. (You didn't think I was going to make you mime this out, did you?)

Once you've listened, and you've identified their 'what I'm hoping for' hot ideal of the week, and you've mentally run through your own strengths and weaknesses and secretly picked out something you'd like to highlight about your work that you think will make the prospect giddy with glee and think you MUST be THE ONE, then it's time for *drum roll*…

The "*Sit Down, Son!"* Moment.

Ah, yes. A very real moment, indeed.

The "*Sit Down, Son!*" moment is what I call the place in the conversation where you go from listening to the prospect and hearing all about their thoughts, to placing a gentle finger over their lips, and telling them to sit their behind down on the bench while you show 'em how it's DONE.

(For the record, I kind of hope you're picturing me soaring into the air like Michael Jordan right now.)

What the heck am I talking about?

I'm talking about the moment when it's time to transition to the next phase in the conversation, when it's clearly your turn to speak—and keep leading the show.

So naturally, you don't just want anything to come out of your mouth. *"That was interesting! Welp, here's where you can find a list of my packages! Let me know what you think!"* Do not do that, so help me cheese quesadillas. (And bonus boneless buffalo wings…try saying that three times fast.)

You aren't out of the woods yet. Nor is it time to try and close the deal yet. You've still got one remaining piece to the puzzle: Helping the prospect see that you're fucking brilliant. (Can I say fucking in a workshop? Oh, look. Doing it!)

Yes, chances are good that if they contacted you, they already like you to some degree. And yes, chances are even better if you're doing a stellar job marketing yourself, telling the right stories, and making people fall in love with you before they even talk to you. But once more:

Even though a person doesn't like to feel sold to, they still need to be sold.

Maybe we should get that as a matching tattoo. Oh second thought, lasering something onto your body that could be misinterpreted as a sex-trafficking pact is probably not a good idea.

I call this the "*Sit Down, Son!*" moment because this is your turn to shine—your time to show 'em that you know your stuff, and you're damn well worth it.

In other words, you're going to cement the deal. And you're going to show 'em how it's done.

How?

By telling them a story.

Story. We've used that word a lot, haven't we? Bear with it. Cuddle up to it. Hug it like the best friend you haven't seen in five years. Because this here story concept is going to come through for you: I promise.

Most of the time, we get stuck trying to figure out how to transition the conversation with ease and keep it moving in the direction we want. We don't know how to move the conversation from one place to the next without sounding awkward or forced. We don't know how to suddenly take the spotlight and say something to toot our own horn without sounding, well, like we're tooting our own horns. We aren't good at having to come out and promote ourselves, because we've been taught to be humble and polite. Not to brag. But if there were ever a time to brag, it's right now.

The trick? Is learning how to gently wrap that brag in a delicate baby blue silk sheet, so it comes off as less "braggy," and more like a thoughtful gift.

And the way is through story. You tell your prospect a story. One that's going to highlight your expertise and enthusiasm for exactly the things they just got done talking about (specifically, the thing you scoped out as being "the thing they're hoping for"), showcase your skills, and also—and this is really important—help them see themselves in your story.

Stories sell because they're a great way to communicate ideas without being awkward about it. Also, they're much more convincing; people tend to believe stories much more than they would if, say, you just started blurting out, "Wellllllllll, just so you know, I won three advertising awards last year, and I'm really good at magazine lay out. I mean, really good."

But if you can pull a few stories out of your arsenal that relate to, perhaps, past clients you've worked with, or even something unrelated, but that demonstrates the particular thing the prospect is looking for, then you can spin it into your, "*Sit Down, Son!*" moment where you take center stage, and seal the deal in the prospect's mind. Remember: Throughout this whole conversation, they're skeptical of you. They're skeptical of you because that's the nature of sales conversations, and the nature of anyone selling anything to us. We assume we've got to be on the defense. (This goes back to the tried and true vision of duels.) So your best bet here is to try and foresee what concerns, or objections, the prospect is already thinking—and then tell a story that not only demonstrates that you get it, but can simultaneously address the very worries that might be running through their head. (Eloquent sales processes at their finest, indeed.)

So, for example.

Let's say I'm a life coach, and I have a new phone meeting with a prospect. I'm hoping to sign them for a 3 month contract.

I do all the right things: I take control over the conversation out of the gate, and I lead the prospect through a conversation that helps me understand the one thing they're really hoping for. And then I know it's about that time to pull my *"Sit Down, Son!"* move.

As she was talking, I heard her say a few things that caught my attention: That she didn't feel like her old self anymore. That she had lost her sense of confidence. And that she wanted to find a way out…but didn't know which way that was. But as I listened more and more, I discovered that the common theme throughout—the #1 thing she really hoped for—was *companionship*. It can be scary trying to figure it all out on your own, after all. Her husband didn't understand her. Her friends had gone in different directions. Her mother was dead. And throughout it all, she felt very, very alone. And she was having trouble remembering who she was—because she didn't have many people, anymore, helping her work through the twists and the turns and the thing that is LIFE. She felt alone. And she didn't want to feel alone. She knew she needed a change. But she was tired, and exhausted, and overwhelmed, and didn't know the first place to get started. Precisely why she ended up on the phone call with me.

Normally in a call like this, a coach might lend a sympathetic ear—do a little "oooing" and "ahhhing" and "that must be difficult for you-ing". But in the back of their heads, they're thinking: Yeah, yeah, okay—save it for when you're actually paying me. Let's get straight to the point because my time is valuable and are you going to sign or not? (Don't lie. You *know* you've thought this.) And so, in an effort to make sure the coach themselves doesn't feel taken advantage of, or give up too much of their time, or set any precedents, they commit the one fatal error they shouldn't:

They stop caring about the person,
and start caring about the sale.

As a result, once the coach can find a lull in the conversation, they make an effort to switch gears and talk business. "Get 'em in the door." "Get 'em to commit." The coach now feels like the pressure's on them, so they end up doing a switch move—and trying to be the lead of the conversation AND the star, all at once. So with the focus now on them, they get nervous and get impatient for the pressure to be off, so perhaps they interrupt what's likely a tender moment for their prospect, and say something like:

> *"Okay, well, Laura, I don't mean to cut you off, but I've got a 9 o'clock meeting coming up in about 10 minutes, so let me just go over a few of the ways we can work together. I have three packages that I offer to clients—the Blue, the Orange and the Red—and really they only differ by the amount of time we meet each week. For you, I'm going to recommend we go with the Orange, which comes with two phone calls per week, unlimited email support…"*

You get the picture.

It feels curt. It feels disconnected from the conversation you were just having. And furthermore, it feels like you're just trying to get rid of the prospect. <u>They feel that, you know</u>. Worse, what happens when you pull a switch move like this? The prospect feels like they're just another prospect. And when that happens? They don't feel like they matter to you. And then, boom: *"Thanks for your time—let me think this over and I'll get back to you, okay?"*

And then what are you suppose to say as the coach? You can't say anything. So you just say, *"Okay, sounds good, let me know if you have any questions"*—and you move about your day, and then wonder why you lost the sale.

You can't skip over the *"Sit Down, Son!"* moment. You can't skip over your contribution to the conversation, and to this person's feeling of MATTERING. You can't listen to them and then just skip straight ahead to the close. If you remember, the #1 thing they're buying? Is you. And if you aren't giving any of yourself to the conversation, then what's there to buy?

Now, compare and contrast that to this same scenario, tweaked.

I'm a life coach. I have a new phone meeting with a prospect. I'm hoping to sign them for a 3 month contract. I do all the right things. And I identify that the #1 thing she's hoping for is companionship. It's now my turn to talk. Here's what I start with, instead:

> *"Laura, I have to tell you—you remind me so much of a client I worked with about a year ago who was going through some very similar issues. One of the things I loved most about her was the secret warrior in her—she had gone through so much, and felt so drained of life, but what she never realized was that she was much stronger than anybody else who had gone through the things she had gone through. But even then, there's a reason why armies exist—because no one warrior can do it all alone. Her and I started slow—we would meet once a week on the phone, and the greatest gift for her wasn't in the wisdom and the knowledge that we shared together—it was having that person to share it with. The support. The rock. The*

person who she could bounce these major things off of—things she couldn't bother her friends with, or her husband. The important stuff. The stuff that makes you wonder if you're crazy. You ever feel that way, Laura? Like you can't tell which end is up?

(Laura responds.)

Right. And that's exactly how this client felt. Ultimately we ended up working together for an entire year, and it's amazing: The person I met when she first called me is a completely different person today. Not in how she looks, or how she acts, but how she feels. Just the other day I got news from her that she got her first book deal—and I couldn't be happier for her. Though it does make me laugh, because at first, she was pretty hesitant about working with somebody like a 'life coach." We get a bad rap, you know? ;) I think she was even afraid to admit it to her husband! She was worried the money would be difficult and he wouldn't be supportive—but after seeing in just a few weeks how she had already started glowing again, he was MORE than supportive. What's your husband like when it comes to these types of things?"

Do you see how, even though I'm talking about someone else, the focus is still on the prospect? This story is about THEM. It's about helping them to see themselves in the story (identifying with her struggles and showing her she's a warrior) and gain confidence in the process. (Talking about the success she's had.) It's about helping them see some of their same struggles so they can feel that connection with me (drained of life and unsupported), and it's about overcoming some sales objections that you know this person might have

about working with you (whether life coaches are legitimate, whether her husband would object, whether the money would be worth it)—all throughout a story that isn't just a story, but a testimonial.

What I want you to do is this: Put a few of these stories in your pocket. Consider who you're selling to, and what their biggest challenges are. Then, pull from your past experiences—do you have any stories you could keep at an arm's length to refer to in sales conversations? And if you don't have much past experience (which is why you're struggling with sales), then let's go back to square one: What *do* you know? What convictions do you have, and how do those convictions relate to the people you want to serve? Could you tell a story about how you got into this field in the first place—while simultaneously demonstrating your unrelenting passion and excitement with the topic? How can you make the person you're talking to feel like they know you? They like you? They can trust you?

You don't have to sell. Just *tell.*

Actions really do speak louder than words.

So instead of telling them what you'd do. *Show them what you've done.*

That's why you get to say, "*Sit Down, Son!*"

(Also because that mostly rhymed.)

3

GET THE SIGNATURE

The Mysterious “Dotted Line”

I find it strange I’ve never actually seen this so-called “dotted line”—through years of a sales career spent getting people to sign other people’s deals, to owning several of my own businesses and getting my own clients to sign deals, to working with tons of other people whose deals I sign, one thing is for sure: Dotted lines must have died with the typewriter.

Nevertheless, the importance is still the same: None of this matters if you can’t get the signature. None of it matters if you can’t close the deal.

This is, by far, the hardest part for everybody.

It’s hard because it’s where the rubber REALLY meets the road, and you’ve got to transition from nice-nice to: *Alright, time’s up! Buy or forever hold your peace!*

It’s hard for all the reasons we talked about in the beginning: Feeling pushy, unsure how to transition, nervous about saying THE RATE, unsure how to handle objections.

But this is where I need you to remember the first piece of the puzzle: The confidence piece. You must remember that you're doing this person a generous, grand favor by showing up in the world and offering this as something that all anyone has to do to attain it it is transfer you something as arbitrary as money. You're not asking them to give up their first born, or slice their heart out. You're not asking them to betray their mother, or climb Mt. Everest. The only thing you're asking for is a particular number of pieces of paper that cannot, nor will not, harm them, because there is always more money to be made. But there's never more time to be earned. What you're giving them is your time—and make no mistake—it's generous of you.

So when we go into these sales conversations, and it comes time to ask for the sale, we must remember: This is more than fair. Any number that feels right to me is more than fair. This is generous, and this is giving.

This is not greedy / selfish / arrogant / scummy.

This is beautiful.

This is you offering to help this other human being in the way that they <u>really need help</u>—through being their confidant, or being the person who turns their greatest vision + dreams into a website that the world can SEE, or being the photographer who has the super power of giving them the gift of memories, or being the writer who can singlehandedly triple a business' sales with the right words.

How beautiful.

Know that your prospect is sitting there feeling incredibly grateful for the opportunity to even be able to work with you. They are. They're excited to do it. And that's the first key of closing: Excitement.

When are you most likely to close a deal?

a) After someone's had time to think about it.

b) When someone's reviewed your brochure or price sheet via email.

c) In the very moment when they're most excited about all the wonderful things that working together will mean for them (including getting this decision off their plates and feeling like they're PROGRESSING)

Anyone? Any takers?

Do I need to call up one of those above average intelligence lawyers and get their professional opinion? (KIDDING.)

Nope. We all know that C is the answer here. And yet—and YET—when we enter sales conversations, we try like hell to close using tactics A & B. We assume if we're the "best fit" then they'll know it and contact us. We assume that our work will speak for itself. We assume that these people are going to be able to TELL that you're the best. And so we let them have their time, and we lazily send off a one-pager price sheet to make it easy on ourselves. And then we sit around hoping.

Hoping is not a sales technique.

C is the right answer. And C will always be the right answer. The #1 way to close deals on the spot is by capitalizing on that person's excitement, their enthusiasm, and all of the possibilities they're imagining in their heads in that VERY MOMENT when you've got them on the phone, or engaged in a conversation, and you can feel that things are going well.

This is when you must—you must—ask for the sale.

This is no time to try and be humble, or be accommodating. This is a sales conversation. And the point of a sales conversation is the sale.

You simply can't go into one and then not ask for it. That would be doing everybody a disservice. You don't want to waste everyone's time, do you?

No. You're here to help them, and the only way you can help them, is first by getting them to sign. Period.

If you've done a good job of:

- Taking control
- Asking great questions

- Getting them talking about their own struggles and the one thing they're hoping for
- Telling them a story that lets them see themselves and…*gets them excited*
- Then this next part of asking for the sale? Should be the easiest part of the entire conversation. Because this next part, then, follows quite naturally. They will WANT to take the next step with you.

Transitioning into the close

(Because stuttering your way into it will likely scar you for life.)

What do you say?
How do you say it?
Is there a way to do it without suddenly turning on the ugly and noticeable "salesy switch?"
What's graceful, but effective? Eloquent, but powerful? Natural, but professional?

All good questions.

And all questions that can be much more easily answered by reflecting, once again, on what selling really is.

Selling is helping.

So it should follow, then, that in order to sell, you don't sell. *You help.*

That is what you are put there to do: Help the person in front of you figure out the best way to move forward (hint: even if it's not with you.)

And so, let me ask you this: Let's say you want to volunteer at the local children's hospital. You're sitting across from the director, and you're having a conversation. Would you have so much anxiety around:

> What do you say?
> How do you say it?
> Is there a way to do it without suddenly turning on the ugly and noticeable "salesy switch?"
> What's graceful, but effective? Eloquent, but powerful? Natural, but professional?

Probably not. Because it would be coming from a place of a genuine desire to help. And that is where your sales pitch needs to come from. **A place of genuine desire to help.**

When it comes from that place, the person on the other side of the table feels it, too. And they're instantly attracted by that. After all, it feels GOOD to trust other people. It feels GOOD to have someone in your corner. It feels GOOD to feel like you're making a good decision. <u>And in turn, it will feel good buying from you, too.</u>

So that said, the answers to these questions are easier than we make them out to be.

What you say is what is going to help them figure it out.

How you say it is the way that feels most like yourself—but always genuine, sincere, and ENTHUSIASTIC. Your enthusiasm needs to match theirs—this is something that's important to them. Don't doubt it for a second.

The way to do it without suddenly feeling like you're turning a sales switch on is not to sell, but to help.

And the way to be graceful, eloquent & natural while being effective, powerful and professional is to always remember the very first thing I said to you about selling: There are no victims. Only victors. And that means both of you. When you remember that, you can keep the theme of genuinely helping at the front and center, and you can more easily position your final pitch as an act of service and teamwork…and not a one-sided snake trying to take someone's money.

That's not what it's about.

Introducing the Ashley Ambirge list of phrases you can use to transition into a close *—and then nail it*:

- Amy, I've enjoyed our conversation so much. If you'll allow me to be frank: I want to do this with you. I want in. Where do I sign? (Oh, wait. Just kidding. That's your role, isn't it.) Joking aside, let's talk about what the process of working together looks like:

- Jamie, you know what I think? I think we should do this. You, me, and your vision of handwritten notes meets 1-800-Flowers. Are you in, or are you IN?

- Lucy, it's rare that a client steals my heart the way you have—and I'm just going to tell you up front—I want to do business together. From where I'm sitting, here's how we make that happen:

- Michelle, here's what I want for you: [Insert your vision repeating back to them their own language about what they're looking for. For example: "I want you to stop worrying about things like copy and conversions and calls to action—that's my job to worry about—because I want you to be able to focus on the things you need to focus on for your career, like giving all of your attention to your artwork."]

- Okay, James, here's what I think: [Insert your professional observations about the prospect. For example: "I think what you've described to me as the vision for your new site is not only doable, but I even think we can take it a step further and get all of your customers their own private log-ins, which will help increase the perceived value of the product, protect your content, and not to mention, be AWESOME. And furthermore, I even think we could do it before schedule, over the course of the next four weeks, given a recent change to an existing project engagement."] Based on that vision, here's what I'm going to recommend: [Move onto your process and quote].

- Okay, Cheryl, let's do a quick run down and make sure we're on the same page here: You [insert your prospect's language back to them about what they're looking for and need.] Yes? [Then, when they confirm, move onto the quote by saying something like the following.] I don't see any reason we can't put the ball in motion right this very minute, so you can have your [insert something they want] as early as [date]. Would you like that?

- Based on everything we just discussed—world's scariest wedding nightmares and all!—here's what I suggest we do next:

- Well, Lynn, I have good news: I see no reason why we can't [insert benefit to prospect] by [date]. All we need to do right now is a deposit in the amount of X and the green light from you to proceed, and I assure you we can have you [insert benefit] before [date]. How does that sound, Lynn?

- Jen, I have to be honest: I think you seem like an absolute delight to work with, and more importantly, I think I can help you very much. But tell me: Do *you* think I'm the right person to help you?

- Alright, well you know what time it is, don't you, Joe? This is the time when we decide what's going to make sense for your budget, what isn't, and how we can all keep our heads above water while still being able to afford the finer things in life. :)

- Okay, Jane, I'll give you three guesses on what comes next in this conversation: A) I show up at your doorstep holding a Publisher's Clearing House Check, B) You show up at MY doorstep holding one, C) We talk about the reality of the process and cost to work together—without either one of us having to win large sums of money from extremely smiley white-haired TV personalities.

- So Phil, here's what I'm hearing from you: [Reflect back to him his own language and needs.] And here's what I'd like to propose we do: [Explain process and give quote.]

Of course, you can pull pieces of language from each one of these and customize for your own needs, but in general, the idea is simple: You want to keep it natural, keep it light, keep it exciting, and never be shy about the fact that yes, you DO want their business. Not because you're desperate, but because you're self-assured, and you're somebody who goes after what they want. Period.

Desperate would sound like: "How soon do you think we could get this signed?" or "I'm not sure what you're thinking, but I'd really like to move forward today if possible."

You aren't that. You're standing tall and strong in your position, and there's nothing more of a turn on for a prospect who's willing and able to BE the expert they're looking to hire—and that includes being someone who can step up to the plate and say, "Let's do this thing."

Another big piece of the closing puzzle: Communicating that enthusiasm. We talked about this, but what do you notice about all of the phrasing listed above? It positions you as a TEAMMATE. All of the above has a very *together* and *united* feel to it—as if you're working toward the same goal. Because you are. Because you're there to help them. Make them feel that.

Another tip? Use their name. Did you see how I did that in almost all of the phrases above? I use people's names all of the time, and for two reasons: The first is because it signals that I'm listening, that they aren't just another prospect in a pile of generic prospects, and that I'm invested in who they are and their project. The second is because it tends to take the edge off of any potentially salesy sounding statements you might have to make. There IS a difference between:

"If you're ready to get started, I'll just need a deposit in the amount of $100."

and

"Jess, are you ready to get started? Let's do this thing. $100 deposit and we're on our way."

And last but not least, a note of advice on dropping the number bomb. Most people aren't accustomed to spending large sums of money at once unless it's Christmas, back to school shopping, or botox injections. (I kid, I kid.)

So I've got news: When you oh-so-nonchalantly tell them that it's going to cost $6,000, THIS SHOCKS THE SYSTEM. They hear that number, and it automatically sends all sorts of big, red, blinking fatal error signals off in their brain, "Deny! Deny! Deny! Too much! System overheating!"

The average person can't process a $6,000 price tag, unless you're selling to huge corporations who deal with these kinds of sums on a regular basis.

It won't matter how much they like you—if the price tag so dramatically violates their expectations of what something should cost, the first thing they're going to do is get suspicious of you, and wonder if you're trying to scam them—which is going to erase all that good will you just spent all that time building.

Now, what does that mean.

Here's what it means. It means you can still charge $6,000. Many web design and development projects cost this and more. That's no secret, and that's nothing to be ashamed about.

BUT.

You must learn to present the price tag in ways that don't feel so intimidating, scary, and downright red-flag-ey.

My advice?

Chunk it up.

When presenting a quote to a client, whether it's via email, on the phone, in person, through some complicated Prezi presentation, *chunk it up.*

Instead of dropping them with the price bomb of $6,000, try this instead.

> We can get this underway starting today, and here's all I need from you:
>
> - $500 deposit now via Paypal + your John Hancock to give us the green light
> - One payment between now and 30 days from now in the amount of $1,833.
> - Another payment within 60 days of a second $1,833.
> - And the final payment of the same amount upon project completion.

Doesn't that feel so much more manageable—and so much less intimidating? And yet, you're still charging $6,000, so you don't need to compromise on your value, and your client doesn't have to feel like they're going to have to take out a loan to work with you. (Which, by the way, they won't do. Don't make them feel like working with you will cost them more than a half a year's mortgage payments.)

So what do you do when they say—gulp—*no*?

The moment we've all been waiting for. The two letters no one ever, ever, ever wants to hear: N-O.

Yup, it happens.

You know what we call these in sales? Objections. You've heard that term, right? (I always picture some fancy pants lawyer standing up in court yelling, *"Objection, your honor!"*)

There are a trillion and four books written on the art of handling objections—the fancy word for when somebody says "*no*." It doesn't have to be a direct "*no*," of course—it might be a "*no*" in the form of hesitation, for example, or in the form of hard questions.

Let's say somebody says to you:

"I'm not sure we have the budget right now,"

That's an objection.

And I've got news: While most people would just as soon accept the "*no,*" throw in the towel and then proceed to eat five ice cream sandwiches in a row while watching Roseanne re-runs by the light of the moon, you're going to take that objection, and turn it around and use it to your benefit.

That's right, a "no" can be the best opportunity in the whole conversation.

Do you *know* why? (No pun intended!)

Because they're telling you, straight up, what the hell the problem is. In other words, they're telling you exactly where they need help. And by just accepting their "no" and walking away with your tail in-between your legs, it's actually the equivalent of looking at a burning building and shrugging your shoulders as an 8 year old screams from the bedroom window.

Okay, maybe not *that* dramatic.

But if your goal is really to help them, then you need to learn to look at these objections as miniature calls for help. Believe this: They want to work with you. They wouldn't be on the phone with you if they didn't. But they might need some help to make it happen. How can you listen to what they're saying, and help them?

You know what you might say if someone tells you they don't have the budget? Try this:

"Bill, I like you. So I'm going to ask you to level with me.
Tell me: What *can* we do? How can we make this work for you?"

Note the "we" coming back to play.

Ultimately, you might be able to remind them that, fortunately, you're the CEO of this company so you have some special privileges that some others might not, like flexible payment plans.

Whatever you do, just remember: An objection isn't a rejection. It's a reason. And sometimes it just takes a little reasoning *with.*

If you can help them, do it. Whether that means helping them see things differently, helping them logistically, helping them understand something more accurately, or helping them do the right thing for them—hopefully in conjunction with your services.

And if they raise a legitimate concern you can't answer, don't try and gloss over it. Help them in that case, too. It's perfectly acceptable (and, in fact, preferable) to simply say something like:

> *"Let's talk about that. Let's look at those concerns, and let's understand where these points that you're talking about may be totally valid."*

Because this are the things that build trust. You don't want to force yourself onto anybody—and when you do it right, you won't have to. Your goal is to meet them halfway and create an experience you both can benefit from.

Victors, not victims.

That is, after all, the difference between being Cocksure…

….and just being a _____.

Uh oh. Pull on those reigns. Is this the end?

Or, the part where I wave to you wistfully from the window of some annoyingly European hotel as you walk away in the rain and don't look back.

…WAIT, WHY DIDN'T YOU LOOK BACK?

Kidding. I wouldn't look back, either. There are no tears in ~~baseball~~ sales conversations. But European hotels? Maybe—if you play your cards right.

Before we really do say goodbye (for now, at least), I'm going to issue you a challenge.

I want you to take a risk.

I want you to take a risk, and I want you to use at least one piece of language we discussed here in your next sales conversation. And then I want you to tweet me at @TMFproject and let me know how it went.

Do we have a deal? Do I need to make you sign on the imaginary dotted line?

In selling, as in life, nothing is certain.

You can't control what other people think of you. You can't control what they think of your prices, and whether or not they can legitimately afford to work with you. You can't control whether they'll ask you for discounts or try and sucker you into things you normally wouldn't do (scope creep, anyone?). You can't control how other people behave when it comes time to talk about deals, money, and outcomes.

The only thing you can control?

Is you.

And that's why it's your job to get Cocksure.

Because the person who goes in confident he can do the job, but fails to be confident in communicating that?

Is in the same boat as the person who has no skills at all.

Selling doesn't have to be pushy or slimy or to-the-death-duel.

But what it does have to do?

…Is sell.

…And sell *brave*.