

I understand people’s reluctance to think of themselves as salespeople. I had a love/hate relationship with sales myself when I was younger. I grew up on a small farm on the coast of New Zealand, a place I loved.

My father looked after the farm after his four brothers went to World War II. From the age of 15, he worked on that farm, developed it, and expanded it. By the time he was 35, it was clear that some of his brothers would never let him buy it, though; they wanted their share. In the end, sadly, my father had to sell.

Overnight, we moved to a new town and Dad travelled all the time for work. I didn't know anybody at my new school. The new kid always gets bullied and picked on, and I was no exception.

I wasn't happy, but I learned to adapt. I was forced to find a way to meet new people and create new friendships. That was probably the real start of my sales career.

I may have been a hesitant salesperson at age seven, but I was already learning how to open up relationships with others.

Life Lessons Learnt.

As a young man, I left a small town in New Zealand to live in Sydney, Australia. Perhaps 15,000 people lived in my hometown and at 18, I moved to a city that housed four million.

At 18 I was reasonably good at rugby—a national obsession in New Zealand—so I got to play in Sydney, where I also got a job selling stationery to newsagents. Every Sunday evening I would put all the goods that I wanted to sell into a big blue bag. On Monday morning, I'd throw it in the back of the car and drive from the suburbs into the city of Sydney.

I'd park my car and walk around, calling on my clients and also knocking on the odd door. I sold everything—rubber bands, ballpoint pens, books, and stationery—out of that big blue bag. I practised all the skills needed to be a strong salesperson. I was perfecting my craft.

On the Move

When I later gave up on sports and moved to London, I could not find a sales job, or so I thought. After six months spent cleaning carpets in upscale homes, I was offered an

estimator’s position with the cleaning company.

I was a salesperson once again. There I was, in my early 20s, driving all over London, quoting jobs in the most luxurious homes imaginable. I met some amazing people and learned to negotiate and sell on a whole new level.

Sadly, I had to return home and ended up bunking with my brother. After several weeks of moping around his house, I let him convince me to apply for an advertising executive position for a local radio station.

I borrowed his suit and shoes for the interview. The suit was a little tight and the shoes a lot. I remember trying not to let the suit sleeve stay fixed on my elbow when I shook the interviewer’s hand.

Guess what? I got the job.

I had never sold advertising before, but I was willing to learn. I sold ideas to advertisers and small businesses for the next few years. I saw firsthand how small businesses ticked. I brought in entertainers to open stores, launched products, and ran promotions. I did every type of campaign that could be done.

The businesses loved it and I did too. The job taught me that I had to stop selling the air time itself and start selling the result of a promotion or event.

Eventually, I was recruited to manage a sales team for another media company a few hundred miles away.

There I met my first true mentor, Brian Duffy, who taught me to look at sales and management, and myself, differently.

Brian coached me to be a good manager and a good person. Oh, I made mistakes, but his guidance and support helped form beliefs that I carry with me today.

Mentors pave the way.

Mentors pave the way, and Brian mentored me long-term, into my next job and eventually into NRS Media. Brian's guidance led me to media broking, where I met mountaineer Rob Hall, another great mentor.

As much as I enjoyed media broking, though—the perks were considerable, including good food, lots of socializing, and free stuff on top of excellent money—the seductive sheen soon wore thin for me.

I knew I should be doing something else, but I didn't know what it was. I was not happy. I thought that maybe it was time to take more risks in my life; I knew something was missing.

I was looking for something to fill that space and then one day I got a phone call that would change my life forever. Opportunities often come to you unexpectedly if you make room for them. It was Brian again. "Mike, let's meet for coffee," he said, "I have an idea."

Even today, I can see both of us sitting there in the café. He says, "Look, I'm moving to Australia, but I have clients here I want you to look after.

Join me and my partner in this future opportunity, but you'll have to pay to get in." It cost $5,000 to get into the business. It was a lot of money, but it was taken as a show of commitment.

They wanted me, but they wanted me to pay to get in? Was it worth the risk?

The partner's name was Doug Gold. He had started a new media company called More FM. He also had a consultancy company with Brian that was called Persuaders Concepts. (Can you believe that name)

His More FM Network quickly became the second biggest media network in the southern hemisphere. It is now known as Mediaworks. Doug's unique ideas influenced industries across the globe. I didn't know that then, but I took a leap anyway and said "yes."

Over the next 20 years, that yes became NRS Media.

A valuable lesson I learned is that opportunities do not come when you want them to…. be scared and afraid is part of the ‘doing’

Next week I will talk about how NRS Media became the powerhouse in media sales globally, with no start-up money, no investors, just luck, timing, passion and a great team of people.

Until then

Good selling

Mike.

P. S Tired of missing out on those sales and not knowing why! Try our FREE CHANGING YOUR SALES MINDSET -7 DAY CHALLENGE

