

# The Startup Survival Podcast by Peter Harrington

## Series 2 Getting Better, Going Further

### Transcript: Episode 11 – Why what you Sell is not what people Buy



June 2021

Speaker 1 ([00:11](#)):

Well hello and welcome back to the Startup Survival Podcast with me, your host, Peter Harrington. In this episode, episode 11, I'll be talking with Martin Hutchins, an entrepreneur who knows the struggles of startup. And more importantly for you over the years has worked tirelessly with thousands of people to develop their sales skills. If you tuned into the top tips and advice provided by marketing specialist, Victoria Bradley in the previous episode, I'm sure you're going to benefit from and enjoy listening to Martin. Even if you develop a great product in line with Diana Kander's research principles and then apply the tactics and strategies discussed with Victoria, startup success is not guaranteed. All startups must do their research and market their products and services. Yet neither of these disciplines bring in the money entrepreneurs seeking to get better and go further need to know how to become effective salespeople.

Speaker 2 ([01:19](#)):

[Inaudible]

Speaker 1 ([01:19](#)):

In a couple of minutes, I'll be joined by our guest Martin Hutchins. Rest assured to help you sell more effectively and build your sales confidence and your business I'll we'll be digging for those all important answers. But before we go there, you'll know from episode two, that once upon a business life, I self published a book called the caravan planner. Knowing little about publishing or mobile boxes on wheels. I kidded myself, the product was half decent and took on the sales challenge. One wet October Monday, I launched by new telesales department, me, and started phoning caravan manufacturers. Rejection followed rejection. But then on a Tuesday afternoon, I struck gold. A Bristol based company took interest excited by the response from the other end of the line, I immediately suggested a meeting. My Bristol prospect was catapulted to the top of my empty secondhand sales wall chart.

Speaker 1 ([02:23](#)):

Dear listener, please note back then I was paying myself a pittance and didn't own a car yet the opportunity to hire one, buy a tank of fuel, drive the 500 plus mile return journey and have a meeting felt like true entrepreneurial progress. Five hours on the road earned me 27 minutes with chain smoking Dave. Dave

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said little and his expression hardly altered as he flicked through my 32 page masterpiece. For me, the awkward silence was made worse by the fact my fingers were melting into the flimsiest of plastic cups, containing boiling hot tasteless and teared liquid the office machine had dead to label as coffee. Uncertain how best to progress the meeting, but keen to survive, I ditched the coffee and went into presentation mode. I forget how many different and random ideas I suggested for working together. As I spoke Dave stubbed out a fag and then immediately let another, I didn't ask a single question.

Speaker 1 ([03:26](#)):

I don't think I even established why Dave had been interested in my book when we spoke on the phone. Being so green in 1990, I took the phrase that I'll get back to you as a positive sign. There was to be no fairy tale ending. After several days in, during the sound of silence I got on the phone. Dave was busy and his PA passed on the inevitable news. Over the line last 30 years. I like to think I've become a better salesperson. But one thing I have definitely learned is that it is very easy to get sales wrong. To help demonstrate this point. This episode is deliberately entitled, 'Why, what you sell is not what people buy'. With the help of Martin, my special guest, I want to share the subtle complexities of what's really happening during the sale and how effective salespeople develop the skills to understand both their own and their customer's behavior. So without further ado, let's get Martin onto the show. Martin Hutchins has spent over two decades in sales training and he is the managing director of Cambridge Professional Academy. As well as being an experienced sales person, he's also a multitalented entrepreneur who knows all about starting and growing businesses. Martin, welcome to the startup survival podcast.

Speaker 3 ([04:55](#)):

Thank you very much Peter. I'm really, really pleased to be here, actually.

Speaker 1 ([04:59](#)):

Thanks Martin. To kick us off. Can you share a bit more about your work and your experience in sales?

Speaker 2 ([05:05](#)):

Of course it'd be a pleasure. But before I start, I think it's worth mentioning that I actually commenced my career as an apprentice welder. So working in, in manufacturing was one of the things that sort of motivated me if you like to, to make the leap from being in an organization where you're doing something for somebody else to actually being responsible for my own destiny as an entrepreneur. So yeah, twenty-five years ago I set up or started delivering training and I am the founder and MD of Cambridge Professional Academy. So yeah, we, you know, we've, we, we are a training company. I talk probably to entrepreneurs and people that are looking to sell or market their services on a daily basis. And I have done for, for, for 25 years.

Speaker 1 ([05:55](#)):

So with the experience now have, would you describe yourself as an expert in sales?

Speaker 2 ([06:01](#)):

I, well, I mean, at my core, I'm a salesperson. I mean, I, I started out in sales. I always wanted to be in sales from the age of about 18. I wanted to be a salesperson and indeed I left the company that employed me as an apprentice to become a sales person. So yes sales, moved into marketing and then moved into management and actually laterally an accountant as well as a software programmer as well. But the sales

and the challenges of sales are there. I think in entrepreneurship, you need to be able to do most disciplines really.

Speaker 1 ([06:32](#)):

Okay. And in, in your time as a trainer, how many people do you estimate you have trained to become better salespeople?

Speaker 2 ([06:40](#)):

That is such a, such a hard question. I had come into contact with, well over a thousand people a year. Me and my team, well over a thousand people a year. So we are talking a hundred and these could be from big companies that we've worked with, the likes of Vodafone with BT you know, all the great and the good blue-chip companies right down to one man bands that you will never have heard of, but still have the same challenges. As far as I'm concerned. If you're in selling or marketing, you have exactly the same problems. Exactly the same hurdles to overcome, whether you're a big company or a small company,

Speaker 1 ([07:17](#)):

Martin, as I mentioned, just before you joined me, this episode seeks to examine the fact that what people buy is not what people sell. So let's get straight to that point. What are people buying when they buy anything

Speaker 2 ([07:32](#)):

In answering the question about what are people buying? I think I'd like, if it's okay with you, Peter, just take a step back and understand what it is that actually people think they're selling and why what they think they are selling they are actually not selling. So if we take a typical entrepreneur they've gone through this sort of emotional journey, they've got the passion they've put in quite often their life savings they've put in their time, they've put in their effort and they have created this idea, this innovation, this, this thing, that's going to change the world and they've overcome all of the barriers and all of the challenges and all of the, what you might want to call the objections to that product in their mind over a series of months or if often years. So the journey that they've gone on in terms of creating that product, that they believe they're selling has taken such a long time, that they forgotten in a way what it was, they were trying to solve as a problem or as a need.

Speaker 2 ([08:30](#)):

Whereas when you're a buyer buying a product, quite often, you you're, you're going through this. Well, what's my problem. What's my issue? What's my challenge? Why am I trying to make myself better? Or why am I trying to make something else better? That journey the entrepreneurs would have gone on, but this, the buyer has not gone on that same journey. So really when we're buying something, we're actually trying to fix something, but not only be trying to fix something that may be an issue that we're facing. We're also trying to do it with the best value that we can find. So we might be faced with completely different options to solve that problem, completely different options. And we subconsciously evaluate the pros and cons the rational and emotional factors to solve that problem.

Speaker 1 ([09:21](#)):

So are you saying that the state of mind of the buyer can be completely at odds with the state of mind of the startup or seller?

Speaker 2 ([09:28](#)):

The state of mind is different, but also the time it's taken to that state of mind, they eventually. If you, if you said to a buyer, okay, you go through the same journey. There's the same thought processes that an entrepreneur has gone through. They would eventually come to the same solution. Let me give you a really good example. We're not selling anything. We are. As a sales person, we are not setting anything. What we're doing is making it easy for somebody to buy what they want to buy. We are facilitating an ease of purchase. If we're having to sell something, there is an implication there that we are persuading somebody against their odds to buy something. That's not, that's not what we're doing. The best people that buy from us are those that are queuing up saying, I want your products. I need your product. I need your solution. I need your service. And that's because they have sold it to themselves. So as a salesperson, we just want to make people aware of what's available and why we're the best.

Speaker 1 ([10:27](#)):

So why is it that so many startups don't like selling or they find selling a real challenge

Speaker 2 ([10:33](#)):

Because they feel they have to change somebody's mind. They feel they're in a, in a battle. They feel they're really in conflict with, with the purchaser, but actually they're on the same side. It's they're just making this person aware of something because of the knowledge that the seller has already got, but the purchaser doesn't necessarily have at the moment.

Speaker 1 ([10:54](#)):

I'm fascinated that Martin uses the word battle. In all my experience entrepreneurs often think they are in a battle to persuade people to purchase. Unfortunately, too many startups go about their work in the same kind of way I try to sell my caravan planner. Resistance results when a product or service is created and developed without the aid of robust and meaningful customer research. The valuable metaphor I shared in the previous episode is relevant again. Struggling businesses struggle because the amount of buyer resistance, they face feels like pushing a rock uphill whilst successful businesses guide rocks downhill, because what they offer is what their research has shown customers want. Now I'll be asking Martin to talk about how a seller should sell later, but staying with the theme of buyers for a moment, Martin, you mentioned that buyers seek solutions. Can you say a bit about what drives people to purchase?

Speaker 2 ([11:56](#)):

So first of all, we, you often hear the term features and benefits. So people hear about this things, sell benefits, not features. Many, many entrepreneurs have created or invented something which has got wonderful features. It's bigger, it's faster. It's, it's a nicer smell, whatever it is, it's a better product. That's the feature. And the more enlightened people will therefore talk about the benefits of that product compared to, you know, the, the other products that are available to solve that problem. What people often miss in my experience is the advantage. So I call it the fab factor. Fab. We talk about features and benefits FNB. The 'a' in the middle is the advantage. So when we look at, and I mentioned this earlier, when we look at a product to solve a problem, we are going to compare it consciously or subconsciously against alternative solutions.

Speaker 2 ([12:50](#)):

What a good sales person does is not only understand the benefits of their products, but also the advantages over the other options. So let me give you an example. You've got some money, you've inherited some money. You go to a bank, you say to the bank, I want to put my money in the bank and they say to you, well, yeah, fair enough. Then we're going to give you so-and-so interest. Or you go to a pensions advisor and I said, we'll put it into the pension. We're going to give you a more secure income, blah, blah, blah. However, what you're also doing is looking at maybe putting it under the bed because the advantage of having it under the bed is that you can pull it out and use it whenever you want. So there's completely different solutions to the same problem. And your job as a salesperson is not only to say the benefit of my solution is X. The advantage of my solution over the other options are ABC.

Speaker 1 ([13:37](#)):

Okay? So a good sales person knows what the competition is doing?

Speaker 2 ([13:41](#)):

Direct and indirect competition. Direct competition would be somebody else's offering a similar service to you in direct will be something completely different as a solution. But nevertheless solves the same problem under the bed and in the bank are both alternative solutions to storing your money.

Speaker 1 ([13:59](#)):

Right, Martin, this good practice sounds great and makes real sense, but to go back to basics for a moment, when I go out to the shops, I invariably meet sellers who don't know anything about me and my needs because they either take no interest in me or simply ask a couple of basic courtesy questions before launching into their product 'wonderspiel'. Why do they do this?

Speaker 2 ([14:23](#)):

Interesting question that you pose there about the process actually of the sales cycle. One of the fundamental mistakes that everybody makes certainly rookies and actually I've met many salespeople who are very, very experienced, been around in the industry for years and years. The fundamental mistake they make is they don't ask good questions. They don't ask good questions. If you don't ask a buyer or a potential customer, what is it they're looking for? Why are they looking for this? What's their issue? What's their problem? Why are they, they trying to solve this particular need? You've got no way of matching your proposition with their requirements. And actually fact is that there's an extra step there as well. There's not only the issue of asking the question. There's also the issue of going back to the person and say, so what I understand, you're, you're, you're asking you for is X. So many times people misunderstand, misinterpret or make assumptions or stereotype, and they don't really get to the true answer.

Speaker 1 ([15:25](#)):

Ah, fascinating Martin. So, so let me clarify what you are saying there to start. What is it that stops sellers from asking questions?

Speaker 2 ([15:36](#)):

Arrogance [Really?]

Salespeople have been trained on the technicalities of their products. Entrepreneurs have lived and breathed their new products as they've, they've developed it and they become arrogant that it is the best

thing. And therefore, they assume that everybody else will, will have the same belief if you like of, of how good it is. And it, in my opinion, it's an arrogant perspective.

Speaker 1 ([15:58](#)):

Okay. Arrogance, well, arrogance can't be a good strategy because for one, it prevents us finding out what customers want. And secondly, in my experience, at least arrogant, people are often not that likable. Who buys from people. They don't like? Sorry, Martin, back to you. My other point of clarification is why do people only ask a couple of questions and then leap into their product presentation?

Speaker 2 ([16:26](#)):

Because they've been on a course and the course has says the sales cycle is you build rapport. You open the discussion, you ask questions, you met and then you, then you make your proposition. And therefore stage three of that sales process is ask questions. So therefore they ask some questions, but actually they're not interested in the answers. And they're just going through the process of, I think I need to know how many you're going to buy, because I want to know how big my commission is going to be.

Speaker 1 ([16:52](#)):

Okay. So do people only ask a couple of questions because they are lazy or getting overexcited by the prospect of the sale or even both?

Speaker 2 ([17:01](#)):

Okay. So they ask questions primarily for their own benefit. ie, what am I going to get out of this? Not to understand, seek, to understand what is it the customer wants to buy. That's the first mistake that they make. The second mistake that they make when they ask questions is they ask questions in order to then position their features as opposed to their benefits. So they're that they'll say, right? Help, you know, how big a unit do you want to fit in your space? And therefore we are, we've got, we've got small units. We sell units, which would fit in the space that you've got available, as opposed to what actually size might be an issue. But what you're really looking for is something that's a little bit more efficient or there's another benefit that you might get. So in my experience, the majority of poor questioning, is because people are looking to drive the questions around their features rather than understand the buyer. If I'm honest with you, Peter, the best questions are questions about the emotions. How do you feel about something? What, well, what's the issue that you're facing? Why is it causing you a problem? What can I do to help you? They're much, much better questions then what are you looking for? You can send that through in an email. As far as I'm concerned.

Speaker 1 ([18:19](#)):

Martin you've mentioned the 'E' word emotions. Just through doing the research for this podcast series and listening to Andy Penaluna in episode one, I've become increasingly aware that even though we can't see or touch them, emotions play a significant role in the decisions human beings make. Can you share any thoughts about why it is important for entrepreneurs to foster emotional or deeper relationships when seeking to become better salespeople?

Speaker 2 ([18:47](#)):

Let's look at the, the two types of sales process that go on. The first type of pro sales process that go on. You might want to call a transactional sales process. A transaction of sale is you go into a shop, you need to

buy something, or somebody comes to you to sell you something. And the organization that's selling it are only thinking about that single purchase, that single sale, that single event and making a profit on that event. That type of organization gets a bad reputation and gives a bad reputation to sales. But you know, we're talking about the double glass glazing sales people. We're talking about the insurance sales people, were talking about estate agents. And you know, some of these people that really never ever think about sale number 2. That should never ever be your organization's philosophy. Even if you don't think you can sell to that person, another on another occasion, they will recommend you.

Speaker 2 ([19:45](#)):

They will refer you and they will build the reputation of your brand. So you should always be thinking about the sale as something that's going to lead on. So another, the lifetime value of that customer or the lifetime value of that customer's network or that customer's reputation. As soon as you, as you understand that people will say good things about you, your whole process of selling, it becomes different. It becomes an empathetic relationship, partnership oriented event. Rather than that one sale. You're not trying to maximize your profit in that one order. And quite often I have sold things myself, where I know that I'm going to make a loss and I know I will never ever make my actual fact quite often. I give things away to people for free on the basis that I'm building a good relationship with somebody that's going to then grow my business as a whole.

Speaker 1 ([20:38](#)):

Okay. So should entrepreneurs seeking success, be driven by the goal of creating high quality long-term relationships?

Speaker 2 ([20:45](#)):

A hundred percent. I mean, cannot say anything other than yes. You've got to think about the long-term relationship there.

Speaker 1 ([20:53](#)):

Great stuff, Martin. And coming back to the theme of this episode, buyers are becoming more savvy. In your experience what happens when buyers detect the fact that the seller is more interested in the sale as opposed to the long-term relationship?

Speaker 2 ([21:08](#)):

So interestingly, when you see it, you know, if I were to if I were to watch a sales person and a buyer, and I do quite often do a lot of role-play assessments with people and work out, you know, what's going on there, you can usually see the conflict in the body language more than in the words. So actually, you know, I'm not sure whether you're, you know, your listeners are going to be people that could be setting face to face, or they're going to be selling remotely. The conflict tends to be much more apparent when you visualize or you, you, you look at the body language of people and we're talking about micro movements here. We're talking about, you know, small sort of wincing in the face or movements of the arms, or sitting back in, in their seat. The words tend to reinforce the body language rather than the body language reinforcing the words.

Speaker 2 ([21:57](#)):

So, yes, I think if a sales person is going to be too aggressive or too features focused, then they, the body language of the buyer would, would give their, their feelings away, very quickly, very, very quickly. And if you're, and if I'm a, if I'm helping people to sell more effectively, I would actually get them to work on their body language and their tone of voice and their empathetic manner. Before I then say, right now, let's go through the sales process. Let's make sure you build rapport. Let's make sure you answer the questions. By the way, you know, we, you talked about people feeling sold to, that is what you would call an objection. The best questioning that one can do is take all the objections off the table. At the beginning. In other words, prepare the combo, the buyer, such that when they get, when you get to what you might want to call the close or the agreement stage, there are no objections because you've dealt with them on, in the questioning phase, in your matching of your proposition.

Speaker 1 ([22:58](#)):

So in other words, Martin, the seller has asked plenty of good relevant questions to find out exactly what the problem is. So when offering the solution, there is a clear match that appeals to the buyer? That's right. That's correct. Just coming back to this point about body language, what postures or gestures potentially make buyers feel uneasy?

Speaker 2 ([23:20](#)):

Leaning forward and taking a more aggressive stance on the part of the seller is obviously one form of body language. And I think too much eye contact as well. There are some what you might want to call shy buyers. They don't like a hundred percent eye contact. They prefer to have a little bit of a relax. And so you look away. So I think too much of a force fallout, right? But you've really got to read your customer. If I'm honest though. Now, if your customer is an assertive person, you do need to match and mirror that. One of the terms that we often use in body language is mirroring the other person and you can use, if you're quite clever at it, you can use a mirroring concept to copy the buyer and then change their mood subtly by the use of your own body language as well.

Speaker 1 ([24:05](#)):

Okay. And do you have any tips and advice for listeners that will help them better read buyer behavior Martin?

Speaker 3 ([24:12](#)):

What I think that you should do is use the the, both the sort of the body language, but also the verbal cues are called nonverbal and verbal cues. Look at the nonverbal cues as in the body language. And my little chip there, by the way, is work from the feet up. If you're going to try and read another person's body language, look at their feet. First, their feet tend to subconsciously point at something or points away from something not interested in or points towards something they're interested in. So work from the feet up. When you're trying to read somebody's body language, then look at their stance, their angle, their neck, their shoulders, their head position, their eyes, their mouth. And you're looking for leaks to start at the bottom up and understand something. And then try to match that with the words and the tone that they're using as well. You should never look at one sign in isolation. Often people talk about you never, if a person's got their arms folded, that means they're negative. It doesn't, it, it could well mean that they relaxed. So you've got to look at all the other things in combination to understand the buyer behavior,

Speaker 1 ([25:15](#)):



Reading buyer behavior clearly has its complexities. You mentioned working from the feet up. Are there any other pointers people should specifically look for?

Speaker 2 ([25:25](#)):

The one tip that I would suggest that people look for is what you would call leakage. So if any of you, if any of your listeners are poker players, there'll be well versed in the concept of micro signs. And, you know, people wear sunglasses to hide their, their pupils opening. They try to keep Stony face. You're looking for leakage. So as a, as a seller, you'll say something and you've got to 100% tune in on exactly what the expression on the other person's face is making. Even to the point, whether they're taking an extra intake of breath, because when we get excited, our heart beats faster and we breathe heavier. So you're looking for an extra intake of breath because you've said something good, or you're looking for that very, very minor sit back in your seat, because you've said something that's upset somebody or, or that's not what they want to hear. And if you're, again, if you're a salesperson looking to uncover objections, you'll make a statement. You'll see a very, very subtle sit-back in the seat or change of head position. And if I'm honest with you, you need to be brave and say, have I just said something that you weren't expecting to hear? Have I just disappointed you you've got so uncover that objection immediately. Don't try and brush it under the table.

Speaker 1 ([26:38](#)):

I love that detail, Martin. Thank you. I'm sure people new to sales be feeling slightly overwhelmed by the prospect of meeting people for the first time, making a good impression, making a sale and also picking up on micro behaviors throughout. To succeed takes quite a bit of practice experience and learning through mistakes. Is that fair?

Speaker 2 ([27:00](#)):

Okay. So there's two tips that I can give to your listeners in terms of how to learn these skills. First of all, it will be to take somebody else with you when you can and ask that person to be an observer, just to sit and watch and listen. And then afterwards give you some feedback on not necessarily the mistakes you made, but some of the things where you can improve on and take it as a positive that someone's going to critique you. You cannot do this on yourself. When you're in the heat of the moment during yourself, it's really helpful to have somebody else watching you there. It doesn't matter. They're senior or junior to just a third person. That's that's one little tip that I would give. And the other little tip that I would give is take your time. Salespeople are passionate, they're energetic, they're enthusiastic. That's why they choose that job. Entrepreneurs. The same thing. They're energetic, they're passionate. They're enthusiastic. Just take a breath, sit back, listen that the person talk to you. Control the conversation without actually feeling the other person believing that you're controlling it. And, and again, you can evaluate your process or you can evaluate your sales skills because you've got, you're giving yourself more time to do so.

Speaker 1 ([28:14](#)):

Yeah. Sound advice, Martin. Now you've highlighted some key words like control and mirroring. Let's start with this issue of control. What kind of advice do you give to people with whom you work so they are better equipped to stay in control during a sales meeting?

Speaker 3 ([28:31](#)):

It's a shame this is not videoed because this would be a really useful thing to show you visually how to do this. When you make a statement. And I always say the same thing to anybody that I'm working with in

terms of how to control the conversation, is to bite your lip. You make a statement and you just bite your lip. And I physically say to people, put your lips together because you [inaudible], you cannot talk when your lips are together. So make a statement, physically, feel your lips, go together and wait for the person to answer. And the more you practice stopping, talking the much more effective you are at selling.

Speaker 1 ([29:08](#)):

So when you say, make a statement, this, this could be a question?

Speaker 2 ([29:12](#)):

Whatever it is, you're going to say, make a statement, ask you a question and say what you've got to say, and then put your lips together. And wait. Salespeople call it the power of the pause.

Speaker 1 ([29:21](#)):

And the second issue of mirroring. Let's say you are at a meeting with a cautious buyer, someone who wants to take their time, how might you mirror their behavior, for example?

Speaker 2 ([29:32](#)):

Okay. So your body language should be, if you're waiting for somebody to answer or you want to put give people the space and the time, you'll back. So you're, you'll make a statement or ask your question and you'll sit back in your chair that subconsciously says to the other person, I'm now passing the baton to you to speak and take over the conversation for. When you feel that you need to interject, you can either use your words and your, you know, your, your, your tone, or you can actually lean forward. Leaning forward, says, I'd like to go now, please.

Speaker 1 ([30:08](#)):

Martin, let's move on. And let's imagine 10 entrepreneurs with all kinds of different businesses have come to one of your workshops. And they all want to know about getting better and going further with their selling and sales. Let's assume they've heard everything you have shared so far. What other critical advice would you offer them?

Speaker 2 ([30:29](#)):

So, first of all, I think that make sure that you're mindful of both the rational and emotional evaluation that a customer goes through. Usually we think features and benefits as we've talked about earlier, features and benefits quite often, are rational things. Is it cheaper? Is it faster? Is it reliable? Is it safe? That is just stage one of the sales process. Stage two and the most important stage, is the emotional feeling towards buying your product or your service, how do they feel? You only have to look at people that go into a clothes shop and any good salesperson the closure will say, yeah, it looks right. How do you feed in it is how you feel. You will only buy as a customer. If you feel right about that decision, it doesn't matter if on paper, it is the best thing in the world. If it doesn't feel right, you won't part of your money.

Speaker 1 ([31:22](#)):

So to be successful with any sale, you have to be able to get to the point where the buyer is emotionally comfortable with the purchase. Is that what you're saying? Martin,

Speaker 2 ([31:33](#)):

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You will never close a sale unless somebody, unless somebody commits to emotionally buying that purchase of your product or service.

Speaker 1 ([31:40](#)):

So being able to understand the buyer's deeper, emotional relationship with whatever is being sold is, is very important to. Martin, you know, there's an issue here for me relating to the rapport word you mentioned earlier. To develop true rapport you can't go up to a customer you've only just met and say, hi, how'd you feel about buying our gizmo today? Or is that what people should do?

Speaker 2 ([32:07](#)):

Okay. So let me, let me talk you through the very simple stages of, of selling and, and focusing on the importance of rapport specifically, Peter. First of all, I have to say selling is a process and not an art. I fundamentally believe that that one can be taught to sell. It doesn't matter whether they have the gift of the gab or anything else, as long as they understand the process, most people can sell effectively. If they go through the stages that I am now going to discuss and briefly cover it with you. So the first one is the rapport. Rapport is the, what I would call the foundation of a really good sales process. Rapport is finding something that you and the customer have got in common, a common interest. It could be the weather, it could be football, it could be the environment, you know, the office that you're in something that you can just have a very relaxed conversation about that stage one you've must, must, must build good rapport.

Speaker 2 ([33:04](#)):

That should seamlessly lead into this next stage, which is, I tend to call it the agenda stage. It's where you lay out. I'd like to talk about this. I'd like you to tell me about your issues that you're facing, which is why I'm here. And by the end of the conversation, and this is the brave part by the end of the conversation, my objective is X. It could be a follow-up meeting. It could be that you commit to the purchase, whatever is so you've laid there on the table straight away, where you believe this agenda is going to lead. So, and your customer can say yes or no to that, it's an objection you can handle straight away. So let's lay out your agenda. That's open. Then you start into the questioning phase and clarify your answers or your interpretation of those questions. So it's all very well when we talked about it earlier, sorry, we're asking a couple of questions, but you must clarify your understanding of what's being sold back to you.

Speaker 2 ([33:59](#)):

Then you would move on to, this is your proposition. This is your solution to their needs that they've laid you out. And possibly any objections will come up there because you've misinterpreted. What's been said. In my opinion, if there are objections, it's because you've done your job badly and questioning anyway, because you've not taken those objections off the table. And then finally you ask for the business, if that was what you set out at the beginning of the agenda, this is, this is the purpose of our conversation. You know, we're gonna, we're going to try and resolve the, the sell to like, oh, we're going to move on. You ask for the next meeting or you ask for the referral or whatever it is you're asking for. So really simple stages. If you follow that process and okay, you need to do your questioning well, you need to, you know, be empathetic and all the other personality traits that I've mentioned, but the process of setting is actually quite straightforward.

Speaker 1 ([34:50](#)):

Okay. So what you're saying is that selling involves building rapport, tuning in and developing empathy, questioning, listening, and clarifying, and ultimately presenting a solution that solves the buyer's problem. I

imagine entrepreneurs can have the best product in the world, but if they ignore your sales process, they can really damage or at least limit that business prospects?

Speaker 2 ([35:13](#)):

If the, the foundation stage the rapport building stage is not correct you're going to struggle on everything because people will not open up. They won't show you what they want. They won't see when they don't like what they hear from you. They won't, you'll get the classic response and I've heard it a hundred times. I'll get back to you. I'll get back to you is thanks very much for your time. I'm going to see the next, the next competitor. As soon as you walk out the door. I'll get back to you is it's not I'll get back to you. Rapport building. Good rapport stops the I'll get back to your statements.

Speaker 1 ([35:47](#)):

Martin. This has been so insightful, but unfortunately I have to move on to the final couple of questions. I think we both know that no one sells every time and therefore selling can be hard because you have to deal with rejection, sometimes quite a bit of it. What advice can you share with entrepreneurs and people starting out regarding the issue of handling rejection and being resilient,

Speaker 2 ([36:12](#)):

Being an entrepreneur, being a startup, even being a salesperson. If I'm honest with you it can be a soul destroying job. Fortunately, and I don't know what it is about the people that choose to go into the, into the role of business development. They tend to have 'A' thick skins and 'B' are able to visualize a goal much further into the future. So you might not get a sale today. You might not get a sale tomorrow. You might not get it this month. But for some reason, they can visualize the payoff being in a few months' time or a year's time. And I think that one of the best pieces of advice I could give somebody is focus on that long-term goal, focus on why you set out on this journey and what you've, you know, and that payoff is. Is there you know, one of the things that I have said to people in the past is even put a visualization board up on their fridge or on their wall that they look at. I remember years ago being a financial person as well. I put the balance sheet of my company that I expected in five years time, I actually built the balance sheet and pinned it to my wall. And I would look at that every day in terms of what I felt the balance sheet would look like having had a successful sales process along the way.

Speaker 1 ([37:28](#)):

Huh. So your advice Martin is to focus on the longer term goal and not to be distracted by the inevitable rejections and knock backs that all people in sales experience.

Speaker 2 ([37:38](#)):

So yeah, first, first piece of advice is definitely focused on the goal. The second piece of advice is learn from the mistake. Look at, as I said earlier, maybe take somebody with you to, to, to critique you look at what you may have done wrong. So I've seen things like people being too techie. Yeah. They go into a conversation with a customer they've they've got this wonderful technical product. They talk about the technology, the customer doesn't understand the technology and it completely turns them off because they just want the solution. So don't be too techy in your, in your discussions too eager to close again. If you're not comfortable in your sales process, you want to close the deal, but actually people needs to go on the same emotional journey that you've gone on. So, so relax a little bit, but always follow up.

Speaker 2 ([38:23](#)):

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Always, always follow up again. The opposites are too eager to, as close is too scared to follow up. And quite often people assume that they've they've the customer's been enthusiastic. They've said the wonderful things during the meeting, the deal is closed, they just need to wait for the phone call. That phone call never comes because the customer has been enthusiastic, but hasn't quite overcome all of their objections yet. So I think, yeah, one of the other big issues is this, this eagerness and the what's the word, the snowball that, you know, the roller coaster ride that everybody goes on. When you've got something exciting to talk about it, doesn't always transpire into hard cash. So just accept that.

Speaker 1 ([39:04](#)):

Okay. So you're saying entrepreneurs must develop a customer focused mindset, go at the buyer's pace and always take responsibility for following up. And it's inappropriate and too simplistic to believe that you can just be yourself when seeking to sell and build a professional relationship. Is that right? Martin?

Speaker 2 ([39:22](#)):

The watchword of good salespeople is empathy. Learn empathy, empathy, empathy, empathy, understand, listen, interpret, reflect. It is all about empathy. It's not about persuasiveness.

Speaker 1 ([39:39](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Empathy couldn't agree more. And on that note, I have one final question. Do you have any recommended reads about empathy or better selling that you think listeners will benefit from?

Speaker 3 ([39:52](#)):

It's it's about selling. My favorite book is about selling, but actually it's about running the whole business. You may well have had this mentioned to you by some of the other people that you've talked to Peter, but the book that I'm recommending today out is Start with Why by Simon Sinek.

Speaker 1 ([40:09](#)):

Start with Why by Simon Sinek. Great. Cool. I talked about Simon Sinek quite a bit in series one. So I'm delighted. He's back with us. You never know. I might get him on the show one day. So very final question, Martin, why do you rate start with why so highly?

Speaker 2 ([40:28](#)):

It makes you focus on the customer. It makes you focus on other people. It, it teaches you to understand why do people like you? Why do your customers queue up to buy it from you why'd your staff, get out of bed in the morning and come to work for you. It's because you're propositioned it's because your idea it's because your dream resonates with them and you effectively communicate that to them. So as a salesperson, if I truly truly believe in what I'm selling and I can communicate that effectively, Simon Sinek would say people who could just put a buy from you anyway, you haven't got to sell to them. They're going to come to you in the same way that as an, as a leader of a business, your staff are going to want to sell it on your behalf because they truly buy into what you're selling as well. For me, that is the book that probably has made the biggest difference to my philosophy of setting and my philosophy of running a business.

Speaker 1 ([41:25](#)):

Martin, it has been a pleasure being able to chat with you on this show. So much of what you have said resonates with and takes forward issues that other guests have highlighted. Thank you for sharing your experience and insight on the startup survival podcast.

Speaker 2 ([41:43](#)):

It's been a real pleasure to be part of the program. And I appreciate the fact that you've asked me to join him.

Speaker 1 ([41:53](#)):

Well there you go, Martin covered a huge amount of ground in considerable detail. And I really hope his thoughts and ideas will put the wind into your sails. To be honest, Martin's book recommendation left me a little stumped for suggestions, mainly because I can't think of a better text. Whether you seek sales or business inspiration, Simon Sinek speaks a lot of sense. So go get yourself a copy of Start with Why Another reason I'd like you to buy this book is the fact I've discovered over the years, that the very best question you can ask in any sales situation is simply 'why'. For reference. I cover this point in more detail in episode five in series one. But for now I'll leave it there and consider why I drove 500 plus miles in a hire car to spend 27 minutes with chain smoking Dave, back in 1990. You know, I sold nothing, but fortunately I learned quickly. The lesson get out and sell whatever the result, the wisdom you acquire will prove invaluable.

Speaker 1 ([43:10](#)):

Hopefully this get better. Go further. Podcast has allowed you to think through how you can sell better and help your business or business idea go further. But before I sail into the sunset and look ahead to the next show, let me recognize our special guest. Martin thank you for explaining and making clear what selling is all about. I have no doubt that many startups and budding entrepreneurs will seize on your ideas, tips and advice. And thank you to Duncan my producer, Chris, for your research and cheers to the music sponsors Seejam moths. Finally, without the support of LJ at the London school of Economics, as well as the SimVenture team who allow me time out to do this, this podcast would not be possible. In the next episode to be published on Thursday. The 1st of July, I'll be examining how you can take a business from local to international. With the help of my special guest who started with less than nothing, and now has a flourishing global company, I'll be sharing the secrets of how to grow and scale a new venture. Until then your podcast feedback is not just welcomed. It's needed, share what you really like. And let me know the truth about what needs to be improved. And of course, whatever your listening channel of preference, please remember to rate, review and subscribe. Until next time. My name's Peter Harrington, and this has been your Startup Survival Podcast. Go well, stay safe.

Speaker 1 ([44:47](#)):

And thank you.