

Mastering the Basics of Selling

Orville H. (Pete) Casto, Jr.

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Orville H. Casto's *Mastering the Basics of Selling* treads ground that has been covered by countless books about how to be an effective salesperson. Nonetheless, his book may be a good place to start, as it is clearly intended for the novice interested in a sales career.

Basing the work on his forty-year sales career, Casto divides the book into very short chapters, each of which addresses the most basic aspects of selling: planning and organization; establishing objectives; knowing one's products, competition, and customers; keeping promises; and timely communications. His approach offers an overview of the areas a prospective salesperson needs to understand.

Casto occasionally includes helpful advice along the way. For example, he advises a salesperson to "establish written objectives for each call you make; this will assure that you cover everything that needs attention." He also suggests this: "Sell yourself, your products, and the benefits that dealing with your company will give a client." Those considering a career in sales would probably find this wisdom helpful.

However, the book's topics receive only the most cursory attention. For example, the chapter titled "Know Your Competition" is a mere three pages in length. It conveys several basic questions to ask about the competition. Casto advises the reader that "your marketing management department can provide you with some direction in this area," but this is a luxury, typically available only to those salespeople who work in very large organizations. There is no guidance offered on how to do competitor research or obtain competitor information; it may have been helpful had Casto provided specific direction. At the end of the chapter, the author includes a sales story that is unrelated to knowing the competition.

Chapters are interleaved with pictures of Casto's sales awards, and a final chapter includes reproductions of several laudatory letters and awards. While this material validates the author's success as a salesperson, these pages may have been better utilized for additional text that included some much-needed detail. The book's appendix provides a few "account format planning sheets" that may assist the inexperienced salesperson in gathering information.

Mastering the Basics of Selling is most appropriate as a primer for high school or college students who are considering a career in sales. While the book does offer a reasonably good overview of selling, its content is nothing more than a starting point.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (June 20, 2013)

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