

Selling Change: 101 Secrets for Growing Sales by Leading Change

Brett Clay

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There is no shortage of business books that address “change.” In fact, it may be one of the hottest topics in the business book arena. While Brett Clay’s book is change-focused, it is unique in that the author focuses exclusively on sales.

Corporate sales organizations don’t necessarily like change—it can disrupt the way their salespeople deal with customers, and it can affect the all-important pipeline of new business. But Clay is a realist—he recognizes that “salespeople and their companies must not only adapt to change, they must lead change, driving real outcomes on behalf of their customers.”

The author knows that salespeople are not likely to read anything that takes a prolonged effort and impairs their ability to spend time selling. Undoubtedly, this is one of the reasons Clay structured the book as he did: It is comprised of digestible little morsels called “Secrets,” each of which is a mere two pages—but with just enough detail so a salesperson can act on it. Every secret is comprised of three sections: “What I Need to Know,” “What I Need to Do,” and an “Action Summary,” which contains bulleted advice. Each secret also contains a one-frame cartoon that succinctly captures that secret’s primary message.

The secrets are held together by a “Change Leadership Framework” that the author uses to break the book into five “disciplines,” including “Change Response” and “Value Creation.” While at first this may seem like a somewhat artificial structure, it further segments the more than 100 secrets into sections that can be reviewed individually or as part of the whole.

The secrets themselves are at times obvious (“Always Have a Plan”), but more often than not they are intriguing (“Delivery Trumps Relationship”) and occasionally even provocative (“No One Needs Your Product”). The content of each secret is expressed in simple down-to-earth terms, but the author isn’t afraid to include more complex conceptual ideas when necessary. His apt descriptions of buyer types in animal terms is especially vivid: “Stay Away from Chickens,” “Follow the Chameleons,” “Help the Geese,” “Count on the Beavers,” “Comfort the Mules,” and “Stay Away from Turtles.”

The book is very well-designed, which greatly enhances readability. There are plenty of bold heads, bullets, and other graphic symbols. A mock system of color tabs that makes for easy section identification is included, and a bound-in ribbon bookmark is a nice touch.

Clay writes in a conversational, friendly style, which helps mask the fact that talking about change can be disconcerting if not downright terrifying for a salesperson. Even if a salesperson follows just some of Brett Clay’s secrets, however, that individual should be able to overcome their fear of change and embrace it.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (March 17, 2011)

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