

# Selling in the Theater of the Mind

By John A. Palumbo

**A**fter years in new home sales, I have come to realize that a company's success comes from its attitudes and philosophy. There are no real trade secrets and no "magic beans." I believe, however, that it is time to examine and challenge some of the traditional ideas about the role of product and salesperson in new home sales.

## Selling Value

Throughout the industry, we expect the product and the presentation to be the basis of a successful community. Most of my career, however, has required selling communities well in advance of models and securing large deposits from buyers before the development was ever started. If we didn't sell it, it wouldn't be built.

I recently assisted a company that was actively marketing luxury second homes in a resort setting to empty nesters. The traffic was

**“The real key lies in being able to succeed in a barebones environment.”**

mainly walk-in. There were no models or land developments and they had a first-class sales center. This sounds like the ideal selling situation; however, all the trappings of a perfect sales center aren't necessary to close a deal. In a different development, I assisted another group of salespeople who were able to take 56 reservations of \$10,000 each without even a proper brochure. From selling for years in these conditions to this rather elite group of clientele, we developed a method, or maybe a philosophy, of sales, which makes a difference in any pre-model environment.

Many salespeople have one presentation and tend to sell best to people who resemble themselves. Take away the models and the expensive marketing and they may feel a little lost. The real key lies in being able to succeed in a barebones environment. Take away the product and you have to sell value: appreciation, future potential, values for the money, a dream come true. Selling the dream is what I call selling in “The Theater of the Mind.”

### **Closing In “The Theater of the Mind”**

Selling in this theater assumes a different concept of closing. Closing starts at the very first step, but the end shouldn't be a salesperson asking for a check (although that's still a part of it). Closing should end with the customer being ready for the close and saying, “Ok, what do we have to do now to get one?” It is high pressure, yet we're not the ones applying the pressure. Pressure begins when the customers realize, “Uh-oh, we really like this!” I love it when a prospect says to a salesperson during the presentation, “Now, we're not buying anything today.” More often than not, they've seen something they like and the urge to buy is heating up.

Salespeople understand urgency, but they must understand it from the point of view of a buyer. There is always a “one of a kind” in the theater. Salespeople understand their product, but they have to do more than answer questions. They must understand the value system of the buyer and carefully uncover their motivation, needs and expectations. Then they tailor the presentation to fit each individual buyer.

Take qualifying, for instance. It has to be done, but no one likes it, especially the affluent buyer. Rather than the sadly standard, “Hi, how are you, what do you do for a living?” routine, I prefer to teach salespeople to zero in on a specific unit first, asking qualifying questions along the way and listening closely to answers. Then the salesperson paints a picture of an average client back to the prospect, but paints it with the subtle details the sales agent has learned about the buyers. The buyers will either feel themselves being mirrored exactly or they will usually explain the areas that don't fit: “Well, my situation is a little different ... “ or “We're not at that stage of life yet.” Either way, they end up feeling comfortable about fitting into the community.


### **Selling To the Affluent**

We have mastered selling to a segment of the market that sees themselves as “pioneers.” Studies have shown that people in the “rich niche” see themselves as a breed apart. Not in a snooty sense, but they feel they're able to make decisions

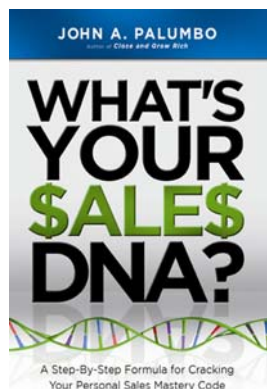
that the majority of people won't and can't. They understand the benefits of buying in on the ground floor, and appreciate buying a benefit others won't be able to later. They've bought four or five homes over the years, and have probably been mistreated by someone along the way. If you've ever dealt with the affluent, you know that these buyers can be tough to deal with, but they have confidence to make a decision.

## Creating Sales Masters

When I assemble a sales team, the group is typically composed of rookies. During the hiring stage, we screen them very thoroughly through the use of our exclusive Sales DNA Profiling system. I look for people with a thirst for knowledge and a desire for personal growth. During training, I use a three-stage mentoring process: they watch me do it, we do it together and, most importantly, I watch them do it alone. After I listen to their presentation, we discuss any suggestions immediately while the experience is fresh in their minds. I monitor their presentations throughout their employment. My goal is to help them master the essence of selling and then let them expand their perceptions and adapt it to their own personalities.

Salespeople will be superstars when they have the tangible tools to work with only if they are able to master the intangibles first. Selling the intangibles is easy if you remember one piece of advice – there are no crooked walls or bad views in the theater of the mind. 

Continue to learn from the sales master, **John Palumbo**, in his recently published book that is certain to help you improve your sales!



**Author:** John A. Palumbo  
**Publisher:** The Sterling Learning Group  
**Date of Publication:** 2007  
**ISBN:** 978-1-934381-00-7  
**Number of Pages:** 205 pages

Order today at  
[www.MySalesDNA.com](http://www.MySalesDNA.com)



*John Palumbo is CEO of The Sales DNA Institute, an idea studio and research laboratory for sales and marketing management. He has presented hundreds of speeches and seminars internationally on the science of sales and influence. He has been instrumental in restructuring the Sales DNA or thousands of individuals from small, family-run companies to large-scale developers such as Trump Grande International. Visit [SellingOnStage.com](http://SellingOnStage.com) or e-mail [PalumboJ@aol.com](mailto:PalumboJ@aol.com) for more information.*