HOW TO

• SELL •

ANYTHING

TO ANYONE

A PROBLEM-SOLVING GUIDE FOR SALES MANAGERS, SALES LEADERS, AND SALESPEOPLE
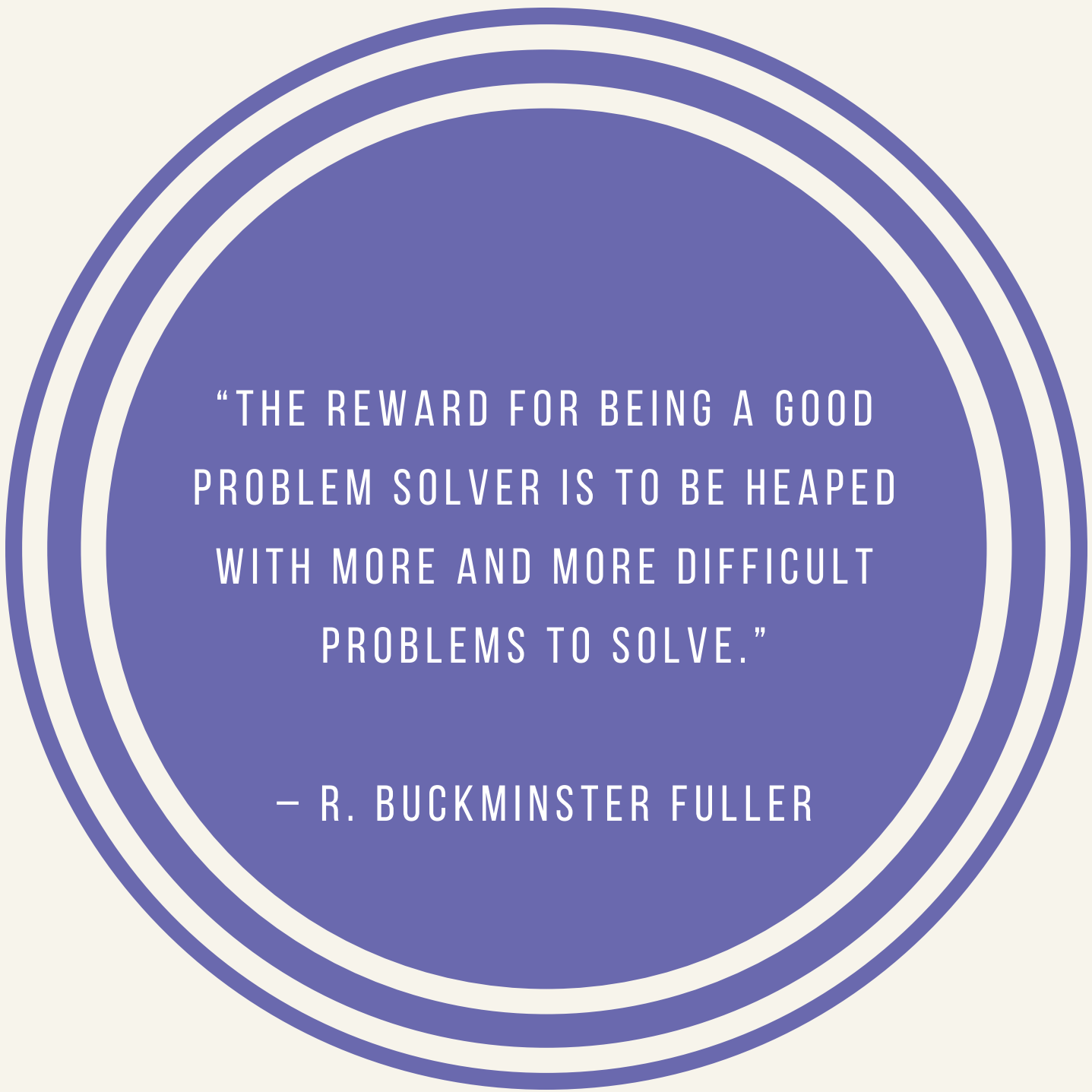
BY REBECCA SMITH

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

"THE REWARD FOR BEING A GOOD PROBLEM SOLVER IS TO BE HEAPED WITH MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS TO SOLVE."

– R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

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There's no doubt about it: selling is challenging.

And as a sales manager, sales leader, or salesperson, you've likely encountered challenge after challenge.

The good news? Learning how to sell anything to is entirely within your grasp. In fact, it's a lot easier than you might believe!

In this eBook, you'll discover more about how to sell anything by exploring:

- Being a Problem Solver
- Using Active Listening
- Solving Problems with the Problem/Opportunity Matrix
- Sharing the Common Problems You Solve

Let's dive in.

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BEING A PROBLEM SOLVER

If you want to know how to sell anything, begin by being a problem solver.

Why? Because people care about problems! We all have problems. And your prospects are no different. They have unique problems—both at work and at home. So, if you want to add value: be a problem solver!

Remember: people don't buy because they care about your products or services. They buy from you because they care about the problems that your services solve for them.
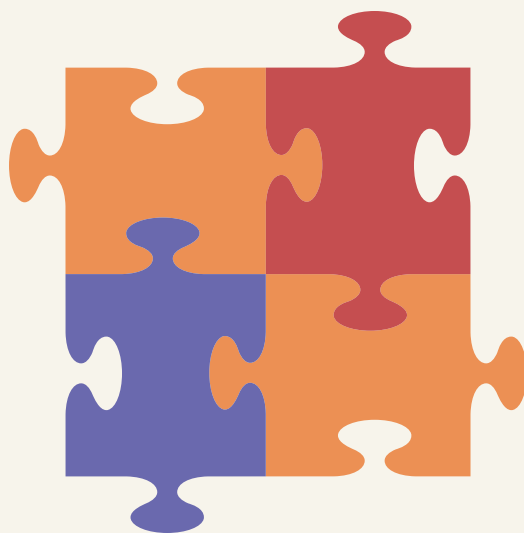
PROBLEM HUNTING

If you want your organization to thrive, it's time to put on a new hat! You are now a problem solver. And as a problem solver, what might you need a lot of? Well, problems! Your first step to success is to go on a hunt for problems.

Think about what you sell as a set of solutions. You might have 10, 20, or even hundreds. Perhaps you might think about this by product or service. At CFS, we refer to each of these as a Solution Set.

The most important piece of your Solution Set is thinking about which features and benefits of one part of your offering solve a particular problem.

Here is an example of a Solution Set:

SOLUTION SET

PROBLEM TO EXPOSE	FEATURE/BENEFIT (SOLUTION)

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Connect every Solution Set to a success story that demonstrates that it actually solved a problem. That way when you're helping a new prospect to solve their problems, you'll have examples to show how you've solved this issue in the past.

PROBLEM TO EXPOSE
FEATURE/BENEFIT (SOLUTION)

→ ?

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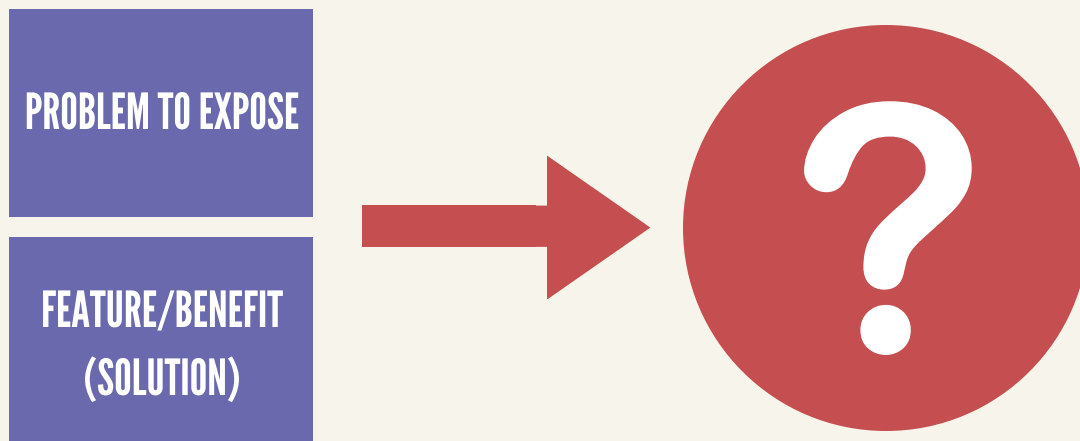
SOLUTION SET EXERCISE

Ready to get started solving problems for your prospects and customers? Grab a flip chart, get your team together, and get solving! Don't forget to tee up your Sales PlayBook as well. Once you're done building out your Solution Sets, you'll add the responses in the "Selling" section of your Sales PlayBook.

Follow the steps below for this team building Solution Set exercise:

STEP 1

On the flip chart, begin by listing the "features" of your product or service.

A "feature" is a unique element of your offering. For example, let's say that you sell an app that is designed to track food intake, weight, and recipes. A "feature" of this app might be that it has over 100,000 different food items already pre-programmed in it.

So, on the flip chart, have your team list out 10-20 features that your product or service has.

*Note: The best features are unique. If your competitors could say they have the same feature, it's not a great one to use.

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Once you've made a list of the features of your product or service, divide your team into triads.

STEP 3

Assign each triad with a certain number of features from your features list. It might be 3 features per triad, or 5. The number is completely up to you. What's important is that each team is working on a smaller chunk of the features. This allows everyone to contribute.

STEP 4

Once each triad has their list of features, have each team build out the "benefits" that the listed features provides.

A "benefit" is pretty clear-cut. It's simply the benefit that the listed feature provides. For example, if the feature of your food app is that it has 100,000 different food items pre-programmed in it, the benefit is that users will not need to manually enter food entries, which ultimately, saves them time.

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STEP 5

Last, it's time to list the "problem solved" by the feature.

A "problem solved" is the opposite of the benefit. For example, if the benefit is that it saves users time, the problem is that manually entering food items takes too long.

ACTIVATING YOUR SOLUTION SET

Now what do you do with the exercise your team just performed? It might seem like all you've done is create a triangle!

FEATURE

SOLUTION SET

BENEFIT

PROBLEM SOLVED
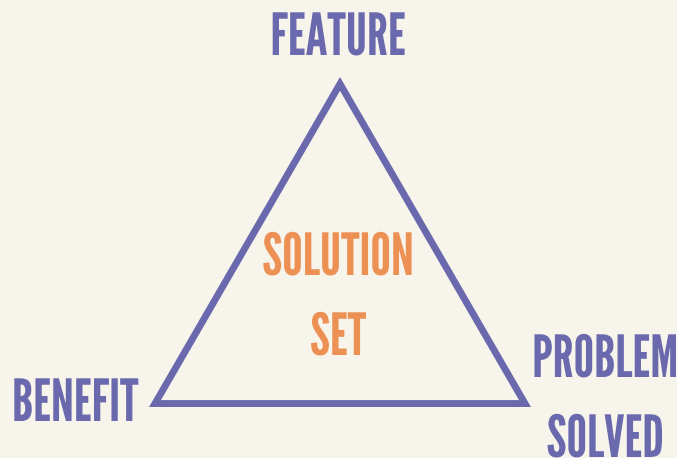
Think about consultative selling for a minute. You want to ask good questions to expose problems. This allows you to share solutions and tell success stories.

Well, a solution set addresses the middle of that process. Now you need a "question" and a "story" to pair with each solution set. At CFS, we call this activating the solution set. You activate it by asking a question.

An example of a question for each solution set typically sounds something like:

"Please tell me about a time when…" followed by the problem. So, for the food intake app you might ask, "Please tell me about a time when entering food items took too long."

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SOLUTION SET TEMPLATE

SOLUTION SET TEMPLATE

SOLUTION SET

| PROBLEM TO EXPOSE	FEATURE/BENEFIT (SOLUTION)

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ACTIVE LISTENING

If you want to sell anything to anyone, it truly starts by being an excellent listener. Some call this active listening. Others, like Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of High Effective People*, refer to this type of listening as empathic listening.

Active listening is a form of listening that involves asking clarifying questions. It's about more than just hearing what is being said. It means being attentive to what another person is saying and truly understanding the feelings or viewpoint of the other person.
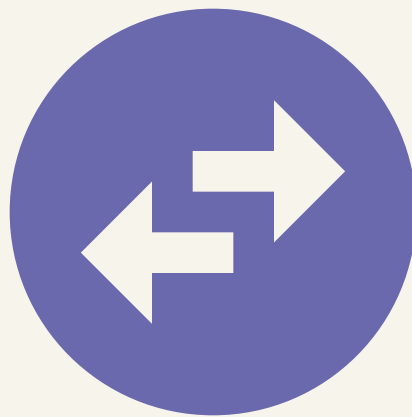
Empathic listening follows a similar blueprint. Covey's fifth habit is "seek first to understand, then to be understood." He notes that empathic listening is the truest form of listening. Covey provides a template to begin practicing empathic listening:

1. Mimic the content: repeat what the other just said.
2. Rephrase the content: tell the same story, but in your own words.
3. Reflect on feelings: focus on the emotions that lie behind what is told, not on the words that try to express these emotions.
4. Rephrase the content and reflect the feeling: this is a combination of the second and third form of empathic listening. It shows that you are really listening and understand what message lies behind the words.

Practicing active listening will allow you to sincerely hear your prospects and customers. You will understand what's important to them, which provides opportunity for you to respond with a solution set that fits appropriately.

In a selling context, active listening moves your prospects from an intellectual perspective to an emotional perspective. This is important because people buy emotionally before rationalizing their decisions intellectually.

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SOLVING PROBLEMS

WITH

THE PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY MATRIX

Well, we've gotten through some great content so far! From being a problem solver to building solution sets to focusing attention on active listening. Now it's time to shift our attention to solving the problems that we've worked so hard to understand!

So how do we now solve problems for our clients? Go back to those solution sets!

Each solution set is an opportunity to take selling a step further. We do this using the Problem/Opportunity Matrix.

"PROBLEMS ARE OPPORTUNITIES."

- CHARLES BERNARD

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THE PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY MATRIX

Would you rather tell prospects that your company is amazing, or have them discover it?

By asking best-practice open-ended questions, you can lead prospects to discover the benefits of your offerings, rather than simply presenting the solution. By telling third-party success stories, you invite prospects to identify with clients whose problems you've already solved.

The Problem/Opportunity Matrix is a tool to help you organize your thoughts around the products and services you offer and how they serve specific needs in your target audience.

Working through the exercise of developing this matrix will help you and your team better understand how your organization helps clients and identify opportunities to provide value for new prospects.

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HOW THE MATRIX WORKS

When you're ready to add something to the Problem/Opportunity Matrix, think first about the feature or benefit you want prospects to discover. This is where your solution sets come in handy!

Then, consider what problem it solves. This then becomes the problem you're looking to expose to your prospect.

What open-ended questions could you ask to help prospects expose their issues? What successes can you draw on to illustrate how you've solved that problem before?

To use your Problem/Opportunity Matrix in a sales meeting, ask the questions and drill down on any problems or pains the prospect reveals. Don't march down the list of questions too quickly. And when you present your solution, make sure you use the third-party success stories to demonstrate how you've solved those problems for other clients.

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PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY EXAMPLE

Below is an example of how to use the Problem/Opportunity Matrix.

Example of product/service: An app that is designed to track food intake, weight, and recipes.

QUESTION	PROBLEM TO EXPOSE	FEATURE/BENEFIT (SOLUTION)	THIRD-PARTY SUCCESS STORY
Please tell me about a time when using a food intake app was time consuming?	Don't have enough time to manually enter food items.	Has over 100,000 different food items already pre-programmed in it which means that users do not need to enter items manually, saving them valuable time.	Suzy was determined to lose weight, but didn't have a lot of time. She used our app and since 100,000 food items were already pre-programmed into it, discovered that all she needed to do was search the database then hit "add to meal." This kept Suzy on track and she ended up losing over 30 pounds!

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PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY MATRIX TEMPLATE

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY MATRIX TEMPLATE

Now it's your turn! Get your team together, grab those solution sets, and build out the Problem/Opportunity Matrix.

QUESTION	PROBLEM TO EXPOSE	FEATURE/BENEFIT (SOLUTION)	THIRD-PARTY SUCCESS STORY

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COMMON PROBLEMS YOU SOLVE

At this point, you and your team have done quite a bit of work building out the problems that you solve! Now it's time to use all this hard work to get solving.

COMMON PROBLEMS EXERCISE

Take the problems that you identified in your Problem/Opportunity Matrix and copy them into the table below.

You can use the table in two ways:

1. Bring it to meetings with prospective clients, give it to them, and ask them to check the box next to each problem they face.

2. When you are speaking to a prospect on the phone or in person, check off the pains they share as they answer your pain probing questions.

Later, when you are presenting your products and services, make sure you identify how you will solve the specific pains the prospect shared.

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COMMON PROBLEMS WE SOLVE FOR OUR CLIENTS	Y/N
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

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CONCLUSION

Selling isn't hard: all it takes is planning, practice, and process.

We can't wait to hear about the breakthroughs you make in your business after utilizing the power of Solution Sets, the Problem/Opportunity Matrix, and the Common Problems list.

Don't forget to add each of these items to their place in your Sales PlayBook. Below is an organizational recommendation.

Under the "Prospecting" section:

- Common Problems

Under the "Selling" section:

- Problem/Opportunity Matrix (which incorporates your Solution Sets)
- Success Stories (short versions in the Problem/Opportunity Matrix; longer versions separate)

Have questions or need help? Please feel free to reach out to us at any time.

Happy selling!

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ACCELERATE YOUR SALES GROWTH

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sales processes, and sales growth? Join us on social media & visit our blog!

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