

**Michael Senoff's**

# **SELLING**

I N T E R V I E W

## **AUDIO SERIES**



### **Real Secrets To Selling**

**Michael Senoff Interviews Tom Hopkins**

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Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

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Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

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# Real Secrets to Selling:

## An interview with Tom Hopkins

Needless to say, Tom Hopkins is a legend. More than three million people around the world have attended his seminars on selling, and more than 35,000 corporations are using his sales training materials. But believe it or not, when Tom first started out in sales he couldn't even bring in \$50 a month in salary.

So in this interview, you'll hear how Tom went from being that sales-weakling to having a sales empire. You'll hear why he believes that people who say they can't sell are usually the best salespeople. And you'll hear how developing trust and personality, along with having the right attitude, is the "real secret to selling."

### You'll also hear...

- How adding personal touches to your sales techniques can turn your prospects into loyal clients
- How to overcome the fear of rejection and develop that thick skin for success
- What "NEADS" stands for and why you'll *need* to know it before your next sales meeting
- How to use the phrase "Not to be personal" to relax prospects and get personal
- Phone tips that'll help you slide through to the decision maker more times than not
- All about the hardest challenges in sales and practical ways to overcome them
- How going after the old customer is just as valuable as going after the new one – and ways to do that
- Ways to improve your presentations so that you're making the most of the words you choose without sounding scripted or corny

Tom also talks about his three-day boot camp that's coming up at the end of August. It's a high-intensity program that includes breakout sessions, top-of-the-line speakers and networking opportunities galore. In fact, it was a boot camp like this one that was the turning point in Tom's life. After spending his last \$150 to attend the camp, Tom's career took off and he quickly became one of the world's leading sales experts. You can learn more about this exciting event by visiting

Here's a **quick** and **easy** way you can get into the marketing consulting business. Work part time from home. Help businesses make more money. Listen to hours of free interviews, case studies and how to consultant training at <http://www.hardtfindseminars.com/AudioclipsH.htm>

Tom's website at [www.tomhopkins.com](http://www.tomhopkins.com) or by calling his toll free number 1-800-528-0446. There are great deals if you sign up early, so you might not want to wait too long to check it out.

The best thing about Tom is that he lives by what he teaches and believes in what he sells. You'll never catch him pushing hyped-up flashy gimmicks. He simply gives out the kind of solid advice that people trust. And it's those tried-and-true methods in life that will stand the test of time, every time. So sit back and listen to the real secrets of selling from the man who knows – the one and only Tom Hopkins. Enjoy.

Tom: I really believe, Michael, if I can say this; selling is an art form. Art begins on a blank canvas and then a man or woman takes the medium, charcoal, oil, they paint something that's pleasing to the eye so the person that sees it wants it on their walls and will exchange their money for this art. Well, selling is an art form but you don't use a paint brush, you don't use a blank canvas; you're painting images with your words and what you say in the mind of the person listening to you.

Hi, this is Michael Senoff with Michael Senoff's [www.hardtofindseminars.com](http://www.hardtofindseminars.com). I'm really pleased and honored to bring to you a very special interview with a legend in the sales training industry. His name is Tom Hopkins. Tom Hopkins is recognized as the world's leading authority on selling techniques and salesmanship. Over three million people on five continents have attended Tom's high energy, live seminars. Tom's talent of teaching in a creative and entertaining style has brought him a huge following as well as constant demand for appearances at regional and national conventions each year. Tom Hopkins didn't find success easily; he was born in Burbank, California. He quit college after only three months and at 19 years old he was married with a baby on the way. He then took a job in construction. It wasn't too long before Tom decided that this was not the way he wanted to spend the rest of his life so he took a job that he thought was going to be easier and that was selling real estate. Six months into his real estate career, Tom's income was only \$42 a month. He realized at this point that he was not making any money in sales because he didn't know how to sell. He had discovered that all the top producers in sales had extensive sales training. So he set out to learn everything he could about the profession and how to do professional selling. With the drive he had, the determination with his back against the wall and the knowledge, Tom Hopkins was able to build his sales volume to over \$14 million within five years. In 1976,

Tom founded Tom Hopkins International, Inc. and he's since then has dedicated his life and his company to teaching and inspiring others through his seminars, books, audios and video training programs. Today over 35,000 corporations and countless professional sales people through the world utilize his professional sales training materials. So in this interview, you're going to hear me grill Tom Hopkins for an entire 60 minutes. We're also going to field questions from some of the students from [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com). There's a lot to cover and this interview is the kind of interview you need to listen to three or four times. Every time you do, you'll learn something new that you hadn't during the time previous. So let's get going and I hope you enjoy.

Michael: What is selling and how does it differ from marketing?

Tom: In my opinion, let's reverse it. Marketing is the plan to get the product to the consumer at a profit. That's the overall plan of marketing. See, selling is the going out with the plan and presenting it at the point of sale. Now, of course, if you like a great retail outlet, they have their locations, their leases, their products and services and they advertise and they try to drive people in to their locations. Then when the person comes in, they need a person that's a representative called the sales person, and that is when the selling starts. So the marketing gets the plan out and the sales people implement it by prospecting, by qualifying and presenting and closing sales.

Michael: How about negotiating; how would you say selling is different from negotiating?

Tom: Well, it depends on the product or service. There are some products that the negotiation process plays a major role in the actual presenting of the product. But most sales people don't really negotiate as much as they do their best to lead the person that should own the product to say yes, and take advantage of the opportunity.

Michael: Were you successful as a sales person when you first got started?

Tom: No, to the contrary. I had a lot going against me. I was a construction worker right out of high school and after a year of that, I thought I'm going to try and do something else. And I went and got a real estate license and I was kind of unique to be 18 and going into real estate. Back then it was a real middle-age man's business; there were very few teenagers and women in the business. And so I got my license and started but I had a lot going against me. I didn't have a car when I got into real estate. I was

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riding a motorcycle and I needed to make some money to get a car and then all of a sudden, in six months I'd only made one little sale and I always tease the audiences that I didn't really make the sale; I was the only one in the office and the man wanted the property and he even helped me fill out the darn forms.

Michael: You got lucky.

Tom: I got lucky. Here's the thing that I try to get people to realize. There's some truth in the fact that if you are ready, a teacher can appear. And that teacher, if you become an avid student of their training, can then take you and get you to become a professional. Well, that's how it happened to me. I wrote a check for the last \$150 I had in the bank and I went to see a man that many people in sales today don't remember. His title was the Guru of American Selling back in the 60's and 70's.

Michael: Who was he?

Tom: Jay Douglas Edwards. And Mr. Edwards had a record, this was back before VHS and before cassettes, but he had a record called "Closing the Sale; the 13 Basic Closes" and all of us in sales, especially us in commission selling primarily, we listened to his techniques, his strategies and then with this \$150 I went to see him in his three day program. There was a competition to see who could learn all the phraseology and I slept two hours a night for two nights and memorized and won this little award and that was my start. I took off after that. I had six months of failure and then went to this training and my Boot Camp is very similar to what Mr. Edwards put me through. I mean, you had to study, you had to compete. It was like a mental going to Boot Camp, if anyone listening is aware that it's a tough, disciplinary program. And that's kind of what I do with my training; make people learn the words, say the words and then, of course, have a better presentation, a better way of handling people.

Michael: So what was the most difficult part for you as you grew into a professional? What really was tough for you to take on?

Tom: At first it was getting them to really listen and take my advice because again, I was so young, people coming into the office when I first started and the first question was, is your father here. And of course, I then had to convince them that I had a real estate license, that I was an agent, and anyone listening to us right now that is very young, let's say anywhere between 19 and 23 or 24, you can

do extremely well in sales, but you have to have in-depth knowledge. So you can be young, and they'll like to do business with you because they'll see you're a young hardworking young person, but if you don't know the answers to their questions; if you can't come across as a professional in your presentation skills, they'll probably look for someone else to do business with.

Michael: How were you able to hone your skills over the time other than that one Boot Camp? I mean, were you a maniac when it came to studying and mastering sales?

Tom: Well, I was and I worked very, very hard. That's another thing. I only took three days off in my first three years in real estate. And those were Christmas days. But I had a commitment; I was going to prove my father wrong when he didn't think I'd amount to anything because I didn't go to college. And so I worked very, very hard. Now that three years of seven days a week allowed me to build such a momentum and such a nice amount of sales and referrals that the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth year I could put in less time and make more money because I'd built the foundation. See, some people in business, they don't want to put in a committed amount of time, of fanaticism to build the business. And you almost have to. Anyone who I have seen become successful, I think one of the greatest examples that most people in the United States are aware of is P.F. Chang. Paul Fleming I met when he opened up his first Scottsdale, Arizona P.F. Chang's; the very first one. And I fell in love with the food so I keep going in there and I saw this man sit at the end of the bar all day long, all evening long, reading the newspaper, watching and finally I went up to him and said I'm curious; I'm in business here in the community and I've got to tell you I love this place but you're here all the time. He goes, I know you come in. My name is Paul Fleming. I said you're the P.F. in P.F. Chang. He said yes. I said well, my goodness, you are here all the time. And he says I'm going to quality duplicate everything we do in this restaurant around the United States. And of course, that's what's happened. There are over 150, I think closer to 175 now, P.F. Chang's and of course, he's taken his bundle and left. But it took that fanaticism and time and effort to get that whole restaurant operation up to where it was.

Michael: So you say, there's no free lunch; you're going to have to do the work, make the calls, and be willing to fail.

Tom: You've got to learn to love rejection when you start. And it's a game you have to play. It's not fun but I will say this; I've learned

over the years those that take the biggest risk get the biggest rewards and those are the people that are willing to put their ego on the line and are willing to suffer the possible failure/rejections that life brings to you and keep your attitude while you're doing it, eventually they will become successful.

Michael: When you were young, were you married with a family or single?

Tom: No, I married very young. I married my high school sweetheart and we right away started having babies. So I had three children and again, that was another thing. I did take the kids out a lot with me on appointments but that first three years, they were little babies and toddlers and of course, I'd hug them and squeeze them and let them know daddy loved them, but I also said, hey I've got to build this business. And of course, today they've grown up and have their own kids and it's amazing how much of what I taught them they're teaching my grandkids.

Michael: Right, but your back was against the wall. You had to do it.

Tom: I really did. Without an education back then, even more so today; I was an iron worker carrying steel on bridge decks out in California and it's the hardest physical labor on the planet. And I did that for a year and of course I'm only 5'7" but I always tease the audience and say I was 6'2" when I started carrying steel. I knew I had to do something else. Anyway, I luckily found the real estate business and I hope everybody that's listening is fortunate to find their niche in life. And I define the niche in life as finding a business that brings you an income that is not work; it's something you just love to do. And the money becomes a byproduct of how well you do it.

Michael: Yes, that's smart. Who were some of your other mentors that really influenced you?

Tom: Well, on the attitudinal side, it would be Earl Nightingale. Earl created again, a program called "Lead the Field" and his recordings I invested in every month and he was very inspirational in the attitudinal part of my life. The sales skills was Jay Douglas Edwards and another man named Larry Wilson. And Larry Wilson founded the Wilson Learning Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota many years ago; maybe 35 years ago, but was one of the most dynamic instructors, trainers and I just in a way copied those folks until I made it all mine. And then of course developed my own skills and then taught it to others.

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Michael: What do you think, Tom, is the most effective and economical way to sell now with the Internet and everything? Any feedback on that?

Tom: The Internet and electronic transactions and all of this is wonderful, but I totally believe and most especially your larger products and services, that people want to do business with a human being. And I really believe they may shop, they may get their prices, they may compare on the Internet, but I also feel a lot of them will walk into a nice location and want someone there to help them and serve them and help them with their process of the purchase.

Michael: You know, your web site is pretty extensive and it's pretty personal. You have videos, you can go to your site, [www.tomhopkins.com](http://www.tomhopkins.com), and really get a feel for who you are. Have you found that to be effective and how are sales of some of your higher end products and your trainings going since you've had your on-line site?

Tom: I think what it has done definitely is given me a chance to talk to more people and contact more people and it's done well. It's replaced a couple seminars a month as far as our growth, which is good for me because I'm trying in a way to wind down and not do as many as I've always done. I have a personal goal that you may not be aware of, but there's never been a speaker or motivator or trainer, whatever you want to call us, that has done 5,000 one-day seminars in their career, and I'm at 4,586 and I have a goal to hit that 5,000 mark and when I do that, I think I'll have a legacy of training that I can be very proud to leave. And then, of course, just do my passion, which is play golf.

Michael: That's great, so after 5,000 you want to kind of slow it down and get off the road?

Tom: Yes, I would think that would be very true. Based on the number of dates I do a year, if I continue at exactly my pace today, I will be right at 72 and I think that's the age when I'm going to be saying, hey it's been a great ride, I've trained 5-6,000,000 people in sales so it's time for me to take the clubs out. And that won't be easy for me because I love the teaching so much. I watch Zig Ziegler, I was with him last week and he just celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and he

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still gets up there with the power and the excitement. I was 21 when I went to see him for the first time so there's an example. I think age is so much in the mind and I think people will respect you if you've been around a lot of years, especially I update my training. I go out with some of the top producers out in the street today, kids in their 30's and 40's and I pick their brains and then add that training and give them credit, but teach their techniques. So it's always being updated.

Michael: Yes, you'll probably reach 5,000, you'll retire and then you'll say I want to get back on the road in front of the people. It happens all the time.

Tom: I hope not, Michael. I don't want to do that.

Michael: That's a lot of time on the road. I don't know, do you get used to being on the road that much?

Tom: Well, let me say this; when I first started doing the seminar business 30 some years ago, travel was a snap. We'd show up an hour before the flight, go through no security, jump on the plane, and there, boom. Today some of the major airports, their security is so long. I've been an hour and a half or two trying to get through security. That is stressful. The travel is the toughest part of my work. Once I hit the stage, once the audience and I take off together, it's just wonderful and that six hours goes by at a blue. But the getting there and the hotels and that, is very, very tough. Fortunately, I'm blessed. I have a man that travels with me, his main job is to take all of the details and have the room set, the lighting, the audio, all the video, everything's set. So when I come on in the morning, I don't have to think about those details, which has been very, very helpful.

Michael: Tom, because of the Internet, are you seeing out there in the public that people are spending less time face to face doing personal selling and falling back on that impersonal tool of the Internet?

Tom: Yes, I am and it's kind of sad in a way. You know, anytime that many sales people can avoid the chance of being personally rejected, they will follow that course. And I have always had a belief that the eyeball to eyeball meeting a client, a future prospect, I think is the finest way. I try to tell realtors today that they still need to go out and visit with neighbors because timing is part of success. You can go up the street and talk to the folks, let them know you're in business in the community and you'd be amazed at how all of a

sudden you'll hit someone who's just received a transfer notice and they were looking for a realtor and there you were and bingo you're doing business.

Michael: How do you think government regulations and laws that are going into effect now and in the future, like the do not call list, and I know in California there's some laws with people in the professional services industry before they meet a prospect face to face they have to send a letter. Have you seen out there any frustrations from sales people with these regulations that are making it more difficult for them?

Tom: I have, but again the people that don't want to go out and prospect, they love the regulations because it's a cop out. One of the things I'm teaching and again, this is one of the ideas I've been working on teaching, is when a person does business with a client, they get a letter from that client and if the client actually asks them to visit with friends and neighbors and they were so pleased with what you did, that they'll help you meet other people. Now my real estate buddies, you can get a letter from a seller and a listing is an employment agreement with a fiduciary relationship that you must do what the seller asks you to do. And you get a letter from the seller saying, Mr. Hopkins, it's come to my knowledge that the average home sells to a person that lives within six blocks or a friend of a person in that area, and I'm asking you in writing as your employer with this listing agreement, to go visit at least 100 people in a six block radius and let them know that we have a property that's available, it's a fine value and see if they have a friend or relative. Now you get that in writing, that does away with the do not call or the do not knock, which is what you call it when you make cold canvas.

Michael: That's a great technique. Tom, in your book *Selling for Dummies*, you outline seven steps of the sales cycle; prospecting, original contact, qualification, presenting, addressing concerns, closing the sale and getting referrals. Out of this cycle, where do you see most sales people making mistakes?

Tom: Oh boy, it depends on the person. I'll give you a quick overview. The prospecting is the key because activity in making contacts will result in increased sales and productivity. I had a graph for five years and if the contacts I made, both in person or on the telephone, were down this month, meaning I wasn't having the activity up, my productivity and sales were down the month or two after. Then of course if I increased my activity, my thank you notes,

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my follow up, my calls, then of course it would pick up the next month or two. So again, the activity; for most people, prospecting is their biggest challenge. That's why I've tried to create some ways that you're not really putting your ego out there in the way you prospect. You're doing it in a real nice way. The second thing, original contact. Well, people judge you in 10 seconds verbally and visually, so if you don't look sharp, smell good, come across professionally, they can be looking down their noses at you and I've taught this, Michael, for years. The real secret to selling is to develop not only the personality, but to develop the way of doing business where people like you and trust you and then they want to listen to you as an expert advisor in your industry rather than a salesperson.

Michael: Yes, because if they don't like you and trust you, you're not going to get any further.

Tom: No, nothing works. And that's why, you know, all these little trite sayings, work harder on yourself than you do on your job to be a person that relates to more people, they all will always be true and those will always be true in business.

Michael: Maybe that kind of rolls into this next question. What do you mean by selling is all in the attitude? How important is attitude?

Tom: Well, you know I've always had a little saying: attitude is everything in a way. If you're down, people sense it. If you're not excited about your product, they pick up on it. People say yes to an offering to exchange their money for a product, a service, be it an automobile, be it a copier, be it real estate; they will say yes based more on a person's conviction and belief than they will on the technical skills. So the first thing a salesperson has to do is find a product they really believe in. I've had people at seminars come up at a break and go, you know Tom, I read your book and boy, I bet you could sell anything. And I stop them and say, you know I don't think I could. I really would have to have a burning belief in the product or service and not just the product, but the benefits the buyer will get after they own it. And that's where I think my strengths came from in the real estate business. In my eight years I loved the business; I closed a lot of home sales to people that didn't think they were going to buy but when they saw my excitement to have them take advantage of the American dream, the pride of ownership, they said yes to the purchase. I had one guy, Michael, this is cute, about oh, I'm going to say about two years ago. I was in San Francisco doing a seminar and at the

afternoon 3:00 break, a guy comes to the stage, he says Tom, you don't recognize me, I'm sure, but and of course I always try to remember people, but when you meet so many it's not easy. And so I said, well tell me about you. And he says, well my wife and I in 1968, now keep in mind how long ago that was, walked in to your real estate office and we wanted to rent a home because very little money and you sat us down and you talked to us about the exciting opportunity to maybe own a property, how there are properties in the market that maybe need a very small initial investment and that we could get you in to and bottom line, I had a builder, JBR Developer was the name of the company, who had four or five repossessed homes sitting there. And I worked out an arrangement where these people put in a very small amount, moved in almost like first and last month's rent, then every week I would take X dollars from them to the down payment and a year later, they bought the home. Now here's what's funny; they paid \$21,950 for the home in '68; three bedroom, 1 ½ bath. Today the house is worth almost \$400,000 in California. And of course, he said, Tom the greatest equity we've ever is that one little home. And we've now paid it off and it's the best thing that's ever happened to us. So those are the things that may keep me doing this.

Michael: Yes, I mean stories like that, when you think you had a major effect on that guy's life, that's got to feel good.

Tom: Oh, it's great!

Michael: What about people who are working for companies and they're moved into sales positions or that's part of their job and they don't totally believe in the products that they're selling but because it's their job, they have to I guess to maybe pay the bills and pay the rent. What would you say to them?

Tom: Well, I would say first of all, that's a real tough way to live. To get up in the morning dreading what you're doing; to get up in the morning not excited to go and do the job. That's a tough life and I've always believed you have one life to live, you might as well find what you love to do. And what I would suggest they do is set a goal, they have to make a commitment to have enough money to live for say six months without having to earn money, and then they can get out of that job and spend some time with no pressure to find something they really want to do. But another challenge we have is many people don't think they can sell and the sad truth is, those that don't think they can are often the best because they

don't come across like the stereotypical image of a sales person. See 96% of the American population don't really like sales people. So the key is to not come across verbally or visually as a sales person. More a real nice person, nice smile, good firm handshake, don't forget their name and do a good presentation, establish that rapport, and another thing is you've got to keep in touch with people. There's almost a sad truth about the field of sales that the average person is always looking for new business and neglects their existing clientele. And their existing clientele can not only do more business with them but can send a lot of referrals if you keep in touch with them.

Michael: I know, so many people do that. Why is it we're always after the new customer, the new customer and we ignore the old one?

Tom: You know, I think it's human nature. I made a decision when I first got my real estate license and started making a little money, that I was going to keep in touch with every person that either listed their home with me or bought a home from me, six times a year. And for the folks listening, regardless of your business, you've got to set a goal to contact existing clients in one form or another; either by mail or email or by a personal visit or a hi, how are you doing telephone call at least six times a year. And that will keep them in front of you and you'll be in their minds because they keep hearing from you. And I tied a lot of my follow up, Michael, to holidays. You know, I tried to be different than anybody else. For example, Halloween 1965 I went and bought 500 pumpkins and I handed them out into a neighborhood and put a little note on the top, when you carve this up think of me if I can ever serve you. And of course I got people calling me saying thanks so much, my kids have been bugging me to get a pumpkin and it was really a nice gesture to have it on our front porch. So little things like that. I also believe the handwritten thank you notes will work better today than they did back in my early days because, again, we have such a lack of real personal contact and a handwritten thank you note, really I think, will go a long way today.

Michael: Let's talk a little bit about research. How does one get the information that need before they go in on a sales presentation?

Tom: Well, the first thing I think you need to do is you have to really answer some questions before you decide what the best product is. Now I use this formula, Michael, I developed as an acronym and if you can picture the word NEADS, but it's not spelled N-E-E-D-S, it's spelled N-E-A-D-S. Now every letter is the information you

need to gather before you decide on the product and then present to the decision maker. So the N stands for now; you've got to do research on their existing situation. What do they have now because the average American doesn't make drastic changes in buying decisions? So you tell me your past and that gives me a good inclination about what we'll do in the future. The E in NEADS stands for enjoy. I'd like to know what you liked about what you have now because that you'll want again, or something better. And the A of course, stands alter, and it's a word I use because it fits in the acronym, but what would you like to change, alter or improve about what you have now? Then the D in NEADS stands for who is the decision making? Many people in sales are presenting to the wrong person. Without doing some qualification questions to find out Mr. Johnson, if we're fortunate to serve your company's needs with our copier, I know you're probably going to be talking to some other folks, which is great. Who other than yourself would be involved in the final decision? That one question is so important. And of course, the S in NEADS is solution, and that's really what we come up with. We find out the NEADS; now, enjoy, alter, decision-maker and we come up with the solution. So that's the NEADS formula to find out what they should say yes to.

Michael: That's great; thank you for that. Tom, what culture do you think American's have the hardest time selling because of culture? Who are the toughest buyers that you've found?

Tom: The Orientals are the toughest because they just have this ability to want to negotiate but they won't let you know where they are coming from. It's almost they've been raised to hide emotions; they're not going to let you see any buying signs, warming up. I've found in my eight years in the street in sales that the Oriental, the Japanese, these people were the toughest because of lack of showing me how they're feeling emotionally. I would say the self employed because they're risk takers; those that own their own little companies. In fact, many of my top sales people in other industries, because we can relate to each other, and sales people are the easiest to sell because we just are. I mean, I have to be so careful. My wife says, honey we own enough stuff, will you quit saying yes to these people? So I have to work on that myself.

Michael: When selling face to face, like consulting services for example, what have you found is the most effective way for delivering facts or a presentation?

Tom: Well, first of all, if we were to talk let's say financial services to a family, and I'll just give you an overview to show this. My job is to take your money that you're spending now and with a computer, analyze how we can reallocate the money you're spending, how we can get you a better death benefit in an insurance program, how we can then get you into a mutual fund so you can get a nice return on your money, and so that's my goal. Well, the key is to find people who, again, have the need and then you have to first of all, I think, present it in such a way. And I think people have to relax people. Kind of like this, Michael, if I was sitting in front of you I'd say, Michael let me just begin by thanking you for the time we're going to share. I hope we can consider our time as somewhat exploratory as to what we can do for you. Our goal is to basically do two things; reallocate your assets so that you eliminate debt sooner and give you a chance to get a higher interest return on the money we invest. Now do those two things sound good to you?

Michael: Yes, they do.

Tom: Well, of course they do. Every question they've got to really want to say yes to. So the first thing I'd like to do is, let's talk about your situation now and if you wouldn't mind, I don't mean to be personal, and by the way, when you're ever talking money with people, you folks listening, always say not to be personal, because that relaxes them and now you can become somewhat personal because you said I don't mean to be personal but I've got to ask you some financial questions just to see how everything I'm going to be discussing fits into your life.

Michael: That's great; so are you saying that listening is really important?

Tom: Oh, it's the key. Asking questions and listening is 10 times more important than talking but the challenge with the people that go into sales, most of them are great talkers, and so they just talk too much and listen too little.

Michael: Have you found that delivering facts in presentations can create unnecessary objections?

Tom: Well, it depends on the person. There are some buyers, I'm one of them, don't bore me with a lot of facts; let me see what it's going to do for me. I'm not real fact-oriented as a temperament and personality; I have other people that I know that they have to not only have the facts, they've got to do so much research, they have to do so much shopping, and I've always kind of been an emotional

buyer. If I like it, if I see a suit of clothes that I like, I'm not going to fight the money. I'll try to get a good buy of course, but it depends on the personality. And there again, I get to know people after doing as many years at the table with people, you almost get a feeling as to what's going to happen in the future because you've been with so many people.

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Michael: Can we talk a little bit about prospecting through the phone? What's something important that your telemarketers, people who are doing cold calling, can you give some tips that would help them get through to the actual decision maker rather than the blockers?

Tom: Kind of like, Michael, if I called you. The phone rings, you pick it up and you greet me and I say my name is Tom Hopkins and I'm in business in the community, as I know you folks are as well. The company I represent, management has given me an assignment. They've asked me to call people in the area, let them know about some exciting things we're doing, and so I almost have to in order to keep my job, make this call so let me apologize for any intrusion or any inconvenience but could I ask you two quick questions so I can make my company happy?

Michael: What about the people who are going to smell a salesman on the phone? Because they've all gotten these survey calls and they know it's either a survey or someone trying to sell something?

Tom: That's just part of the business. You're going to have some people that hang up, some people that are mad; that's why it's so important you start as fast as possible to say, it's part of my job to make this call and I earn my living and feed my family by calling folks. Please, if it's not right for you I'll understand, but can I do my job and just give you a few ideas about what we're doing in the community?

Michael: Where do you think this stereotype, this negative perception of sales people came from and why is it still so persistent?

Tom: Here are some figures you can about take to the bank. There is a third of the United States sales people coming in to selling a year; there's a third that will always stay, they've been doing it all their

lives and love it; and there's a third every year that leave. Now the challenge we have is, that third that comes in, if they're not professionally trained, and many companies have no training, they just kind of say, okay, there's your territory, go out there and see what you can do. And the poor person walks in to terrible situations. So we have untrained people that say the wrong thing and a lot of us have been sold things that we don't like. Many times we've had people in sales that have maybe told us an untruth. And anyone over 40 has had some type of bad experience in a selling situation. So once any feeling toward selling starts, they relive that experience and that's why there are some people that are very abrupt and kind of nasty in the beginning. You just can't take it personally. When someone rejects you in a presentation, it's not you as a human being; they're rejecting that the timing isn't right, the opportunity isn't right, the proposal's not right. And so you've got to just get a thick skin, and it does take a thick skin. And you've got to make the numbers. Because selling is a numbers game until you build a referral base.

Michael: I do have a question for Tom and it relates to a comment made during your recent interview, Michael, with a negotiating expert as well as many other sales trainers who contend that scripted presentations and closes are no longer effective as business professionals are now too advanced to be affected by these techniques. My question is, Tom, I am interested in how you respond to those who say that some of the techniques are passé' and can't be used on sophisticated prospects.

Tom: And I wouldn't disagree with that. One of the things I've always taught is, you have to internalize your presentation. It has to be able to be adjusted to the person across the desk or table. There are certain fundamentals that you will always cover; the introductory statement as I did with you earlier. I think that sets the stage with a thank you for letting me be with you, letting them know this is somewhat exploratory. Then again I think you have to be real flexible as to your presentation. Now I'll guarantee if there's anyone listening to me right now that makes over a quarter million dollars of income a year who's been out in the field of sales for more than five years, I will guarantee you that if we strap the tape recorder under their shirt or blouse and went out and listened to what they say to people both on the phone and in person, you would see and hear very, very similar things every time because they have honed their presentation. That's how they make a quarter million dollars a year. It's not scripted, it's something they've said so many times it becomes a natural part of them. The

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last thing I try to teach is that you memorize some words that are not sincere or not you. But you do have fundamentals and it's just like if the buyer said to me, you know Tom, it's more than we want to spend. Well, the proven fundamental is to say, I appreciate that; our company is somewhat flexible as to what we offer. You'd sure help me out, though, Michael, if you could kind of tell me about how much too much you feel it might be and let me see if we can't go to work together, okay? See that's gentle and nice but I'm getting a figure that you and your wife didn't want to pay over \$30,000 for the swimming pool and we came in with a proposal for \$32,000 and you were going to negotiate with me to get \$2,000 less off the pool and once I have you committed to the money, I then know you want the pool and all we have to do is help you, your wife, those three lovely kids that will bring friends to the home instead of being out at the mall, who will enjoy the summers in the pool, who will be so pleased that you went and sent us additional \$2,000, which most of my happiest clients, Michael, they enjoy their pool for about ten years. Which really breaks down to about \$200 a year, and if you took a two week vacation, that would break down to about \$4 a week, and of course, for under a dollar a day, less than a can of pop, you've got your pool. Does that make sense?

Michael: You've got to really help them see it in their mind.

Tom: That's right; you have to with words. I really believe, Michael, if I can say this, selling is an art form. Now I happen to collect art. I've been investing in art for over 25 years. I have a passion for both realistic and surrealistic art; I love them both. I love a seascape, I know that's what it is, but I love a Chagall or a Picasso or a Salvador Daly where you're not sure what was happening when they painted it. But I also have the appreciation of that type of art. Well, see, art begins on a blank canvas and then a man or woman takes the medium, charcoal, oil, they paint something that's pleasing to the eye so the person that sees it wants it on their walls and will exchange their money for this art. Well, selling is an art form but you don't use a paint brush, you don't use a blank canvas; you're painting images with your words and what you say in the mind of the person listening to you. Just like, for example, there's words you can't say to people like the three letter word buy. You know, Michael, when you buy this product . . . right away the word buy smacks them. And they're thinking we're not here to buy; we're just going to look. So you say the word own constantly instead of the word buy. Or the word contract. Contract scares the pants off of people, so you never, ever call it a contract. You just ask if you might draft up your feelings on the paperwork to just see if going

ahead even makes sense. So again, it's an art form but the paintbrush is your mouth and your words. Painting pictures of ownership where the money they pay is less than the benefits they'll get when they take it home.

Michael: Very good; here's a question from Jim Peak from [www.mysuccessgateway.com](http://www.mysuccessgateway.com). Tom, what is the state of the sales training and personal development industry today and where do you see the future heading?

Tom: Well, I know when I first started doing seminars there was only about 15 men and women that were nationally known as to seminars. And most of them were not "how to" sales trainers; they were more motivators. Augman Dino, for example, a prolific writer, he was famous. Earl Nightingale, J. Douglas Edwards, Paul Harvey before he got his radio show was doing motivational seminars. So all these folks, there was 15 of us. Today as one of the founders of the National Speaker's Association, there are over 4,000 members that have on their cards they're professional speakers. And the sad truth is, Michael, there are people that you don't know how good they are until you hire and pay them. And then if they're no good, your company has a black eye because you spent the company money and had someone who was not a competent presenter. Never ask how much something is without saying I've got make sure I offer quality in my company or I look bad. So I think the future is wonderful for our business. I have so many people come up to my seminar stage and say, Tom I want to do what you do some day. I know; you know a lot of people. The first key is to set a track record that people know you have credibility, know you've done what you're teaching them to do, and if you're 100 pounds overweight, don't talk about goal setting because that's not your subject, because you aren't living it. And that's another thing; I think people have to live as an instructor of that which they teach.

Michael: Beverly Smith wants to know what would you determine to be the hardest and biggest challenge in sales, Tom?

Tom: Staying up when you're just been beat up. Selling is a cycle business and it's amazing; you'll have a time period where everyone you talk to is nice. Everyone wants to meet you, everyone is pleasant, you're closing lots of sales, you're making good money. And then you can just hit a period where everything is the opposite. People are fighting you, they don't want to meet you, they don't invest in the product. Now you get timid, you get

shy. And that I think is the biggest challenge is to stay up when you really don't feel like it. I had a seminar in Tai Pa and I flew of course twenty-some hours to get to the seminar and I caught a bug and I was, I don't want to say deathly ill, but I could hardly stand and I had the promoters and I had a full six hours to teach. And I had them bring a chair in, a bar stool that was nice and high, and I just let the folks know that, hey I'm just going to sit and visit with you today; here's your workbook. And believe me, that was one of the longest six hours of my life. But a pro has to go on; a pro has to perform. And I think people in sales have to give their best day every single day regardless of how they feel.

Michael: That's great; Richard Emmans, an HMA Consultant in Grant Pass, Oregon wants to know, are effective selling techniques universal across all industries and in all age groups?

Tom: Pretty much but they have to tailor made. It's kind of like words. If I were with a 60 year old couple and I'm 28, I am not going to use words like awesome or gnarly about the product because I'm not relating to their culture or their age. I had people, when they first met me, when I was 23 or 24, I was doing pretty good, this 65 year old couple, you could see the little dubiousness in their eyes when they first met me. But again, after an hour or two with them, they'd start warming up and I had many of them say, you remind us of our grandson. You know, we've got a grandson that's 23; how old are you? I'm 23, as well. Again, I think it's the way you relate to people. So I think that the training is universal. Of course, when I go to Australia or New Zealand or Singapore, Malaysia, I spend a day out in the field with a top producer so that I can culturize my presentation because I think too many Americans go to a foreign country and they want to tell a person, this is what you need to do when I think I'd rather share what works for us, but here's an idea to tailor make it to your culture.

Michael: This is a question from John Lamb, Tom. I'm an engineer and I talk to the computer more than people. I don't know how to sell whether it's real selling or just selling myself in an interview. Seriously, can sales skills be taught and how?

Tom: That is a myth, Michael, I have fought all of my life. And the myth is that there has to be natural born sales people and that the people that aren't don't do well in selling. Now, I'm going to share something real quick. There's an interesting extrovert personality and an interested introvert personality. This engineer, I'll guarantee you, leans towards being the interested introvert. Now, the

interesting extrovert is the outgoing, gregarious, talkative person who gravitates into sales normally. I mean, everybody says, man you've got a mouth on you; you should be in sales. The engineer technical specialists, they have a tendency to feel that they couldn't sell because selling feels like it's uncomfortable. And that's why I try to teach people that are like our engineer friend that if you learn the art of questioning, you come across real sensitive and with your timidity and a little bit of fear, people respect that. I'd much rather do business with an interested introvert than an interesting extrovert. And, Michael, some of the men and women I teach, and they make \$700-800,000 a year as the highest paid person in a 1,000 person company. You meet them and you go, golly they don't come across like they're that powerful. Well, they aren't. They're just master questioners and great listeners. And in my books the main thing I talk about is ask questions, don't tell people what to do.

Michael: So people who want a career and they want to make a lot of money, can you think of a career any better than sales, if they're willing to do the work?

Tom: No, I think if a person will become a good student, number one, find something they love to do, number two, then become very coachable. Many people aren't coachable; they don't listen to what the company says works. They try to re-create the wheel and I think you have to take what the company that's been 25 years in existence knows works and you have to make it yours and internalize it. And that I would think is what's one of the most important things. Work harder on yourself, as I said, to learn your skills and I really believe that if the engineers can sell themselves on selling, they will really do well in that industry. But you do need to study. I wrote a book called, "Low Profile Selling; How to Act like a Lamb and Sell like a Lion". I wrote that book, for people that are not the traditional sales-type personality and it's a softer, gentler approach. But it's the questions that make it all work.

Michael: How many books have you written?

Tom: 13.

Michael: 13; and who are your publishers? Do you have one publisher?

Tom: Time Warner is my main, but a lot of them I self publish and the reason I do like the Dummies books, I don't publish those that are in all the stores around, but I have three Dummies books, "Sales

Closing”, “Sales Prospecting”, and “Selling for Dummies”, but most of my books we market at our seminars and that’s our greatest outlet. But of the 13, I think one of my favorite books is “Low Profile Selling”.

Michael: You’ve got a big event coming up. Can you tell the listeners about what’s coming up? Is it in Scottsdale?

Tom: Yes, it is. Every year for 25 years, I’ve brought people from all over the world literally to my home town, Scottsdale, Arizona. And we offer a three-day, high intensity program where we take those seven fundamentals and they are all taught and there’s a lot of interaction where we have breakout sessions, now look to the right, what you think you’d like to say based on these fundamentals, and I have some wonderful speakers as well. Bill Bartman is going to be on this program this year. Bill is a two billionaire. Bill started with nothing and through investing in companies, became the 25<sup>th</sup> wealthiest person in America and a very, very wonderful fellow. Now he’s going to do an hour of my three-day. I have a woman; women will love Nancy Friedman. She’s very, very successful and she’s going to be one of our presenters. And then Tony Peranello, all of you that are familiar with the great Video, which is his getting the decision maker; Tony’s on the program. So one thing we do, we make it in August, Michael, because that is not only our down season in Scottsdale, but folks can come and stay at the gorgeous Princess Hotel and the rooms are \$445 a night, but when you come to Boot Camp, you get them for \$95 a night. So it’s a real special event and we have 700-800 people that come every year and if anyone’s interested, would it be alright if I at least gave you my 800 number?

Michael: Absolutely, I want you to give me the best web site for the listeners to learn more about you and to learn more about this event and all your books and any phone number, sure.

Tom: Well, that’s nice; thank you. Well, my toll free number, and we have people that their whole function is to talk to people about Boot Camp, is 800-528-0446 and of course, my web is [www.tomhopkins.com](http://www.tomhopkins.com) and then of course, you would just go to the seminar schedule and Boot Camp and they give you all the information there. We have some great things happening, too. We try to get people to bring at least five or six people to the program, so you’re in a room, you have a team competing to learn all the presentations, and so we give some great group rates. And the people registered before August 8<sup>th</sup>, they can even save a lot more

money. And I know many of the people aren't aware of this, Michael, that Zig Zigler and Tony Robbins and a lot of these folks that are nationally known, they get \$2,500-\$3,000 for a three-day event like this. And we, of course, get \$1,095 and that includes a 60-page manual and that's if they register by August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. But if they want a brochure I've got a beautiful four color brochure, Michael, they can just call the 800 number and say, hey send me that brochure on Tom's August Boot Camp and the dates for anyone that just might want to see if they're available, are Thursday, Friday and Saturday, August 23, 24 & 25 and the management session, we try to get managers to come in a day early, is on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. And again, they can call me or they can fax me; anything they want to do. Our fax number, Michael, is 480-949-1590.

For more interviews like this, go to [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com).

Michael: For any of the listeners who are listening to this maybe a year from now, do you hold the training around the same time every year?

Tom: We try to make it as close to the last weekend in August every single year, and we have it at the Princess because we've had such a great relationship. Students just love the hotel. We take the whole resort, the TPC Golf Course is right next to it, so a lot of my buddies come in and they'll take Thursday, Friday and Saturday and play golf Sunday and head back home on Monday, but it's a fun three days. You'll work hard; you'll study hard; you'll compete; you'll have fun; we give away prizes and it's a great three days. I love it and everybody who comes seems to because we've had it filled every year for almost 25 years.

Michael: What's been your most successful book out of all your books, sales-wise, numbers-wise?

Tom: "How to Master the Art of Selling", which was my first book in 1979. I think it really hit the book stores in '80; it's approaching over 2,000,000 copies sold and that has been the foundation, Michael, of my whole company is that first book.

Michael: Was that Time Warner distributed?

Tom: That's a Time Warner, but of course we market a lot of our products because if they call my 800 number, I can get their name and

personalize it and write a little note to them, which I like to do and I think a book autographed by an author has a lot more meaning than just a book that they order from a bookstore.

Michael: That's great; are you still doing high end customizable trainings for corporations?

Tom: Oh yes, I don't think in the last 25 years there's an industry that I haven't done a customized program for. And that's really the thing I like to do best is to take a company that markets a product and they're having a convention of 300 people and write a work-book where I actually customize the whole presentation to their product and to me that is one thing most people in my business don't do. They pretty much have the same talk or same presentation for everybody. But I love a customized high end presentation; thanks for asking.

Michael: How is Nightingale Conan been with publishing your audio products? Has it been a good relationship?

Tom: They've been fine. We don't do an awful lot. That's not one of our main areas of marketing. The main area seems to be, when I'm up on the stage with 1,000 folks that have come into their seminar in Detroit, Michigan. We market product and I give them a tremendous discount and everyone listening, we have a seminar in almost every major city (our one day, not our Boot Camp), but hopefully the folks will hear of us coming to down and maybe come visit with me in person; I'd love that.

Michael: So you're at all of your seminars.

Tom: Yes, I do all the training. Years ago I decided to try to have a stable of teachers/trainers and got up to five other folks that were teaching but the bottom line when all the smoke clears, is we didn't do much better and a lot of the folks wanted me to be coming and teaching, so it's got me now.

Michael: Yes, they want Tommy Hopkins; they want to see you.

Tom: Oh, that's nice. If anyone calls me Tommy, they've been going a long time with me.

Michael: Well, we're out of time here and you've been very generous and I know I've bombarded you with questions but I think the content's

really important. It's been a real honor; I really appreciate your time.

Tom: Well, Michael, thank you and thanks to all of you that listened and have a wonderful forever.

Michael: You, too. Have a great day.