

# Powerful selling tips

An interview with business guru Brian Tracy

In writing these marketing articles for *PP*, I've been thrilled with the opportunity to interview so many business leaders, many of whom I've long admired. Topping off the list is Brian Tracy, who for the last 30 years has been educating, motivating and helping others become successful in business.

One of Tracy's strengths is his power of persuasion. He takes much of the negative connotation out of the word "salesperson," and he brings integrity, pride and a results-based system to selling. As he always says, nothing in the world happens until a sale takes place. Regardless of your artistic talent, and whether you like it or not, you must develop sales skills to succeed in the business of photography.

You can't count on luck or magic, but you can learn some powerful sales techniques. A good place to start is with Tracy's latest book, co-authored with Mark Thompson, "Now ... Build a Great Business!: 7 Ways to Maximize Your Profits in Any Market" (Amacom Books, [briantracy.com](http://briantracy.com)). *Now* is the time to start a business, he says, and he explains why selling as opposed to discounting is the key to success.

**Sarah Petty:** *You say timing's overrated. Why is this a good time to start a business?*

**Brian Tracy:** Some of the most successful businesses in America were started in a downturn. In fact, hundreds of thousands of businesses are being started now because people are out of work. When the business climate is tough, and you start with very little money, boy, do you get smart quick by starting to use all your creativity, intelligence and resources to generate business.

We've gone through a watershed in America and we've been coasting for many years on the affluence of Americans. From now

on, it's like the old Smith Barney commercials: You have to make money the old-fashioned way—you have to earn it.

*How has the Internet changed business?*

The Internet has changed everything. Look at your local newspapers and magazines—they're all flimsy now because no one is advertising in them. That's because it's shotgun advertising, where the Internet allows you to hit specific targets.

People will have to go out and sell. They'll have to make phone calls. They'll have to establish connections. They'll have to put together presentations and be far more aggressive.

One of the greatest challenges for small business owners is that they're obsessively terrified of rejection. The very idea of calling on a prospective customer sends trauma shuddering through their bodies, yet there's no longer an alternative. You can have the cleverest e-mail in the world, but nothing will replace face-to-face, voice-to-voice or eye-to-eye contact.

*What do you say to the businessperson who is panicking because the phone isn't ringing, so they immediately have a 50-percent-off sale?*

The phone works both ways. You can actually make outbound calls, as opposed to waiting for inbound calls. People have to keep the funnel full all the time. Sometimes people get busy and stop prospecting and developing new business, then the funnel gets empty and panic sets in.

Lowering your prices is the lowest form of salesmanship. It basically relegates you to a commodity and says you're no better and no different than anybody else who can point a camera. But the point of developing business is making it clear why you charge what you charge and how that's a benefit for the client

—because of the quality of the work they get. That's the essence of successful business.

*What about the new small business owner who's a one-man show? How does he prioritize what they should be working on and what they should be outsourcing?*

The first rule is to outsource everything you possibly can. The second rule is, when you surround yourself with good people, especially the small business owner and sometimes lone wolf, that means you can work with people who don't work for you.

For example, one of the best markets of all is shooting weddings. What you want to do is personally call on every wedding planner within 50 miles, show them what you do, talk to them, get to know them.

People will buy photography first of all because they like you, and second because they like your work. Those two things—they're never going to buy it over the phone and they won't buy it online, which is going to require that you get face-to-face with people. ■

*Sarah Petty Photography is in Springfield, Ill ([sarahpetty.com](http://sarahpetty.com)).*