

## Sales – A Great Career, Why the Put Down?

The first time I heard someone speak disparagingly about sales was during a high school class on careers. The teacher Mr. Sweet, yes that was his real name, spoke glowingly about the different trade careers at BHP, the largest local employer on the South Coast of NSW. He then paused, looked around the room and said, *“However, if you don’t like these careers, you can always go into sales. It doesn’t take much to be in sales.”*

Salespeople are consistently rated near or at the bottom in public surveys of the most and least trusted professionals. Why does sales as a career path continue to be overlooked and undervalued? Would a degree in sales change perceptions? There are many online, certificate and non-certificate sales courses, but these appear not to be enough.

The blocks we found to establish a sales degree in Australia are:

- The entrenched stereotype attached to sales
- A lack of appreciation for the competencies and talents it demands
- Academics, sometimes arrogantly misinformed, fail to see the significance of sales education
- A belief that sales do not warrant a place at university-level
- The tendency to position sales as a secondary subject within broader management or marketing degrees
- Resource constraints add weight to the challenge.

American Universities have led the way by being the first to consider sales as a degree more than 30 years ago and currently thirty-seven universities have full time sales majors. The rest of the world in terms of progress ranges from slow to non-existent. Europe takes a pragmatic approach integrating sales into applied science degrees and facilitate practical skills through collaborations with companies. On the other side are science-based institutions offering sales education rooted in theoretical concepts and academic research.

For those of us in sales we know what it takes and realistically, it is not for everyone. Sales requires determination and commitment built on years of education, coaching, and personal development.

I would like to see sales lifted as a top-tier career choice, it truly is, and for the public to recognize sales as an honourable profession. The power to shift this perception lies with us. According to TAFE there are 90,000 salespeople in Australia, and the developing world is estimated to be a surprising 1.2 million sales professionals, so there are many of us.

As part of my mission to elevate sales to professional standing I developed a framework of six sales competence levels.

These are:

Level 1: The Beginner

Level 2: The Novice

Level 3: The Disciplined

Level 4: The Competent

Level 5: The High-flyer

Level 6: The Professional.

Each level has a set of attributes, knowledge, and skills. For more detailed insights you can find these in *The Most Unlikely Salesperson* book or reach out to me by email for a copy.

Mr. Sweet did his best, he was a great teacher, but about sales, he was misinformed. If he were here today, it would be a pleasure to give him an update on our profession.

Let's do what we can to reshape perceptions through our words and behaviour. The more competent we become the brighter our professionalism shines through.



Kurt is a sales practitioner who created sales records in five industries and won major sales awards including Salesperson of the Year. The products and services he sold were newly released, consultative, relationship and retail. He is a recognized sales expert, successful author and respected sales and personal development coach who has guided organizations and salespeople to vastly improved sales performance and profitability. His clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. Kurt is the author of 21 *Timeless Insights for Sales Success* sold in eight countries. Available on [www.amazon.com.au](http://www.amazon.com.au) or [www.salesconsultants.com.au](http://www.salesconsultants.com.au). His latest book *The Most Unlikely Salesperson* will be released in August 2023.

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