

INBOOKS

are these business books for you?

The Greatest Salesman In The World

DETAILS: Paperback, 128 pages, 1983 | AMAZON.COM PRICE: \$7.99

The Greatest ... Part II

DETAILS: Paperback, 144 pages, 1989 | AMAZON.COM PRICE: \$7.99

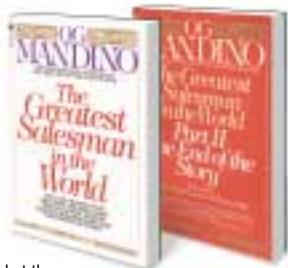
BY OG MANDINO

IN A NUTSHELL: Og Mandino's *Greatest Salesman in the World* is the world's all-time best-selling business book (9 million copies in 17 different languages.) And, for the life of us, we can't figure out why. Here we review the original "classic", and its sequel.

THE KNOWLEDGE: In order to provide his lessons in salesmanship, Mandino creates an allegory set in Biblical times

featuring a young salesperson, Hafid, who is chosen by a world-famous merchant, Pathros, to be the recipient of his lifetime of business wisdom. This wisdom is given to him in the form of ten scrolls, which are to be read at the rate of one per month — with the salesperson to repeat the lessons in each scroll to himself three times per day, with the last reading being spoken aloud. Actually, this is not a bad idea ... self-affirmation ... but did Mandino have to weave an entire Biblical epic around his lessons in order to get readers to re-read them? As for the advice itself, there are some instances of solid, and in some cases even inspiring, life-management and sales-generating advice. But other advice is so simplistic that it could be (and probably has been) stated more inspirationally in a needlepoint sampler rather than an entire chapter of a book. And even more of Mandino's "vision" is imparted in such a flowery, cornball manner that it's hard not to chuckle while reading: e.g. "Never will I be of concern that my goals are too high, for it is not better to aim my spear at the moon and strike only an eagle than to aim my spear at the eagle and strike only a rock?" In fact, Mandino's entire concept is almost laughably overblown. In the course of the two books, Hafid becomes the world's richest man, then a record-setting motivational speaker, and even a close friend of the great Roman philosopher, Seneca. But for sheer dizzying hubris, nothing compares to the section in which Mandino's salesperson, still struggling to make his first sale (of a fine wool jacket), comes upon a desolate cave in a little town called Bethlehem one cold December night ... and decides to make a present of his jacket to a poor couple and their beautiful, freezing child, who's asleep in a manger. Words fail to express the utter audacity Mandino shows in inserting himself (or his proxy) into one of the most important events in all of recorded human history.

OUR TAKE: Take all the sludge out ... the sloppy cliched writing, the dubious and even fraudulent history, the simplistic and interminably extended metaphors, the facile attempts at myth-making ... and you *might* have a good book. Of course, it would be only eight pages long.



O N S A L E S

answer man



This month, **Shane Decker** tackles questions from Instore's retail readers. Fire away.

I HAVE AN EMPLOYEE *who's getting her gemologist degree from GIA. She took it upon herself not only to take the course, but to pay for it as well. She has just passed the first exam in diamonds. Is there a way to show her she is doing a great job and get her to utilize her studies?*

Absolutely. You always want to encourage your employees to build their professional skills. First of all, as the owner of the store, you should reimburse her for the cost of the course. Secondly, you can show your pride by making her responsible for doing an inventory count and a case count on diamonds. Ask her to make a recommendation on what you need to buy to round out your current mix. Thirdly, you can have her work with the person responsible for appraisals. Once she has finished *Diamonds II* and *Diamond Grading*, she'll be well-prepared to offer even more help in terms of inventory recommendations and buying.

Many of your ideas are fantastic, but I feel that you use a "one approach fits all stores" formula for selling diamonds. Don't you feel that there needs to be a variance in your approaches?

Please don't take this the wrong way, but you've obviously never had me in your store. There are three different selling styles that salespeople use: serpentine, missile, and sneak (see **Instore** column of March 2003). There are different diamond-selling approaches for those stores that allow discounting, and those that do not. If price negotiation is allowed, I teach salespeople how to make price presentations. If negotiation is not allowed, I teach the staff to romance the product more and downplay price. I have worked with more than 3,000 stores, and we adapt our program for each store, as no two independent jewelry stores are alike.

Any advice for a salesperson who's great at selling but never makes it in on time?

Fire them, if they refuse to change. No matter how good they are at selling, no salesperson should ever get special treatment. In fact, it is even more imperative that your strong sellers set a good example for other team members. The first time you have to call them out on this issue, I recommend sending them home for one day without pay. The second time gets them three days leave without pay. The third time this happens, they should be terminated. You cannot allow this type of person to drag down your entire operation.

Can you define the fine line between being an "in your face" salesperson, and being a knowledgeable, subtle, nice salesperson? It seems many trainers promote "always asking for the sale", when I find there are other ways to make the sale.

One thing's for certain: this is not a "missile" asking this question! When I am speaking at a convention, I make my points far differently than I do in a one-on-one situation, which is why it may seem that many speakers cater more to the "missile" profile than the "serpentine." No matter what type of profile you are, I never like *pushy* ... and neither do your customers. You have to use your own style. There are lots of ways to close if you understand the anatomy of the sale. One great close is the reassurance close (i.e., "She's gonna love that!"). If you close all the way through the sale in a professionally correct manner, you will get the sale, no matter what your profile.

Shane Decker has provided much sought-after sales training for more than 3,000 stores worldwide. He can be reached at (866) 424-2472. Send questions for Shane to editor@instoremag.com.