

# Selling You

Improve your sales with Mark Jeffries' soft skills advice.

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**D**ividing time equally between London and New York, Mark Jeffries is a strategic communication and soft skills expert and consultant to some of the world's largest corporations, including Ernst & Young, Microsoft, IBM and Boeing. He's a regular contributor on NBC's *Today Show*, CNBC, *BBC News*, *Sky News* and *FOX Business News*. His latest book is *What's Up with Your Handshake?*

## **SUCCESS: How important is a first impression?**

**Mark Jeffries:** A first impression is crucially important. People are judging us the whole time—from the minute you walk out the front door in the morning, to the minute you go to bed at night. People look at your clothing, how you shake hands. They look at every aspect of your communication and make decisions, second by second, on whether they buy you or don't buy you. Regardless of what business you are in, we are all in sales.

## **That is so true. Can you tell our readers why you think everyone is in sales?**

**MJ:** Of course. I was giving a presentation in Toronto yesterday, and I asked for a show of hands from people who believe they are in sales. Out of an audience of 400 people, two people put their hands up. The reason we are all in sales is every time we have an idea that we show someone, people



don't just listen to the idea, but they look at the person broadcasting the idea. They ask themselves: Do I like this person? Do I trust them? In other words, do I buy them?

## **So what really makes the difference for a prospect in terms of making the sale?**

**MJ:** If you can't explain to someone in their language why they should want your product, service or idea, they won't buy it, no matter how great it is. That is why we have to understand that we are all in sales. To learn how to do it, people can follow the acronym LWAR. Listening and Watching first, and Adapting and Reacting second. You look at someone and ask yourself: If I were that person now, what would I want to hear? What would be troubling me? What would be my pain point? Where would I get excited if I were that person? And then all you have to do—because we are all good observers—is, very quickly, you have to change the way you sell your product or service to match what you guess are the needs of that person in front of you.

Of course, you can do a lot of pre-work if you are going to meet with a client. You can Google their company. You can search the industry and understand what is going on in their

world. A lot of people make the mistake of focusing solely on what they think are the great selling points of their service, and they just talk about those relentlessly, saying the same thing to every person. But it is only when you start to adapt your message to suit the person in front of you that you actually get to make headway.

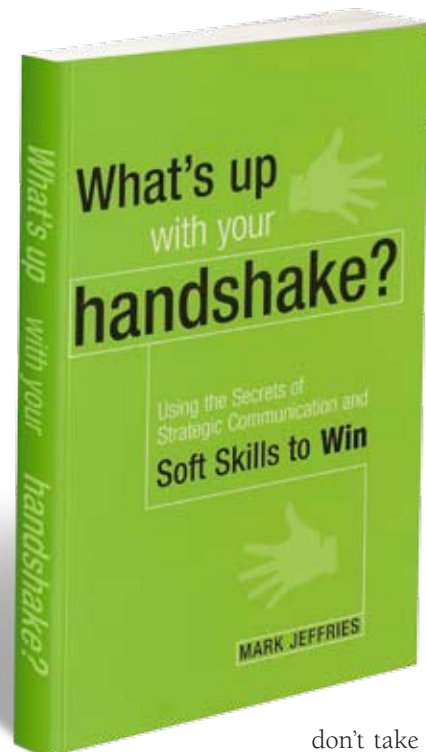
### Since you believe in customizing your message to meet the needs of the individual, what do you think of the elevator pitch?

**MJ:** It's funny; people have talked about elevator pitches forever. But you should be able to summarize in 30 seconds what it is that you do and the value of your product or service and adapt it every single time to suit the person who is actually listening. That is the real skill—understanding how to get a message across and to make sure it actually counts. Every single time you have to offer a differentiator. What makes you different?



### What are some of the most important ways to stand out?

**MJ:** You have to offer the differentiator of likeability. The likeability factor is huge because it all comes down to the fact that people buy people. We become so intent on focusing on this amazing thing we offer, we forget that, at the core, we are dealing with a person—someone who likes to go home in the evening and play with his dogs or kids or go to the movies, someone who has other worries, maybe how to go on vacation. We are all the same. We forget that and become too professional. It is not what someone who buys something wants. They want to find someone they trust and someone they like. It goes back to the first question you asked me, and that's first impression. We tend to gloss over the importance of the first impression and the first handshake.



### Why is the handshake so important?

**MJ:** If someone goes to shake your hand and gives you a little piece of cold salmon or holds on too long or just shakes your fingers, you instantly ask yourself, "What's wrong with this person?" Because, by now, surely, we all have it down; we know how to shake hands. But in the last two weeks, I bet you shook the hand of someone and thought to yourself, "That was weird."

When you shake someone's hand, you are instantly tilting the scales toward you or against you. The good news is, with soft skills, you don't have to do much to tilt the scales in your favor. But the bad news is, if you are not focusing or caring enough, you don't have to do much to tilt them *against* you, as well.

You have to make the other person feel great about their communication with you. Don't put someone's business card in your pocket. They are handing you a little life story. If you

don't take a moment to look at that card, acknowledge it and say something about it, you are missing a huge opportunity to tilt the scales in your favor. You are acknowledging that their card means something to you, and other people like that. That is one differentiator point, but it could be all you need to get into positive territory. **S**