One in every nine workers in the United States makes a living from selling, in the
classical way we think of the activity - trying to get people to part with their money in
exchange for a product or service.

That may not be a surprise. But what is, is that the other eight-out-of-nine of us also
spend 40 percent of our time selling, in a broader sense - trying to persuade, convince
and influence others or, in Daniel Pink's terminology, in non-sales selling.

One way or another, we're all seeking to move others: “The ability to move others to
exchange what they have for what we have is crucial to our survival and happiness.”

Furthermore, selling in this broad sense is a human social instinct. We just need his
help refining our skills.

This book is the latest in a series of best-sellers from former political aide and vice-
presidential speech-writer Pink, who is rated as one of the world's 50 most influential
business writers.

It's in three parts: an explanation of the changing nature and definition of the concept
of selling; the key attributes of the process of successfully moving others; and, finally,
guidance on how to put his ideas into action.

Rebirth of the Salesman

Reflecting on that one-in-nine statistic, Pink notes that sales - we'll call it “traditional
selling” to avoid confusion with “non-sales selling” - is the second largest employment
occupational category (after office/admin workers), and will grow by two million jobs by
2020.

Even though traditional selling is growing fast every one of us is also involved in non-
sales selling - from physicians who “sell” patients on a remedy and lawyers who sell
juries on a verdict, to teachers who sell students on the value of paying attention and
entrepreneurs who sell their ideas to funders. And, of course, individually, we use social
networks like Facebook and Twitter to “sell” ourselves and our ideas.
This is what Pink calls “moving” which is akin to “persuading.”

“The conventional view of economic behavior is that the two most important activities are producing and consuming,” he says. “But today, much of what we do also seems to involve moving. That is, we’re moving other people to part with resources - whether something tangible like cash or intangible like effort or attention - so that we both get what we want.”

How did this happen?

The Three Es

Pink identifies three key factors that are driving this trend: Entrepreneurship, Elasticity and Ed-Med.

**Entrepreneurship:** Almost a third of Americans now work for themselves. By 2020, self-employed individuals could account for more than half of the workforce.

If you’re self-employed, you have to work hard promoting yourself and selling your services. More entrepreneurs means more attempts to move others.

**Elasticity:** Job descriptions and role distinctions are blurring. Nowadays, we have multiple responsibilities inside a single job.

For many, this elasticity includes an ambassadorial or promotional role - selling our business and its values.

Some companies have even abandoned the idea of having dedicated salespeople. For example, software firm Atlassian has built a $100 million enterprise without a single sales person. It relies on support staff, engineers and others to promote its applications after trial versions have been downloaded for free. “In a weird way, everyone is a sales person,” says CEO Mike Cannon-Brookes.

**Ed-Med:** Educational and medical services are the fastest growing employment category in the US and their mode of operation involves a process of persuading or moving others.

Says Pink: “Care and education both revolve around non-sales selling: the ability to influence, to persuade, and to change behavior while striking a balance between what others want and what you can provide for them.”

The Age of Caveat Venditor

The other salient feature of our new selling environment arises from the increased availability of information, mainly via the Internet, and that affects our buying decisions.

In the old days, in an age of **information asymmetry**, the seller had the product information and therefore the power, while the consumer had little or none. We were urged
to practice *caveat emptor*, buyer beware.

For instance, a car salesman knew everything about an auto you were considering buying, while you knew next to nothing. He held all the cards and had all the power.

Today, the situation is transformed. You can check a vehicle’s accident record, the reputation of the vendors, average prices and common problems for yourself. So the salesperson had better not try to pull the wool over your eyes.

So now it’s the seller’s turn to be wary - *caveat venditor* (seller beware).

To keep relevant, sellers must become curators and clarifiers of information, helping to make sense of the avalanche of data potential buyers now possess or have access to.

At automotive group DARCAR, for example, the salesperson’s desktop PC is positioned so both he and the customer can see it. They can jointly inspect vehicle data and explore how it relates to the customer’s needs.

*Caveat venditor* applies to just about every sales situation.

Travel agents no longer have the monopoly on vacation information; job candidates no longer control access to all information about themselves; teachers may find themselves out-informed by a student who looked up the class topic on the Internet; and doctors are often confronted by patients who have already researched their condition and potential treatments.

The consequence?

“Whether you’re in traditional sales or non-sales selling, the low road is now harder to pass,” says Pink, “and the high road - honesty, directness and transparency - has become the better, more pragmatic, long-term route.”

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**The New ABC of Sales**

In the 1992 movie *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the ruthless anti-hero Blake shows his sales team a chart bearing the first three letters of the alphabet. He says: “A - always, B - be, C - closing. Always be closing.”

Today, says Daniel Pink, those letters represent the new ABCs of moving - *Attunement*, *Buoyancy* and *Clarity*.

*Attunement* is the ability to see issues from another person’s perspective, to “tune in” to the way they see and feel about things, so that you can respond in a way that’s appropriate and comfortable for them.

It relies on putting yourself in the other person’s shoes. When you’re trying to move someone, imagine how they may be feeling. Show them you understand their situation. This will significantly enhance your ability to connect.
A useful tool in this process is **mirroring** - copying others’ gestures and echoing their statements, but done subtly, with a slight time lag, so they are unaware of it. Research has shown this to be an effective way of strengthening a bond between people.

It’s also helpful to establish what Pink calls an **ambivert stance** - that is to be neither an extravert, dominating a conversation, nor an introvert, seeming shy and withdrawn.

To practice attunement, try these activities:

- Follow Good to Great author Jim Collins’ advice on starting a conversation with a question that encourages people to open up without seeming intrusive. Collins recommends: “Where are you from?”

- Try mirroring the gestures and comments of others - **Watch** them, **Wait** 15 seconds or so and mirror back (but not too often!).

- At meetings, use Amazon founder Jeff Bezos’s trick of leaving a chair empty - representing the customer or the person the meeting is about. You’re more likely to consider their perspective that way.

- Get in touch with your inner ambivert. Find out where you currently stand on the extravert-introvert scale at www.danpink.com/assessment and then take steps to modify your behavior. For instance, if you’re an extrovert, practice talking less and listening more. Introverts need to speak up more often and state their points of view.

**Buoyancy** is all about “how to stay afloat amid the ocean of rejection” that anyone involved in selling inevitably encounters. It’s a euphemism for optimism.

How you do this depends on what stage you’re at in the selling process.

**Before** you try to move others you can create buoyancy by identifying the reasons why you’re likely to succeed - but not simply by telling yourself: I can do it.

Better to ask yourself: “Can I do it?” says Pink because this will elicit answers and explanations that help you structure your approach.

**During** the interaction, demonstrate positivity. Being upbeat and looking on the bright side will heighten your intuition and creativity.

But, warns Pink, “You have to believe in the product you’re selling and that has to show.”

**After** the interaction do a “post-game analysis” that reviews the outcome in an optimistic way.

For example, if the other party was unmoved, tell yourself that there was nothing personal in their decision, and that their behavior was a one-off and not part of a pattern.

This approach really works for agents at insurance giant Met Life, where those considered to be optimists sold 37 percent more insurance than the pessimists.
Techniques for strengthening your buoyancy include:

- Asking yourself: “Can I move these people?” Then list five reasons why the answer is “Yes.”

- Actively monitor and try to improve your positivity. Start by taking and repeating the test on positivityratio.com.

- Explaining bad events to yourself as temporary, specific to that situation, and external - that is, not due to you or your performance but some other factor.

Identifying and stopping unproductive self-talk.

**Revealing Truths**

**Clarity** is an interactive process. It’s about helping others to “see their situations in fresh and more revealing ways and to identify problems they didn’t realize they had.”

The move away from information asymmetry to something approaching information equality has reshaped what buyers can do for themselves and thus what sellers should do to avoid becoming irrelevant.

For example, salespeople at Melle, the Italian maker of Mentos candies, focus on sharing research findings to help retailers sell more and strike the right balance in their product line.

Drilling down to understand the problems and challenges that consumers face is a great clarifying technique.

For example: Someone wants to buy a vacuum cleaner. But what’s the cleaning problem they’re trying to solve (cleaning floors)? Does this suggest other solutions (for example more effective window screens to keep out the dust, a better carpet, an inexpensive cleaning service)?

This may not get a sale for you right now but it will create a relationship from which you can build for future sales. Or it may prove that a new vacuum cleaner truly is the solution and you are the best source to provide it.

Identifying problems as a way to move others turns two long-standing skills upside down, says the author.

“First, in the past, the best salespeople were adept at accessing information. Today, they must be skilled at curating it - sorting through the massive troves of data and presenting to others the most relevant and clarifying pieces,” he explains.

“Second, in the past, the best salespeople were skilled at answering questions (in part because they had the information their prospects lacked). Today, they must be good at asking questions - uncovering possibilities, surfacing latent issues, and finding unexpected problems.”
Techniques you can use to help clarify others’ needs and your own thinking processes include:

• Clarifying others’ motives with two “irrational” questions. This is a counseling technique that aims to spark a behavioral change by understanding what’s driving an individual’s behavior and helping them to see it, rather than coercing them to change. Pink references an example of a student who’s resisting studying for an exam. Instead of telling her she must study, a parent might ask the student, “On a scale of 1 to 10, how ready are you to study?” After giving her answer, the parent asks: “Why didn’t you pick a lower number?” Asking why the number isn’t lower is a catalyst for the student to acknowledge that she is at least partially ready - that her motivation could have been even lower - thus creating a platform from which to encourage her.

• Refining your questioning skills by preparing in advance the questions you might ask your client or audience; or by using the Five Whys: When a person answers a question, you ask “Why?” When they give their explanation, you ask “Why?” again - and so on until you’ve asked “Why?” five times. This often takes you to the root of an issue.

• Jolting yourself out of complacent thinking by changing a behavior. Try sitting at the opposite end of a conference table at your next meeting, traveling home by a different route, or spending a day immersed in a new activity.

• Developing your skills as a curator of information - for instance, by selecting a specific subject relevant to your work, researching the subject, compiling the information and then sharing it with colleagues or customers.

What To Do Next

Now that you know your ABCs of moving others, Pink delivers some pragmatic advice on using them in the course of both traditional and non-sales selling.

This involves three skills: the way you present your case, your ability to respond to the needs of others as they become clarified, and setting aside your self-serving instincts in the cause of serving others.

Pitch Perfect

We all know what a sales pitch is. And we’re all familiar with the concept of the elevator pitch - a pithy summary of what you’re about.

But the art of successful pitching is not as straightforward as it seems.

For example, a study of meetings in which writers and producers pitched ideas to Hollywood movie moguls revealed that the most important element was the extent to which the presentation drew the “suits” into a conversation in which they could develop and contribute
their own ideas.

Pink explains: “The purpose of a pitch isn’t necessarily to move others immediately to adopt your idea. The purpose is to offer something so compelling that it begins a conversation.”

This process might include asking questions, which naturally elicits a response and supports attunement.

Or your pitch may involve developing a single word or small group of words that capture the essence of your business, while prompting your audience to want to know more.

This may seem farfetched, but think of a technology company whose name is synonymous with online searches (Google), or recall President Barrack Obama’s election strategy built around a single word - “Forward.”

Or consider the handful of words we use in an email subject line. Every email you send is a pitch. If the subject line isn’t attuned to the recipient, and doesn’t catch the imagination, the message may never be read.

To perfect your pitch, try these techniques:

• Before making it, consider these questions about your audience: What do you want them to know? What do you want them to feel? What do you want them to do?

• Review your own pitches and collect and study those of others.

• Experiment with pecha kucha. Never heard of it? It’s the visual equivalent of a Twitter tweet and an antidote to boring, verbose PowerPoint presentations. It contains 20 slides, each of which appears on the screen for exactly 20 seconds. Using this tool imposes clarity and succinctness, while catering to the short attention span and time poverty of today’s audiences. (For more information visit www.pechakucha.org)

The Power of Improvisation

Sales and theater performance have a lot in common. Both take guts and both invite rejection. Some organizations even provide carefully constructed scripts for their salespeople, and acting out the process may be part of their training.

But, says Pink, the stable and predictable times that once favored a scripted and rehearsed performance have given way to more complex and unpredictable conditions that call for adaptive and reactive behaviors more akin to improvisation.

He offers three rules for improvisational selling.

First, leave aside your own preconceptions on what might happen or what to say next. Don’t deliver a set message but instead listen to what is being said and then form your response.
This is what improv actors do. In Pink’s language, you hear offers. So an actor has no idea what she’s going to do or say until she hears what the other person says.

Second, build on what the other person says by employing buoyancy - you make something positive out of their situation. In theatrical terms, Pink tells us, you say “Yes, and…” rather than “Yes, but…”

In effect, you’re agreeing with the other person and building possibilities out of their comments. “When you stop,” he says, “you’ve got a set of options, not a sense of futility.” You’ve clarified their opportunities.

Finally, a guiding principal of improvisational theater is to make your partner look good, or, perhaps, to feel good about themselves and their relationship with you.

This third principle of improv, says Pink, “calls for, and enables, clarity, the capacity to develop solutions that nobody previously imagined.”

Techniques to help you develop these skills include:

- Pausing for a few seconds before responding to someone’s comments. This will help you develop your listening skills.
- Practicing saying “Yes, and…” to build on others’ ideas, instead of knocking them down.
- Using questions that will help increase your understanding so you can develop solutions that truly help the other person.

The Service of Others

The three improvisation skills just outlined - listening, responding positively and questioning - open the way for Pink’s final action technique: placing yourself in the service of others. This idea is at the heart of the book.

The more you understand and strive to improve the lives of others, the more effective you’ll be in your attempts to move them. To do this, you need to make things personal.

Consider this: radiologists reviewing CT scans were found to be far more effective in their assessments when they also had a photograph of each patient.

In another example, the owner of a restaurant posted a photograph of himself with his cellphone number in the restaurant, inviting people to call him directly if they were not satisfied.

“(T)he value of making it personal has two sides,” says Pink. “One is recognizing the person you are trying to serve, as in remembering the individual human behind the CT scan.

“The other is putting yourself personally behind whatever it is you’re trying to sell.”

In a business environment, moving others by putting yourself in their service led AT&T
executive Robert Greenleaf to develop the concept of **servant leadership**.

He argued that the most effective leaders weren’t the heroic, take-charge commanders but were quieter, humbler types whose goal was to serve those below them in the employment hierarchy.

Pink’s ideas for developing your service skills include:

- Forget “upselling” and focus on “upserving” - delivering more than the other person expects.
- Rethink sales commissions. Many firms have now abolished them because they put performance emphasis in the wrong place.
- Take a lesson from marketing guru Seth Godin, who asks: “Why not always act as if the other guy is doing you a favor?”
- Look for opportunities to personalize relationships. Get to know others. Find areas of common interest.

**Conclusion**

In his section on pitching, Pink introduces the **Pixar Pitch**. Named for the animated movie company, it uses Pixar’s formula for creating a story.

This pitch formula begins with “Once upon a time” and continues with “every day… (something would happen)”, then “one day…”, and “because of that…” and, again, “because of that…” ending with the phrase “until finally…..”

You can even apply the Pixar Pitch to his book, says Pink:

“Once upon a time only some people were in sales. Every day, they sold stuff, we bought stuff, and everyone was happy.

“One day everything changed: All of us ended up in sales—and sales changed from a world of caveat emptor to caveat venditor.

“Because of that, we had to learn the new ABCs—attunement, buoyancy, and clarity.

“Because of that, we had to learn some new skills—to pitch, to improvise, and to serve.

“Until finally we realized that selling isn’t some grim accommodation to a brutal marketplace culture. It’s part of who we are - and therefore something we can do better by being more human.”

Try it for yourself and your business and see what happens!