

BOOK REVIEW

Thinking About Selling

Strategies to improve your selling performance

By Neil J. Binder

NICE IDEA PUBLISHING, 164 PAGES, \$19.95

Tips for novices — and old hands

Neil Binder's newest book offers timely lessons on selling

REVIEWED BY BETH BRAVERMAN

With a credit crunch that shows no signs of abating, it looks like the national housing slowdown — and the current buyers' market — will not go away any time soon. Could there be a better time for home sellers and real estate brokers to bone up on their basic sales skills?

A new book by Bellmarc Realty cofounder Neil Binder attempts to help readers do just that. "Thinking About Selling: Strategies to Improve Your Selling Performance" is Binder's fourth book devoted to the art of the deal. This one focuses on selling generally — yet, perhaps surprisingly, offers little take-away information specifically for real estate.

The first half of the book, which is skimmable, attempts to convey selling lessons gleaned from the four-week, in-house training course for Bellmarc's brokers.

The first few chapters outline selling basics, like rules for becoming a salesperson (Rule No. 1: Anyone can sell; Rule No. 2: The key to being a better salesperson is to grow rather than change) and the qualities of a successful salesperson (according to Binder they are attentiveness, deductive reasoning and likability).

The author also advises readers to cultivate "a big-picture mentality" and says a successful salesperson should always be looking to build a business.

"He knows that if you are only thinking about one deal, you're losing your focus on the overall objective, which is to create and strengthen a larger enterprise," Binder writes. "A deal is only one event along the way. He thinks of every customer as a referral base, and every time he treats a customer right, he feels he has done a deal, even if it is not with that customer."

While Binder lays out these lessons and rules in a lucid and accessible manner, the book initially does little to differentiate itself from the dozens of other how-to sales tomes that overwhelm the shelves of some bookstores.

Yet while the initial chapters offer an introduction to sales that seems tailored to novices, much of the rest of the book offers tips aimed at improving the performance of experienced salespeople.

Sometimes the translation of the brokerage's sales teachings into written form falls short. For example, a lesson from Bellmarc's training session that requires participants to step on and off of chairs becomes confusing for a reader to follow.

The book also requires readers to fill out worksheets used in the Bellmarc training sessions and then refer back to them. The worksheets, however, contain many vague instructions and can be frustrating to complete. Further, the book does not explicitly spell out the purpose of some of these exercises.

Yet bright spots emerge. In particular, the sidebars at the end of each chapter, in which Binder offers brief personal memories or observations about the world, are relevant and provocative, and they help make the book's lessons tangible.

Binder uses a story about his daughter's piano lessons, for example, to convey the importance of putting passion into one's work. Another sidebar uses a story about fighter jets to explain the importance of flexibility.

Like a good real estate investment, this book gets more valuable as it progresses.

Chapter seven, "Understanding bio energy," offers fascinating insight into harnessing personal energy to become more productive and to maximize profits.

The book's final chapter outlines specific shortcomings Binder has found in unsuccessful salespeople and offers remedies that readers can apply to their own selling techniques.

Salespeople who do not know the market, for example, should start by defining price categories and reviewing the product alternatives for each category to choose the best choices.

"This is how you study the market," he writes. "If you don't study the market, you won't know the market, and you won't be an authority to your customer."

The bottom line: Readers would do well to skip the worksheets and skim the first six chapters, making sure to read the sidebars. Chapters seven through 10 offer more detailed pointers that readers can use to become better sellers. **TRD**