

# Media Selling, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

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## Chapter 4 – The AESKOPP System of Selling

Let's return to those years of yesterday when I made my first sales call and ask what I did wrong. The answer is easy – everything. But everything is not a helpful response, so we will put the responses into a context of a selling system to help you understand the elements of a successful sales call and a successful sales system.

To begin with, I did not plan my call properly did not have a framework, or a method for breaking down the sales call into component parts in order to analyze it. The AESKOPP system of selling provides such a framework.

The AESKOPP system is a generalization, a simplification of some underlying, universal sales principles and provides a framework for coaching, planning, and evaluating sales thinking and action. It posits that successful selling requires Attitude (A), Emotional Intelligence (E), Skills (S), Knowledge (K), Opportunities (O), Preparation (P), and Persistence (P):

$$A \times E \times S \times K \times O \times P \times P = \text{Success}$$

Notice that each element in the above formula is multiplied by the others. Just as in a mathematical formula, if any one of the elements is not present, then the result is zero success; any element multiplied by zero is zero. Thus, all of the elements must be present for a successful result – getting customers and keeping them.

Before making a sales presentation to a prospect or customer, salespeople should get into the habit of asking themselves the seven AESKOPP questions, and they should also evaluate their overall sales approach and performance by regularly asking themselves these questions. In addition, managers should continually ask these questions about their salespeople and their performance in order to coach them effectively.

### The Seven AESKOPP Questions

1. Do I have the right mental Attitude to solve problems and get results for my customers?
2. Do I have the Emotional Intelligence to understand people and build rapport with them?
3. Do I have the Skills necessary?
4. Do I have the Knowledge necessary?
5. Do I have the Opportunities?
6. Do I have sufficient Preparation?
7. Do I have the Persistence to never, never, never, never give up?

If the answer to all of the above questions is yes, you will make lots of sales. However, if you put a priority on closing a sale above all else, you put establishing and

maintaining relationships, solving problems, and getting results in a subordinate position. This means that sooner or later your customers will know you care more about yourself and your income than about their problems and their desired results.

## **The AESKOPP System**

In the remainder of this book, we will examine the AESKOPP system in detail. Chapter 5 goes into more depth about how an optimistic attitude can help you create a positive future. Chapter 6 covers emotional intelligence and provides you with details about how to improve your emotional intelligence. Chapters 7 through 13 concentrate on skills. Chapters 14 through 23 cover knowledge. Chapter 24 covers opportunities, preparation, and persistence.

Following are definitions of each of the seven AESKOPP elements.

**Attitude:** *Attitude* is having the desire and motivation to be a salesperson and having the proper mind set to do it. If you have the skills, the knowledge, and the opportunities to sell but have no desire to do so, you will not be successful. Chapter 5 presents more details on attitudes and how to control and improve them.

**Emotional Intelligence:** *Emotional intelligence* is the ability to understand yourself and others so you can develop empathy and rapport with people and manage relationships successfully. Chapter 6 presents more details on how to increase your emotional intelligence.

**Skills:** *Skills* are the ability, improved through practice, to use your knowledge of techniques, methods, and tools. For salespeople, it is understanding the techniques of prospecting, identifying problems, generating solutions, presenting, negotiating and closing, and servicing. Chapters 8 through 12 will have in-depth details about these techniques.

**Knowledge:** *Knowledge* means knowing the product you are selling in depth – knowing more about it than your customers do so you can educate them. For salespeople, it means having information not only about their product, but also about research, about marketing and advertising, about customers' businesses, and about competitive media. Chapters 13 - 23 will cover these knowledge areas.

**Opportunities:** *Opportunities* are the circumstances in which you can use your tools. Even if you have the tools and know how to use them, you cannot accomplish anything unless you have opportunities to put them to use. Salespeople may know how to solve problems and have a storehouse full of product, marketplace, and competitive knowledge, but if they do not make sales calls and find prospective customers, they will lack the opportunities to put their skills and knowledge to work.

**Preparation:** *Preparation* is getting organized to solve customer problems, as covered in Chapter 24. Even if you have the attitude, emotional intelligence, skills, knowledge, and opportunities to sell, you will not solve problems or make many sales if you forget your presentations and if you do not know anything about clients' businesses or personalities.

**Persistence:** *Persistence* means never giving up. Salespeople need to continue working on prospects past any initial uninformed "no" they might encounter.

## **Core Competencies of the AESKOPP System**

Each of the seven elements of the AESKOPP system is made up of a group of core competencies – building blocks – that, linked together, lead to successful performance on that element. The core competencies are subject to change, depending on the media selling job involved. Some sales positions, such as in a large-circulation national magazine – *People*, for example – require a high level of knowledge, especially about national advertising, the product, and magazine research, plus very strong relationships with major advertising agencies and advertisers. Other sales positions, such as in a local television station, might require an understanding of retail businesses – an automotive dealership, for example – and skills in negotiating with advertising agencies.

Below is a list of core competencies for each of the elements the AESKOPP system.

### **Core Competencies**

**Attitude:** Honest, positive/optimistic, committed, confident, courageous, competitive, coachable (open/non-defensive), self-motivated, assertive, flexible, cooperative, and nurturing.

**Emotional intelligence:** Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (internal and external).

**Skills:** Communicating (internal and external), listening, understanding people, creating value, presenting (to individuals and groups), negotiating and closing, and servicing.

**Knowledge:** Financial/economic/business/category, marketing/advertising, market, product, and competitive media.

**Opportunity:** Prospecting/getting appointments, and identifying problems (discovery).

**Preparation:** Strategic thinking, creativity/problem-solving, organization, planning, and time management.

**Persistence:** Determined/never giving up, and follow-up.

Each of the seven AESKOPP elements will be defined and explained much more thoroughly in subsequent chapters.

### **Core Competencies**

The next step in effectively using the AESKOPP system is to evaluate yourself based on your degree of expertise on each of the core competencies as listed in Exhibit 4.1. I have assigned a percentage to each of the seven AESKOPP elements according to my perceived importance each contributes to a salesperson's ultimate success. These AESKOPP elements and their corresponding core competencies will change with the type of media selling job as will the percentages I have assigned, but the AESKOPP elements and core competencies in Exhibit 4.1 are a good place to start in order to define and evaluate a media salesperson's job. I recommend that salespeople and sales managers go over the list together and add or delete core competencies and put weights on each according to the needs of the medium they sell and the company they work for.

Then, salespeople should study their modified and weighted list, evaluate themselves, and then develop a plan to improve those competencies in which they lack experience or have a deficit.

Note the title “Salesperson Core Competencies.” The term salesperson is used because it is inclusive of a wide variety of titles salespeople in the media are assigned by their organizations: sales representative, account executive, account manager, sales consultant, radio marketing consultant, business development director, director of new business, and many more. The preferred title is Account Executive or Account Manager, which implies managing customers’ accounts, schedules, and campaigns according to what is best for a customer. Also, titles that include “consultant” should be avoided because customers need results more than advice. In this modern age of solutions selling, Results Generator might be a suitable title. But this euphemism is akin to calling a janitor a Maintenance Engineer, so Account Executive or Account Manager are more appropriate titles. However, in this book, to avoid confusion, salesperson will be used in order to encompass all titles.

Below is my list of the AESKOPP elements with percentages and the associated core competencies.

#### **Exhibit 4.1**

#### **Salesperson Core Competencies**

##### **Attitude (12%)**

- Honest
- Positive/Optimistic
- Committed
- Confident
- Courageous
- Competitive
- Coachable (Open/Non-defensive)
- Self-motivated
- Assertive
- Flexible
- Cooperative
- Nurturing

##### **Emotional Intelligence (20%)**

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management
  - Internal
  - External

##### **Skills (20%)**

- Communicating
  - Internal
  - External
- Listening
- Understanding people
- Presenting
  - Individual
  - Groups
- Creating Value
  - Missionary selling
  - Service selling
- Persuasion
- Negotiating/Closing

Servicing  
 Team leadership  
**Knowledge (20%)**  
 Financial/economic/business/category  
 Marketing/Advertising/Research  
 Market  
 Product (your medium)  
 Competitors  
 Competitive media  
 Pricing  
 Sales process  
 Contract terms  
**Opportunity (8%)**  
 Prospecting/Getting appointments  
 Identifying problems (Discovery)  
**Preparation (12%)**  
 Generating solutions (research)  
 Strategic thinking  
 Creativity/Problem-solving  
 Organization  
 Planning  
 Time management  
 Creating presentations  
**Persistence (8%)**  
 Determined/Never giving up  
 Follow-up

The most effective way to use this list of core competencies is to download it from the book's Web site ([www.mediaselling.us](http://www.mediaselling.us)) and use it as a coaching instrument.

The AESKOPP system of selling provides salespeople an excellent way to keep track of their strengths and opportunities for improvement (a positive way to say weakness or shortcoming). It is also a valuable tool for managers because by using a modified and weighted core competencies checklist, they will have an excellent coaching tool and snapshot of a department's strengths and weaknesses and who has high potential to become a manager.

## Test Yourself

1. What do the various letters in AESKOPP mean?
2. Do all of the seven AESKOPP elements have to be present for successful selling?
3. Name five core competencies in the Skills element.
4. Name five core competencies in the Preparation element.
5. How can a salesperson use the core competencies rating system to improve performance?
6. Name two ways a sales manager can use the core competencies rating system.

## Project

Rate yourself on all of the core competencies, make a list of the five you need to work on most, and then assign yourself some learning goals – for example, “to improve your market knowledge by reading Chamber of Commerce material and Census data.”

## **Resources**

Michael Corbett. 1999. *The 33 Ruthless Rules of Local Advertising*. New York: Pinnacle Books.

Philip Kotler. 1999. *Kotler on Marketing: How to Create, Win, and Dominate Markets*. New York: The Free Press.

Don E. Schultz, Stanley I. Tannenbaum, Robert Lauterborn. 1994. *The New Marketing Paradigm: Integrated Marketing Communications*. Chicago: NTC Business Books.