

The Four Agreements for Sales: Advice for Selling Your Freelance Services – by Fran Marranca

Selling your freelance services can seem a daunting task, even for a seasoned freelancer. The most important thing to understand is that a client buys you first, and then whatever it is you are selling. The art of selling is about developing strong relationships with your prospective clients. You want to make a connection with your prospective client (let's call him "Ted") and show Ted the value you can add to his project. Like all relationships, this involves human interaction – and that's where the sales process can get a bit tricky!

The process of selling one's services or product is like dating. The process requires nurturing, developing trust, proving value, delivering excellent work and creating respect. And, much like dating, not everyone is going to like you or want to hire your services.

No matter how you first meet with Ted, relationship plays a major role in your success. You can't control Ted's response to you, but you can certainly control your approach, demeanor and response to him.

So how do we "date and woo" the "Teds" of the world, while maintaining our confidence and self-esteem? If you practice **The Four Agreements** by **Don Miguel Ruiz**, you're certain to see greater sales success.

The Four Agreements are:

- 1) Be impeccable with your word.**
- 2) Don't take anything personally.**
- 3) Don't make assumptions.**
- 4) Always do your best.**

These Agreements can save you heartache and headaches. At first glance, the Four Agreements may seem a bit obvious, or simplistic, but while they are simple to understand, they are not always easy to practice. Let's look at these Agreements from the perspective of the sales process:

Be Impeccable with Your Word

First and foremost be honest, not only with Ted, but with yourself! Sometimes when you are eager to close the deal, it can be tempting to over-promise or claim an expertise that you simply don't have. While you may do this with the best of intentions, hoping that by making such promises you will seal the deal, ultimately, once the engagement begins, the truth will become evident soon enough. (This is when creating strategic alliances with

other freelancers who compliment your skill set will come in handy. A blog for another day!) Sometimes the gig is just not the right fit for your skill set. Similar to the fine art of dating, not every Ted will be a match or a fit for your skills and your career goals.

Take time to get to know Ted, ask him questions to better understand what his goals and needs are and then present the value of your particular skills showing Ted how your talents will contribute to his goals. Follow this formula and you will eventually find the right clients. And your confidence will soar as you eagerly enter into a work engagement that is the right fit for you, knowing that you were clear in your sales pitch, and can deliver quality work as promised. Further more, rather than claiming – “I can do it all.” your transparency about what you do well and what you may not do as well, gives you credibility. Clients appreciate your honesty, which lends to their confidence to engage your services and expertise. Happy clients can lead to referrals. Remember, your reputation precedes you, and it follows you too, thus the value in being impeccable with your word.

Don't Take Anything Personally

This is a big one, possibly the toughest Agreement to follow. We've all had our feelings hurt; we know what rejection feels like! It feels personal! Let's look at it from the sales process:

You have done your best sales pitch ever, but Ted has decided to “go another way.” Rejection is part of the deal in sales and it is very easy to take personally. But remember, all you can control in the sales process are your actions. If it doesn't work out, be honest with yourself. Do a checklist. If you did your best, showed up to the meeting well prepared, rocked on your sales pitch, followed up with Ted, were impeccable with your words and even got a laugh out of him, you did your job. If you find in your post mortem that there are aspects of the process that you could have done better, then make a note of it and move on to the next Ted with this knowledge in hand.

If you know that you totally rocked the sales process and still didn't get hired, remember that there are many reasons Ted went in a different direction that could have nothing to do with you. (He wasn't ready to make a commitment, he didn't have the funds, he was just shopping for ideas, etc.) It's important to not take this personally and to not burn the bridge with Ted, tempting though it may sometimes be. Keep the lines of communication open, touch base from time to time and keep on prospecting and selling to other “Teds”. Many times what begins as a “no” turns into a “yes”. Clients aren't always ready to immediately say yes, but when they are, they'll contact you if you keep in touch with them and continue to develop the relationship.

It's important not to take “No” as a personal rejection. Sales is a numbers game, simple math: Out of 100 prospects you get 10 requests for proposals, out of 10 requests for proposals you get one client. This is simply the part of the sales process that isn't always fun. You can't be all things to all people, but if you persevere, you will see results and with results you will see your odds changing as well. It's a momentum game too – the

more you win, the more you win. Suddenly out of 100 calls you get 20 requests for proposals, out of 20 requests you get 4 “Teds”! And so on. The trick is to keep on keeping on, be honest with yourself about what you can do better, shrug off the rest and just keep prospecting!

Don't Make Assumptions

Assumptions are a big pitfall in sales. Even before we pick up the phone the assumptions can flood into our heads –“they won't like me”, “they won't want to speak to me”, “they're too busy”, “they don't have enough money”, etc. Especially in a cold calling situation, it is easy to let the demons of assumption hold us back from a personal interaction. When you are assuming the worst, it is tempting to send an email with a pitch and hope that out of 100 emails sent, someone will respond. But truly – we've all received unsolicited emails, and let's face it – we usually delete them, thinking they are spam. I recently spoke with a client who was having problems with their sales team getting meetings. I asked them how the sales reps were going about setting up meetings with prospects. His response was – “I hear them pitching to people's voice mail or sending email pitches! And no one ever calls them back!” Shocking! (not!)

Here is what voice mail is for – leave your name and number first – then a brief sentence about who you are and your desire to set a meeting – leave your name and number again. Voicemail is not for selling. Don't assume Ted will listen to your voice mail. People are busy and have little time to listen to a pitch they didn't even know they wanted! It's best to simply call again. And, much like dating, don't stalk Ted either! Call again in 48 hours. If timing is urgent, then call in 24 hours but don't leave repeated voice messages. Ted will eventually pick up the phone. And don't assume that if Ted doesn't call you back that he is not interested. Just call again. Keep on prospecting other leads so that you build your pipeline and don't obsess too much over any one prospect!

Always Do Your best

This one says it all. In your life, work, relationships, always strive to do your best. Although your best will be different from day to day. On a day when you have the flu, your best isn't as good as on a day when you are feeling healthy. And yet, in every day, whatever the situations you may be facing, you can strive to do your best. And, with each passing day, you evolve and your best gets better. Your best 5 years ago is not your best today. You are an expanding being, striving to grow, learn and create success. What interested you 5 years ago doesn't necessarily hold your interest in the same way today. Everyday, as you go through the process of doing your best, you learn. Through rejection, we learn what we can do better. Through success, we learn how much more we can do. But the truth is, we are always growing, always seeking, always striving and expanding. And so, everyday, if we strive to do our best, our best simply gets better. Remember, the more success you make, the more success you make! With momentum, comes more momentum. Suit up, show up, do the best you can and remember the Four

Agreements in your day to day interactions, relationships and sales process. And don't worry, there are plenty of "Teds" in the sea!

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