Understanding People—the good, the bad and the cunning.

QUICK OVERVIEW

In his classic Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive, legendary business leader Harvey Mackay addresses management practices, salesmanship and negotiation. By breaking the advice into bite-size chunks, he makes the relevant material immediately accessible and applicable.

Mackay divides this book into what he calls “Three Basic Courses” on salesmanship, negotiation and management—comprising 69 chapters. He also includes 19 “quickie” lessons, as well as chapters on “How to Succeed” and “Helping Your Kids Beat the Odds.” With so many chapters, the table of contents may make the book appear overwhelming. But Mackay makes his points quickly. In fact, a few of the lessons are so short, the title is the total content. This summary focuses on points from the lessons on sales, negotiation and management.

Some of his instruction may seem outrageous. However, his practices have garnered serious revenue (to the tune of $100 million), and his sales team earns twice the industry standard. Best of all, Mackay’s tips are inexpensive and practical. Read Swim with the Sharks and you’ll be equipped to take your business to the next level—regardless of your starting point.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

Winners know their strengths and capabilities. Mackay points out winners don’t need someone to feed their ego. Rather, they surround themselves with other winners. They seek out people who complement their weaknesses and encourage learning and solution-oriented thinking.

Think about the people with whom you choose to spend the majority of your discretionary time. These are the people you are learning from.

What attitudes have you developed during the past month from these associations? How do those attitudes benefit you? What skills or thought processes have you learned from these people? Are you satisfied with the results you have acquired from these lessons?
Who do you believe you could learn from, but aren’t spending enough time with? Schedule a 20-minute appointment with them during the next two weeks.

Remember, you’ll achieve greater success in life when you spend time with people who can teach you.

Business revolves around human beings. We’re not all in it to make a buck. What this book offers is not how and what to buy cheap and sell dear. Instead, I’m going to try to help you make money by giving you a better understanding of people.

What you are going to read from now on in this book isn’t a laundry list of killer closing lines and split-second witticisms that landed the big fish. It’s how the big fish got to be that way and how you can be one, too.

**A SHORT COURSE ON SALESMAHNSHIP**

*It’s Not How Much It’s Worth; It’s How Much People Think It’s Worth*

A speaker is introduced to a roomful of people who have never seen him or heard him before. He begins his presentation by reaching into his pocket and holding up a twenty-dollar bill. He says, “This twenty is for sale for exactly one dollar. Who wants to buy it?”

Now, be honest. Would you leap to your feet clamoring to get his attention? Or would you wait a few seconds, see what everyone else does, and then after a hand or two goes up, timidly raise your own?

If you’re one of the hesitators, you’re normal. We’ve been taught all our lives that only suckers fall for deals like that. But once someone else is willing to take a chance, on no better information than ours, then our greedy little hands pop up, and we tend to go along. The faster others’ hands are raised, the greater the demand, and the more likely we are to be part of it. Our sense of what something is worth derives not from the intrinsic value of the object itself—whether it’s twenties for a dollar or unusual tulip bulbs or a rare gem—but from the demand that has been created for that object.

In order to supply something, you must first create demand. I could stand on a street corner all day long with twenty-dollar bills for sale at a dollar apiece and only manage to get arrested. Who would believe that anyone would make such a fabulous offer? There must be a catch.

Marketing is not the art of selling. It’s not the simple business of convincing someone to buy. It is the art of creating conditions by which the buyer convinces himself. And nothing is more convincing than hard evidence that others want the same thing.

*How to Handle the Tough Prospect*

My definition of a salesperson is not someone who can get the order. Anyone can get the order if he tells enough lies—for example, about price or delivery time.

A great salesperson is someone who can get the order—and the reorder—from a prospect who is already doing business with someone else.

It all starts out with the sales call. I have never made a cold call in my life. Before I see anyone on a sales call for the first time, I see to it that I’m introduced. The salesperson’s classic dilemma is set out in an ad done forty years ago by McGraw-Hill to promote—what else—advertising. It pictures a green-eyeshade, rolltop-desk-type curmudgeon facing the reader who is cast in the role of the salesman. The Tough Prospect says:

- I don’t know who you are.
- I don’t know your company.
- I don’t know what your company stands for.
- I don’t know your company’s customers.
- I don’t know your company’s products.
- I don’t know your company’s reputation.
- Now—what was it you wanted to sell me?

If you’re not selling for a big, well-known company, you need an effective entry. The best recommendation is from one of your own customers, someone already known to your prospect.

I’ve spent a lifetime trying to build a network of customers and friends who will give me a line of communication into almost every office in my city.

There are two ways to do it: retail and wholesale. Retail means the one-at-a-time kind of contacts that are built up through participation in community or social activities. Wholesale means the recognition, and acceptance, extended by people who don’t know you personally but who have heard about you as a speaker, read your articles, or read about your civic activities in the papers.

Either method can help break down the classic barriers.
**Fantasize**

When I was thirteen, I dreamed of owning a factory. When I owned the factory, I dreamed of selling the largest and most prestigious account in town and finally achieved it. In fact, for five years, when men actually wore hats, I had the words “General Mills” pasted inside the crown of my hat so I saw it every time I put my hat on. An absolutely unavoidable way to remind myself of what I had to do.

I came to realize that fantasizing, projecting yourself into successful situations, is one of the most powerful means there is for achieving personal goals.

It’s what an athlete does when he comes onto the field to kick a field goal with three seconds on the clock, sixty thousand people in the stands, thirty million watching on TV, and the game in the balance.

As the kicker begins his move, he automatically makes the hundred tiny adjustments necessary to achieve the mental picture he has formed in his mind so many times since he was a kid… the picture of himself kicking the winning field goal. Great athletes seem to have something in common: the ability to project. Even in the middle of action, they see things happen a split second before they happen.

Human survival itself very often depends on a kind of future vision, seeing oneself in specific situations as a healthy, thriving, creative person.

Dream on.

**A SHORT COURSE ON NEGOTIATION**

**The Ability to Walk Away from the Table Without a Deal**

Whether it’s a labor negotiation, an acquisition, or a real-estate deal, don’t deceive yourself into believing that just because it’s negotiable it has to be negotiated.

I had occasion to take my own advice recently. Five partners had formed a real-estate deal to develop a major hotel property in Chicago. Two days before all the financial commitments were to be signed and the bank was to issue their letter of credit, one of the partners, an architect, dropped out in a dispute over the dollar value they’d be credited with for their professional work. That’s when they contacted me. I was offered very attractive terms and given twenty-four hours to make up my mind. When the time was up, I said, “Thank you very much. It’s a very attractive deal. But I still haven’t decided that I want to take it.” And I left the table. The next day—after the ironclad twenty-four-hour deadline had expired—the phone rang and the terms got even more attractive, including a guarantee by a financial angel with *Forbes* 400 net worth that eliminated any downside risk.

Deals seldom get worse when you walk away from the table. Be prepared to walk away from the table… and mean it. You’ll be able to go back to the table and get even better terms.

**What’s the Best Way to Save Time?**

- Use your cell phone according to posted rules so you don’t alienate important people.
- Use your cell phone to contact a client before you make a call, making sure you have their cell line, their land line and their e-mail address.
- Always park your car in the getaway position.
- Use your car’s CD player to listen to discs that teach you something, instead of babble from the radio.
- Never travel without a PDA or pocket dictating unit at your side so you can “write yourself notes” while you’re driving.
- Keep that same device by your bedside… you’ve just doubled the hours you can be getting ahead of the competition.
- Plan out your e-reading daily. Have all the important publications logged for instant reference. If you’re likely to be waiting in a reception office, you’ll know exactly which Web address you’ll move to next.
- Never go to the bank or corner ATM during Friday lunch hour.
- For an entire week, switch your reading plan. Dump the sports section or gossip scoop and read the hometown newspapers of your major customers, or the trade journals of your key customers or suppliers, so you can learn what they’re worried about.
Agreements Prevent Disagreements

Every now and then you find yourself dealing with a “country cousin” type who says he doesn’t want a contract and “your word is good enough.” Maybe yours is, but his usually isn’t.

One of those arrangements taught me a lesson I’ll never forget. I had a handshake deal with a man I hired. He agreed that he would not seek other employment for two years. After a year, a better offer came along, and he was gone. He said he remembered that we had agreed on only one year. How could I prove he was wrong? I couldn’t.

Now what I do when I make a deal, I simply send a letter that same day in which I thank him profusely for his courtesy. Set out the terms of the deal: “As I understand our agreement, I have agreed to….”

I don’t usually ask for any acknowledgment (though you could just to be on the safe side—to make sure the letter arrived). It’s just a nice, friendly letter—and a useful record if there are any misunderstandings later.

Make Your Decisions with Your Heart, and What You’ll End Up with Is Heart Disease

You not only have the right, but also the personal responsibility to think in a cool and calm way about any major investment you are asked to make. Never make a significant deal that is proposed to you, a deal that is going to involve your commitment to spend your own money, on the spur of the moment. There is no more certain recipe for disaster than a decision based on emotion.

Someone is going to say this is absolutely your last chance to accept their generous offer. Someone is going to make you an offer you can’t refuse. Where every step has been choreographed, every note orchestrated to lead up to that one moment, the moment when it’s your cue, your duty, your responsibility to say yes.

Say no.

A SHORT COURSE ON MANAGEMENT

The Single Greatest Mistake a Manager Can Make

Americans of every variety of opinion and background can pull together. You just have to give us a reason. That’s what managers are supposed to provide. Motivation. Goals. Resources. Leadership. But not restrictions. Not being told what to do. Not rules. Oh, how Americans hate rules.

No matter what business you’re in, to be successful, managers must create the kind of environment that makes their people the most productive. It isn’t enough to make them conscious of details if you destroy their sense of freedom and spontaneity in the process. You must understand them well enough to give them not what you want, but also what they need to make a maximum contribution.

Look at the people who walk out your door and leave you to become successful in their own businesses. Chances are they’re not doing it just for the money. They need room to express their own styles. Give them that room… and the recognition and appreciation… and nine out of ten times they won’t leave. We’ve been hearing a lot about “intrpreneurship” lately. But it isn’t some new form of capitalism. It’s the old idea of taking talented men or women one step short of a full partnership, a means for making the employee the president of his own company rather than losing him.

You can get your employees to pay attention to detail, and run your ship like an America’s Cup yacht, if you develop a leadership style that delivers your message in a positive way, and if you demonstrate your confidence in your people by giving them freedom to do the job you hired them to do.

Little Things Don’t Mean a Lot; They Mean Everything

Vince Lombardi said, “Victory doesn’t mean a lot. It means everything.” What victory consists of is everything. Doing everything right. The point is, a successful business is like a successful football team: You don’t have to be winners; just make fewer mistakes than your opponents.

Fantasizing, projecting yourself into successful situations, is one of the most powerful means there is to achieve personal goals.
If you run a business, there are 1,001 ways to screw up every day, and almost all of them can be avoided with a little more attention to detail or common courtesy. If you’re in charge, your job is to minimize the mistakes.

You can’t be everywhere at once.

You can’t get away with, “It’s on the truck” or “It’s in the mail” for very long.

You know better than to try to solve your problems by merely sending out another memo.

Yet you still have to try to impress all your people with the importance of details.

How do you accomplish this?

The strategy is leadership.

Nobody is going to believe it’s important unless you, the boss, make it seem important. The tactic you use is by example.

You can preach about little things and discipline until your tongue hangs out, but it won’t work unless you yourself find a way to dramatize it and make it seem important enough so the message gets through.

Treat Your Own People the Way You Treat Your Customers

The salesperson’s classic tactic of knowing as much as possible about the customer begins with learning names. Entrepreneurs can expand on that concept.

Instead of thinking of our employees as customers to be won over to achieve our long-term objectives, we think of them as automatons, pieces of machinery who are summoned to carry out our short-term objectives. It doesn’t work that way. Take the trouble to find out enough about the people you’re working with so you can show some genuine personal concern about them.

The way you pay your bills says something about the kind of person you are to deal with.

Express that concern and make them your friends. One at a time. Your long-term success depends on their performance. To a greater extent than you realize, they’re performing for you, for your approval, not just for your paycheck. If you can make them believe that your approval means something, by taking a personal interest in them, you will have taken a major step toward securing your own long-term success.

JUMP IN!

You don’t learn to swim with the sharks in a single outing. High stakes challenges demand practice and perseverance. This book was written to help you navigate life’s risky waters more safely and prosperously.

Now, jump in! The water’s fine!
ACTION STEPS

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by putting what you’ve learned into action. Here are a few questions and thoughts to help you get started.

1. How are you pitching your product or service, or presenting yourself to your prospect. What are you doing or saying that helps create demand?

2. Ask for and give referrals. Who do you know that can help you connect with a new client or mentor? Ask them to introduce you.

3. Dream big, and keep your dream in front of you. Place visual reminders of your goals so you see them several times throughout the day.

4. Ask yourself: When is the last time I felt the freedom to walk away from a negotiation table?

5. Are you afraid to trust your gut? Think about a time you felt pressured to make a decision. How did it work out for you?

6. Who are you micromanaging? Determine instead to lead by example; give your followers room to grow and develop their skills.

7. How do you show your team members or employees that you value them? Get to know the people you’re working with, and show them your respect and concern for them and their well-being.

About the Author

Harvey Mackay is a legendary business success. He’s the founder and chairman of the $100 million Mackay Envelope Company. His wisdom and savvy business practices have also made him a legend in fundraising. He’s raised $6 million in a matter of days, and over $100 million collectively for causes like the American Cancer Society and University of Minnesota.

Larry King called Swim with the Sharks “one of the best self-help books I’ve ever read,” and CEO Charles Schwab said, “I wouldn’t hesitate a minute in taking his advice.”

Harvey Mackay updated the 1988 version of Swim with the Sharks in 2005 to reflect the changes in technology and business culture. The book was named one of the top 15 inspirational business books of all time by The New York Times.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive, check out:

- The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John C. Maxwell
- Life Is a Series of Presentations by Tony Jeary
- The Greatest Salesman in the World by Og Mandino