



SECRETS OF THE SALES NINJA

By Hanzo Ng

This is the first of the *Secrets of the Sales Ninja* series which will appear fortnightly in the *New Sunday Times*. The article is extracted from a book bearing the same title authored by the writer, who regularly conducts workshops on 'Ninja Sales'.

*A Sales Ninja doesn't learn by reading.
A Sales Ninja doesn't learn by listening.
A Sales Ninja learns by doing.*

Hanzo Ng



Kevin Spacey stars as a cynical yet honourable salesman in 'Big Kahuna'. The dialogue-driven film is confined entirely to a hotel suite where three hapless industrial-lubricant salesmen hope to land a critical but elusive customer. — AP picture

FAILURE is not an option

WHEN it comes to sales, there are only two major characteristics of importance in individuals

They are competence, which is made up of concrete skills and product knowledge, and likeability, or how effective one's social or people skills are.

The possible combinations of possessing — or not possessing — these two qualities create the four categories of salespeople, who include:

• **Incompetent Jerks** — They are the bane of the office environment, possessing neither competence nor likeability. They are lazy non-performers desperately in need of a serious attitude readjustment.

These people live at the bottom of the office food chain and are ultimately passed over in favour of any other option. These people should not be working in your company.

• **Competent Jerks** — These jerks are one step above their incompetent cousins. Although just as unlikable, this type of person does possess a high degree of job competency.

However, despite their considerable expertise, colleagues are hesitant to work with them because of their disagreeable dispositions, thereby, limiting the Competent Jerk's chances for success.

• **Lovable Fools** — This set of people, although not terribly competent, are so likable that they are more successful than their Competent Jerk office-mates.

They are typically good-natured, sociable, and well liked, and as, such build valuable relationships with their colleagues and higher-ups.

However, on the flip side, they are also typically inept and generally unskilled at their work, and must constantly turn to others for assistance.

• **Sales Ninjas** — These are elemental forces; both highly competent and likeable, they are the most successful group and a model of achievement.

They are both smart and friendly, and possess a keen knowledge of themselves and others.

The Sales Ninja knows that his job is not just a bag of slick tricks. There is something more to it.

Just like any martial art, there are two aspects to it: the martial art itself or the tactics, and the martial way (called the Tao) or the philosophy behind it.

Sales tactics are like the specific kicks of a martial art while the sales philosophy is like the Tao.

There are plenty of cases where "gifted millionaires" lost it all and gained it back (like billionaire Donald Trump); this is because they adhere to the right philosophy.

They are not using any cheap tricks to make their millions. Instead, their actions are backed by the right philosophy and they are able to implement this knowledge to bounce back.

It is imperative that Sales Ninjas understand that situa-

tions change.

Nothing is guaranteed in life. Knowing that nothing is certain, the Sales Ninja must learn four beliefs that combine to create the Sales Ninja Philosophy.

1. **Impermanence** — The Sales Ninja knows that no matter how bad or how good the current situation is, it will change.

You cannot count on things to stay the way they are.

Be open and be ready. As Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, said, "Change before it is too late!"

Remember, the only constant in life is change.

2. **Persistence** — In the test for the ninjutsu black belt, I had to fight six ninjas all at once. This taught me several things.

First, I realised there is no choice but to keep on fighting. No matter the circumstances, do not give up!

Second, because I had to keep on moving and manoeuvre around the other fighters, I learned that a ninja must work with outside forces (such as the body movements of the fighters) rather than against them.

Similarly, as a Sales Ninja, it is important not to fight against outside forces but try to find a way to skirt around them or even use them to your advantage.

Third, I found out that our reactions are based on our training experience. If we train well, we fight well.

Therefore, we need to always better ourselves before a situation occurs to stay ahead of our

competitor.

Lastly, at the end of the test, all the fighters came together and chanted.

This is important because it reminded me that every single situation we find ourselves in, provides a lesson.

We should take the time to reflect on our past experience and try new ways to achieve our objectives.

The Sales Ninja knows how to take a hit and get back up and keep on fighting.

It is important to not let one negative event deter you from your course.

Instead, remember that things can always change, and keep trying, again and again.

3. **Don't take it personally** — The Sales Ninja knows not to take things personally. Sometimes, there is nothing we could have done to change a situation.

Do not blame yourself outright, and more importantly, do not create a negative image of yourself and your mistakes.

Never say, "I always fail". No one always fails; it's situational. Thinking in such a way will only put you in a negative loop, preventing any positive growth.

Instead, remember to maintain a calm composure and quickly re-assure yourself that there are valuable life time lessons to be learnt from every failure.

4. **Positive Identity** — The Sales Ninja always believes in his own power, no matter what the circumstances are.

It is absolutely imperative that you do not regard yourself as a failure merely due to one setback.

We must realise that just because something did not work, it does not make us a failure. The particular situation failed but we did not.

Evaluate what we can do better next time and move on. It will pass.

Instead of thinking, "I am a failure", say to yourself, "I am a winner", "I am a champion" or whatever other positive identity that suits us.

This will reinforce your positive identity internally. The more you remind yourself of these truths, the easier it is to constantly embody them.

Power

What exactly is power? Some who have attended my 'Secrets of the Sales Ninja' workshop suggested it might be one's authority over others, extreme stamina and persistence, having more opportunities than others or just plain strength.

However, the fact is that power is our ability to attract and hold the attention and respect of those people around us. But how can this be done?

One way of attracting others to you is to be more attractive! People are naturally inclined to associate with people who they believe to be appealing, not only in a physical sense but in their attitudes as well.

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Mindset Coaching

By Andrew W.

HE is a responsible employee, husband and father, and has a simple life-style.

All these years, Chong, in his late 40s, has been disciplined in saving his hard-earned money.

But saving money alone is difficult to help to meet the present and future financial needs.

That is quite obvious to Chong. With no interest in business, his attention is channelled to investment.

Chong dabbles in shares and unit trusts. There are some gains, some losses.

Once he overheard one of his children remarking: "You know, Michael (a classmate from a rich family) is going to Australia to pursue his studies after his SPM. How lucky he is!"

Chong's heart aches, as his children have never made any request or demand on things beyond the family's financial capability.

He is more determined to invest and grow his money.

He reads news about the bullish market. His colleagues are making money, so are his neighbours.

From the newspapers and magazines, there are many promising stories of investment opportunities.

He invests in the stock-market, with good gain. He invests more and more. This is getting really exciting and he foresees his financial dreams to be realised soon.

Then the market turns downwards, but the mass media still projects bullish news. So Chong holds on to his investment.

Soon the prices of his investment dive sharply. First there is panic, then hope resurfaces as the price rebounds upward.

After a few rounds of sharper drops and some rebounds, his paper assets have shrunk to a small amount.

There is despair and depression. Chong feels paralysed. How is he going to face his wife and children over the huge loss?

He curses the market. "The market has failed me. The market has failed my whole family!"

He curses and curses. Chong dared not tell a soul. The boss notices his sadness and tries to cheer him up.

"Chong, I like you as you are hardworking and take