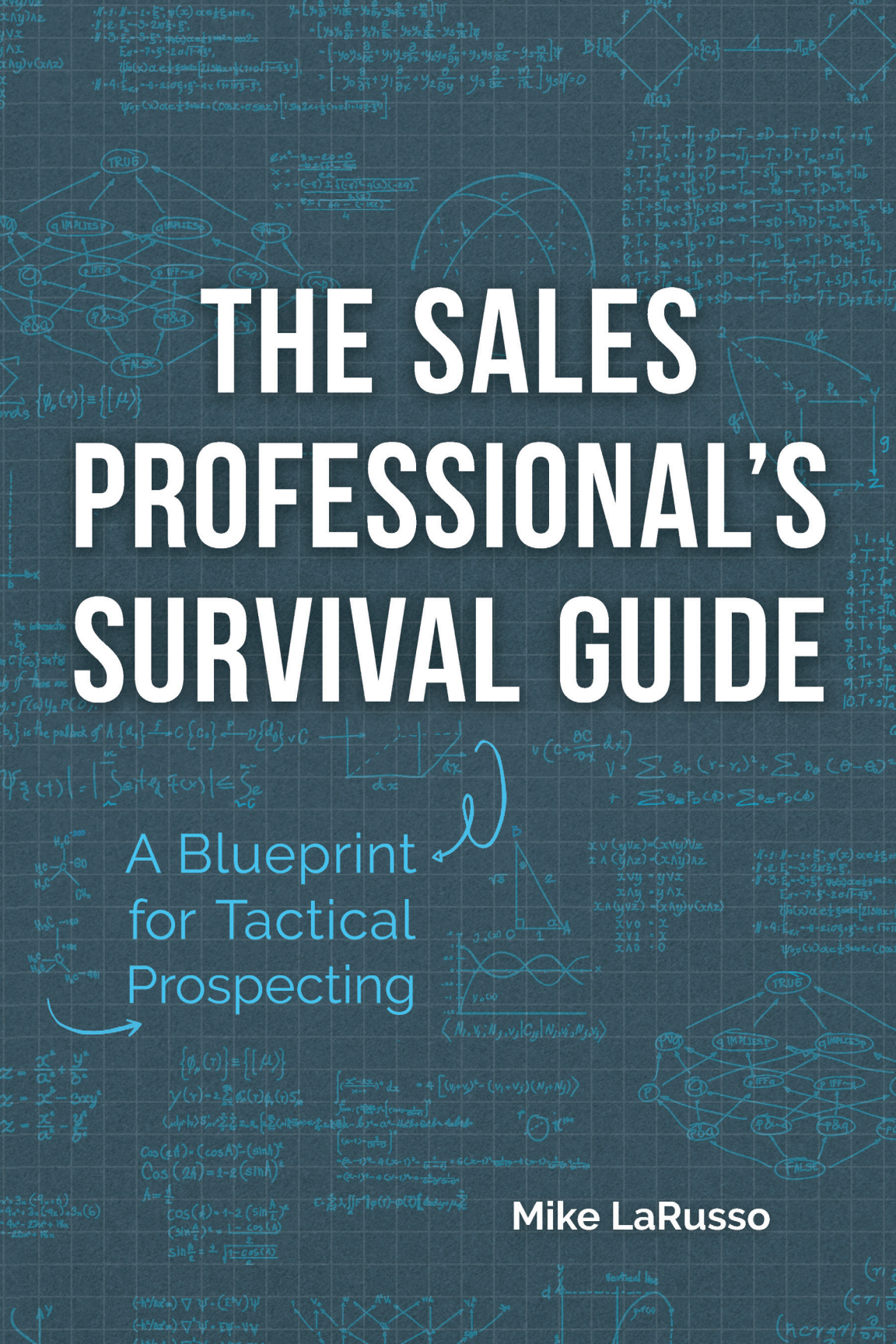


THE SALES PROFESSIONAL'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

A Blueprint for Tactical Prospecting

Mike LaRusso



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INTRODUCTION

You're Making Money on My Time

At some point in your sales career, you may miss quota, be put on a performance-improvement plan, get laid off, or lose your job because your company went belly-up or got bought out. Perhaps your specific industry will change in some manner and your ability to prospect for new business will stagnate. Maybe you'll be uncertain as to why your sales situation and career are continually precarious. And all that time, you will work your tail off, obediently following the marching orders of others who control every aspect of your prospecting activity but who won't suffer a single consequence if you fail. So, I'll assume you have a genuine interest in learning new prospecting methods to avoid this or you're desperate for any alternative.

Well, there is an alternative. I will reveal prospecting techniques, some of which you may have considered but have refrained from exploring because you couldn't make them work, you didn't know how to start, or your attempts had no support from Management. You may also be distrustful of new methods because your previous experience and training were nothing more than a collection of hollow catchphrases that offered painfully obvious advice parading as revolutionary.

Why won't my methods also be painfully obvious? As a consultant, my responsibilities could include conducting sales analyses, negotiating partnerships, or hunting for new business. I typically worked on a six-month contract and had to create methods that rapidly produced results. But more importantly, there is nothing that has infuriated me more as a Sales Professional than having been required to engage in prospecting activities that grew muscles for Management but had no chance of producing results

for myself. If I voluntarily chose a prospecting method that ultimately proved to be fruitless, then that was on me, and I learned from it and moved on. But it was constantly on my mind that I was being forced to engage in unproductive activity, again and again, while postponing my own productive methods, stealing my time to pay for someone else's time. It didn't matter if that other person was a sales trainer, a manager, or the supervisor that hired me. At that point, the only thing that mattered was that my livelihood was tied to my production, and my production was tied to required and minimally successful prospecting methods. Therefore, the reason my methods are now different is that I can't afford to promote unproductive prospecting techniques that only appear to be revolutionary. You can't afford to spend your time learning them either.

A VP of sales was reciting a tale of a salesperson who drove by ABC Company every morning and proclaimed that, one day, he was going to sell them his product and nothing was going to stand in his way. The salesperson called, and knocked, and emailed, and tried all the typical methods to communicate. Then finally, after four years, he broke through, got an appointment, and, by the fifth year, ultimately made the sale. Success!

We were all supposed to be inspired to do the same through perseverance. That may sound like an inspiring story, but for one thing, I can assure you that during the five-year process, the salesperson either closed other sales or had a rich spouse to sustain him while waiting for that specific one. And I can also assure you that those other self-sustaining sales were not prospected in the same manner. But that's all okay, so long as you devote only the same percentage of time equal to the method's success rate. If 1 percent of your prospecting time is devoted to the "whale," and after five years of selling other customers, you succeed in selling the "whale," that's also okay. What isn't okay is trying to portray singular perseverance as the sole technique for chasing all prospects. There is no way that VP would do the same thing in the same situation. Never! But he'd spend five years telling you to. And how many hundreds of other salespeople drove by that same company, proclaiming the same thing, and didn't accomplish anything other than a PIP or termination

letter from their supervisor? No sales story ever ends without supporting the storyteller's method.

Part of the unspoken truth is that Management is searching for any newer prospecting methods and doesn't know how to adjust the existing ones to better accommodate a new sales environment. But unfortunately, I don't think it would matter if they did. The change wouldn't be worth the risk to them. Sales has become the only part of an organization in which high turnover is blamed on the victims and is accepted by the supervisors as a normal, almost-necessary consequence of employing Sales Professionals. If the prospecting methods are continual and unchanging, then poor results will also be. And if Management has complete faith in their prospecting techniques, then they'll think the poor results must be attributed to the Sales Professional's incompetence, and punishments will ensue. Even when I've experienced incomprehensible turnover rates of various sales teams, the mandates are continual, as are the resulting failures.

You may become exasperated, distressed, and believe you're at fault over your apparent failure to produce, I'm here to tell you that you aren't. How can I be so sure? Because it's in a Sales Professional's makeup to close business and to do deals, regardless of the product. And that can't be done if it becomes virtually impossible to get in front of a customer. And to me, "impossible" is defined as the minimal prospecting success rate at gaining an appointment that exists with common prospecting methods. A "one out of a hundred" appointment success rate is much closer to zero successes than it is to actual successes. And a lot of successes are what's needed for a lot of success.

I will show you that extremely productive prospecting techniques do exist, and they are based in Tactical Prospecting. I'm sure if you look around your sales world and see that not all Sales Professionals are suffering in the same manner. Some may even be producing tremendous results month after month while others sit wondering what they're doing differently. If you analyze the life cycle of their prospects, you'll soon realize they have been derived from some form of Tactical Prospecting, even if by accident.

And it doesn't matter whether they're aware of it; they would never admit it even if they were. Management seems to prefer gaining appointments through extensive activity, while accomplishing the same objective through minimal effort is frowned upon. "Work smarter, not harder" is what's proclaimed, but the opposite is what's expected. Not here! Our goal is to gain appointments in the least amount of time, regardless of the effort. This will be accomplished by learning the tenets of Tactical Prospecting as the foundation needed to institute the Alliance Process.

The sales environment has dramatically changed, but prospecting strategies have remained stagnant. My methods won't be like the prospecting trainings you may have experienced, because now you're making money on my time. I have an *obligation* to provide you with something of value—and that is what I intend to do.

Throughout the text, I use some familiar terms and some newly created ones. But each has its own definition as it relates to the Alliance Process and my experiences. I frequently refer to the terms Management and Sales Professionals as the two entities that have distinct effects on sales. A Sales Professional is defined as any individual in any role who's responsible for generating sales revenue for an organization. Management is an inclusive term representing any entity that can institute a level of control over those individuals and their sales activity. This control can be exerted by direct supervision or indirect control through the enforcement of procedures. Management can be any person in any area of the business at any level. Regardless, if this individual is a rank-and-file member, an outside agent, a member of operations, or is in a true supervisory position, the only distinguishing characteristic of Management, for the purposes of this text, is that they can control a Sales Professional's time. I use these labels to conceptualize two types of individuals in an organization: one who is engaged in revenue-generating behavior and another who can obstruct that behavior either by design or by accident.