MORE SALES LESS TIME

Surprisingly Simple Strategies for Today’s Crazy-Busy Sellers

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INTRODUCTION

SHORTLY AFTER I DELIVERED THE CLOSING KEYNOTE AT A BIG sales conference, Matt, a salesperson for a midsized software firm, approached me with a grim look on his face. “Do you have a second?” he asked hesitantly. “Sure,” I answered. “What’s up?”

That was all it took to open the floodgates. Matt started off saying he totally agreed with me that salespeople needed to be invaluable resources to their customers (the subject of my talk). I was glad to hear that. Then came the big but.

“But,” he said, “I’m totally maxed out right now. I hustled like crazy last year to meet my quota. Then they went and raised it thirteen percent this year. I have no idea how I’m going to make my numbers. I’m up at the crack of dawn, working my you-know-what off all day long. On my way home, I pick up my youngest at day care. In the evening, I have family responsibilities. How in the world am I supposed to get everything done and learn our new CRM and do social selling and . . . ?” His list went on and on.

I recognized the pain of not having enough time in the day to do
it all. It was my pain too. Likely it’s something you’re struggling with right now as well.

My response to Matt was empathetic but not one bit helpful. “I know exactly how you feel,” I said, “but I’m not a productivity guru. I’m also having a tough time these days.” Personally, I felt like time was taunting me: “Behind again? You’ll never get it all done.” I worked harder and longer hours, sacrificing my limited personal time to stay ahead of the game. Still, it wasn’t sufficient. My work just kept expanding, demanding more of me. I could never seem to call it a day.

In my entire career, I’d never faced a sales problem of this magnitude.

While I—and Matt—dealt with this crisis of not having enough time, the entire sales field was doubling down on its obsession with sales productivity. Sales leaders wanted “more revenue per rep.” Spurred on by big data, emerging software-as-a-service technologies, seamless integrations, and easy-to-use apps, sales teams were armed with the latest and greatest tools to sell even more—and handed quotas to match that supposed new capacity.

With all these productivity-enhancing tools, you’d think we would have been able to meet our quotas with time to spare. But precisely the opposite was happening. Virtually every seller I knew worked longer hours, yet according to CSO Insights, a whopping 45.4 percent still weren’t making their numbers.

Matt’s question to me—and my own recognition of what my life had become—made me curious. Why were we so overwhelmed? Shouldn’t the development of all these technologies make it easier to get things done, not harder? What was I missing?
THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

For my entire career, I’ve relentlessly searched for fresh strategies to address emerging sales challenges. At Xerox, where I began my sales career and led sales teams, figuring out how to beat new competitors consumed me. When I sold technology, I obsessed over finding new ways to displace the status quo. When I ran a consulting firm, helping my clients jump-start their new-product sales was the ultimate challenge. Most recently, I’ve been writing, speaking, and doing workshops on the following:

- Setting up meetings with impossible-to-reach corporate decision makers (which I wrote about in my book *Selling to Big Companies*)
- More effective approaches for selling to crazy-busy buyers (I covered this topic in a follow-up book, *SNAP Selling*)
- Getting up to speed quickly in a new sales position (a skill I wrote about in depth in my last book, *Agile Selling*)

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I’d need to tackle the issue of sales productivity. In my mind, time management gurus were anal-retentive sorts who were preoccupied with streamlining processes and saving minutes. Being a sales snob, I was interested in more important things—like increasing sales effectiveness and driving revenue.

But at the time Matt asked me his question, I was sick and tired of being crazy busy. It was time to stop feeling sorry for myself and take action. With a vengeance, I threw myself into learning everything I could about time management and sales productivity. It was a problem begging for an answer.

I studied the work of neuroscientists, psychologists, time management gurus, cognitive behavioral specialists, psychiatrists, sleep
researchers, and business innovators. Throughout the process, I kept trying to figure out, “How does this relate to sellers?”

Traditional time management strategies don’t take into account the unique needs and challenges of salespeople. We have so many balls in the air—our prospect pipelines, long-term relationships, clients we’re trying to close—and we need to pay attention to all of them if we’re going to meet our goals. Plus, in many cases, we salespeople live on our computers. They’re like appendages to us, necessary for our survival. Detaching from our devices, even for a short time, makes us nervous.

I decided to turn myself into a human guinea pig—to figure out how to stop fighting the clock and start winning again in my career. This book outlines my quest and all of the strategies and tools that I picked up or developed on that journey to becoming a more productive seller, with the ultimate aim of selling more in less time. It’s my goal to help solve your problems with crazy busyness as well, without all of the hardship.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

To be successful in sales today, you can’t just be productive. You need to be smart too: a good thinker, savvy, and insightful. Someone who brings value to prospects and clients with every single interaction. To do so, you need to be strategic, creative, and agile. You need to be up-to-date on what’s happening in your field and with your prospects and clients.

The quality of our thinking is a huge differentiator in our work, yet few sellers realize just how important it truly is.

Our always-on, distraction-filled work life hurts the quality of our thinking. We have a harder time learning new things, prioritizing, analyzing situations, seeing new possibilities, and solving com-
plex problems. When we bounce from task to task, that type of thinking is unavailable to us. We also make more mistakes.

Being productive isn’t just about getting more done in less time—it’s also about getting the right things done and doing them better. As sellers, we must free up time to ask crucial questions such as:

- What’s the most important thing I can get done today?
- How can I have the greatest impact with this customer?
- What will it take to get multiple people to agree to move ahead?
- Is this the best next step? Would other options be more effective?
- How can I increase my closing ratio?
- Should I invest more time in this opportunity or not?

Answering questions like these requires quiet time and deep thinking. We can’t determine the best route to take if we’re frenetically checking our e-mail. The reality is we’re not going to get that extra time we need unless we design a different way to work—every day, every week, every month.

DIGGING IN

I wrote this book for salespeople, account executives, entrepreneurs, consultants, sales support personnel, and business professionals. If you’re responsible for bringing revenue into the company—and you’re feeling overwhelmed—then you’ll get value from reading this book and applying the strategies I share to your work life. My goal is to help you free up more time and do the work that gives you the highest payback.

Here’s a snapshot of how this book is structured and what you’ll learn:

In part 1, “Accept the Challenge,” you’ll discover what you’re really up against when it comes to selling more in less time. This “age
of distraction” is stealing our attention and destroying our ability to think clearly, creatively, and strategically.

In part 2, “Recover Lost Time,” you’ll find out how to save at least one hour a day by changing your relationship with e-mail and minimizing the endless, time-sucking distractions that you encounter, particularly online. You’ll also find out how to recover when you invariably screw up.

In part 3, “Get More Done,” you’ll learn how to add another hour to your day. These strategies ensure your time is spent on what really matters, keeping mentally sharp and optimizing your schedule. For many, this requires a significant rethink of how you invest your time.

In part 4, “Make It Easier,” you’ll be amazed to see how a seemingly simple approach can virtually eliminate your resistance to adopting new habits. Within two weeks, you’ll start seeing yourself in a whole new light.

In part 5, “Add the Secret Sauce,” you’ll discover numerous ways to keep yourself at the top of your sales game throughout the day. You’ll be able to get more done, have better thinking, and get your oomph back.

In part 6, “Accelerate Sales,” you’ll read about key sales strategies that truly help you close deals faster that you can use alongside the other time management and productivity strategies I’ll share in this book.

To help you make the most of More Sales, Less Time, I’ve included dozens of experiments you can do in a variety of different areas. I encourage you to become a scientist and run your own tests to find the best way you work. These experiments aren’t meant to be hard work—they’re meant to challenge and surprise you. When you add the element of fun to any project, not only do you stick with it longer, but your chances of succeeding also increase exponentially.

If you’re a sales leader, sales productivity is likely high on your
priority list. Right now, virtually everyone on your team is unintentionally frittering away at least one to two hours per day. I’d suggest you read this book together, perhaps a couple of chapters each week. Set up team challenges to motivate everyone to recapture lost time. When you do, your reps will make more calls, have more meetings, and close more deals. The best part is you won’t need to hire more salespeople to make your numbers. I’ve included a special chapter for you in appendix I titled “Leading a Highly Productive Sales Team.”

Personally, I think this is the most important book I’ve ever written—it addresses a universal problem from a salesperson’s perspective. My hope is that for you, it’s both sales enhancing and life changing.
PART 1
ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

Crazy busy is a way of life for most sellers today. We have people to see, e-mails to write, calls to make, prospects to research, and proposals to prepare. With all this work to do, we definitely feel important, needed, and invaluable. But we also feel tired and overwhelmed.

Many of us wonder if it’s even possible to get everything done. Truthfully, it probably isn’t. We’re tied to our devices, going nonstop from the moment we get up until we power down in the evening. We can’t escape.

If we want to not just survive but thrive in our always-on world, we need to take a serious look at how we’re actually working today. While it’s often not pretty, it’s always illuminating.

In this section, you’ll discover the following:

• What happens when the digital world we live in collides with our very human limitations
• Fresh insights on changing habits and setting goals
Perhaps best of all, you’ll discover that you’re not alone. We’re all overwhelmed and trying to find new ways of working. In this section, we’ll start identifying solutions together.

**GOAL:** Understand the root causes of our crazy-busy existence.
EVERY TIME SOMEONE WOULD ASK ME, “HOW’S IT GOING?” I’D answer with a smile and a twinkle in my eye: “Crazy busy!” It was like I was wearing this as a badge of honor. In some perverse way, it made me feel important to say that.

While I might have fooled others that my life was great, I didn’t fool myself. Underneath my chipper exterior, I was struggling.

In sheer frustration, one day I decided to record everything I did from sunup to sundown. I wanted to see my life as it actually was and perhaps find a way to improve it. I was tired of the “crazy” part being so accurate.

What I discovered was pretty ugly, but I’m sharing it with you anyway. Perhaps this day will even feel familiar to you. Here it is, a typical day in my life before I started my productivity makeover.

It’s 7:15 on Thursday morning. Time to get up. I immediately head downstairs to feed the cat and make a pot of coffee. While it brews, I run upstairs, get dressed, and make myself presentable for the day.
soon as I'm done, I head back downstairs, pour myself a big cup of coffee, add a little cream, plop down at the kitchen table, and pick up my cell phone to start e-mail triage.

I quickly go through all the messages that came in overnight, deleting as many as I can, as quickly as humanly possible. It makes me happy to delete these messages—now I have fewer things to do for the day. I reward myself by playing a few games of Words with Friends. I then scan my favorite news feeds to catch up on world affairs.

After a half hour or so, it’s time to get to work. I take my smoothie out of the refrigerator, refill my coffee, grab my phone, and head to my office, which overlooks the woods behind our house. This seventeen-second commute completed, I sit down at my desk and open my e-mail to read and respond to the messages I’d deemed important enough to save.

Before I know it, I’m sucked into an article from one of my newsletters: “107 Game-Changing Sales Statistics.” There’s a reference in it to some fascinating statistics, so I track the information to its source, opening that study in a new tab, which I save to read later.

Then I kick my own butt back to work, prepping for a project I’m doing with one of my clients. It’s hard work, involving multiple interviews and customizing a program tailored specifically for their reps. I review my notes, immerse myself in their case studies, and start to think about how I’ll structure the program.

As I do, I look outside and notice that it’s getting overcast. I wonder if it’ll rain later, so I open my weather app to check things out. Fortunately, the storms aren’t rolling in until tonight. Okay, back to work.

Even as I try to get back to the project at hand, I start thinking about the meeting I have with a prospective client later this afternoon. It’s a toughie. My prospect is really struggling to get everyone on board. It seems like all five people involved in the decision have
totally different agendas. I ask myself, *What will it take for them to all agree?*

I head over to LinkedIn to learn more about the decision team. When I land on my LinkedIn home page, I’m greeted by a strategically placed promo for an e-book called *How I Leveraged LinkedIn to Close a $100,000 Deal.* Of course, I can’t pass this up, so I click on the link, register for the e-book, download it, and then take a quick peek. *Good stuff,* I think. But I better get back to work.

Back on LinkedIn, I review the profiles of the stuck team members, taking notes on how I can create a connection with each of these individuals. I think about the best way to handle this conversation, the questions I want to ask, and the best possible outcome. I open a tab on my browser to review the company’s website.

As I do, an alert pops up about a breaking news story. I click on it to learn more. While on the news site, I quickly scroll down to see if there are any updates about the presidential election. When no fresh articles pop to the top, another headline captures my attention: “You’ll Never Believe What Kim Kardashian Is Wearing Now.” Much as I hate myself for it, I can’t resist clicking.

After a quick look (I’m not impressed!), I notice another headline below her photo: “Mother Cat Brings Her Kittens to Meet an Unlikely Old Friend.” Within seconds, I find myself watching a heartwarming video of a big dog playing with the mother cat’s two teeny kittens.

Oops! I still need to prep for that meeting I have later today. It’s hard figuring out the best way to get everyone to reach a consensus. After a few minutes, when nothing good comes to mind, I remember a presentation I did for a similar client a few months ago. I open it up to check it out.

While reviewing that presentation, another thought pops into my head: *I wonder if Natalie has gotten back to me yet.* I open my
e-mail for a quick check and see seven new messages. I might as well
read them all right now as long as I’m in my e-mail, I think. I respond
to all the messages requiring my input.

I finally close my e-mail to focus in on that upcoming meeting
again. I stare blankly at that old presentation, still stuck. I wait a few
more minutes for an epiphany to hit, but none emerges. When I look
at the clock, I see that it’s 11:45, so I head to the kitchen to heat up a
bowl of soup for lunch. I bring my computer out to the table so I can
brainstorm some more about that meeting while I eat. I jot down a
few thoughts, some questions to ask, and an issue I want to bring up.

As I eat my soup, I remember that I forgot to congratulate An-
thony, my new client, on his recent promotion. Back into e-mail I go
to jot off a quick note. As I do, I see that another message has just
arrived from Ravi, who’s having a billing problem. Darn. He’s an im-
portant customer, I think. I better take care of it now. I send off a
message to my assistant. I also see an e-mail from CeCe. She has
some questions regarding the recent proposal. Yup. I need to tackle
that one now too if we want to close the deal this month.

Before I know it, it’s time for my afternoon meeting. I head back
to my office for the call, which lasts nearly an hour. It goes okay, but
clearly it’s going to be tough to reach a consensus on our direction.
I’m smart enough not to fool myself about the likelihood of success.
And I can’t help but consider how much time I’ve already invested
with this prospect. I briefly wonder if I could have done anything
different to prepare for the meeting. When no new insight strikes, I
decide to check e-mail instead.

I then take a quick look at my to-do list. Argh. There are a few
prospects I need to connect with today; I can’t put that off any longer.
I dash off a few e-mails and make several follow-up calls. Thankfully,
no one answers the phone, so I leave messages.

When I look at the clock again, it’s 4:30. I need to contact a friend
about a birthday party we’re throwing together. I also want to check in on my mom, as she’s been having some health issues.

Before I know it, the “official” workday is over—but I’m not done. I barely made a dent in the client project I started working on that morning. I don’t know how I’m going to get it done. Seriously. Clearly, I’ll have to dig in later tonight and try to make some progress. I don’t have any choice, actually. It’s what people pay me to deliver—and I don’t disappoint them.

Except now I feel further behind than I did starting the day. After cooking my favorite chicken stir-fry recipe (which is quick to whip up) and having dinner with my husband, I drive to the grocery store. While waiting for the stoplight to turn green, I check my e-mails. At the store, I quickly stock up on the essentials. Then, as I wait impatiently in a long line to check out, I take a look at my e-mail again.

During the course of the evening, while watching a bit of TV and working on that project, I’m on and off e-mail a few more times. I manage to pull together an initial workshop outline but it still needs fleshing out. I play a couple more rounds in my Words with Friends game, hop onto Facebook to see what’s happening there, pop over to Twitter to see if there’s anything new I should be aware of—and check LinkedIn again too.

I then go upstairs and get ready for bed. Before I shut down for the night, I check e-mail one last time. Don’t ask me why—I’m certainly not going to reply to anyone at that hour. Maybe I just like to end the evening deleting one last message from the next day’s stack.

I feel like I’m a rat on a treadmill who’s not allowed to stop. But that’s how I’ve been working for the past few years.

I wouldn’t be surprised if your day resembles what mine used to look like.

To find out if distractions are hurting your productivity, take this mini quiz.
DISTRACTION QUIZ

Mark an X on all those that apply to you. Be truthful!

☐ 1. I keep checking to see if any new e-mail messages have arrived.

☐ 2. I frequently bounce from one sales activity to the next (e-mails, research, phone calls, CRM updates, proposals, social media).

☐ 3. Being “crazy busy” is exhilarating. I love, love, love it.

☐ 4. Even if no one interrupts me, it’s hard to stay focused on a task for more than half an hour.

☐ 5. I sit at my desk staring at screens for long periods of time during the day.

☐ 6. Thirty-plus minutes can easily disappear due to following interesting links.

☐ 7. I’m under lots of pressure (self-imposed or management) to get results.

☐ 8. My to-do list feels like it’s never ending.

☐ 9. I get irritable or bored when I can’t check e-mail or go online.

☐ 10. When working on something tough, I catch myself going online whenever I get stuck.

Count up your Xs. If you only have one or two, you might be a bit distracted but doing fine. But if you’ve checked many boxes, it’s increasingly hard for you to sell more in less time.

Before we get into tackling the many problems of working this way, however, we need to understand why we behave the way we do—and what factors, internal and external, contribute to this crazy busyness.
Hi there!

First, thanks for taking the time to read this first chapter. Perhaps you saw a bit of yourself in my crazy-busy confession. Believe me, it’s no way to live.

Yet so many of us are working non-stop, doing our best to stay on top of our game yet feeling like we’re falling further behind every single day.

I’m on a mission to restore sanity to the world of selling.

So we can achieve more. So we can tap into our best thinking. So we can become an invaluable resource to our customers. By doing less, a lot more thoughtfully.

Here’s where I could use a little help!

*More Sales, Less Time* is now available for pre-order. If you could order your copy by December 6th, I’d really appreciate it. And, I’ll send you the Field Guide as a bonus.

Even better, grab extra books for your colleagues so you can implement the strategies together. The more people who read this book, the more we can challenge and change our crazy-busy status quo—and close more sales.

To your success,

*JILL*

P.S. To get your special bonus, send your receipt to book@jillkonrath.com and we’ll send you the download link.
BUY THE BOOK:
MORE SALES
LESS TIME

ABOUT JILL
Jill Konrath is an in-demand speaker at sales conferences and kickoff meetings. Her previous books include Selling to Big Companies (a Fortune “Must Reads”), SNAP Selling, and Agile Selling. With over a quarter of a million LinkedIn followers and well over one hundred thousand blog readers, her fresh strategies make a global impact.

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