

VAIL RESORTS®

The Snowsports
Instructor's Guide To

MORE RETURNS & REQUESTS

by KELLY COFFEY

*Customer-Focused Sales Skills That
Make You A Better Instructor*



CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:

"I'm an Instructor, Not a Used-Car Salesman!" 3

Where sales skills belong in an instructor's toolkit

CHAPTER 2:

Know Your Product 10

Identify the value you offer your clients

CHAPTER 3:

Know Your Customer 16

Assess your client's needs and motivations

CHAPTER 4:

Communicate the Best Fit 25

Lay out the opportunity for another lesson

CHAPTER 5:

How to Sell Specific Products 33

Tips for class lessons, privates, multi-day products, and more

CHAPTER 6:

7 Steps to Sharpen Your Sales Skills 39

Tips to improve your sales technique: before, during, and after lessons

APPENDIX:

Further Reading 45

Track down these books, websites, and courses to keep improving

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Chapter 1:

"I'm an Instructor, Not a Used-Car Salesman!"

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why sales can't be separated from other instructor skills.
- 5 rewards for improving your sales skills.
- The "secret" formula for increasing your returns and requests.

*"All things are difficult
before they are easy."*

-Thomas Fuller

The Missing Piece

You are a snowsports instructor. You're passionate about skiing, snowboarding, or both. And you enjoy sharing that passion with other people.

You feel good about how you improve people's vacation by spending a day with them.

You are also a professional persuader. To be successful, you need to persuade your client that a certain drill will help him with his goals. You need to persuade your client that she has the skills to do her first black diamond run. You need to persuade your client that he will have a better vacation with you than without you.

Yet, too many instructors feel sales skills aren't part of the path to success. They feel they should only focus on improving their skiing or riding, teaching, and people skills to carry them through season after season.

These instructors don't see the connection between sales skills and delivering a great lesson. They don't see how improving their sales process means they improve their ability to help their clients (and help themselves have successful seasons).



When asked about sales skills, they dismiss the notion entirely with a reply along the lines of: "I'm an instructor, not a used-car salesman."

Too many instructors try to build their careers like they're putting together a puzzle with a key piece missing. Too many instructors build a low ceiling over their potential.

Top ski and snowboard instructors understand sales skills can't be removed from their overall package. They've figured out how to incorporate elements of the salesperson into their role as instructors. As you read through this book you'll realize there's far more overlap between the instructor and the salesperson than you first imagined.

REMEMBER THIS.....

If you remember nothing else from this book, know these two things:

1. To be a good instructor you need to have sales skills.
2. You have the ability to improve your sales skills.

You Don't Wear A Plaid Sport Coat

Picture a salesperson. What pops into your mind might be the stereotype of the plaid sport coat-wearing, smarmy used-car salesman. The one who uses psychological tricks to scam you into overpaying for a car you don't really want anyway. "What do I have to do to get you into this automobile?" he says more demanding than asking.

COMMON MYTHS OF SALES PEOPLE INCLUDE:

- They push the customer into the sale.
- They use deception or psychological tricks to scam the customer into saying "yes."
- In order for the salesperson to win, the customer has to lose.

The truth is that great salespeople—the one's who achieved high success in their careers—act nothing like that used-car salesman stereotype. Deception, psychological tricks, and pushiness have no place in a top salesperson's toolkit.

You work hard to become a great snowsports instructor, not that guy in the plaid sports coat. Though sales may be a dirty word to many people, the truth is that selling is part of your job. Sales skills—like skiing or riding skills, teaching skills, and people skills—are just as important as the rest of the snowsports instructor package. And like any skill, you can improve your sales skills... no matter your current ability level.

“When you know your true value as a snowsports instructor you will most likely realize that your client will always have a better vacation with you than without you.”



Your Product: A Better Vacation

In many ways snowsports instructors have it far easier than most other salespeople. You don't go door-to-door. You don't cold call. You don't generate leads or qualify prospects. In fact, all you have to do is convince current customers to become repeat customers... typically the easiest part of your average salesperson's day. And you have hours with your client to get it done.

Selling is a process that connects your clients with the best service for their needs. Top instructors know that what is best for the client is ultimately what's best for the instructor.

This means if you honestly believe your client will be better off skiing or riding without you tomorrow, you should tell her that. However, as you read through this book, you will realize the true value of the services you offer: coach, guide, motivator, friend, safety net, problem-solver.

When you know your true value as a snowsports instructor you will likely realize that your client will always have a better vacation with you than without you. You are Great Vacation Insurance.

“Compare season-long earnings and you’ll see that the instructors who are most successful at generating returns and requests make three to five times the amount under-performing instructors make.”



5 Rewards For Improving Your Sales Skills

1. DO A BETTER JOB OF GIVING CLIENTS WHAT THEY WANT

What can you accomplish in a full day lesson that you couldn’t in a half-day? What can you accomplish in three days that you couldn’t in a single lesson? When you convince your clients to return, suddenly you have multiple days to achieve their goals instead of just one. That gives you more time to share your passion of snowsports with your clients. With a longer window of opportunity you’re in a far better position to help your clients have a great vacation.

A key skill of sales is to be able to identify your clients’ needs and motivations. By improving your sales skills you will be better at figuring out those needs and motivations. It will become easier to give your clients what they want when you already have the answer sheet.

2. MAKE MORE MONEY

By persuading a client to return tomorrow, you get a few extra dollars on your paycheck. This doesn’t seem like much on first notice. However, if you take a look at the whole picture, these returns compound your earning power. First, you’re guaranteed to work tomorrow. Second, you’re making more money for the same amount of work. Third, as you accumulate returns over the season, you’ll be bumped into higher paying categories. Fourth, your priority status will increase, giving you the lessons that naturally pay better.

Combine all these factors and the difference is staggering. Compare season-long earnings and you’ll see that the instructors who are most successful at generating returns and requests make three to five times the amount under-performing instructors make.

3. GET MORE CONTROL OVER YOUR SEASON

When you predictably get your clients to return, you are able to steer your winter in ways you never could while waiting for assignment after assignment. You have more choices. You have more control over what days to work and what days to take off. You have more control over which clients to teach and which clients to pass off.

Suddenly it’s more like you’re your own boss, generating your own work instead of relying on others to feed you. You’re more able to keep yourself busy regardless of the swings of the business volume.

4. ACHIEVE SUCCESS BEYOND THE SLOPES

Persuasion skills are highly valuable in any situation—from business to personal. As a snowsports instructor you have the opportunity to practice your persuasion skills every day you work. Those same skills transfer to your family life and your non-winter job: when you need to sell an idea to your boss... when you need to convince your kid to eat his vegetables... when you need to sell your partner on some home improvements....

“Sales skills are as important to teaching a great lesson as skiing or riding skills, movement analysis skills, and teaching skills.”

The “Secret” Formula For Returns And Requests Success

THERE ARE THREE STEPS TO PERSUADING YOUR CLIENTS TO COME BACK FOR ANOTHER LESSON:

1. Know your product
2. Know your customer
3. Communicate the best fit between your client and your product

Simple. Straightforward. This process is both art and science. It’s a science because there are specific things you should do each time you teach a lesson to get your clients coming back. It’s an art because there are so many variables and nuances that even the most experienced instructors don’t have them mastered.

Like ripping down a steep crud run, it takes skill and experience to be able to read the situation and apply the right tactics.

5. MAKE A CAREER OUT OF THIS JOB

At some point you decided to become a professional snowsports instructor. When you made that decision, your ability to make a living now plays a large role in staying in this profession. You didn’t enter this profession for the money, but money plays a major role in your ability to stay in it. Don’t let a poor return rate be the reason you leave the job you love.





Your Next Big Client

Breckenridge's Chris Juarez constantly gets asked by his fellow instructors what he does to get all his clients to return for more lessons. But this snowboard instructor wasn't always a model for his peers and supervisors on how to sell the next lesson.

After receiving a degree in business, Chris took a series of sales jobs when he finished college. Dissatisfied with the corporate life, he moved to Colorado to become a snowboard instructor.

But Chris didn't immediately see the connection with his past life in sales and his current life as an instructor. He enjoyed the lessons he taught, but didn't put much effort into getting his clients back. "I didn't take ownership, I guess," Chris said.

Chris moved to Breckenridge in 1999. Looking

at other Breckenridge instructors and the new opportunities at this mountain, Chris saw that he could make a career out of what used to be just a job. It was that shift in his mentality that shone a light on Chris's path to success. In this new light he saw the connection between his sales background and his career as a snowboard instructor.

A key moment in this mentality shift occurred when Chris was booked on a one-day assignment to a family of beginner snowboarders. On first look, this family of four looked like a lot of work for Chris... without a lot of reward. Madeline, the mom, looked timid. Brett and Henry, the two boys, didn't seem like future Shaun Whites. Only Richard, the dad, seemed optimistic about his family's success. Chris's first impression was that this family would dabble in snowboarding for a

day, then start looking for beach rentals in Cancun.

That day Chris made a decision to shake off that first impression. He dove into the lesson with the mentality that this family could become his next big client... the type that books him for weeks at a time every year.

With that mentality Chris was able to deliver a great lesson, exceed the family's goals, and convince them to keep riding for the entire week.

Richard, Madeline, Brett, and Henry did become Chris's next big clients. They booked him one or two weeks each season, and even flew him out to Heavenly when they wanted to ride there. That success reinforced what a stronger sales effort could do for Chris's career.

"I now look at every new student as 'this could be my next big client,'" Chris said. "Because you never know."



Action Plan:

1

Decide what you can do right now to improve your sales skills (after you finish reading this book, of course).

2

Find a senior instructor and ask her how she improved her ability to increase her returns and requests over the years.

3

Based on your returns and requests performance last season, write down a goal for returns and requests this season.

Chapter 2:

Know The Product

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to identify everything you offer of value to clients.
- Why it's important to know the details of your snowsports school's products.
- Where self-improvement fits into the sales process.

*"I don't design clothes,
I design dreams."*

-Ralph Lauren

Are You Worth The Cost Of A Lesson?

Sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer said this about product knowledge: "One thing I have found after selling and studying sales for 30 years that is the absolute truth: the best salespeople are the ones with the best attitude, the best product knowledge, and who give the best service."

The more you know about your product, the easier it is to sell the benefits. To know as much as you can about your product, you need to first know what your product is. For snowsports instructors, that's not as straightforward as it sounds. What is your product?

You need to realize that there are two parts to your product: yourself (and the skills you offer), and the different lessons your snowsports school offers.

Instructors often focus so much on technique that they forget about everything else they offer as professionals. You're far more than the sum of your drills and progressions.



Would your client have a better vacation if he skied with you tomorrow? The answer should be “Yes.” After all, you know the nuances of the mountain. You know how to read your client’s energy level and confidence. You know when and where the lift lines will be shortest. You know the good restaurants. When problems arise over the course of the day, you’ll solve them a lot quicker than your client.

Ultimately, you’re Great Vacation Insurance.

When you look at it that way, you realize that your product is not just ski technique. Your product is a better vacation for your clients. Is that worth the cost of another lesson?

Know Your Versatility

Part of Keystone ski instructor Annie Black’s success comes from her versatility. Annie teaches skiing and snowboarding to all ages. She even speaks Spanish. That versatility kept her in demand for her 32 years as an instructor. It also helps her deliver great lessons, no matter the needs of her clients.

But Annie knows her value as an instructor goes beyond the equipment she teaches on. She knows it’s her job to make sure the entire family is having fun on and off the snow. This might involve recommending shopping spots for a member of the group that doesn’t ski. This might involve checking the snowboard equipment of her client’s daughter. “Teaching skiing is probably 20 percent of what I do,” Annie said.

One day in the 2009 season Annie found herself booked with a group of four families that rented a house together in Keystone. Annie was tasked with teaching the first time skiers of the group. One woman named Gail was incredibly fearful.

Gail was a high-level human resources executive back in Louisiana. Though she had never experienced snow, learning to ski was one of her life goals.

Before she could work on any skiing progressions, Annie needed to build trust

Would your client have a better vacation if he skied with you tomorrow? The answer should be “Yes.”

with this woman. Gail wouldn't even try the sport until she believed that Annie wouldn't kill her. To do that, Annie and Gail walked around the base area, getting comfortable with the snow and the environment. Annie acted as a guide to the mountain environment, a manager of Gail's fears, and a performance coach to set Gail up for a successful day.

By the time Gail clicked into skis Annie had built trust and confidence within Gail. Gail could progress without being hampered by her fear.

By overcoming her fear and learning to ski, Gail built her self-confidence. Annie dug into all her skills to help Gail check off one of her life goals.

What does versatility mean?

Like Annie Black's ability to jump on different equipment to teach many different clients, versatility means you adapt to the diverse needs of all your clients.

Versatility means more than skill with different ages and equipment. It also means mastery over all teaching styles so your teaching matches your clients' learning styles. Versatility means explaining edging skills many different ways. Versatility means cracking jokes on the chairlift for one client... then being a quiet observer for another.

How versatile are you?

It's worth the effort to spend time identifying all the services you provide your clients: coach, guide, motivator, friend, safety net, problem-solver, and more. Actually sit down and write your services in a list. The act of list-writing will help jog your memory and give you a more detailed list.

Versatility means discovering what you have in common with all your clients—even those who at first seem drastically different from you. This is what separates great instructors from merely good instructors.

HERE ARE SOME BENEFITS OF LEARNING THE VALUE OF ALL YOUR SERVICES:

- You will more easily explain your value to your clients.
- You will better fulfill the goals of your clients.
- You will see your true worth and therefore have an easier time persuading your clients to return.
- When a specific situation arises, you'll recognize the opportunity.



“You need to know the details of every product your snowsports school offers.”

Know The School's Products

You need to know the details of every product your snowsports school offers. Why? So you can match your client up with just the right product... and educate her when she asks questions. You need to be able to list the prices, times, locations, and sign-up procedures. What's the difference in price between a half-day and full-day lesson? What are the steps to sign up for a kids' class? When do you meet for an afternoon adult class lesson?

Just because you don't teach a certain product (i.e. you're an adult instructor who doesn't teach children's classes), doesn't mean you don't have to know about it. Teach enough clients and you're bound to be asked about that product at some time.

The more knowledgeable you are about all the products your resort has to offer, the more professional you'll look to your clients and the easier it will be to solve your clients' needs.

Joe's having a great time skiing with you today, and is considering booking you for a private lesson tomorrow. However, if he does that, he will need to put his 11-year-old daughter into ski school. The thought of the extra hassle in the morning is making him balk.

To ease his fears of a headache-filled morning, you educate Joe on the procedures for kids' classes. You tell him the price of a class lesson for children, what time they meet, the ski rental procedure, and even show him where to drop off his daughter. You also tell him that he can take care of all the forms and payments this afternoon, saving him from waiting in long lines in the morning.

To seal the deal, you tell Joe that tomorrow you'll meet him in the lobby of the Children's Center to help get Olive set up in her class. From there you and Joe will have another great day on the slopes.

The worry lines on his forehead melt away. You and Joe head to the ski school sales desk to take care of the details.

Believe In Your Product

Which do you think is harder: tricking someone into buying shoddy product, or convincing someone to buy a quality product because you know she'll be better off with it?

Of course it's the latter. Even the best salesperson couldn't sell a shoddy set of kitchen knives where the handles fall off after a few days of use. She might trick a handful of people into buying a set, but ultimately she'd be fighting a losing—and demoralizing—battle. The best salesperson would never put herself in that position. Instead, she'd find a superior product to sell—one she could believe in. That way she could convince her prospects because the salesperson truly believes her prospects would be better off with this high quality set of knives.

The art of persuasion only takes you so far. You also need a great product to sell. And unlike the knife salesperson, you're 100 percent in charge of your product's quality. If something goes wrong you can't blame the engineers in R&D. The buck stops with you.

What does this mean? To get more returns and requests you must constantly improve your product. The instructors who get the most return clients also deliver the best lessons. This is true at every snowsports school at every mountain in the world.

When you work to improve the lessons you teach, you put yourself into a positive feedback cycle that affects your confidence, your ability to sell the next lesson, and your number of return clients.



The better you are at your job, the more confidence you'll have persuading your client to come back for another day. With more confidence, you'll actually be more persuasive and more successful in getting returns and requests.

So invest in training. Your home resort and PSIA-AASI both offer great clinics on many topics. Reach for that next level of certification. Sign up for a movement analysis clinic. Audit a senior instructor's class lesson.

You also have plenty of options off the snow: books and audiobooks, classes and seminars. Here are a few topics that translate to better lessons: communication skills, leadership, self-improvement, psychology, and sales skills.

Always improve your teaching, skiing, movement analysis, and people skills. You will see the rewards in better lessons and more return clients.



Action Plan:

1

Study your snowsports school's pricing list. Carry a brochure with you. Better yet, make your own cheat sheet with the products most relevant to you. Keep that cheat sheet in your pocket whenever you teach a lesson.

2

Write down a list of everything that makes you valuable as an instructor: your knowledge of the mountain, snow conditions, lift lines, restaurant reviews. Spend some time on this list, going back to it for days when you remember something new.

3

Ask your clients what they find valuable in a lesson. Probe deeper than the first answers to find out their underlying feelings. Do this for every client you teach for two weeks. You might get some enlightening answers.



Chapter 3:

Know Your Customer

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why knowing as much as possible about your clients is crucial to persuading them to come back.
- How to discover your client's needs and motivations.
- 4 Steps to asking the right questions.

GREG AND MARY

Consider Greg Kelley. This Vail ski instructor has stayed at the top-earning status for the last 20 of his 27 years teaching. The secret to his consistent success: he gets his clients to come back by being genuinely interested in them as people. "I ask clients about who they are," Greg said.

But Greg wasn't born a great salesperson. When he first started out teaching skiing, most of his lessons fell flat. He made the mistake of over-teaching ski technique. He would show his clients everything he knew about making turns. The result: an overloaded client who absorbed no information.

As luck would have it, since Greg was a brand new instructor, he didn't know a whole lot about ski technique. Eventually he would run out of things to say on the topic. To fill up awkward silences, Greg began to ask his clients about themselves: why they came to Vail, their hobbies, their skiing goals.

“That sitting down with her for two hours in the lodge—talking, relaxing, drinking coffee—was huge,” Greg said.



Greg stumbled onto a goldmine. The answers he got from his clients built a closer bond between him and his clients, gave him a roadmap to creating a successful lesson, and made it easier for Greg to persuade his clients to return the next day. That happy accident began Greg’s rise to success.

Flash-forward a few years: one day Greg was assigned to ski with an older woman named Mary. The day before Mary had taken a class lesson. In that lesson she fell constantly and was always holding up the group of eight. She had a bad experience in that lesson, had lost confidence in her skiing, and was about to give up the sport.

Greg knew he had to recover Mary from the previous day and deliver a five-star lesson to keep her as a client. Greg and Mary began the day, not on snow, but over coffee at the base lodge. That’s where Greg had a chance to ask her about her lesson the day before, about her goals with skiing, and about her life outside this vacation. That quick cup of coffee turned into a two-hour conversation.

Those two hours allowed Greg to get the information he needed to deliver just the right lesson for Mary. It also allowed Mary to relax and build trust in Greg.

Greg helped Mary love skiing. One private lesson turned into two... then three. Soon enough Mary bought a house in Vail and booked Greg every day she skied: up to 40 days some winters.

“That sitting down with her for two hours in the lodge—talking, relaxing, drinking coffee—was huge,” Greg said.



Through conversation and building trust, great instructors tease out important details that give these instructors a roadmap to creating a successful lesson and persuading their clients to come back.

Discover Needs and Motivations

You might never have a chance to sit with your client for two hours to assess her needs. Yet, you still have plenty of time to get valuable information in a full-day or half-day lesson.

The best salespeople and the best instructors artfully assess their clients. Through conversation and building trust, they tease out important details that give these instructors a roadmap to creating a successful lesson and persuading their clients to come back.

A common myth about great salespeople is that they have a sixth sense in reading their prospects: some hocus-pocus skill that allows them to persuade their prospects to buy their products. The myth is that they have insights regular people lack.

The truth is a lot more down to earth. Great salespeople, like great snowsports instructors, know how to get their clients to share their needs and motivations. Once the salesperson has that information, closing the sale is as easy as taking a math test where the teacher gave you the answer sheet.

The skill lies in asking the right questions.



Ask the Right Questions

Like a journalist uncovering a story, a snowsports instructor needs to be skilled in the art of the interview. A great interview is not just about reading down a list of prepared questions. It's more a directed conversation where the next question is based on the previous answer.

That great journalist knows that the first answer his subject gives isn't the best answer. The interview is about digging deeper to finding the real truth.

In snowsports instruction, it's better to think of this process less as an interview and more as a conversation. But this ain't no small talk: this conversation has purpose. You're challenged with helping your clients give you the deep-down truth, not just the first answer that comes to their minds.

4

keys to digging up the answers

1. Ask open-ended questions
2. Ask the same question multiple ways
3. Ask follow-up questions
4. Shut up and let your client talk

Here Are A Few Tips For Successfully Digging To The Heart Of The Matter:



Ask The Same Questions Multiple Ways

Just because you got one answer doesn't mean you got the full answer. If you ask the same question a few different ways, you're more likely to get the full story.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THE SAME QUESTION ASKED DIFFERENT WAYS:

- What are you looking to do today?
- What runs do you want to ski?
- What do you want to work on?
- Is there anything you'd like to accomplish today?
- What are your goals for this lesson?
- Why did you decide to take a lesson today?



By asking the same question phrased differently at different points of the conversation, the client won't feel like he's repeating himself and you'll likely get a fuller story.

*“People don’t buy for logical reasons.
They buy for emotional reasons.”*

- Zig Ziglar

Ask Follow-Up Questions

Eric came to you for a snowboard lesson. When you ask him what he wants to get out of this lesson, the 40-year-old says he wants better control on steeper groomed slopes. “No problem,” you say as you start to plan the runs you’ll take and the drills you’ll practice.

The two of you head up the chairlift where you decide to ask a few more questions. You begin by asking him what happens to his riding when he gets on steeper terrain. Then you ask him why he wants to go on those steeper runs.

“Because then I’ll be able to ride more places on the mountain,” he says.

So you follow up by asking what places he has in mind: trees, bumps, powder?

Eric is pretty vague with his answers. But as the conversation continues to the top of the chairlift, he starts to open up a little more. Right before you reach the top of the mountain, he coughs up the truth: “Actually, I feel silly for saying this, but I want to have the skills to go into the halfpipe,” he says sheepishly. That halfpipe desire is something he doesn’t tell anybody. He feels he’s too old and will never be good enough to go into the terrain park.

But you know better. You quickly modify your plans for the day.

WE’RE ALL PROGRAMMED TO GIVE STOCK ANSWERS TO CERTAIN QUESTIONS:

How are you doing?

Fine.

What do you do for a living?

I’m a ski instructor.

It’s not in our nature to spill out our soul with the slightest prompting. If you ask your client

why he took a lesson today, he’ll probably give you a ready-made answer that sounds logical.

“I want to get more control.”

“I want to get better at bumps.”

Sales legend Zig Ziglar said: “People don’t buy for logical reasons. They buy for emotional reasons.” Behind that logical answer is likely a more important emotional answer. Your client won’t reveal that emotional answer right away. She may feel it’s too personal, she may feel it’s not relevant to the lesson, or she may not realize the true reason herself.

It’s your job to dig and find that emotional answer. It’s only then that you’ll be able to deliver a lesson that satisfies your client. It’s only then that you’ll be in a position to convince your client to come back tomorrow.



“You’re challenged with helping your clients give you the deep-down truth, not just the first answer that comes to their minds.”

Truly Listen To The Answers

So you know what questions to ask. But what in the client’s answers do you listen for? You’re looking for information that exposes their needs and motivations.

SOME EXAMPLES ARE:

- What she wants to accomplish as a skier or snowboarder.
- What draws him to the sport.
- What brought her to this mountain.
- Trails he likes to go on (or avoid).
- Who she’s here with: friends, family, alone.
- How he best learns a new skill.
- What other activities or sports she enjoys.
- Is he timid or aggressive on snow.
- Why she took a lesson today.
- His plans for taking future lessons.

The difference between this type of conversation and mindless small talk is that you’re conscious of the answers you’re trying to get. Everything your client says contains clues to how you should deliver the perfect lesson and how you should persuade your client to return the next day. You need to listen, truly listen to the answers your client gives you. It’s only then that you can come up with more probing questions.

Base your next question on your client’s answer to the previous one. If your client says he wants to learn to carve, ask why he wants to carve.

“Through conversation and building trust, they tease out important details that give these instructors a roadmap to creating a successful lesson and to persuade their clients to come back.”

Build Rapport and Trust

Your client gave up his money and his time to take a lesson with you. He has a very important reason for doing that. That reason may be personal. It may be tied to underlying motivations. One thing's for certain: your client won't reveal personal information to a stranger.

You are trying to dig up the truth. But this is not an interrogation. It's a conversation. It's crucial for

you to build rapport and trust with your client. The more trust you gain from your client, the more freely he will give out information.

Luckily for you as an instructor, you have hours, if not the whole day, to build trust and eventually persuade your client to come back. That means your pacing can be relaxed. Let the conversation build over chairlift rides, lunch, and catch-your-

breath breaks on the hill. Don't forget to give a little information about yourself, also. It's only fair and it will help build up that crucial trust.

A successful snowsports instructor is a people person. She can relate to her clients and make them feel at ease. This allows her to create a great lesson and get her clients to tell her exactly what she needs to do to get them to come back the next day.

Are They Here With Friends?

As you gather information about your client's needs, this is your chance to find out about his friends and family as well. Rarely do people go on ski vacations alone. They come with their family or they come with their friends. Though you might just be skiing with one person today, you have an opportunity to show you can fill the needs of the whole group tomorrow.

This is where your versatility comes in. Maybe you can ski with the kids in the morning, the whole family right after lunch, and just the parents for the rest of the day. Maybe you teach one friend to snowboard in the morning, then work with the skiers on bumps in the afternoon.

Make sure you find out the needs of your client's whole party. Otherwise you may be passing up a great opportunity for a request.





Action Plan:

1

Write down one question you typically ask a student. Then write four other questions with the same meaning that might fetch a different response. In your next lesson, ask all five questions to your client.

2

Track down a senior instructor who is known for getting a lot of returns and requests. Ask her what information she gets out of her clients in order to meet their needs and take more lessons.

3

Pair up with another instructor. Practice interviewing each other by following a string of questions until you're five deep: why... why... why... why... why? The goal is to get more personal answers than just the first responses.

Chapter 4:

Communicate the Best Fit

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to explain the best options by using features, benefits, and motivations.
- 4 keys to dangling a delicious carrot.
- The simplest thing you can do to increase your returns and requests.

What Do You Sell?

Communicating the best fit: this is the part of the sales process most instructors think of as “selling.” Yet this step is only the visible ten-percent of the sales process for snowsports instructors. Everything you did up to this point is the vital underwater part of this sales iceberg.

Let’s review the sales process up to this point. Step one: you know your product (everything you offer of value as an instructor) inside and out. Step two: you’ve assessed your client’s underlying needs and motivations. If you did those two steps right, it should be clear to you what is the best fit between the product and customer.

Do steps one and two correctly, and step three should fall into place. You’re simply laying out the opportunity.

But know this: that opportunity is obvious to you... but it’s not necessarily obvious to your client. It’s worth repeating: the opportunity is obvious to you, but it’s not necessarily obvious to your client. Don’t lose an easy return client because you assume your client sees the connection between his goals and the benefits of another lesson.

This is where your communication skills come into play. Your job during this step of the sales process is to communicate that fit to your client. You are selling the solution to your client’s needs. Your goal during this step is to lay out the opportunity so clearly that your client sees the benefits of another lesson as obviously as you do.

“There is only one way to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it.”

–Dale Carnegie

“Your goal is to lay out the opportunity so clearly that your client sees the benefits of another lesson as obviously as you do.”

The Restaurant Recommendation

Imagine your client asks you to recommend a nice local restaurant. You quickly think of your favorite place, picturing the great meal you had the last time you went. You talk excitedly about the meal you ordered, the service of the waiter, and the great atmosphere.

You're selling that restaurant, and you're doing it with passion and without fear of rejection. Recommending a restaurant is easy for us all.

What if you could train yourself to persuade clients to return for more lessons as easily as you recommend restaurants? Your success rate would skyrocket.

LET'S ANALYZE THE PERSUASION ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN RECOMMENDING A RESTAURANT:

- You have expert knowledge on the subject.
- You believe in the product.
- You know your client's needs.
- You're confident that you're helping your client.
- You lay out the opportunity.
- You communicate with passion.
- You expect success.

You don't get stressed about selling that restaurant because you have a genuine desire to help your client... in this case to have a great dinner. Your client is happy to be sold on that restaurant because he has a need (to find a good restaurant) and you're an expert on the subject (because you ate there).

Suddenly, when you promote your own services, the fear of rejection creeps in. You fear that you're "selling" something and you fear your clients don't want what you offer.

Train yourself to think of selling the next lesson the same way you recommend a restaurant. You're doing your clients a favor because you're helping them create better vacations.

Features, Benefits, and Motivations

In order to convince your client to take another lesson with you, it's important that you communicate what is important to the client. To do that, you must know the difference between features and benefits. It's also important to link the benefits to your client's motivations.

A feature is an element of your lesson. Six hours with an instructor is a feature of an all day lesson. Lift line privileges are a feature. Alone, features don't do much to convince clients to come back.

But attach benefits to features, and now you're talking. A benefit describes why a feature is good for the client. Lift line privileges means less time waiting for a chairlift and more time skiing. Here are more examples of features and benefits for a full day private lesson:

FEATURE		BENEFIT		MOTIVATION	
Just you with the instructor		More individualized attention. Going at your exact pace. Going on all the runs you want to do.		"I want to improve as fast as possible."	
Lift line privileges		Less time wasted getting back up the hill. More time to ski or ride.		"I'm only out here a couple days. I want to get as much riding in as I can."	
Flexible start time and location		The instructor will meet you when and where it's most convenient to you. Makes your morning so much easier.		"I have to get the whole family ready in the morning. It's so hard to get myself out the door on time."	
Six hours long		Plenty of time to go anywhere on the mountain, practice drills, eat anywhere for lunch.		"I want to explore the mountain."	

In your mind, the benefits of a lesson's features may be obvious. But it might not be obvious to your client. Make sure you clearly communicate the benefits of each feature and tie that to your client's motivations.

Rattling off features that don't have any tie to your client's motivations is just a waste of words.



Dangle the Carrot

We all know carrots are great for the eyes. Let your client see the value of another lesson by “dangling the carrot.”

This means you tell your client you’ll do something during the next lesson that will help convince her to sign up for that lesson. Carrots could be (but are not limited to): going down their first blue or black run, learning a new technique, going in the race course or terrain park, seeing a new part of the mountain, or having lunch at a new restaurant.

But you just can’t throw out carrots willy-nilly. You won’t succeed if you say you’ll hit the terrain park and your client mentioned nothing about freestyle. Though the actual dangling will take place towards the end of the lesson, you need to plan your carrots at the very start.

HERE’S HOW TO MAKE YOUR CARROTS WORK:

- Plan the carrot from the beginning of the lesson.
- Use a carrot that is tied to your client’s goals.
- Pace the day so you have something in your bag to offer tomorrow.
- Use carrots every lesson.



How Many Clients Have You Lost Because You Didn't Invite Them Back?

One January afternoon, a guest named Pam came up to Dave Gregory, a supervisor at Vail. She had taken a lesson the day before and had nothing but great things to say about the instructor and the lesson. She went into detail about what she accomplished with the instructor, how much fun she had, and how much she now loves the sport.

"So are you going to take another lesson?" Dave asked Pam.

"Oh, no," she said. "I don't want to slow him down."

Pam assumed that her instructor didn't want to ski with her. She thought that because she could only ski green runs, that her instructors would rather have the day off and ski fast on much harder runs... or at least get some new clients that were much better than her. Even though her lesson went beyond her expectations, Pam didn't want to take another lesson because she didn't want to impose on her instructor.

That instructor lost a return student only because he didn't invite Pam back.

Pam isn't unique among lesson-takers. Her assumption is far more common from your guests than you might think. Instructors are expert skiers and riders who love to rip around

the mountain on the hardest terrain. Why would experts want to hang around with beginners and intermediates? Many guests don't put two and two together to realize that instructors make their living from repeat customers.

If you've taught your fair share of lessons, it's likely that you lost a returning client only because you didn't invite him or her back. Though many things about lessons seem obvious to you, and go without saying, they're not always obvious to your guests. Don't leave anything to chance. Clearly communicate the benefits of future lessons and that by returning tomorrow, both you and your guests will have a better day.

What Does "Invite Them Back" Mean?

Ski instructor Brett Gagnon earned the most returns and requests among all Beaver Creek instructors during the '08-'09 season. Yet, it's not just the promise of a larger paycheck that motivates him. Brett measures the quality of his lessons by the number of people who return (since it's the client who is the judge of quality). He also sees the opportunity to get people back for another day as a better chance to expose them to the sport, mountain, and lifestyle he loves.

To increase the chances of return clients, Brett makes sure he invites his clients back every lesson. But he doesn't just do it at the end of the lesson. He begins the day that way.

"One of my responsibilities to you is to bring you back for another lesson," Brett tells each of his clients when he first meets them. He then encourages his clients to let him know if he's not delivering the type of lesson that would make them want to come back. Brett finds the transparency empowers his clients to partner with him in creating the perfect lesson. "If you can share it with them up front, then it's going to be easier to deliver on those needs and wants," Brett said. "All of a sudden they open up to you."

One January day Brett taught an adult class lesson. One of his students was a 75-year old cancer survivor named Arthur. He was weakened from chemotherapy treatments, but still had set aside five days at Beaver Creek to learn to ski.

Brett introduced the class lesson in his normal way, by stating his goal of delivering a lesson that gets them to return. This showed to Arthur that this instructor was interested in creating a lasting relationship, not just a single-day of work.

Arthur opened up to Brett, telling the instructor what his goals were for this vacation. "What Arthur saw was someone who could help him on his journey," Brett said. After that class lesson, Arthur booked Brett for private lessons for the remaining four days of his vacation. That allowed Brett to cater specifically to Arthur's unique needs due to the chemotherapy.

"If you can start off by inviting them back, that helps set up the whole day," Brett said.



You must first build trust with your client before you lay out the opportunity for another lesson. Selling without trust is being pushy. Selling with trust is serving your client.

Expect Success

YOU WILL HAVE FAR MORE SUCCESS WHEN—AT THE START OF EVERY LESSON—YOU ASSUME THAT YOUR CLIENTS WILL WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER LESSON. HERE'S WHY:

- Your confidence will show through and your clients will respond favorably.
- You'll have an easier time doing the hard stuff (i.e. asking for the sale).
- You'll overcome your fear of rejection.
- You'll have so much more fun during the day.

Train your mindset to expect success. The best thing you can do is to recognize that your client is better off skiing or riding with you than without you. With all that you offer your clients (coach, guide, motivator, friend, safety net, problem-solver), you should feel sorry for the skier or boarder who doesn't have a chance to spend the day with you.

By being genuinely excited about sharing your love of snowsports with your clients, that excitement will show through and will be the best thing to convince clients to return for more lessons. Turn expecting success into a habit. At the start of each day see yourself delivering the perfect lesson and your clients eagerly wanting more. With enough practice, this mindset will become the default—even without you trying.

The Simplest Thing You Can Do To Increase Your Returns And Requests: Get The Commitment

As part of your “expecting success” mentality, you should know exactly what you will do when your client agrees to a new lesson. Getting to “Yes” is not the end of the process. Your day isn’t done until you secure the commitment with your client. This might mean walking your client to the sales desk, calling up the reservationist yourself, or notifying your supervisor. However you choose to accomplish this task, your client needs to know that tomorrow’s lesson is already taken care of.

BY SECURING THE COMMITMENT, YOU ACCOMPLISH TWO THINGS:

1. You provide good customer service: you take one task off your client’s plate, and prevent your client from standing in one more line in the morning.
2. Your client is less inclined to back out should something happen between today and tomorrow.

Even though your client told you he would come back the next day, there are a million reasons why he might be a no-show: he’s sore from the day before... he stayed out late and wants to sleep in... the weather looks bad and he’s not motivated... the kids need extra attention this morning....

When your client commits to tomorrow’s lesson, make sure you seal the deal right away. A lot happens between the afternoon when your client is excited about the next day’s lesson and the next morning when he was supposed to show up.

The excitement your client feels right after a successful lesson may be a vastly different feeling than when he wakes up in the morning cold, sore, or tired.

Walk your client to the lesson sales desk. Or better yet, call up the ski school reservationist and book the lesson on behalf of your client. Your client will appreciate the extra care you put into this, and you’re securing that higher level of commitment.

This simple act may be the easiest thing you do to increase your returns and requests.

When Do I Make The Sale?

Trust is the #1 factor that tells you it’s the right time to make the sale. The key here is you must first build trust with your client before you lay out the opportunity for another lesson. Selling without trust is being pushy. Selling with trust is serving your client.

How do you know when you’ve built trust?

When your client begins to open up to you. Listen for a noticeable shift in your client’s conversation and answers to your questions. This is when your client responds to your questions with deeper and more personal answers (the one’s you’ve been waiting for). This usually happens after three things occur:

1. **YOU’VE BUILT RAPPORT**
2. **YOU’VE SHOWN THAT YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR CLIENT AS A PERSON**
3. **YOU’VE DELIVERED ON AT LEAST PART OF YOUR CLIENT’S GOALS FOR THE LESSON**





Action Plan:

1

When you get clients to return for more lessons, ask them why they decided to return. Make a habit of doing this for every return client. They will give you the answers for persuading more clients to come back.

2

Talk to an instructor with less experience than you. Tell him or her what you do to convince your clients to come back for another lesson.

3

Go to your snowsports school sales desk and find out all the ways you can finalize the lesson for clients who want to come back. What phone numbers can you call? What information do you need? Does the client need to be there? What are the different procedures for class lessons and private lessons?

Chapter 5:

Selling Specific Products

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- Tips for selling 7 types of lessons.
- 3 things you absolutely must do every time... no matter the product.
- Special things you can do for top clients.

NO MATTER THE PRODUCT, THERE ARE CERTAIN UNIVERSAL LAWS:

- 1) **Connect with your client to build trust.**
- 2) **Deliver a good product that meets the individual needs of your client.**
- 3) **Communicate the value of returning to you for another day.**

Selling Tomorrow's Class Lesson

The challenge of class lessons is that you have to meet the needs of a diverse group of people. That can often be overwhelming, especially with a larger group. The trick is to focus on one person at a time, remembering that each student in your group is an individual. This will take more time. Don't wait until the end of the lesson to persuade everyone to come back for another day. Begin the process early, taking advantage of chairlift rides and indoor breaks to isolate individuals into a focused conversation.

HERE ARE MORE TIPS FOR SELLING TOMORROW'S CLASS LESSON:

- 1) **Group bonding.** Get the group excited about being together. Do this by getting the group interested in each other personally. Do it well, and the group will persuade each other to come back for more.
- 2) **Show the meeting spot.** Finish the day in the exact spot where you'll meet the group the next morning. This helps your students see themselves in another lesson, and lowers barriers to commitment.
- 3) **Invite the individual.** Individually invite each person back, offering each a customized carrot for tomorrow.
- 4) **Finalize the commitment.** For those who commit to the next lesson, walk them into the sales desk to purchase tomorrow's ticket. You might not be able to do it for everybody in the group. But you can always do it for one person in the group.



Selling A Kids' Lesson

A challenging part of teaching a lesson to children is that you have to convince both the kid and the parent that another lesson is worthwhile. In a class lesson you may only have a couple of hectic minutes at the end of the day to talk to the credit card-holding parents.

Joe Wilson of Keystone makes sure every day that the parents know that he and his students accomplished something valuable. In his 35 years teaching skiing, Joe often found himself talking to parents among the chaos of the Children's Center yard at the end of the day—not the ideal environment for persuading someone to buy another lesson. “You have to set that time and make that boundary, saying ‘this is my time with Jim’s parents and the rest will have to wait,’” he said. “Don’t just give the report card and say goodbye.”

- 1) Convince both the kids and the parents.** The parents usually want their kids to improve. The kids want to have fun. So make sure you’re doing lots of fun stuff that you can translate into skill improvement for the parents: skiing up sidewalls may be a hoot for the kids, but the parents want to know sidewalls improve balance and gets little Suzie ready for skiing uneven terrain like bumps.
- 2) Communicate with the parents.** You may only have a few valuable minutes with these decision-makers. Make the most of every minute. Before the lesson, talk to them and make sure they see you actively engaged with all the kids. Give out report cards and other tools that show individualized feedback and goals for the child. Coach the child on what you accomplished today so they can repeat it to their parents.
- 3) Get the group to bond.** If your kids bond with each other they’ll often sell each other on showing up for another lesson. This group bonding takes place during lunch, breaks, and chairlift rides. Inside time is breaks for kids—you’re still working. Play games at the table that gets the whole group engaged. Stay away from the television: you want your kids to interact with each other, not zone out for an hour.



Turning A One-Day Lesson Into A Multi-Day Package

Your snowsports school will likely offer multi-day lessons: some for class lessons, some for private lessons. They're designed to help you up-sell your single-day clients into multiple lessons. Inherent in these products are two key points: the savings from the discounted lessons and the benefits the client will receive from taking more than one lesson. It's your job to highlight these points.

- 1) **Explain the benefits.** Show the benefits of taking two or three (or more) lessons in a row. Tell your client what you'll be able to accomplish with the extra time. Help your client picture the level of her skiing or riding at the end of the series.
- 2) **Explain the price.** Highlight the price difference (remember, we decide on emotion, but justify that decision with logic).
- 3) **Easy conversion.** Remind your client how easy it is to convert to the multi-day package—and you can help take care of it.

Selling Tomorrow's Full-Day Private Lesson

A private lesson gives you the ability to focus your attention on one or two people (usually). From the get-go, you're set up to deliver a knock-out lesson simply because you have the opportunity to deliver exactly what your client needs. The sales process in a full-day private lesson is relaxed, stretching out over the whole day.

But don't get too relaxed. You still need to get through all the steps of the sales process. With only one or two people to focus on, you should be able to delve deeper to get the needs and motivations of your clients.

- 1) **Dangle the carrot.** Compared to a class lesson, a private lesson gives you more flexibility in the carrots you offer. Just make sure the carrot is tied to your client's goals.
- 2) **What's the rest of the family doing?** A common excuse for clients to not take a second lesson is because they have "other plans" with their family. By preemptively finding out what those plans are, you can shape the next lesson so that "other plans" also include you. This also lets you show off your versatility—you can teach different ages and disciplines.

Turning A Half-Day Private Into A Full-Day Private Lesson

A full-day private lesson gives you all the freedom in the world to shape the perfect lesson. You start when and where your client wants. You go for as long as your client wants. You ski or ride wherever your client wants. Such bliss.

A half-day lesson is far more rigid. Since you need to pack two or more lessons into your day, you're handcuffed as to when and where to start... and when and where to end. What does this mean to your client?

- 1) **Explain the freedom.** Tell your client what the freedom of a full-day means to him: more flexible start and end times, more flexible start and end locations, the ability to travel all over the mountain, the ability to get more mileage and own the technique you're working on.
- 2) **Explain the price.** Highlight the price difference between a half-day and a full-day lesson. It's certainly a better value for your client's dollar.
- 3) **Easy conversion.** Explain how easy it is to convert a half-day lesson into a full-day one.



Multi-Day Privates, Year After Year

Multi-day privates are the gold standard of your client list. These clients typically see the value of going out with an instructor (or four) every day of their vacation. So any persuasion required is not focused on convincing them for one more lesson, but to come back to your mountain and to book you again year after year. Here are some tips for keeping these clients coming back:

- 1) **Deliver a great product.** Make it clear (through your actions) that they will have a better vacation with you than without you. That means deliver a great product every day they're with you. Do something special at least once a trip. This could include planning a family picnic on a scenic deck, getting silly with a dress-up day, or organizing a scavenger hunt.
- 2) **Stay in contact.** Don't just assume they'll book you next winter. Keep in touch through the summer and fall. A phone call or email reminds them that you care.
- 3) **Keep the whole family in mind.** You may only be riding with one member, but you want stay on top of everyone's needs. There may be an opportunity to convince Mom to come back for a special women's clinic in the spring while you ride with Johnny. Or maybe little Karen wants to do a freestyle camp while you ski with Mom and Dad. With the right suggestions, a single trip a year may turn into two.

*Help your client
picture the level of her
skiing or riding at the end
of the series.*

One/Two Hour Lessons Into Longer Ones

One and two hour lessons saddle you with plenty of constraints. You need to deliver a great lesson and convince your client to stick around for more... with the clock ticking the whole time.

The key here is timing. You need to build trust, assess your client's needs, and deliver on some of those needs before you attempt to persuade him to extend the lesson. But you can't wait too long, otherwise he'll already be thinking about his plans for the rest of the day.

Yes, extending a short lesson is a tall order. But here's how to do it:

- 1) Guided Practice.** Explain the benefits of practicing with a coach. You've given one or two tips, but your client doesn't yet own the movement. A longer lesson will allow your client to practice those tips under your watchful eye. It will also allow you to work on those skills on different terrain: steeper trails, bumps, crud, the race course, or the terrain park.
- 2) Explain the price.** Highlight the difference between what your client paid already and the cost of the longer lesson. It will be a better value for your client's dollar.
- 3) Easy conversion.** Explain how easy it is for you to convert to a longer lesson.



Action Plan:

1

Identify the product you're most successful in getting returns. Analyze why that is the case. Translate those elements that make you successful in one type of lesson into action points for other types of lessons.

2

Pick a product you find yourself in the most. Make a list of tips you will use to get your clients to return. Talk to another instructor to add to that list.

3

From that list, pick out one new tactic you will employ the very next time you teach a class lesson, a private lesson, or a kid's lesson.



Chapter 6:

7 Steps to Sharpen Your Sales Skills

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- Habits to form to get better at convincing clients to come back.
- Tactics for immediate improvement.
- Why Boy Scouts have an advantage in selling.

*“The greatest thing
in this world is not
so much where we are,
but in what direction we
are moving.”*

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

STEP 1: Eliminate Self-Limiting Attitudes

These beliefs put a ceiling over your potential. Only you can build that ceiling. Only you can tear it down:

- “I’m an instructor, not a salesperson.”
- “I’ll never be good at selling my services.”
- “I’m not worth the cost of a lesson.”
- “My only value is teaching ski (or snowboard) technique.”
- “My client won’t want another lesson.”

All these beliefs are false. Yet most instructors believe one or more of these. Change your mentality to believing that sales skills are part of the path to being a great instructor, that you have the ability to improve your sales skills, and that you’re worth every penny your resort charges.

Change your beliefs and move forward.



*Sell the lesson to yourself
first to deliver a better
product and set yourself
up for more returns.*

STEP 2: Sell To Yourself First

The women and men who stand at the top of the profession—the ones that consistently shatter any return and request benchmarks their supervisors lay out for them—have the following in common when they deal with their clients:

- 1) Passion. They have a passion for snowsports.
- 2) Interest. They have a genuine interest in their clients as people.
- 3) Optimism. They feel confident they can meet their clients' needs and get their clients to return for more lessons.

If your mentality has all three of these elements, you're 90% of the way to a sale. Passion, interest, and optimism seep out from everything you do. Your clients will notice and they will respond favorably.

All instructors have those three traits within them. Yet these traits don't always show because your energy and motivation varies each day. One day you're high on life. The next day you're slogging out of bed.

So how do you still exude passion, interest, and optimism on the days when you're not feeling it? You can't just fake it. After all, your clients will sense when you're not genuine. As much as a client responds favorably to genuine passion, they will be turned off by fake passion.

The key to getting into the right mentality is to first sell the lesson to yourself. What's in it for you (the instructor)? What do you get out of teaching this lesson today? The answer may be that it's an opportunity for improving your own skills. Or the answer may be the pride you feel after successfully helping someone improve. That answer will be different for every instructor, for every lesson.

When you answer that question—every single day—you will always uncover that passion, interest, and optimism.

Sell the lesson to yourself first to deliver a better product and set yourself up for more returns.



STEP 3: Create Small Victories

Imagine a novice skier arriving for a lesson with you. Would you take him down a black diamond run right away? Likely not, since this would shatter his confidence and make him a worse skier. Instead you would warm up on the easiest runs, then slowly challenge him with more difficult tasks or more difficult terrain. You would guide him along, always looking out for his confidence and his energy level.

You should do the same thing with yourself when looking to improve your sales skills.

If you're a green circle seller, don't dive right into a black diamond closing technique. Find your own pace. Find the tactics that you're comfortable trying with your next clients.

The key to success is to always play around with the edges of your comfort zone. Every day you have a lesson is an opportunity to practice your selling. Over time your comfort zone will grow, your skills will grow, and your confidence will grow.

Focus on the little victories. Maybe your goal for

the next lesson is to tell each student individually that you had a great time and want them to come back tomorrow. Then when you do invite everyone back that day, celebrate that victory.

After all, celebrating your victory is the most important part. That's what helps ingrain that action into your daily habits.

Small successes are the building blocks of confidence. Build them up day after day and see large results.

When you wake up in the morning with a clear goal in mind, you know exactly what you need to do during the day to get closer to that goal.

STEP 4: Debrief Every Lesson

After each and every lesson—no matter the outcome—give yourself a little debrief about what happened. If you weren't able to convince your client to buy another lesson, why not? What were his reasons for only taking one lesson?

Imagine the conversation where you could persuade that lost client to return. What would you say to overcome his objections? This mental

exercise will prepare you for the next time you come across those same objections.

More importantly, make sure you debrief yourself when you are successful. How did you structure the lesson, how did you act, what did you say that convinced your client to buy another lesson? Too often we chalk up our successes to blind luck: "Oh, he was going to take another lesson anyway." But

that's hardly ever the case. Your actions always play a role. Make sure you remind yourself what you did right so you can turn those actions into habits.

Every day you work, you have an opportunity to practice your persuasion skills.



STEP 5: Study Other Instructors

Your greatest resource for improving your sales skills is the group of instructors around you. Make it a point to pick their brains. Learn from their experiences.

Don't just save this for the locker room. Observe instructors in their natural habitat. Audit a class lesson with an instructor known for a strong return rate. Eavesdrop on other instructors with their clients. You'll only get part of the conversation, but even from that little bit you'll often pick up some gems.

STEP 6: Set Goals

Personal-success guru Napoleon Hill said it best: "A goal is a dream with a deadline." Goals—big and small—move you to action. The simple act of setting a goal makes the next steps clear. When you wake up in the morning with a clear goal in mind, you know exactly what you need to do during the day to get closer to that goal.

Breckenridge's Chris Juarez sets goals for request hours. He sets an ultimate season goal, then breaks it down to smaller monthly goals. By tracking the numbers he keeps his sales skills at the top of his mind. "It helps to track those numbers," Chris said.

Setting goals keeps Chris improving, and keeps him at the top of the profession.

STEP 7: Be Prepared

"Be Prepared": the Boy Scout motto. What helped generations of Boy Scouts survive the wilderness also helps you build up your returns.

Being prepared means planning your lesson in advance. It means anticipating your clients' needs and being ready to solve their problems.

Being prepared means spending time at home mentally rehearsing objections. That way when those objections come up in a lesson, you'll know what to say to persuade your client to return.

Being prepared means knowing what carrot you're going to dangle for tomorrow's lesson, and how to set up the day so that carrot looks tasty.

Being prepared means knowing what to do when your client says "Yes." You need to know exactly how to sign up for that next lesson so it can be done quickly.

Being prepared means being well rested so you have the energy to give a top shelf lesson.

When you are prepared, you will look like a pro, you will have more confidence, and you will deliver a better lesson. That formula adds up to more returns.

Find Your Style

Just as some skiers are better at bumps, others at racing, and others in the terrain park, there are as many sales styles as there are people. The key is to figure out what works best for you and grow with that style. You'll have far more success with a style you own than one you try to fit into.

That doesn't mean you can't learn from others. Take their techniques and integrate them into your own style.

"I'm a horrible salesperson. If I try to 'sell' I just alienate people," said Heavenly ski instructor Ellen Johnson. Yet Ellen has been Heavenly's most requested instructor for the past three seasons. Even though Ellen doesn't "sell," if you were to watch Ellen teach a lesson, no doubt you would see her go through every step of the sales process outlined in this book. She just does it so well that her clients are ready to buy long before she'd ever have to try a hard-sell close.

Ellen became a top instructor not by mimicking others, but by knowing her style and fine-tuning it over her career. "I try to be authentic. It's just really being who I am," she said.

What is Ellen's style? "I'm sincerely interested in people's experiences," she said. "Why they came, why are they doing this, are they excited, are they anxious...?"

There is no employee on the mountain in a better position than you to help a guest get the most out of her vacation.

CONCLUSION: Learn How To Deliver A Great Vacation

Beaver Creek ski instructor Mark Grimaldi wasn't born with great sales skills. When he first became an instructor he made plenty of mistakes. The success he sees now with his lessons didn't show up those early years, mainly because he hadn't developed the people skills to relate to different personalities.

Mark gained that experience by teaching hundreds of skiers in class lessons each year at resorts in California, Colorado, Australia, Switzerland, and Austria. The sheer number of people he dealt with helped him hone his people skills. "How can you develop your people skills unless you can practice on a large quantity of people?" Mark said. "Only from experience are you going to know how people react to things."

That experience lets Mark decide what style he'll use with clients to persuade them to come back.

Mark also used his second career—real estate—to gain sales experience. As a real estate agent he has taken a number of courses on sales. He applied the lessons he learned from those courses to both his career in real estate and his career in ski instruction. Today both his careers feed off each other, giving him experiences in one that helps him succeed in the other.

You may be a first-year instructor figuring things out. You may be at the top of your game, searching for that next tip to get you even further. You might have years of instruction under your belt, but feel you've reached a plateau in your performance.

Either way, you have the opportunity to practice your sales skills every day—both through the winter and the summer, on the slopes and off the hill. The bad news is that improving your sales skills requires hard work. The good news is that by entering that path, you get on a positive feedback cycle that means each success makes the next success easier. If you make a commitment to every day improve you sales skills, you will see results... dramatic results.

Take the next step today.

There is no employee on the mountain in a better position than you to help a guest get the most out of her vacation. Commit to improving your sales skills and you will deliver not just great lessons, but great vacations.



Action Plan:

1

Create a sales journal. After every lesson you teach, write down what you did to convince your clients to return for another lesson. Write down the results. Write down any reasons your clients gave for not buying another lesson.

2

Talk to a senior instructor about how she improved her sales skills over her career.

3

Study salespeople in your daily life. The waiter who serves you at the restaurant, the sales clerk at your favorite clothing store. Keep an eye on what they do to convince you to buy. Does it work? Are they good or bad at sales? What can you incorporate into your sales process with clients?



APPENDIX: FURTHER READING

Keep Your Sales Skills Sharp By Diving Into A Few Of These Resources:

BOOKS

How to Win Friends and Influence People

By Dale Carnegie (Simon and Schuster)

This book created the genre of business self-help. First published in 1937, it's still as timely today. This is a must-read for anyone who deals with people for a living, especially snowsports instructors.

The One Minute Sales Person

By Spencer Johnson (Random House)

By the author of mega-bestselling *The One Minute Manager*. It's a quick, yet classic, business parable that shows what selling is really about. For the instructor looking for the benefits of staying customer-focused.

The Sales Bible

By Jeffrey Gitomer (Wiley)

A book full of lists and methods on the sales process. This book is packed with hundreds of tips you can act on in your next lesson.

WEBSITES

www.SalesPeak.com

Head straight to the "Articles" section to get access to more than 100 articles on sales.

www.SalesCaffeine.com

A weekly eZine delivered to your in-box by sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer.

COURSES

Dale Carnegie Courses (www.dalecarnegie.com)

Offers single-day and multi-day sales courses in cities all across the United States.

Community College

Check your local community college course schedule for classes and seminars on selling.