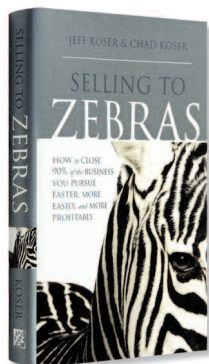


# Be the King of the Sales Jungle

Review by Erin Nagle



## Selling to Zebras

By Jeff Koser and Chad Koser

Greenleaf Book Group Press © 2008, 240 pages, \$19.95 (ISBN 978-1-929774-54-9)

It's hard to believe, but most companies close only about 15 percent of their sales deals. This means that salespeople spend 85 percent of their time to no

avail. What can they do? The answer lies in identifying zebras, prospects that are perfect fits for a salesperson's deal — not just from a product or service basis but also in terms of corporate values.

### The End of Activity-Based Sales

The concept of *Selling to Zebras* is founded on the belief that activity-based sales no longer work. As the authors explain, sales can no longer be a numbers game. "Old-school methods targeting sheer volumes of leads and knocking on every door with equal vigor have been proven ineffective, not to mention too expensive. Effort alone is no longer enough to be competitive."

While perfect prospects are zebras, according to the authors, those who chase after deals — from salespeople to CEOs — are lions. Although the focus of the book is salespeople, the advice is equally important to those at the very top of organizations who initiate alliances and other deals.

In the opinion of the authors, lions can close 90 percent of business deals operating in a zebra way. By using the tools in this book, lions can identify the right prey, catch it and effectively feed the pride. The authors write, "[Lions] won't swipe at any food source within sight ... and then pursue another and another until all their energy is spent and they have to abandon the hunt. Rather, they pursue prey that is worth the energy to pursue."

To make this feasible, the authors provide tools, techniques and spreadsheets to differentiate zebras from the rest of the animals in the sales jungle. The end goal is to increase average deal size, margins and close rates while reducing sales cycles, discounting and resource usage. This keeps customers happy and enables word-of-mouth references that increase sales customers. Further, the salespeople can spend time with those prospects that matter most:

members of the executive level. The authors point to situations in which salespeople were able to gain access to a higher level within a prospect and stay at a higher level throughout the negotiating process.

### Assessing Prey

Readers are able to do this because the authors have given them the insights they need to customize their attack on the zebras. With the help of the authors, sales personnel should be able to answer each of these questions correctly: Will this prospect buy anything? Will this prospect buy from me? Will this prospect buy more? Inability to answer "yes" to these questions means the individual may not be a prospect at all — in other words, may not be a zebra.

Among the secrets the authors divulge is to assess past best customers. The questions asked include: How did these companies behave during the sales cycle? Were they open, inviting, honest and forthright, or was it difficult to communicate with them? Were contract negotiations smooth and uneventful, or tense and tiresome? Were you able to position and sell all that you offer?

Readers are then asked to consider the size of the companies in their set and determine the existence, if any, of a pattern and, most important, analyze prospects' philosophies and ideas. The authors suggest that prospects be evaluated with a product-adoption life cycle spreadsheet that depicts five classifications of buying habits: innovators, early adopters, early majority, last majority and laggards. Which category best describes customers who buy from you?

A Best Books Award winner, *Selling to Zebras* may be one of the most valuable books read by sales personnel — from salespeople to sales directors to sales vice presidents. The book also has strong potential to find an audience with executives who are frequently involved in negotiation. On the plains of the sales landscape, *Selling to Zebras* aims to turn ordinary salespeople into apex predators. The authors are confident that their methods will lead to a sales quarter that would be the pride of any company.

### The Buzz

**Notability:** ★★★★★  
**Readability:** ★★★★★  
**Takeaways:** ★★★★★  
**Innovation:** ★★★★★  
**Shelf Life:** ★★★★★