

How Sales Made America

No doubt you have heard the quote, “Nothing happens until a sale is made.”

That statement was made by Thomas J. Watson Sr. (1874 – 1956), who served as chairman and CEO of International Business Machines and oversaw the company’s growth into an international force from 1914 to 1956. He turned the company into a highly effective selling organization, based largely on punched-card tabulating machines. He was one of the richest men of his time and was called the world’s greatest salesman when he died.

But just think about the role of the salesman. America was populated and freed by salesmen.

World conditions were horrible when the settlement of America started and people were desperately needed to populate the new, uncharted wilderness. Sir Walter Raleigh toured the coffeehouses of London, persuading people who were living in distress that there was a better land and a better way to live.

The people were ignorant, fearful and superstitious, so it took a lot of selling on Raleigh’s part to persuade them to leave the security of their homeland.

America was freed by a salesman. George Washington’s task to recruit the Continental Army looked insurmountable. He had to convince the farmers, merchants, shipbuilders, fur trappers and other workmen to stop what they were doing and go to war against the most powerful nation on earth – the one with the dominant navy and a large, professional, well-trained, well-equipped army.

He had to tell them if they won the war there would be little, if any, money to pay them, and if they lost the war, they would be hung from the highest trees. Yes, it was a tough sell, but Washington was a salesman on fire for freedom.

America was explored by a salesman. Though America had been discovered in 1492, by 1776 – or nearly 300 years later – it had been settled only as far west as the Appalachian Mountains. However, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton persuaded Congress to appropriate money to study the methods the British had used to establish themselves around the world.

Trading posts were the result, and Lewis and Clark got their jump start toward reaching the Pacific Coast. In fewer than 50 more years, a strong presence had been established all over this great land.

Yes, the salesperson has played a significant role in our country. Just consider ...

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- In a technological age, tech support isn't needed unless something is sold that needs to be supported.
- The big 18-wheelers have nothing to deliver until someone sells something.
- The roads can't be paved until someone sells the asphalt.
- The auto mechanic has no car to work on unless someone sells an automobile that needs, or will need, work.
- The patient would have no medicine if the pharmaceutical sales rep didn't sell the doctors on the drugs
- And our facilities would have no patients or residents until a sale – somewhere along the line – is made.



So the question: What dream, idea or conviction do you hold dear, and how are you selling it?

Believe it or not, the Bible has something to say about it:

The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips (Proverbs 16:23 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter