



**Outstanding Agents.
Outstanding Results.**



Serve mankind; go into sales

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CURM19

Tom Hopkins is the Elvis of sales trainers. In his "Sales Champions" DVDs, Hopkins makes the case that sales is the best career a person can choose. There is, of course, the money. He even argues that the uncertainty of the salesperson's income is a hidden benefit, saying, "The more guarantees you accept, the less opportunity you have for financial freedom."

However, I like the absence of certainty in a broader sense: You never have the same day twice. If you want your work to be a game, you must have the chance for victory, which also means having the chance for defeat. The typical job is like a slot machine where you pull the handle a thousand times a day, while knowing that the jackpot is going to hit every other Friday at 2 p.m., and it's always the exact same jackpot.

Hopkins further points out that sales is "the highest-paid hard work and the lowest-paid easy work," meaning that if you do sales the sit-back-and-wait way, you make little or nothing; however, on the other end of the effort continuum, hard work is rewarded. He says he was a fanatic when he began, taking three days off in his first three years -- the three Christmas days. However, by his eighth year, he was the top real estate agent in the country, and then "never picked up a phone to call a prospect."

Contrast this with, say, being a fanatical accounts-payable clerk. If you do double the work of an average clerk, you might make 5 percent more, and instead of your work getting easier over time, you simply are given a bigger stack of projects. There's good old Parkinson's Law: "Work expands to fill the time allotted to it," but for corporate life the time expected keeps expanding too. Another advantage of sales is that it's easy to get into. You can have your own direct-marketing business with an investment of \$100, maybe \$200. However, this is also a disadvantage, as the profession is perceived as the catch basin for those who aren't qualified for something else. In other words, there is no snob appeal to being a salesperson.

There have been a number of attempts to create certifications for selling, something akin to sales CPA, but these are doomed. Sales justifies itself. If you can sprint fast enough to win, nobody cares where you learned to run.

Hopkins cites four levels of knowledge for a salesperson, ones that also apply to any profession:

- Unconscious incompetent.

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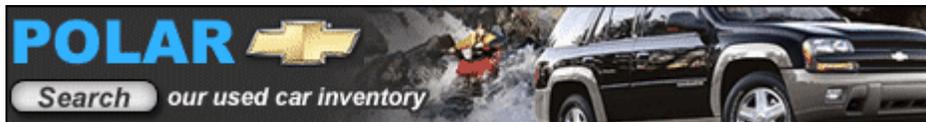
- Conscious incompetent.
- Conscious competent.
- Unconscious competent.

You begin by not knowing what you don't know. Soon you realize your shortcomings. If you persevere, you know what you're doing, but you must think about it, to work at remembering. By the time you've reached the highest level, you simply know. You don't need to recollect; you have developed the reflexes of a pro.

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