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FOREWORD

We're all selling something. At parties, in job interviews, when we meet someone we like, even when a new checkout opens at the supermarket. We're always selling something – whether we know it or not.

Yet when we look at sales from a commercial perspective, there's an additional ingredient. Every participant has an interest in the outcome of our sale. And since we're no longer acting on our own behalf, we devise ways to guarantee success: communications tools and long-term structures. Yet personal contact remains crucial in sales: personal contact involving real people, person to person, which is more about intention than interest.

Over the last fifteen years, we have developed training courses that have spread our sales philosophy far and wide. Rather than basing our approach on theory, we take the person doing the selling as our starting point. And we seem to be getting it right. The Sales from Your Heart approach takes a new perspective on selling. Sales can be fun, more effective and less arduous. Our mission, to show that sales is universal and everyone is always selling something, is the bottom line of this book.

In essence, Sales from Your Heart focuses on caring about

what matters to the customer. It's the purest form of customer contact: benefitting the customer and yourself. Gaining the customer's trust by remaining true to yourself. While this is obviously valuable for professional salespeople, it also enhances the success, pleasure and satisfaction that people not directly involved in the selling process derive from their connection with internal or external customers, knowing that their thoughts and actions are based on their own authenticity and desire.

People working in sales will naturally benefit from this book. But even people who think sales isn't really their cup of tea will gain new, enlightened insights. *Sales from Your Heart* will come as a revelation to the pros, and as a breath of fresh air to the antis.

Public speaking can be fun, and training too, but a book leaves something for posterity. And that happens to be something I promised myself many years ago:

I'm going to force myself to keep innovating. That's why I'm here. I want to dare to live. I want to think less. I don't want to let go. I want to embrace every facet of life, all its pros and cons. I want to keep challenging myself. I want to dare to fail, I want to get back up. Make my mistakes, consciously and to improve, to be able to offer more. I'm only here for a short while. But the world needs to know about it. I want to leave a legacy. I want my presence here to have meant something. That's why I do what I do.

Even so, writing this book was one of the hardest things I've ever done. The ambition and the desire date back to 2012. And now the book is finally ready. At last! Though that's just how I

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am. I tend to start with a suggestion, then develop the concept and worry about the details later.

Much of what you'll read here began as my own idea. Elsewhere I've adapted existing concepts. My strength is my ability to keep things simple. I draw inspiration from everyday life and I reduce complex material to its essence. It's how I explain it to myself, and how I motivate others.

But writing a book is a whole different discipline. In fact, without sales philosopher Hiske Gude and partner Michel de Weerd, I would never have completed this book. Michel is my friend and teacher, and the architect of our ideas. Hiske is a vital link for us, bringing the various strands together and finding the right words. Making our philosophy more profound, complete and ultimately worth publishing. Together, they collected my anecdotes and catchphrases and laid the groundwork so these various elements could be published in book form.

And of course, these ideas would never have developed without the many participants in our training courses. I would like to thank them especially for their honesty, sincerity and willingness to share and learn. It has given us the insight, energy and encouragement to continue perfecting our philosophy.

Enjoy the book. I hope you find it inspiring!

Richard van Kray

1

MY STORY

This is me, Richard van Kray: a young lad from an ordinary street in the village of Veldhoven, in Brabant, the Netherlands. Starting high school in the top class, and working my way down to the bottom. Forty-one years young. One metre 71 (or 5,7 feet) tall. Flash clothes. A little too much gel. Slightly unruly, a tad vulgar. Averse to authority. So, naturally, a businessman: a commercial trainer and speaker on how to connect meaningfully with customers.

Some see an ostentatious wannabe-Italian with ‘the gift of the gab, low on skills; no content, nothing new’. Others say: ‘But he inspires and he has integrity. Buckets of life experience and he knows what he’s talking about. He gave me plenty of food for thought.’ I leave it to you to decide what you think when you get to the end.

Either way, I have a message I want to tell you. About the lessons I’ve learned, about myself and about sales. Personal lessons. But universal too. Lessons that have enabled me to inspire other people. The essence of my message is that my *authentic* self, that vulnerable guy with all his faults and uncertainties, and my *ambitious* self, packed with amazing plans and goals, don’t have to be in conflict. I’m both those people! The moment I recognised that, a whole new world opened up for me.

It took a serious identity crisis for me to find that out.

**I'm both
those people!**

A moment, or more accurately, a period in which I came to the realisation that I was doing everything wrong, as a person and as a professional. So my story has two halves: Richard before the crash, and Richard after. They are two different people.

Yet deep down, I've always remained myself. The big difference is the extent to which I allowed the world to see my vulnerability and my willingness to link this to my goals and ambitions.

At heart, I'm a bit of a Jack-the-lad who's constantly trying to prove himself. I used to focus on the superficial, the veneer: the prettiest girl, the coolest bike and the funniest jokes. It was all so people would like me and satisfy my insatiable ego. I kept this up later in my work too. Everything I did, was to get recognition and respect. Customers were a means to an end for me.

**I used to
focus on the
veneer.**

That's how I started, selling in a grocer's store and persuading passers-by into discos in Spain. At around twenty, my parents decided it was time for a little more 'calm, clarity and stability'. I began working for a wholesaler in florist accessories. That's when I found I could be a Jack-of-all-trades. I learned a lot there. To this day, I'm still grateful for the opportunities they gave me. But I knew I could achieve more, and I wanted more. And then one day my chance to prove it came.

I was twenty-five when someone at a major financial services company recognised my talent for commerce. They practi-

My Story

cally plucked me from the street. A four-week internal sales course followed, on the American model, and then they sent me out to sell savings policies around the country. I was very good. We had between 600 and 700 sales representatives and sometimes I was number 1, sometimes number 5, but always somewhere at the top. It's sad, but whenever I dropped to number 6 nationwide, I lost sleep. That's what gave me quality of life. Whether customers were satisfied or not didn't bother me, just my own success.

Around seven months later, head office promoted me to sales trainer. I was still a young lad, telling the travelling sales reps with years of experience how things worked in the commercial world. That was something I found I could do well, and it paid nicely. I felt like the king of the hill at that club. There was no limit to the perks: tickets to the Olympic Games and Wimbledon, invitations to exclusive parties and fittings for expensive made-to-measure suits. But that was when things started to unravel.

I began developing narcissistic traits: I thought I was invincible.

That illusion was shattered unexpectedly and cruelly in 2004-2005. They say that bad things come in threes. And that's how it happened. In the space of a year, I lost my job in a company reorganisation, my girlfriend packed her bags and went back to her parents, and my father died following a brief, painful illness. My whole life rocked on its foundations.

Everything I had counted on until then turned out useless in a crisis. I was thrown back on my own social resources, which I had been neglecting for years. There I stood: empty-handed and alone. Suddenly, my life had become a living par-

adox: my audience thought I was doing fine, while inside I was deeply unhappy. The lesson I learned was that taking yourself to the limit can be addictive, but it can also cause a lot of pain.

In retrospect, however, all that was a blessing. It was during my father's illness that we finally got to talk. As a boy I had been timid, scared to show the person I really was. My father was the opposite: also a bit of an introvert, but unlike me he was totally unafraid. In our conversations, he said some amazing things, such as: 'Fearing death won't stop you dying.' That was an eye-opener for me.

That was when I decided to rely on my inner motivation and to stop worrying about what other people thought of me. I realised that I had been standing on the edge of a precipice. My focus had been on how I was supposed to behave. I had been playing a role, and that had turned me into a robot. I had lost my independence; I had handed over control of my personality and my happiness. I was constantly having to shore up my image, for myself and for other people. While I had become good at that, it meant I could never show who I really was. It was consuming me from the inside. Plus, I felt in constant danger of being found out, which made me deeply afraid. That was why I was continually having to prove that I was the best.

As I came through that crisis, I found that the things I had once considered certain were just illusions. That by fighting and repressing my anxieties, I had become estranged from myself and the people I loved. Through those experiences, I came to realise that I had to acknowledge my fears; I feared being rejected if I showed my real self. However, I have a