The Mystery of the Great Salesperson

Hey, did you hear about Bob? He's is the greatest salesperson ever! Yeah, he's a natural born salesperson!

So what exactly is a great salesperson? Is it someone who is just "naturally" good with people? Is it someone who can speak eloquently? Is it someone who could sell the shoes right off your feet? In my short quest to examine the mystery of the great salesperson I turn to www.dictionary.com for their definition of selling. Is the answer found here?

Sell;   sɛl - Pronunciation *verb,* **sold, sell·ing,** *noun*

- *To persuade or induce (someone) to buy something*

- *To cause or persuade to accept; convince*

- *To force or extract for a price*

Does the answer lie in the definitions given above? It seems this would imply that the mystery isn't a mystery at all – just someone who can extract money from someone for something that they may or may not fully want to own. This might imply more of a disservice than a service at all. Does being a great salesperson involve caring about people or caring more about meeting the salesperson's needs? After all, the definitions above tend to imply it is something that is done *to* someone rather than *for* someone. If I talk you into something because I am very smooth or persuasive, would it stand to reason that in all probability I would accomplish this one time with you and then you would never return? If so, would this constitute a great salesperson?

Years ago a business associate asked me to write down the first word that came to my mind after he spoke three words. I pulled out my pen and prepared myself. Here came the first word, *tree*. Then the second word, *ice cream*. Then the third word, *salesperson*. And then, he stopped. He then told me the first two words mean nothing and he was most interested in hearing what I had written after *salesperson*. To which I said, *me.* I have continued to employ this exercise in seminars to which the responses are often words such as; con man, slime dog, liar, cheat or fast talker. I have also discovered that if I fear that another perceives me in this way, I will try to overcompensate for that fear.

The mystery of the great salesperson seems to be in an opposite direction of most people's perception of a salesperson. To place the word *great* in front of one of the three definitions above or the typical responses from the word, salesperson would be an odd mix; *great* persuader, *great* cheat, *great* con man. So, where does the term great salesperson apply in the real world?

In searching the internet with the words, *great salesperson* I found the following: "They take the time and invest in themselves and learn how to become great!", "Everyone can be a great salesperson" and "Great salespeople are not born great." It would seem that the collective idea here is that investing in one's self to become great is the key and that great has more to do with helping someone than persuading them.

The mystery of the great salesperson seems to rest on a familiar premise. That being, I become great to the extent I seek to understand, to be good or great at what I do. Does this mean that I would have to put effort out to become great? Does an athlete put out effort to become great? Does a concert pianist, violinist, vocalist, gymnast, baseball player or golfer become great by accident? I know that I formerly coveted the greatness in another salesperson to the extent that I felt I did not possess it for myself. Perhaps the mystery of the great salesperson lies in whether an individual *wants* to be great. If this is the case, perhaps the bigger mystery is why don't some salespeople want to be that – a *great* salesperson?