

# SELLING TO THE C-SUITE

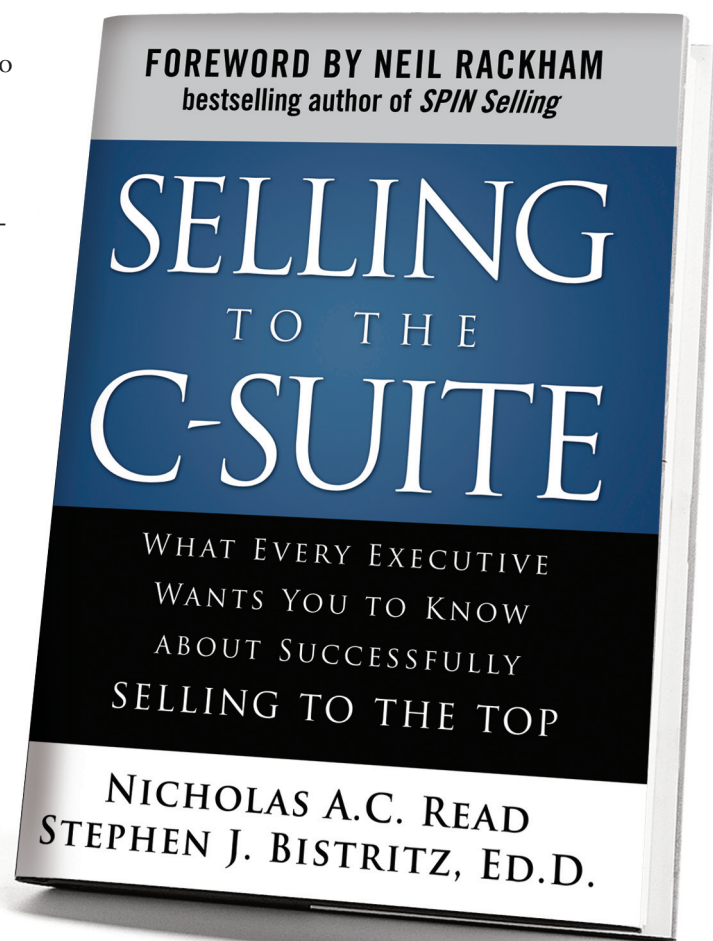
## The world's largest empirical study on how to sell to executives

Two of the world's leading sales strategists and trainers join forces to produce a truly revolutionary book. Critics are hailing it as one of the most important sales books of the decade, destined to become an instant classic.

Based on 10 years of research with CXO-level executives around the world, salespeople can now learn the secrets of selling to the C-Suite—from interviews, surveys and anecdotes of executives themselves.

### Why salespeople will love this book

In a year when salespeople's targets are going up while their customer's interest in spending is going down, there's never been a more topical book on how to sell above the purchasing manager's cost-cutting exercises and gain credibility—and margin—at the executive level. The book is highly accessible, written by sales experts to appeal to the way salespeople think. Full of rich examples, scenarios, suggestions and templates, *Selling to the C-Suite* is a veritable tool kit for anyone looking for a sustainable competitive advantage in today's economic challenges and beyond. The lessons are timeless and can be applied immediately after reading.



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## Praise

*“The business world is drowning in a flood of sales books. The trouble is that most of these books are about how to sell, without a clue about how customers buy. . . . This book is different. It is firmly rooted in how people buy and so it works.”*

—NEIL RACKHAM, author of *SPIN Selling*

*“Those new to executive sales will find a game plan they can use immediately. Veterans who regularly call on executives will use this book to sharpen their game.”*

—CHIP BRUBAKER, Vice President-Americas Sales Readiness, CA, Inc.

*“If you’ve always wondered how the other sales guy got to the CEO and you didn’t, start reading this book and earn serious commissions!”*

—LINDSAY LYON, CEO, Mobilarm, and former GM Commercial Sales for Hewlett-Packard Australia

*“Nic Read and Dr. Bistriz have done a masterful job summarizing how to approach and sell to executives. If you read this and apply its secrets, you’ll win more, more of the time.”*

—MICHAEL GALLAGHER, President, The Stevie Awards for Sales & Customer Service

*“Practical advice on how to get to the decision-makers in the context of sales . . . Having learned these lessons the hard way while transforming a Chinese state-owned enterprise into a globally competitive business, I wish this book had been available when I first started!”*

—GEOFF WATSON, former Vice President, Alcoa China

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## *About the authors*

### **Steve Bistriz**

Steve Bistriz has more than four decades of high-technology sales, sales management and training management experience. He spent more than 27 years with IBM in sales, management and instructional design roles. He then joined Target Marketing Systems (later named OnTarget before its acquisition by Siebel Systems) and was responsible for product management of Target Account Selling, a sales training program that generated more than half a billion dollars in sales over the past two decades.

Steve's articles have appeared in Marketing Management magazine, Sales Doctors magazine, JustSell.com, salesmanagement.com, Dartnell's Selling Newsletter, The Competitive Edge, SAMA's Quarterly Journal Velocity and the Journal of Selling and Major Account Management. He is an active member of SAMA, the immediate past National President of SMT and has served on Advisory Boards for Effectiveness Solutions Research, SellMasters, Capital

Analytics and the Center for Professional Selling at Kennesaw State University.

He received his Master of Management Science from Stevens Institute of Technology and his doctorate in Human Resource Development from Vanderbilt University. Steve is currently president of his own sales training and consulting firm, Learning Solutions International, based in Atlanta. [www.sellxl.com](http://www.sellxl.com)

### **Nic Read**

After an early career in services, sales and management, Nic founded Celcom, a sales channel purpose-built to market the first generation of mobile telephones for Motorola and NEC. After a trade sale of his company he joined Britain's oldest sales think-tank The Pirbic Group in London, before relocating to Germany to work for global software giant SAS as EMEA sales operations manager, where he was responsible for sales skills development to 24 countries and cultures.

Nic launched sales consulting firm SalesLabs after the fall of the Berlin Wall to help Eastern European companies integrate with Western business practices. He followed the wave of globalization to Asia where he partnered with Hewlett Packard and other companies in China and Singapore to develop new approaches for winning complex sales that could be easily adopted across mature and emerging teams. The result was the award-winning Target Opportunity Planning™ and related sales training workshops.

He has since consulted on sales and management in more than 40 countries to companies that include Alcatel, KPMG, Nortel, Ericsson, Cisco Systems, Schlumberger, IBM, Microsoft, Symantec and EMC, including a period serving as Executive Director in the Ernst & Young Revenue Growth practice. Nic returned to the full-time presidency of SalesLabs in 2008. [www.saleslabs.com](http://www.saleslabs.com)

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## *Foreword*

**Neil Rackham**

Sales has grown up a lot in the last ten years and this book is good example of just how far selling has come. When the manuscript first landed on my desk I looked at the title, *Selling to the C-Suite*, and I couldn't suppress a groan. "Another collection of impractical advice about how to get in front of any key executive without even trying," I thought. And you can't blame me for being skeptical. Almost without exception, books on how to get access to "The Man", "VITO", "the fox" or a dozen other names for the top dog whose signature can change your life, have been mediocre and unrealistic. So, I must admit, I started reading with very low expectations.

**By the time I reached the end of the first chapter, all that had changed.**

**Three things were immediately evident:**

- There is a refreshing realism about the authors' advice. No gimmicks, no tricks, no smoke and mirrors. Selling successfully at C-level is hard, thoughtful and strategic and the book offers none of the usual unrealistic silver bullets.
- The ideas are based on research, not on anecdotes. The authors interviewed hundreds of senior executives to learn about their buying practices and, for this alone, the book is worth its weight in commission checks.
- It is one of the few books that actually demonstrates an understanding of selling in a global business environment. There are cases and examples from—among other places—China, Europe and Australia. Everybody says we must think globally. Nic Read and Stephen Bistriz have been doing it. They have been working all over the world and they really understand global business because they live it every day.

# SELLING TO THE C-SUITE

## Q&A with Steve and Nic

**Q: Why did you write a book on selling to executives?**

A: There is much in the literature about selling to executives, written by salespeople from an anecdotal perspective. Selling to the C-Suite highlights the results of research with CXO-level executives where they were asked about their relationships with professional salespeople. From that perspective, we think it makes a significant contribution to the sales profession.

**Q: There seems to be quite a number of books on the market already about how to sell. What makes this book different?**

A: Most – if not all – of the books on the market today were written by salespeople from an anecdotal perspective. The content is mainly about how the salesperson was able to sell effectively in a particular environment. To our knowledge, none of the books available on selling came from the executive's perspective. This book is based on a number of research projects, conducted by the authors over an extended period of time, where CXO-level executives were asked about their relationships with salespeople. One of the research projects was in the US, while the other was in Asia Pacific.

**Q: What were some of the questions you asked CXO-level executives in your research?**

A: Some of the specific questions posed to those executives included the following:

- When and why do senior executives get involved in the decision-making process for major purchases?
- What is the most effective method for salespeople to use to gain access to executives?
- How do executives screen or test salespeople?
- What has to happen in meetings with salespeople for the executive to feel it was effective?
- How do salespeople establish trust and credibility with executives, thereby gaining return access?

**Q: Why would salespeople want to buy this book?**

A: The book provides many insights about selling to executives – primarily from the executive's perspective. For example, we learn that there are specific times in the customer's buying process for major purchases

when senior-level executives get involved and engaged. At other times in the buying cycle, executives tend to delegate responsibilities down to lower-level executives or managers in their organization. Understanding when to engage with senior-level executives during the buying process is a key point.

In addition, salespeople will learn what executives feel has to happen in meetings for the executive to sense that the meeting was effective. Further, salespeople will find out how to become perceived as a trusted advisor by executives, thereby getting return access to them.

**Q: What additional sales experience did the authors have in writing this book?**

A: Nic Read and Steve Bistrutz have more than 60 years of practical sales, sales management and sales training experience between them. Both have been involved with sales training initiatives which were implemented on a worldwide basis and focused on business-to-business sales in companies ranging from start-ups to global leaders.

As examples, Steve was the project leader on a sales training initiative with a major Fortune 100 company delivered to more than 35,000 salespeople worldwide over a three-year period. Nic has been project leader for sales performance improvement programs around the world for deals that range from \$50K to quarter billion dollar negotiations with clients such as Celestica, Hewlett Packard and Alcatel.

**Q: What have some of the initial reviews of the book been like?**

A: The book has received overwhelming praise from numerous sales leaders and sales executives on a global scale. Many initial reviewers have commented on the value of the “street-level” ideas and models delivered throughout the book that give it a sense of relevancy and applicability in the salesperson's fast-paced environment of the 21st century.

# SELLING TO THE C-SUITE

*Selling to the C-Suite* comes at the right moment. Nic Read and Stephen Bistriz have been developing this material for ten years and they couldn't have timed their publication better. There are three intersecting factors which put the book at the center of a perfect storm that is changing selling in fundamental ways.

## 1. The Economy in Crisis

These are unprecedented times where even the super-confident economic gurus readily confess that they don't know what's going on or how long it will be before that comforting word 'normal' can be safely used again. Prediction is rapidly going out of style. Yet I'll venture one confident prediction based on the history of every economic downturn for the past century. When the economy goes down, the decisions go up. A purchasing decision that is made in good times at a middle management level requires active participation from the top when company survival is at stake. Selling cycles take longer and customers become risk averse. In this environment, the ability to sell effectively at C-level has never been so important. The advice in this book can make all the difference. Here's just one example. From their research, Read and Bistriz identify where in the sales cycle C-level executives get involved, why they get involved and what this means for an effective sales strategy. Very few of the salespeople I work with understand the dynamics of top management involvement and this book will certainly help them.

## 2. The New CEO Role

In the good old days, CEOs could succeed by looking for improvement inside the company. By cutting away fat, by introducing systems, processes, TQM and the like, their organizations became lean, mean and competitive. Today, with a few endangered exceptions in the much vilified financial and pharmaceutical industries, the fat has gone and the company runs like clockwork. So how does a CEO make an impact? The fashionable answer has been acquisition. Grow the company by buying your competition. But, in today's environment, raising the capital for acquisition has become next to impossible. What's more, the track record of acquisitions has proved spotty and

questionable. With the traditional growth strategies unavailable or discredited, CEO's are now turning outwards. The new role of the CEO is to create value at the organizations boundaries; to radically change relationships with suppliers, customers and alliance partners. This creates significant opportunities for the few salespeople who can relate at an enterprise level with their customers. The authors worked closely with Hewlett-Packard and saw, at first hand, how the top hundred HP accounts brought in upwards of \$13 billion in 2005. To generate this kind of revenue, the account executives for each of these accounts had to work at C-level, to understand the customer's strategies and the politics, to use extraordinary creativity to help their customers find new value from their collaboration. I detect much of their experience in the pages of *Selling to the C-Suite*.

## 3. The Value Creation Imperative

The final factor which makes this such a timely book is a trend that has been gathering pace for several years. The old role of sales – to show customers why your products and services are better than competitors—is no longer viable. It's too expensive and customers don't want it. Salespeople who still cling to this traditional role (I call them 'talking brochures' while the authors here use the curiously similar term 'walking brochures' – take your pick) are failing everywhere. In their place, the new salespeople are highly skilled value creators, who live by ingeniously solving customer problems. The measure of these new salespeople is the value they create and, to create maximum value they must understand the issues and concerns of their C-suite customers. This book is timely and essential reading for them.