

You Are Just Fine the Way You Are

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I was sitting in a sales seminar several months ago and a well known sales trainer got up and started speaking to the audience. He is considered by many to be one of the best salespeople in America, and I was hanging on his every word. The man was describing how he went into meetings in corporations to sell things, and how he always was able to close. His entire strategy was based on what he called "finding the pain." "You need to find the pain! You need to find the pain!" he kept shouting as he paced back and forth on the stage. By "finding the pain" what he meant was taking what someone thought was *okay* with their corporation and making it seem awful--as if the company had something horribly wrong with it, which could lead to its imminent collapse. Basically, this entire strategy is based on scaring corporations and other buyers about whatever they are doing at the moment, and convincing them that if they do not change soon disaster will strike.

For example, if this man were trying to convince someone to list a building for sale he might (over the course of a 45-minute presentation) show the owner of the building various flip charts and other information about:

- Declining commercial real estate values in the area;
- More and more people [working at home](#), not in offices;
- Rising commercial vacancy rates;
- The fact that the geographic area where the real estate is located is losing population;
- The increasing difficulty for people to get financing;
- The fact that commercial real estate has consistently underperformed at the stock market.

These are just hypothetical examples, but it should give you an idea of how people can be "put in pain" by a salesman. None of this should come as a surprise to you, though. Everywhere around us there are people, businesses and others trying to put us in pain so that we buy what they are selling. This is how the sales world often works.

One of the biggest mistakes that people, corporations and others can make is consistently believing they are not doing enough, which comes as a response to those around them who "put them in pain." In fact, our entire economic system is based on businesses and people around us putting us in pain:

- The face lotion company implies you look too old and need a face cream to look younger.
- The vacuum cleaner salesman makes you think your carpets are too dirty due to the shortcomings of your existing vacuum.
- The car salesperson makes you feel that you are not complete unless you get more options for your car.

Most of us continually feel there is a "hole" of sorts, and we simply are not confident that we are good enough, or capable enough. This is the game the world plays with us every second of every day. Because of this hole within ourselves, we allow others to help us when we do not need help, fail to consistently feel content with our lives and accomplishments, and neglect to feel *satisfied* with who we are. We always feel a sense of lack.

If you have some sort of weakness and believe that you are not okay, an entire world is there to solicit you (for a charge), to help fulfill your sense of lack. In fact, I would argue that our entire economy revolves around people preying on our inherent sense of inadequacy. Personally, I cannot pick up the paper, pick up my phone, turn on the television, read my email, or drive down the street without being solicited and reminded about what I lack:

- Advertisements for books in the *Wall Street Journal* remind me about things I do not know each day.
- Roadside gyms remind me that I need to start lifting weights again and they beckon me with specials.
- Schools advertised on television remind me about all of the things I could learn.
- Car ads on television and in magazines remind me that I probably should have a more fuel-efficient car.
- Salespeople call me daily to try and sell me various products or solutions for one business issue or another.
- People call me on the phone wanting to be my partner in business all the time.
- People come by my house to fix things that need repair, and then they try to *upsell* me on something bigger, or better (whatever it is) when I am in the middle of my work.
- I am solicited hourly for one self improvement course or another by email.
- A good portion of the searches I do on the Internet return sponsored results that tell me I need to buy something.

I am replacing my lawn at the moment and the person doing the work has tried to sell me a lot of things so far. Most recently he tried to tell me I should invest in an outdoor fire pit/barbeque, and he offered to build one for me--for a mere \$16,000. He has been leaving catalogues and pictures of outdoor fire pits and barbecues all over the house for the past several days, and every time I look at those glossy photos I admittedly feel like buying. But it's \$16,000.

"Having a new lawn is nice, but it would really be great if you also had an outdoor barbeque pit," he tells me.

I am extremely motivated in business and daily I receive tons of emails from various people, promising to teach me one skill or another. For a guy like me, these emails are very enticing. I want to respond and sign up for every single one of them. I do not, of course (if I did I would go broke), but I would like to.

All the time I encounter people that want to be my partner in business, and their pitch typically is based on trying to identify the things they feel I may lack. For example, if they believe I am not detail oriented enough they will tell me that they can

bring detail skills to the equation, and that I will do better if I enhance marketing side of my operation. If the person believes I am not a good enough promoter, he tells me he can bring promotion skills to the equation. People around me are constantly trying to identify my weaknesses so they can capitalize on them for their own self interest. People are also doing the same with you.

We are all constantly solicited by various advertisers, who convince us that we are simply not enough. I remember when I was in college I refused to smoke pot with my fraternity brothers because I did not think doing so would serve me well. I was so motivated that I did not want to slow down the littlest bit. Our fraternity house was essentially split up into two groups of kids: there were those who smoked pot a lot, and then there were the others, who did not really mess with the stuff. One day I was sitting in a room with a bunch of the guys who liked to smoke pot. Suddenly somebody pulled out a giant bag of grass, and a group of about 10 guys got ready to smoke. I got up to leave.

"We'll be better friends with you if you get high with us," one of the guys said as I was walked out of the room.

I have always remembered this instance. These guys were trying to "rope me in" and *sell me* on the fact that I was not good enough friends with them at the time. They basically were promising that I could be better friends with them if I used drugs with them. They identified a sense of lack within me and tried to exploit it. But I didn't bite.

In virtually every city in America there are numerous schools. The idea is that we do not know enough and the schools can teach us what we need to know. There are public schools. There are continuing education schools. There are for-profit schools. There are local community college classes about this or that. No matter where you turn, there are people eager to teach you what you do not know. I cannot turn on the television these days without seeing tons of ads for all these various schools. Now there are online schools.

In my grandmother's last years of life I used to visit her regularly at the nursing home, with my father. In the home they had classes virtually every day of the week about various topics. Incredibly, people who barely had use of their minds and bodies were being wheeled into classes in diapers in wheel chairs where they would sit straining to hear what they would be taught that day. I went to one of the classes once. It was surreal watching classes filled with people at death's door sitting around learning in a complete stupor. We are continually filling ourselves and others with one form of knowledge or another, right up until death.

Think about what you see when you go to most bookstores. A good portion of the books inside of bookstores are about how to do this or that, be this or that, or become this or that. In fact, most books are a form of self help. When you get to the fiction books, there are myriads of stories that allow us to live exciting, romantic and other sorts of lives in a vicarious way through the lives of others.

I have been doing a lot of studying of the Internet lately and have managed to get myself on numerous spam lists for various Internet training products, seminars and more. Unlike most people, I actually do not mind receiving more forms of spam because I am fascinated by the amount of things I do not know how to do. Every hour I am now assaulted by emails for e-books, courses and all sorts of things that promise to give my companies a #1 ranking on Google.

I remember when I started a recruiting firm, [BCG Attorney Search](#), back in 2000. Because my greatest interest at that time was in recruiting, I decided from the outset that I needed to do everything I could in order to insure I had others address the financial aspects of the business. In my opinion, healthy finances are the most important aspects of any business.

My first employee was a bookkeeper and I ensured that she was given as much support as she could be given from an accountant I had been using for a while. I called the accountant and told him I wanted to ensure that my bookkeeper would do everything according to his satisfaction so it would be easier for him to file taxes when the time came. I also explained that this was not something I wanted to spend a lot of time worrying about. I expected him to provide very good oversight, so I could concentrate my efforts on recruiting.

"Don't worry, we're happy to offer any help we can."

Throughout the day the bookkeeper would call the receptionist of the accounting firm for sometimes an hour or more. Their conversations were always initially about accounting; however, only for the first 1 or 2 minutes of each conversation. Since my bookkeeper had never used a modern accounting program called QuickBooks, she had many very simple questions about which button did this and which button did that on the computer and so forth. After a few phone calls, the conversations turned to things like the results the receptionist was getting from classifieds she was posting on Match.com, the dates she had, favorite recipes and more. I knew this because I was sitting in the same room as the bookkeeper. I should have said something about this but I did not. I figured it was good for the accounting firm and the bookkeeper to be on good terms, and I convinced myself that their exchanging information was a positive thing.

A few months into my bookkeeper's time with us she brought me a check for something like \$5,800 to sign made out to the [accounting firm](#). The bill was itemized and contained over \$5,000 in charges for speaking with the receptionist billed out at \$125/hour. It was a total scam, of course. The receptionist I am sure did not even make one-tenth of that amount, plus in reality there probably had not been more than a couple of hours spent on actual accounting-related discussions.

I fired the accountant.

The accountant had tried to take advantage of me in response to my having exposed a weakness. And when you show a weakness, people may offer "help," but they will often go too far in a direction that serves their own interests best. The world exists and functions in many respects on people preying on others' weaknesses.

It is difficult to admit this and to be so direct about it; however, for several years I believed that there were parts of me that were simply not enough. The mistakes I have made as a result of this belief are some of the worst mistakes I have ever made, and have led to my being taken advantage of many times. One of the biggest mistakes that most of us make is that we think that we are not good enough. By this, I mean that we do not have the skills to accomplish things on our own.

The most important thing you can do for yourself is overcome the sense of lack, which we all experience. You should believe in yourself: you may be able to accomplish all those things about which others would have you believe differently. You do not necessarily need others' strengths and various offerings in order to complete yourself. You are most likely just fine the way you are. The return expected by others who are "helping" you often far outweighs the value of their contributions. Ultimately you may find this disparity is a great deal larger than the very lack you saw in yourself to begin with.