

The Business Book Podcast

Season 2, Episode 1

Bestselling Publisher Ray Bard on *Fired UP! Selling*
and the 4 Things Every Business Book Should Do

Ray Bard is the founder of the business publishing house Bard Press.

Over the last 30 years, half of Bard Press's books have been on bestseller lists, including The ONE Thing with over 1 million books sold and the all-time bestselling sales book in history, The Little Red Book of Selling with over 3 million sold.

*He came on the podcast to talk about his own new book *Fired UP! Selling: Great Quotes to Inspire, Energize, and Succeed as well as to share the 4 things every business book must sell.**

Ray, you don't know this, but I have a connection to you: you're the mentor of one of my own virtual mentors, Roy Williams, another guest in this season.

Roy is as much my mentor as I'm his. I've learned so much from him over the years and reading his Monday Morning Memo and, of course, his books. Over the last thirty years of publishing for authors, they've become some of my closest friends.

Because of your background, you have a unique experience when it comes to selling.

A hundred years or so ago, Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Everyone lives by selling something." It goes to Daniel Pink's book *To Sell Is Human* that everyone, no matter what their profession, is in sales.

Regardless whether we have a publisher helping us or not, as authors our first job is to sell the book—to get someone to take it home and read it. That's a big job. The first "editorial dot," as I call it, is looking at the design of the cover, the title, and subtitle. That's a whole conversation. You have to connect those dots throughout the rest of the book.

When I first got into selling books, I began to think about what we were *really* selling. We weren't really selling paper or ink or anything that constitutes the book. We were selling information, concepts, ideas.



Then I said, "Well, people don't pay a whole lot just for information. There's something more that they want." In the area I publish—business and personal development—it struck me that people are really buying the promise of the result of implementing that information. But then I saw that the bestselling books had something more in common: they were selling hope.

(There's a joke in the book business: there's an ocean of opportunity for books on diets, sex, and money.)

If we're not selling hope in a business- or personal development book, then we're in trouble. We're not selling information; information by itself isn't valuable.

I had these three in mind and gave all kinds of workshops and seminars for a long time, but I kept thinking there had to be something else. How else can you explain bestselling books like *Freakonomics*? There's information there, certainly, but it's not information the typical reader could use or do anything with. What clicked for me was that we're also selling entertainment. Gladwell is a pleasure to read, for instance.

When I work with authors or encourage other people to write a book, I ask them to go back and look at those for different elements: information, results, hope, and entertainment.



[Accompanying visual provided by Ray:]

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING? HOW DO YOU SELL IT?			
SELLING	SHORTHAND	METHOD	TOOLS & TECHNIQUES
Information	Big idea/insight	Concepts	Clear explanation Cases/examples Systems Research studies Flow charts/graphics/illustrations Metaphors Parables History Assessments
Hope	Promise/change	Vision	Stories of comebacks, against all odds Triumphs of famous & ordinary people Myths Anecdotes Personal stories Examples of success Inspirational quotes Visualization
Results/solutions	Nuts & bolts	How-to	Instructions Steps Directions Checklists Goal setting Worksheets Tests Homework
Pleasure/entertainment	Enjoyment	Make interesting/fun	Writing style Surprise Mystery Counterintuitive Believe it or not Oddities Design/color Art/cartoons Jokes/stories/fairy tales Sex Adventure

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So a book has to sell these four things, not just inside the book, but in the "packaging," as I call the cover, title, and jacket copy?

When I think of someone buying a business book, I think of someone going through an airport bookstore and quickly picking up a book. If there's a promise implied on the cover, but they open to the table of contents and don't see that promise being carried through to the chapter- and sub-chapter headings, then there's a disconnect



for them. I spend countless hours working with my authors to bridge the editorial and marketing pieces of the book in the table of contents. The function of the table of contents is not only to inform with clarity—that's the editorial part—but also to persuade someone.

Often, that's the decision point: does the table of contents reflect the cover's promise?

You know, sometimes business authors will send me their chapter drafts, and their chapters might be twenty or thirty pages long. We live in a world today where people, and especially business people, need shorter, more succinct information.

When you're selling the book, you also have to sell the experience. If you ask people to read twenty or thirty pages, you're going to lose them. You need to persuade them to turn the page, to read the next chapter.

Ideally, a chapter should be five to eight pages so that someone who, at the end of the day when they're propping up their eyelids, can pull out the book, read a short chapter, and head off to dreamland feeling like they've accomplished something.

Even before they get finished reading it, you want them to think, "Who else could use this book?" You want them thinking, "I need to buy this for all my employees," or, "I need to give this to all my clients."

Let's talk about your new book, *Fired UP! Selling*.

It began as a hobby. I've always loved quotes, but I began collecting them on my hard drive maybe fifteen years ago. A lot of authors love to use quotes, so sometimes I would be the quote researcher and go digging through all my quote books and library and what have you.

About six years ago, I thought, "Why not do a little quote book?"

Well, there are about a million quote books out there, so I said, "Who could use quotes the most? Who needs a quick shot in the arm from time to time?" People who're selling.

But instead of selecting the quotes yourself, you took a different approach.

I used a crowdsourcing model. I reached out to a lot of different people and asked them to be our "quote judges." We had over 1,200 people who over the course of a year judged 1,005 quotes to come up the very best. The book ended up with 224 quotes.



A lot of times authors will have experts in their field review their book, but those people aren't necessarily their reader. Our quote judges *were* our readers: sales managers, trainers, bloggers, and some who were just quote lovers. Rather than second-guess what my readers wanted, I said, "I'm just going to ask them what they want."

What a concept: ask your customers what they want!

***Fired UP! Selling* comes out this week, right?**

This is the big launch week. It's available online, in a lot of local retailers, and just about any Barnes and Noble across the country.

And what about the free service teaser you put out?

We call it the "55-Second Fire UP!" If you sign up, every morning of the week you'll have two quotes to inspire and two quotes of humor just to get your day started off right.

To learn more about the topics, books, and resources referenced:

[Bard Press](#)

[*Fired UP! Selling*](#)

[Roy Williams](#)

[*The Wizard of Ads*](#)

[*To Sell Is Human*](#)

[Malcolm Gladwell](#)

