

**Excerpts from Chapter 1 of a new book from the American Bar Association**

# Selling Your Services Might Not Come Naturally — But It Can Get Easier

By **Robert N. Kohn**  
and **Lawrence M. Kohn**

**T**he purpose of this book is to help you overcome your discomfort with selling. We call our approach, “selling in your comfort zone.”

What stops you from selling is not simply a lack of knowledge about selling. Bookstores are filled with books on the subject. You can buy videos and hire consultants. Unfortunately, learning about selling won’t help you as long as the idea of selling remains distasteful.

## Book Excerpt

It is easy to avoid doing things that you don’t like, even when you recognize their benefits. For example, if you are afraid of the dentist’s drill, then you may postpone going to the dentist. If you don’t like physical exercise, then you might avoid going to the gym. If you don’t like selling, then you’ll avoid that as well.

We have had clients who have gone to great lengths to avoid selling. They’d come up with one excuse after another. One of our clients threatened to quit his job if his partners persisted in pressing him to sell. Pushing him to sell without addressing his underlying discomfort merely strengthened his resistance.

This book would be a waste of time if it simply gave you the tools for how to sell. It would be just one more sales book in an ocean of self help books.

Our goal is to inspire you to take action.

To do this, we want you to find ways of feeling comfortable with selling, and even to enjoy it. The more comfortable you feel, the more willing you will be to take action.

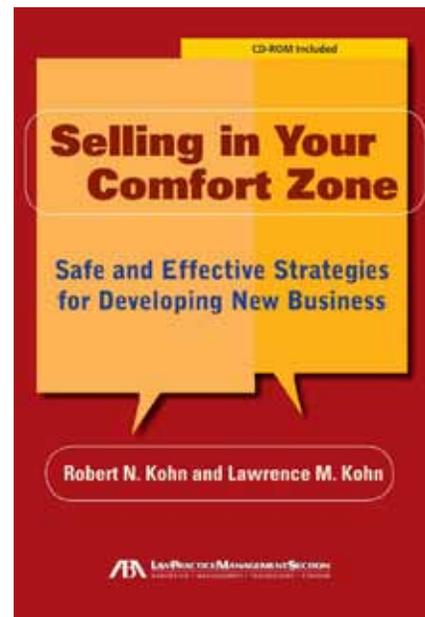
## Your Reasons for Reluctance

Discomfort with selling is common. The mere mention of the word “selling” can elicit images of sleazy, pushy, manipulative, and insincere salespeople harassing you on the telephone or hounding you around the car dealership. It can evoke feelings of neediness and rejection.

You may have an image of a salesperson as someone who is outgoing, someone who loves telling jokes, or who thrives in the limelight. You may not think of yourself as that person. Rather, you may feel shy or introverted.

Maybe you have had some bad experiences with selling. Perhaps you have been served by sales people who tried to sell you something you didn’t want. Or, maybe at some point in your life you tried selling something to others and found the experience to be unpleasant.

Maybe you have developed the belief that selling shouldn’t even be necessary – that you should be able to generate clients without it or that it is unprofessional. Maybe you have been able to rely on your partners or coworkers to generate clients for you. In fact, you may have been so busy doing the work that it didn’t seem possible to take on more.



These are only a handful of the potential reasons for your discomfort with selling. We describe 28 obstacles to selling in Chapter 2. But for now, suffice it to say that you are facing some powerful obstacles, any one of which could undermine your willingness to sell.

## The Importance of Selling

One might ask, if you are so uncomfortable with selling, why bother? The answer is that something has changed your perspective. Maybe you no longer wish to be dependent on your partners or co-workers to feed you with work. Maybe you see selling as a pathway to more money or more authority in your organization. Maybe the economy has taken a turn for the worse and now there is more competition pursuing fewer clients. Maybe you have decided to start your own practice or business. While in the past, doing good work seemed sufficient, you have now awakened to the realization that learning how to

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sell would be beneficial.

But, you are blocked. You don't know where to begin or how to make the transition from technician to business developer.

### The Importance of Selling

If you genuinely want to learn how to sell, you must find ways of doing it that feel comfortable. One of the principle ways that our approach differs from that of others is that we don't push you to do something that you don't want to do. If you are uncomfortable with a particular selling strategy, then we say, "Don't do it!"

This doesn't mean give up. Instead, look for alternative strategies that keep you in your comfort zone.

A Case in Point: One of our clients was reluctant to sell because in his mind, selling meant violating his moral code of appropriate behavior. He believed that it positioned him negatively in his clients' minds. He was skeptical about the effectiveness of selling, and said that his past efforts had never generated any business.

When we asked him to define what he meant by selling, he said that selling meant going to networking events where he had to walk up to complete strangers, give them his business cards, and try to persuade them to hire him. He had gone to several such networking events and found the experiences to be both repugnant and a waste of time. He concluded that selling was not for him and he dismissed anyone's efforts to convince him to the contrary.

Rather than try and convince him to do something that he refused to do, our advice was: "Don't go to networking events. In fact, don't do anything that takes you out of your comfort zone. There are other things

you can do to sell your services that do not require leaving your comfort zone."

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**Your sales techniques must be appropriate for your personality, your beliefs, your values, your interests, and your level of experience with selling. Your techniques must minimize the risk of feeling embarrassed.**

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Over the next several months, we helped him redefine selling and to identify strategies that felt comfortable. We have included these strategies in this book. Once he understood that he could sell in his comfort zone, he began to look at selling in a new way. He learned to embrace it. And, he began to experience great success.

### What Is the Comfort Zone?

There are two components of selling in your comfort zone: safety and effectiveness.

#### Safety

By safety, we mean that your sales techniques must be appropriate for your personality, your beliefs, your

values, your interests, and your level of experience with selling. Your techniques must minimize the risk of feeling embarrassed. Furthermore, you must believe that other people will perceive your selling behavior as appropriate.

#### Effectiveness

By effectiveness, we mean that you must be optimistic that you are using your time and money wisely. You must feel confident that your efforts will realistically lead to new business.

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**Robert N. Kohn and Lawrence M. Kohn** are principals of Kohn Communications, a Los Angeles-based consulting firm specializing in the marketing and management of lawyers and law firms. They can be reached at [www.kohncommunications.com](http://www.kohncommunications.com). "Selling in Your Comfort Zone: Safe and Effective Strategies for Developing New Business," by Robert N. Kohn and Lawrence M. Kohn, © 2009 American Bar Association. Reprinted with permission.