

IF YOU'RE NOT  
**FIRST,**  
YOU'RE  
**LAST**

**SALES STRATEGIES**  
**TO DOMINATE YOUR MARKET AND**  
**BEAT YOUR COMPETITION**

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**GRANT CARDONE**

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# **If You're Not First, You're Last**

**Sales Strategies to Dominate Your  
Market and Beat Your Competition**

**Grant Cardone**



**John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**

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# Introduction

## The Importance of First

Although the concept of first or last may sound unfair and difficult to accept for some, in the real world—regardless of your business or career—first place is the only place that matters. It's a position that allows you to weather all storms, gets you extra attention, and has the competition chasing you—rather than the other way around. But let's face it: if you didn't compromise on any point, you would certainly rather the position of first than any other, right? Given the choice between first and any other position, we all know what's preferable.

Unlike systems or cultures where everyone gets rewarded for just participating and regardless of their efforts, abilities, or even the score—the only position that ultimately makes sense in business—and the one that earns the greatest rewards—is, of course, first. If you aren't in the dominant position in your market, then you are at risk. When economies are abound with business, the company in first position continues to gain customers and expand its size and presence while the weaker players eke out increasingly smaller gains, helped along solely by the

rich nature of the market. However, when these profitable times wane, the dominant company benefits from its first-place position and grabs market share away from all the other contenders while those in every other position pay the price.

Merriam-Webster's defines the word *first* as "preceding all others in time, order, or importance." Being first to the market is not as important as being number one in your category; you don't necessarily have to be the company introducing a product to be the best choice in the buyer's mind. Order and importance are much more vital here than time. There is also a big difference between being first and third in Google search results, as evidenced by companies like first-place Intel and second-place Advanced Micro. As of December 2009, Intel had earned \$32.7 billion in revenue and had \$13 billion in cash, whereas Advanced Micro had \$4.92 billion in revenues and \$2.5 billion in cash. And consider the competition between Barack Obama and John McCain. Only a few points separated a name that has made history. Again, Barack was not first to the market; he actually came 30 years after his opponent and had much less experience. Yet he managed to win not just the number one spot, but the most powerful position in the world.

So quit compromising and being "reasonable." Let's get you fighting—every minute of every day—for the number one spot in your business. You want to be on top when the market is great and take market share when it is not.



## The “Game-Changing” Economy

Businesspeople, salespeople, managers, entrepreneurs, and CEOs fear economic reductions—and understandably so. They reason (correctly) that when the economy moves into a period of major contraction, clients and customers cut back on projects, reduce spending, and worse, sacrifice quality looking for lowest-priced vendors and/or suppliers. It becomes more difficult to raise capital, close transactions, and make accurate projections that affect planning at all levels. People become filled with uncertainty and doubt that negatively impacts their ability to make decisions. These game-changing economic times can occasionally require major transitions in our skill set as well, particularly following periods of extended expansion. It is common for management teams, sales forces, and employees to be improperly equipped to transition in the game-changing economy.

It's fairly easy to observe when people's motivation and skill sets are crippled from extended periods of economic expansion. It's a lot like a professional fighter who after a series of easy bouts appears to lose his edge, his power—even his sense of the basics. People tend to become dependent on a surplus of opportunities, easy credit, and cheap money and develop an overall unrealistic attitude when the business is good and the wind is at their backs. When the market changes and belts tighten, the forces are no longer at your back but are directly blowing in your face. Every weakness in the organization is greatly magnified when times get tough. Mistakes become more costly, every transaction vital and failure

becomes a real possibility for both individuals and companies that aren't able to transition within the new economy.

At the time I began writing this book, the world was entering one of the greatest economic contractions since the Great Depression. During periods of major game-changing economic shifts, people immediately find themselves scared, confused, overwhelmed, angry, hopeless about what to do, and unsure about whether there is anything they can do. During times like these, people suddenly realize that their businesses, incomes, and futures are at risk. It abruptly seems as though the world is giving each of us a giant wake-up call by screaming, *you are vulnerable and may cease to exist!*

The truth of the matter is that if you aren't number one in your category or field, then you are in a precarious and dangerous situation. If you aren't first, it pretty much doesn't matter where you are in the race, you will suffer. Times like these show us how hazardous it is to be tied to or dependent upon the economy. Instead, you want to be in such a powerful position among your group that you are able to take advantage of the existing state of affairs.

This book is about how you can advance your professional mission and goals and not just conquer but dominate the competition and the marketplace. Regardless of your product, service, or idea—and despite a challenging economy—you can be first and should always strive to be there. You must acquire a position within your company and/or career in which you are not susceptible to economic pullbacks and start thinking in terms of creating your own financial system. I don't want you ever to settle for “just getting by” or have

to worry about the condition of your finances. I say to hell with the economy! I choose to improve, conquer, and prosper and will do everything possible to be *first*. This book will show you exactly how to be successful and how to own that powerful position of first. You will learn the exact actions to take in order to advance yourself, your company, and your ideas—and always come out on top.

## From Easy Times to Tough Times

When economies change from being very optimistic and positive (expanding) to very difficult and negative (contracting), people respond in a variety of ways. These responses are somewhat similar to those we experience when we endure the loss of a loved one. We first engage in denial, then anger, resentment, and (for some) apathy before, finally, recovery. But those who succeed during major economic contractions find these challenges to be inspiring moments that incite new solutions and creativity.

I assure you that the economic situation is not hopeless, and you should not give up, there are exact steps and actions you can take that will guarantee you win! This is a great opportunity for those who really want to “up” their game, attitude, and responsibility levels. My mission in life for the last 25 years has been to help people who want to improve and to succeed in doing so. The most exciting part of my job is working with the exceptional people who strive to be number one and master their market.

This book takes the lessons I've learned from these people and through my own trials and tribulations to show you exactly what you will have to do to create success, regardless of what is going on with the economy. It will instruct you on how to expand, surmount, and even exploit these challenges to reach your ideal. You'll read about simple, doable, and detailed actions to help you and your business thrive, and you'll learn specifically how to seize market share away from your competitors. You will see exactly what actions you must take on a daily basis to dominate your market and create success so great that no pullback in the economy will negatively impact you. You'll no longer depend on the economic conditions in which you live and work to dictate your success or failure. You'll be able take advantage of a weakening economy, seize market share from less profitable competitors, and use the contracting events to create the financial situation you want for yourself, your company, and your family—independent of the local, national, or world economy. There are indeed substantial advantages to periods of economic contraction; once you know how to exploit these opportunities, you will grow while your competitors shrink, submit, and disappear.

If you worry that the economy will be tough for some time but still want to learn and do whatever is necessary to enhance your business's progress, then you are in for a rocket ride when you apply what you learn in this book! You certainly are not alone either; plenty of people are seeking answers during today's challenging times. However, there is a big difference between those who are looking for answers and those who are willing to actually learn and execute on

the exact actions that will ensure success. Most of your friends and family may have already ceased believing that there is anything they can do, but you have not. I congratulate you for searching for the answers.

## **A Warning about Books**

Unfortunately, most people today purchase books that they start but never finish. I believe the reasons for this are threefold: (1) the small financial investment required for a book makes it easy for us to buy them by the dozen and read very few; (2) we don't have to make a commitment to finish by a particular date; and (3) many books contain a lot of misunderstood words.

I want you to finish this book. I guarantee that if you read it in its entirety, you'll be able to create the economy and success you want for yourself, your company, and your family—and be first in your field.

So, that said, let's dissect the above-mentioned reasons. First, people approach books as though they are worth only the price they paid for them rather than seeing them for the millions of dollars worth of information in them. This book can be worth millions to you, so read it with that kind of outlook, and approach each action as though it will make you millions (because it can!)

The second reason people don't finish books is because they never pick a target date by which to finish. That is crazy to me; you would never do this with any other project, would you? The average person reads about 200 words per minute,

so he or she—if not interrupted—could finish this book in less than five hours. Before I start anything—whether reading a book or building an addition to my home—I always decide upon a target date for completion. So stop reading now and commit to a “due date” for reading this book. Just write today’s date and the date by which you want to finish on the inside cover.

The last reason people don’t finish books is because they run into words they don’t understand and often elect to stop reading the book. For this reason, I included a very extensive glossary of words in the back of this book. The glossary does not include every way in which the word can be used: just the context in which I used it in this book. Take the time to look up the meaning of every word about which you have even the slightest doubt. Remember: your success in an area depends on the degree to which you understand the terminology being used in that area!

So treat this book like it’s worth millions of dollars to you; set your target date to finish, and don’t gloss over any words you don’t understand. Each time you read an action be sure you fully understand exactly what I am explaining in that action. While many of them may seem clear, the only reason you won’t engage is because of a lack of understanding. Don’t ignore or gloss over any of the actions and I assure you that you will master your markets, and this book will become a resource for not just you but everyone in your organization.

The information contained herein will see you through any recession regardless of how bad or deep it is or how long it lasts. I know because I have used these exact techniques

to get me through three recessions—and I came out of each one stronger, more capable, and more profitable. I am using them at this very moment to advance my position in the market, grab market share from my competitors and actually take ground in markets I was not in before.

## **Doom and Gloom Is the Time to Boom**

Many of the economists, pundits, and media talking heads are predicting doom and gloom and end-of-the-world scenarios with their 24-hours-a-day round-the-clock ranting and raving. They're entirely focused on the problem and who may be to blame and don't seem to offer much in the way of a solution for surviving and prospering. You have probably already experienced a slowdown, as business has been shrinking significantly in most parts of the world. Regrettably, I'm sure you are feeling the effects—and I'm sure you don't like it. In fact, I hope you don't like it, and I would encourage you to hate it so much that you are willing to do anything to fight back. Despite the fact that we're enduring a time when many people will suffer—with millions out of work, companies failing, and entire industries disappearing—it is also a time to learn and use specific strategies to turn the tide. New companies, products, and even industries are born out of economic challenges. I want you to be a person who wakes up every day wanting to be first in your industry or field, who is not victimized by what appears to be reality but who creates a new reality out of the opportunity and rubble of the old.

By taking very precise, exact, correct actions, you can combat any economic pullback and achieve any level of success you desire. You can continue to expand and conquer in your endeavors and move your goals and dreams forward, literally creating your own new economy. The truth is that it doesn't take a recession or contraction to create problems for a person's business or finances. I'm sure you know a fair amount people who weren't doing well, even during periods of economic expansion. Contractions introduce a different set of problems for everyone, and these different problems require varying degrees of willingness and thinking, along with a new set of actions. Financial hardships come about as a result of not being able to sell your products and services in quantities great enough and at prices high enough to make the business profitable and viable.

There can be a great many reasons for not being able to get your products and services into the marketplace—and even more excuses. The reality is that every business has ups and downs, and every economy has its cycles. Along the way to creating success and security, you have to make adjustments to accommodate ever-changing market conditions. It is impossible to be in business for any length of time and not experience a tough economy at some point. Some downturns will be worse than others: some long, some short, some very painful, and some just a blip. The good news is twofold: (1) there are exact and precise actions that you can take to counter any contraction and (2) contractions are excellent opportunities in which to expand and conquer market share. Use the doom and gloom to make this your time to boom!



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CHAPTER

1

# **Four Responses to Economic Contractions**

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**T**here are basically four responses people have during economic contractions—and only one that counts.

1. The Cheerleader Response: “I refuse to participate!”
2. The Old-School Response: “Nothing really has changed; let’s just get back to the basics.”
3. The Quitter Response: “There is nothing I can do, I just have to wait it out.”
4. Advance and Conquer: “Every resource you have goes to advance and conquer while others contract and retreat.”

Let me explain, as you move through each of the stages of recovery and as you build or rebuild your business, you will make choices in how you respond. Your response to the economic contraction will be a result of your beliefs and the influences of your environment. You have heard and/or witnessed each of the four responses by your employers. Let’s look at all four and examine the ones that work and any untruths that may be holding you back.

## **The Cheerleader Response**

The first response—the “cheerleader”—simply refuses to participate. I love this attitude and in fact agree with it on

many levels. However, there are two versions of this, one of which is workable and one that is not. The first suggests that you not partake in the thinking, actions, and behaviors of those agreeing with the economic contraction. While I agree that it's best not to buy into mass negativity, maintaining a totally positive—and therefore somewhat unrealistic—attitude during a time of serious contraction is, at best, a state of temporary denial. It's like you try (unsuccessfully, in most cases) to convince yourself “not to participate” and that somehow, you will be okay. I consider myself an optimistic person and believe my mental condition is critical to success, but it would be irresponsible and unworkable to suggest that the economy can be made different by mentally “pumping yourself up.” You actually have to *do* something! It is hard to deny that credit has tightened, lenders are calling in credit lines, companies and individuals are spending less, and people are losing their jobs. I don't know of a company or an industry that is not experiencing some type of reduction in its revenues. Something very real is happening, and just cheering your way through it and refusing to participate will not change anything.

As I write this, 20 percent of all teenagers in this country are unemployed; so if the product or service that you sell is dependent upon that demographic, it will affect your business. Over 10 percent of the workforce is unemployed. In some locations, that number already exceeds 15 percent and is still climbing. These statistics are frightening in their own right and negatively impact those who can't find work. Add to that the financial damage caused by fear, anxiety,

uncertainty, and lack of confidence, which can be more devastating than the actual facts and figures themselves. Auto sales are off by almost 40 percent, retail sales are hitting lows not seen in 25 years, foreclosures are hitting historical highs, massive amounts of wealth equity have disappeared with the downturn in housing prices, people have seen their 401(k)s cut in half, banks are failing at alarming rates, and credit is being frozen. Positive sayings and optimistic attitudes alone will not get us through this.

I am not trying to alarm you in any way, but operating under the impression that you can simply cheer your way out of this is unrealistic. We've received a serious wake-up call; those who respond by taking the right actions will advance, and those who sit by and do nothing will endure a lot of pain.

Let me give you an example. I live in Los Angeles, where—unlike the Gulf Coast, where I grew up—natural disasters are earthquakes, not hurricanes. The major difference between these two events is that earthquakes offer no warning and last only a few seconds (rather than several hours). So let's say you live in or are visiting Los Angeles, and there's a major earthquake—an 8.5 on the Richter scale. Regardless of how good a salesperson you are, you will have a difficult time selling anyone—including yourself—on the idea that he or she should just refuse to participate. When you see and feel the ground you're standing on move for the first time in your life and watch as buildings sway, trust me, you will *not* be able to cheer this off. During moments of intense episodes like hurricanes and earthquakes, even stock

market crashes and economic pullbacks, people become overwhelmed, freaked out, and tend to overreact. Typically, the first reaction to violent changes is to freeze up or retreat and for many, to simply deny the reality of what is happening. People are unprepared and unskilled to face such changes and don't want to confront the damages and discomfort they will bring.

However, denying the fact that you're experiencing an earthquake will certainly not change the fact that you should probably do something different to protect yourself and take a specific set of actions in order to ensure your safety and survival. For example, you might have to take a different route than usual to obtain food, water, and fuel since roads, bridges, communications, electricity, and the Internet will all be either jammed or not working. Literally *everything* you take for granted will be affected and most likely unavailable to you. Earthquakes occur very quickly, often without any kind of advance notice. Those who *know* how to respond to an earthquake will be able to move forward, while those who don't know what to do will automatically retreat.

Most people approach changes in the economy in the same way they do earthquakes: They simply don't prepare for them. This is the case especially after long periods of good times; people become a bit robotic and even lazy. They forget the muscle, discipline, persistence, energy, and creativity it takes to dominate. They don't know how to act when things suddenly change, so they merely *react*. Most individuals, managers, and CEOs get used to doing

business in stable economies; they therefore don't know how to respond correctly when things are difficult again.

It's not uncommon to see people becoming overly "reasonable" about the actions that are necessary to sustain themselves and their companies. And when recessions happen—as they do and always will—many salespeople, managers, entrepreneurs, executives, and CEOs find that they are ill equipped and lack the knowledge to counter those economic contractions. People have all types of very strange responses when they aren't prepared for events. Many of the actions you take merely mirror the economic contraction whereby you actually react to the contraction with thoughts and actions that further deepen or worsen your situation. Most will handle the economic decline with further cuts, denial, or just outright apathy, while others (as mentioned previously) will refuse to participate. But reactions like these are the opposite of deciding to be *first* in your market and dominate your competition.

## Old School Response

The second response is the classic old-school response to "get back to basics." This outlook suggests that nothing really has changed; if we would simply return to our "roots," everything would work out. I was working with a large group from an automotive company when an executive said, "Grant, nothing has really changed; we just have to get back to basics." I thought to myself, *your industry has gone from*

*16 million new car sales a year to 9 million* (the lowest level in 25 years). Every car dealer in America depends solely on advertising to drive traffic, something dealers will no longer be able to justify, and your sales force hasn't the first clue how to generate its own traffic. On top of that, the banks have pulled your floor plans (dealers borrow money to stock inventory), banks are tightening their lending criteria, and the media are telling people never to spend money again! And your response is to *get back to basics* when 95 percent of the people who work for you don't know what is "basic" enough in a major economic shift to make a difference?

While I support the overall concept of returning to the fundamental elements of an industry—and absolutely agree that the basics are vital to success—you can't depend on block-and-tackle if you're three touchdowns behind with only three minutes left in the last quarter. In other words, you can't make advances in business with just the basics. It is going to take some big plays in a very short period of time. The only way to flourish during an economic downturn is to take lots of unreasonable actions in order to dominate. Back to basics may only get you back to where you were—and remember, our goal here is to be *first*. This is not a time for simplistic sayings but rather for massive actions.

There are a lot of levels of "basic" to get through before you can finally get down to the most fundamental one: That which will get you traction in the changed market. It's also vital to understand that age, experience, and improvements in technology all influence what each person considers to be basic. If you sold products during the 1970s



oil crisis, for instance, and another person had sold only between 1998 and 2008, your definitions of basic would be radically dissimilar. The definition of basic for the person who sells encyclopedias door to door varies greatly from that for the person who sells the hottest, in-demand technological gadget that people cannot seem to get enough of. I built my first company going door to door to businesses all over America, and I did it during a severe recession. People weren't coming to me to buy my service I had to knock on thousands of cold doors just to get people to even know me. I couldn't afford advertising or huge marketing programs, and I didn't have a sales team to do this for me. I was an unknown and unproven commodity. By going door to door I learned skills that no one can ever take from me and that would later define me in business and as a person. I have met hundreds of people that want to be public speakers and I always tell them the same thing. "It's easy; just learn how to get an audience!" But most people that want to speak to audiences are not willing to do what it takes to get the audience. People claim how good they can speak but what does it matter if there's no one to listen.

The point I'm trying to make here is that to claim that an organization just needs to get back to basics is like the "wannabe" speaker who cannot get an audience. You must get yourself and the organization focused on creating a future instead of one focused on merely getting back to doing something from the past. You must vow to do whatever it takes to get the audience and go one step further and do whatever your competitors refuse to do and

then some—so that you can separate from all the other wannabes.

Things are always changing, and change requires actions beyond what is basic. If you don't change with the times, you will be left behind. To that end, even the basics change over time. While we certainly shouldn't disregard the basic principles of success, we do need to cultivate the basics we are using. Consider the fact that *the basics during times of expansion are different from those we use during contraction*—because you *can't afford to make mistakes*. When economies slow down, you cannot miss even one opportunity; you have to kick your activity way up and become much more tenacious about how you approach every interaction.

Think back to a time when you were extremely motivated to succeed and had to perform at a high level. You simply *had* to get results; therefore, you probably went beyond basic and switched to *serious* performance mode. To simply go back to the basics during periods of economic turmoil will not change the fact that you have fewer opportunities to work with, people have less money, credit is tight, fear is everywhere, and your clients will have more objections than ever to purchasing your product or service. While you will hear complaints, stalls, and reasons not to buy similar to those you heard when times were better, they will come with a different level of intensity and certainty from those upon whom your business depends.

It is a fact that many—if not most—of the people with whom you work have never sold in very difficult economies. So instructing those people to get back to basics

won't prompt them to do things that are basic enough to get the results you want, much less take market share. And we aren't interested in going backward in this book. We are going forward.

During periods of economic expansion, business can become so easy that individuals and companies are often lulled into an inflated impression of their own abilities. They become conditioned to a false sense of what it takes to be profitable during extended periods of easy money, free credit, surplus opportunities for their products, and a world operating without financial cares or concerns. Then, all of a sudden, you find yourself enduring the polar opposite situation. Every individual in the workforce who wants to succeed must take a new look at what it really means to get back to basics, develop or relearn new skills, and start executing actions that most of us have not used for years and many more of us didn't even know were required.

## The Quitter Response

The third type of response is expressed by quitters, the people who think there is nothing they can do and will wait out the economic downturn until things return to normal—at which time, they will get back to work again. This group will be crushed both financially and emotionally. They will go through all their cash, only to find out that economic contractions can last *much* longer than expected—in some cases, 18 months or even longer. These people will find themselves emotionally damaged from being out of the

workforce; even when things normalize, they will find it more difficult to get work because they haven't actively participated for months. The quitters are basically scavengers who depend on "good" economies to provide enough cash to fund their lifestyles. They travel from region to region and work in industries that are doing well but never really advance and conquer for themselves. They are only good at picking low-hanging fruit—or easy business—and are unable or unwilling to dig for gold. They will never truly accumulate wealth because they never developed a work ethic necessary to acquire success. I would never have someone from this group of people work for me; they contaminate the rest of the organization. A quitter probably would not even pick up this book to read it, much less execute the actions in it. And if such people did buy the book, I would have offended them so much by this point that they probably would have thrown it in the trash!

## **Advance and Conquer**

Now, the last school of thought: The advance-and-conquer response, and the one I promote as the only correct response for you to take. I encourage you to first embrace the idea that the market is different and has indeed changed and acknowledge that it will be more challenging (but by no means impossible) to sell your products and services, grow your business, or even keep a job. Know that it will require a completely unique sense of energy, work ethic, mind-set, and actions.