

APS1035H-Syllabus: Taking a New Venture to Market (2025)

Learning mode: IN-PERSON in WB219 and simultaneously ON-LINE via ZOOM

Instructor: e-mail: "Steve Treiber" <steve.treiber@utoronto.ca>. See his Bio at the end of this document. In-person & Synchronous classes on Tuesdays, 1-4pm, Sept 9-Dec 2, 2025, **except classes of Oct 7, 25 and Nov 18 which are completely virtual while classes of Sept 30 and Nov 4 must be attended IN-PERSON BY ALL.**

The textbook for the course is "SPIN Selling", by Neil Rackham, McGraw Hill, 1988, ISBN 0-07-051113-6. Available in course Quercus reading list.

Introduction

Learn the science of persuasion. If you are struggling with your go-to-market strategy, this is the course for you. At some point in their careers most engineers and scientists find themselves with the need to convince their boss, their company, their co-workers, or a client to try some new idea. That new idea, product or service might be so novel that there are no easy comparisons to be made to something existing and proven. This is the crux of the innovator's dilemma and the title of a famous book by Clayton Christensen¹. Most science and engineering schools teach their students how to organize their data and facts. Through group projects students are exposed to the need to argue their point of view, negotiate compromise, and then present their results and ideas to their professors to get the best marks. They never get a chance to communicate those ideas to a non-technical audience, who are usually the deciders in business.

Many schools also give students an opportunity to develop business plans. However, very few schools teach their students how to sell their technological ideas to a complex audience who often have conflicting views and needs, and perhaps limited technical knowledge, but who all have some influence on the decision. In fact, in most cases the decision makers have little or no technical competence in the specific subject in question and the engineer/scientist's argument often comes down to "trust me". If [Nikola Tesla](#) had been able to take this course he might not have become a forgotten scientist who had a car named after him.

The process

Good salespeople have a sales "personality", great salespeople have a sales process. That sales process is repeatable and measurable by metrics that predict ultimate success or failure. The sales process taught in this course is based on the two most reliable and scientifically based sales processes, [SPIN Selling](#), by Neil Rackham, and [The Sales Funnel](#), by Ray Leone.

This course is all about how to get people to listen and gain enough trust in you to take a chance on your offer. Students will learn the keys to selling a "customer" on an idea, product or service that they passionately believe in. The course is designed to have a variety of learning objectives which are delivered via pre-recorded lectures, exercises, role playing, group presentations and homework assignments. The students will learn how to organize and communicate their thoughts and facts in a way that will increase their probability of succeeding.

The course is delivered in 12 approx. three hour classes that are a mix of pre-recorded lectures and role play exercises. Lectures and handouts as appropriate provide the background material necessary for

¹ The Innovator's Dilemma, Clayton Christensen, 2002

students to grasp the ideas and processes required to achieve a level of competence. The students will be organized into groups and as individuals for various course assignments. Eight of the lectures are mostly devoted to student presentations of various kinds around marketing, sales, and negotiation.

Real world scenarios based on actual events in the experience of the course creators are used as case studies around which the students prepare their presentations and assignments, and these will be graded to arrive at the course mark. There is no final exam.

The ideal candidate for this course is a technically oriented person who has an idea for a product or service that they want to sell to someone. They will have to sell their idea to some group or individual (typically their manager), the management of a company or institution, or a government office or department, or a customer. The idea can be new or something that has been done elsewhere but is new to the “customer”.

Course Project. All salespeople will admit that one of the hardest things they may ever have to do in their job is a “cold call”. Interview of a Successful Canadian Entrepreneur is the course project that requires each student to interview a successful Canadian entrepreneur and write a report about them and what made them successful. The successful entrepreneur that each student chooses must be a stranger to them. The entrepreneur candidate for the interview must be operating their own business and cannot be associated with a university, university accelerator or incubator.

Each student will identify a person whom they wish to interview and obtain permission from the course instructor who will provide guidance on how to approach that individual and whether the person is a suitable candidate for the assignment. Such permission is mandatory. The purpose of this assignment is twofold:

- 1) learn how to approach a stranger and “sell” them something. In this case the sale is to get them to give you an hour of their valuable time.
- 2) all successful entrepreneurs have succeeded in selling an idea into a market, so this is an opportunity to learn from the experience of the person you interview.

Guest Speakers during class hours:

TBD

Assignments

Assignment instructions, rubrics, rules, and timing of submission of assignments are in Quercus.

Sales Role Play Assignments are Group assignments worth 60% of course mark.

Negotiation is a Group assignment worth 10%

Interview a Successful Canadian Entrepreneur is an Individual assignment for 30%.

Outline & Schedule: Taking a New Venture to Market: Tuesdays, 1-4pm

■	Sept 9	Introduction: Overview of Concepts, Complex Sales
■	Sept 16	Developing Sales Collateral
		First Pitch (Individual 10 Marks)
■	Sept 23	Developing a Sales and Marketing Strategy
		Homework: Read SPIN Selling by Neil Rackham
■	Sept 30	Sales Process: Stages of a Complex (Value Based) Sale
■	Oct 07	Executing Spin Sales Process: Role Play Questioning (Team 10 marks)
■	Oct 15	Executing Spin Sales Process: Role Play Questioning
		Homework: Prepare a Client Proposal Based on Questioning in Class
■	Oct 22	Present Client Proposal: PowerPoint (<10 minutes) (Team 10 marks)
■	Nov 4	Sales Negotiation: Classroom Negotiation (Individual 10 marks)
■	Nov 11	Market Validation & Market Research
■	Nov 18	Sales Meeting with Catalyst Papers (Team 10 Marks)
■	Nov 25	Reliasoft VC Pitch (Team 10 Marks)
■	Dec 2	Planning for Growth: Developing a Sales Pipeline
		Final Pitch (Individual 10 Marks)
		Submit your Successful Entrepreneur Interview (Individual 30 marks)

Steve Treiber Bio:

Steve Treiber is President and co-founder of Manufacturing Technology Network Inc. He began his chemical engineering career at the Shell Montreal East refinery in 1969. After leaving Shell in 1984 he started his own process control company, Treiber Controls Inc (TCI). TCI became a world recognized leader in the field of multivariable constraint control and real-time optimization in oil refining and petrochemicals. Steve sold TCI to a NASDAQ listed competitor in 1998 and served there in various senior roles until leaving them 4 years later to start a new company. He and his employees have implemented Advanced Process Control and Real-time Optimization technology and applications at refineries and chemical plants around the world for clients including Shell, Mobil, Marathon, Sunoco, PEMEX, Saudi Aramco, Ultramar, Petro- Canada, Husky, Irving Oil, Esso, Union Carbide, Solutia, BASF, Lyondell, DuPont, NOVACOR and others.

Steve holds a PhD and B.Eng. from McGill University, an M.A.Sc. from the University of Toronto in Chemical Engineering and is a member of the Professional Engineers of Ontario, Canada.