



ADVANCED SELLING TECHNIQUES

Participant Workbook

Sell with Confidence. Serve with Heart.

3C Squared

Care * Connection * Culture

THE 3COS FRAMEWORK

CARE

CONNECTION

CULTURE

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Welcome

Joe Girard is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's greatest salesperson. When people asked him for his secret, his answer was almost disappointingly simple: "I never sold anyone anything. I helped them buy something they already wanted." He sent handwritten thank-you cards to every single customer, every single month — no exceptions. In his top-selling year, he sent over 13,000 cards by hand. The relationship was the product. The car was just what changed hands at the end of it.

Selling in a restaurant is not about pushing. It's about knowing your product deeply enough that you can connect it to what this specific guest actually wants tonight. When that happens, it doesn't feel like a sale. It feels like a gift — something offered because it genuinely fits, not because it needed to move off a prep line before it spoiled.

This workbook exists because most servers were never actually taught to sell. They were told to "push the specials" and left to figure out the rest. That approach produces exactly the kind of selling guests can feel coming from across the room — and instinctively resist. What we're building here is different. It's selling built on product knowledge, timing, and genuine attention to the person sitting in front of you.

[INSIGHT]

The best servers don't sell. They guide. There's a difference, and the guest feels it immediately.

— Michelle Myers, Founder, 3C Squared, LLC

SECTION 1: Building Rapport & Reading the Guest (The First 60 Seconds)

The first 60 seconds at any table contain more information than most servers ever use. Eye contact. Tone of voice. How quickly they open the menu. Whether they're celebrating. Whether they're in a hurry. Whether they already know exactly what they want before you've said a word. All of it is visible before anyone speaks — if you're actually looking.

Most servers walk up to a table already rehearsing their own script — the greeting, the specials, the beverage question — without spending those first seconds reading who is actually sitting there. That's backwards. The read should happen first. The approach should be built from what you see, not recited regardless of what you see.

At the Inn at Little Washington — Patrick O'Connell's legendary Virginia restaurant, holder of three Michelin stars — servers are trained to silently assign each table a "mood number" from 1 to 10, where 1 means grieving and 10 means euphoric. That number gets communicated to the kitchen so the entire team can calibrate its pacing and tone — not just the server standing at the table. The whole room adjusts itself to the guest's actual energy, table by table.

"You have 60 seconds to read the table. Everything you learn in that window should shape every interaction that follows."

-- Michelle Myers, Founder, 3C Squared

[INSIGHT]

The read comes before the script. A server who reads the table first and speaks second will always outsell a server who has the better opening line.

REFLECTION

What is one way you currently build rapport in the first minute at a table? What guest cues do you already notice that help you adjust your approach?

WORKSHEET: My Rapport Habits

Question	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
I make eye contact and smile before I say anything	☐	☐	☐
I read body language before deciding my approach	☐	☐	☐
I try to match the guest's energy and pace	☐	☐	☐
I introduce myself by name at the top of the table visit	☐	☐	☐
I notice signs of an occasion or celebration	☐	☐	☐
I let the guest set the pace instead of rushing them	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 2: The Art of Suggestive Selling (Making It Feel Natural)

The word "suggestive" trips people up. It sounds like persuasion — like talking someone into something they didn't want. But the best suggestive selling is just enthusiastic curation: a server who knows the menu deeply, reads the guest correctly, and makes a genuine connection between the two. That's not manipulation. That's hospitality doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

There are three common failure modes worth naming directly:

1. Suggesting things you don't actually know — guests can hear uncertainty in your voice, even when they can't name what's wrong with it.
2. Suggesting the most expensive thing instead of the most relevant thing — the guest notices, and it costs you trust for the rest of the table visit.
3. Suggesting too many things at once — overload shuts down decisions instead of helping make them.

At Eleven Madison Park, servers are expected to have a genuine personal favorite in every category on the menu. Not a scripted answer handed down from a pre-shift meeting — their own opinion, formed from actually tasting the food. When a server says, "Honestly, I think the duck is one of the best things on this menu right now," the guest believes it, because it sounds like a real person talking, not a checklist being recited.

"Know your menu well enough that your suggestions feel like recommendations from a friend, not a sales pitch."

-- Michelle Myers, Founder, 3C Squared

[INSIGHT]

Guests don't resist recommendations. They resist recommendations that feel like they came from a script instead of a person.

WORKSHEET: Practice Exercise — Write one strong suggestive selling phrase for each category

	My genuine go-to phrase	Why it works for this guest
Appetizers		
Wine or beverages		
Dessert		
A daily special		

SECTION 3: Handling Objections & Price Sensitivity

An objection is not a rejection. It's a request for more information. "That sounds expensive" means "help me understand if it's worth it." "I'm trying to be good" means "give me a reason to say yes." Most servers treat objections as a signal to back off immediately — but the guest who raises an objection is actually the most engaged guest at the table. They're still in the conversation. A guest who has already decided "no" doesn't bother explaining why.

Here are two of the most common objections, and a framework for responding to each:

"I'm trying to be good / on a diet" — Acknowledge, then pivot: "Our salmon is incredibly light — it's one of the most popular dishes for guests watching what they eat. Fresh, clean flavors."

"That sounds expensive" — Contextualize: "It is our premium option — guests who order it usually say it was the best thing they had all night. Totally worth it as a treat."

"We're not really hungry" — Build a small plates bridge: "We have a few lighter options perfect for sharing — no commitment to a full meal."

"An objection is not a stop sign. It's a question in disguise. Answer it."

-- Michelle Myers, Founder, 3C Squared

REFLECTION

Think of an objection you hear often on your shift. How do you currently respond? What would a more confident, prepared response sound like?

WORKSHEET: Objection Response Practice

	Objection	Your practiced response
"I'm trying to be good"		
"That's a lot for an appetizer"		
"We're not that hungry"		
"Maybe next time"		
"I don't drink"		
"We're in a hurry"		

SECTION 4: Upselling vs. Overselling (Knowing the Line)

There's a line between helpful and pushy, and crossing it costs the restaurant money in the long run — because the guest who felt pressured doesn't come back, and they tell people about it. The line isn't about a specific phrase or a specific price point. It's about genuine interest in the guest's experience, not in the size of the check.

Signs you've crossed the line: the guest becomes quieter, gives shorter answers, starts looking away, or says "we're fine" to a question you haven't even asked yet.

Signs you're in the sweet spot: the guest asks follow-up questions, says "oh really?", or looks at their companion to share the decision together.

The difference almost never comes down to what was said. It comes down to whether the guest believed the suggestion was for them or for the check. Guests are remarkably good at telling the difference, even when they can't articulate exactly how they know.

[INSIGHT]

The guest always knows when you're selling at them instead of for them. Build the skill of selling for them.

WORKSHEET: Selling Confidence Indicators (Rate 1 = rarely to 5 = consistently)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
I know every item on the menu well enough to describe it genuinely	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can name my 3 favorite items in each category right now	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I adjust my suggestions based on the guest's pace and mood	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I stop suggesting when the guest signals they've decided	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I follow up on suggestions without being pushy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I treat every upsell as a genuine recommendation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 5: Product Knowledge — Your Most Powerful Selling Tool

You cannot sell with confidence what you don't understand. And you cannot understand it without tasting it, reading about it, or asking questions before service starts. Product knowledge isn't a nice extra on top of good selling — it is the foundation the entire skill is built on.

Restaurants that invest in pre-shift tastings consistently see measurable increases in suggestive sell-through rates — not because the server becomes more aggressive, but because they become more genuine. Genuine enthusiasm is the single most persuasive force in hospitality. It cannot be faked convincingly, and it cannot be replaced by a script.

If you've never tasted a dish, ask before service. If you don't know what makes a wine pairing work, ask a manager or a sommelier before the table sits down, not after they've asked you a question you can't answer. Every gap in your product knowledge is a moment where you either guide the guest confidently or hand the decision back to them empty-handed.

WORKSHEET: My Menu Knowledge Bank (Fill in with your own menu items)

Item	What makes it worth recommending	One guest type it's perfect for

REFLECTION

What is one menu item you currently don't know well enough to sell confidently? What will you do before your next shift to change that?

SECTION 6: The Check Average: Tracking What Actually Moves

Most servers have no idea what their average check is. That number is the clearest signal of how effective your selling approach actually is — more useful than tips alone, because tips follow satisfaction, and satisfaction follows the experience you deliver from the first greeting to the last goodbye.

The number is not meant to create pressure. It's meant to create feedback. If your average check is \$42 and someone else running the exact same section is consistently landing at \$58, that gap is almost never luck. It's product knowledge, rapport, and timing — three skills that can all be built deliberately, one shift at a time.

"Your average check tells you the truth about your selling — more honestly than your tips ever will."

-- Michelle Myers, Founder, 3C Squared

WORKSHEET: Weekly Sell-Through Tracker

Category	This week's sell-through	Target

Categories to track: Appetizers · Specialty cocktails/wine · Premium entrees · Dessert · After-dinner drinks

REFLECTION

What would a \$5 increase in your average check mean in a week? In a month? In a year? Write out the math.

SECTION 7: My 30-Day Selling Action Plan

1. One technique I will practice daily:

2. One category I will focus on upselling more:

3. How I will track my progress:

Notes & Insights

SECTION 8: My Commitment

I commit to improving my suggestive selling by focusing on the following this week:

MY SELLING COMMITMENT

I commit to Care — knowing my product deeply enough to make genuine recommendations.

I commit to Connection — reading each guest and tailoring my approach to what they actually want.

I commit to Culture — contributing to a team where excellent selling is the shared standard.

Signature

Date

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