

# Back to the future



*Duane Marino*  
SALES & MANAGEMENT  
TRAINING

I am in the midst of helping to create a screenplay and script about Joe Girard. He still stands as the Guinness Book of Records #1 Sales Person (in all categories) averaging six new cars sold and delivered a day for 15 years straight! He then became a best-selling author, globally renowned speaker and sales celebrity. He could have asked anyone, but in 2007 he contacted me to have the honor of doing his inauguration talk into the Automotive Hall of Fame with him, and we became good friends.

To describe him as a colorful character would be a vast understatement, which the movie and Netflix series will depict. I am holding a folder he gave me about how he did what he did. While we all look towards the future, I would like to reflect on a long-lost era of nostalgia in the car business, when Detroit really was The Motor City. The business looks different today than it did when he was selling, but I would like to share some of his entertaining and timeless principles of sales and success. Below are some of his “Sell or Starve” sales practices we should all remember, as written down by him to me, in his unique first-person Detroit mafia-inspired manner:

1. “The real sales start after the sale. You can’t provide customer service until they become a customer so close the deal and then blow their minds with love every month.” Joe didn’t have email or text in the 1960s and 70s so he mailed all of his customers a card every single month. When he retired in 1979 his team was mailing over 15,000 cards a month!
2. “Sales puts them on the road and service brings them back. One problem with one customer is one too many so don’t stand behind what you sell, stand in front of it. It’s not enough that the mechanics love you, they should

kill for you.” On the first Wednesday of every month Joe treated 37 mechanics to a salad, pasta and red wine dinner at the small Italian restaurant Amore Da Roma, just up the street from his store Merollis Chevrolet.

3. “Stop selling cars and start selling yourself. If the customer knows you like them, they will like you and you can start to move towards the close.” When the time was right Joe would pull from his pocket, buttons that said, “I Like You”, and pin it on the shirts of his clients; their reaction would tell Joe if he could start closing.

4. “Sales is a game and you only get one chance to win. Just like chess you are playing a game and if you blow it you won’t put food in your family’s mouths, so don’t be shy to get Word of Mouth going with every single person you meet or sell.” He would attend baseball and hockey games to walk around the arena and throw handfuls of cards in the air when the hometown team scored.

5. “Always have a PMA - positive mental attitude - and stop hanging around negative people and negative talk.” Joe walked through the entire dealership when he arrived at work and then again when he left, and other than that he was there to focus on his business, avoiding gossip and small talk with fellow staff during the day.

He had many ways of selling that wouldn’t work today, but his way of thinking certainly does. A crazed genius, he was a hybrid between The Wolf of Wall Street and The Godfather, and was by all counts, an exceptional thinker and salesperson. **CAW**

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