**Running Your Sales Meeting Like an Honors Class in Selling**

Dr. Murray Sperber’s book [Beer and Circus: How Big Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate Education](https://www.amazon.com/Beer-Circus-Crippling-Undergraduate-Education/dp/0805068112) made a big impact on my philosophy of training. Sperber is a professor at Indiana University.

[Morris Berman’s book review](https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/09/17/reviews/000917.17bermant.html) captures the big ideas and themes of the book: *American college students, particularly at big-time universities, are caught up in a triad of alcohol, spectator sports and partying, which, Sperber tells us, now occupies the “academic” career of vast numbers of undergraduates. This is in turn tied to the promotion of research at the expense of teaching; huge lecture classes (typically taught by teaching assistants); high levels of cheating; rampant grade inflation; and a cynical, if tacit, “nonaggression pact” between students and faculty to stay out of each other’s way. In an argument that comes fairly close to conspiracy theory, Sperber asserts that none of this is accidental. Since the big-time universities aim to acquire status and prestige through expensive research programs, they can no longer afford to give the majority of their undergraduates a meaningful education. Hence, they substitute beer and circus to keep the students distracted and the tuition dollars rolling in, in a way that is perhaps no less cynical than the bread-and-circus constellation of ancient Rome.*

I’m glad I went to tiny Baldwin-Wallace College where I was a [small-time athlete](http://www.bwyellowjackets.com/traditions/hof_bios/chrislytle?view=bio) and a good student.

Sperber despises lecture halls filled with 1200 students and taught by teaching assistants. He writes that the **honors classes** are where the real learning occurs: *After sitting in on an honors class at a Big-time U, a high school senior on a college visiting tour exclaimed, “They spent the hour [discussing] the professor’s specialty. The kids had done all the required reading and even the supplementary stuff. They asked the professor constant questions, interrupted him, argued all the time with him and each other. It must be so hard for profs to teach them. The interviewer replied, “No, it’s like teaching graduate students. Most faculty members could roll out of bed at 3 A.M. and do it. But try teaching regular undergraduates who haven’t done the reading and won’t say a thing. Now that’s hard teaching—straight uphill.” Regular undergraduates can also crust faculty egos, whereas honors students flatter the professorial psyche and give faculty the illusion of being great teachers (some educators term honors students “pre-learners, in other words they master most things on their own, with no need of formal instruction).*

What might happen if you thought of your weekly sales training session as an “honors class in selling?” Try it. Assign one of my  [Instant Sales Training](https://instantsalestraining.com/) audios before the meeting and send it by email. Or ask people to read an article. Or send them a link to a YouTube video. Or assign a chapter of a sales or business book. Let salespeople study the topic on their own and apply the idea or new skill in the marketplace. Then, they can come to the meeting with a story. Use sales training time to debate and discuss the content they were reviewed in advance. Now you’re making them accountable for their own learning.

Become a facilitator of learning rather than a lecturer. Treat and train your team like pros rather than an entry-level class of freshman. What a concept! But do you buy it? Try training this way for a month or two and I think you will. “Pre-learning,” anyone? Anyone?

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