



## Chickens Don't Always Stay Counted

*Never Stop Selling*

by

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*This is a true story – only the names have been changed to protect the guilty.*

**From Martyn Lewis' upcoming book "Sales Wise - an anthology of selling stories, follies, and fables", each with a relevant and timely sales message.**

**M**ike Lee was competing for a major contract, worth millions, at a large manufacturing company. The RFP was done, much activity had transpired between his team and Susan Hanson's, the chairperson for the prospect's purchasing committee, and Mike knew he was on a short list of two finalists. Over the next few weeks his team worked hard on presentations, which led to proposals, which led to some tough but mutually beneficial negotiations. Just after lunch on a Friday before a holiday long weekend, he received that phone call that we all live for:

*"Hi, Mike. Susan here. Just wanted you to know the good news before the long weekend, we have decided to go with you guys. Let's get together next week and go through the details".*

Well, needless to say there were high-fives all round the office. Celebrations lasted well into the evening and the team left for a well-earned long weekend.

The following Tuesday, and in great anticipation, Mike patiently waited for Susan's call and wasn't overly concerned when he hadn't heard from her by end of day. The guess was that she was busy catching up as he himself had been doing all day. However, patience wore thin by Wednesday lunchtime and Mike figured he better call Susan himself to start scheduling the meetings to put the contract in place. He tracked her down and two minutes later his world self-imploded when he learnt that Susan had already finalized and signed a contract with the competition. Are you kidding me?



Here's what happened. Right after she'd called Mike on the Friday, Susan decided that it would only be fair to call the other short-listed potential supplier prior to the weekend as well. No high-fives for sure, but the never-say-die sales rep from the competition asked if there was any way that Susan could possibly spare twenty minutes on the holiday Monday. Due to some good positioning and a sense of fairness, she agreed to meet him on the Monday morning. Needless to say, *that* team did not enjoy the long weekend; they worked round the clock at crafting a more imaginative proposal and further honed their approach to see how they could better meet Susan's organization's requirements. They did such a great job and demonstrated such commitment that they won the deal *and* they also made sure that the successful closing meeting was not considered over until they had a signed contract in hand. And to throw a little more salt in the wound, they were actually more expensive than Mike's proposal.

**T**here is an old selling adage that you never shake hands to celebrate a deal until the order is signed. In the car business, they say the deal isn't done until you see "tail-lights over the curb". ***Never stop selling until the order is signed, because chickens don't always stay counted.***

