



Selling Technology: The Changing Shape of Sales in an Information Economy (Collection on Technology and Work)

Asaf Darr

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Selling Technology offers a look at high-tech markets from within, through the experience of salespeople, purchasing agents, and engineers who construct markets for emergent technologies through their daily engagement in sales interactions. Although sales occupations comprise 12 percent of the American labor force, sales work has been a neglected area of study. Asaf Darr's ethnographic exploration of the sales process for standard and emergent technology argues that our cultural stereotypes of sales work and salespeople, shaped during the industrial era and through popular images of the Yankee peddler and the car salesman, no longer apply to the changing nature of sales in an information economy. In the high-technology settings in which cutting-edge artifacts are traded, Darr finds that sales work deviates sharply from our traditional cultural images. The educational level and technical skills of the sales force are increasing, sellers' and buyers' engineers engage in co-development, and long-term collaborative relationships are replacing brief sales encounters. A growing number of work tasks and skills previously performed and mastered in the design or production phases have become part of the sale of emergent technology. New control mechanisms over the work of the sales engineers are also appearing. Unlike most ethnographic studies of salespeople, which focus on the insurance, finance, and retail sectors., Darr's groundbreaking book turns to the daily sales practices of an information economy.

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