SAFI INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY, CALICUT · 1 NOVEMBER 2026 · 1 H 25 MIN

Why choose sales as a career

Anwar Barayil's full talk to MBA and PGDM students: fifty years of Gulf sales, the three pay-cut decisions that built his career, the skills a salesperson needs, and the SMART goals homework he set.

50 yrs
in the Gulf, since 12 June 1977

3
pay-cut decisions that built the career

12
visits in 6 months for one box of Bounty

22k
rupees a month: a SMART goal, worked out

Book Anwar Barayil: WhatsApp / call +91 98402 44034 · anwar.barayil@gmail.com · Watch the full talk: azizsaif.com/anwar-trainer-consultant/why-sales-career/

SIX LESSONS

What he wants students to take home

01 · DECISION

Take the pay cut that has a future.

Left a 7-to-2 Etisalat job for a van job selling chocolates in the heat, then took Gillette Riyadh at 25% less. 99.9% said he was mad.

→ Short-term loss, long-term room? Decide, then stop polling people.

02 · THE ROOM

Everything in this room was sold.

Fan, clock, desk, the shirt on your back. Someone sold it. Sales is the process in between: products, services, ideas, events, concepts.

→ Name five things you can see and trace who sold each one.

03 · NUMBERS

Your numbers speak louder than your manager.

A salesman who sells 10 cars a month cannot be passed over for the one who sold 2.

→ Pick a job where your result is a figure on a board.

04 · RESILIENCE

Twelve visits, six months, one box.

An airport grocery refused Bounty every fortnight for six months. His salary was paid for the effort, and there is always a next visit.

→ The sale is in the return visit.

05 · SKILLS

Listen, verify, then speak.

Obtain, verify, transmit. Know your product and the competitor's. Turn features into benefits. Separate real objections from false ones. Close with the smaller yes.

→ Nobody buys a bag. A trainee buys the bag for her first sales call.

06 · ROUTE

Sales is the fastest road to entrepreneur.

Almost every student said 'entrepreneur'; none could say in what. Sales, then management, then leadership, then your own business.

→ Ask about pay mix, quota and growth plan. Find a mentor who sells.

SMART GOALS · "THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON OF THE WHOLE COURSE"

How to write a goal that works

S

Specific

Not 'entrepreneur'. A mobile shop on SM Street, Calicut, 10 lakhs, by 2030.

M

Measurable

10 lakhs in 4 years = 2.5 lakh a year = about 22,000 rupees a month saved.

A

Achievable, yet challenging

30 crores by 2030 is not a goal, it is a wish.

R

Realistic

Then align short-term, long-term and lifetime goals, and write them down.

Homework he set: 1 lifetime goal, 3 long-term goals (3, 5 and 10 years), 5 short-term goals. Post them where you sit, review before the weekend, reward yourself for each one hit, and tell someone who will ask.

ALL THE POINTS

The 85 minutes, in order

00:00 SAFI faculty welcome: 4th 'Expert Talk' session, topic Why choose sales as a career; Anwar introduced as 47–50 years in the Gulf, 3 decades in MNCs, now in his own business.

06:24 He refuses the lecture format: 'I hate classroom'. Roll-call of about 30 MBA and PGDM students.

09:45 Stops the session until everyone has paper and pen: 'if you came without it you are not interested'.

11:46 Ground rules: phones face-down, take notes, questions at the end, 2-hour duration, feedback form after.

14:07 50 years of learning came from FMCG majors (P&G, Mars, Gillette, Etisalat), not from a classroom. Quizzes the room on what FMCG is.

16:02 Origin: Keralite Muslim from Mahe; both parents orphans, 7 children, 4th child; days when there was no rice, only kanji. Did not finish graduation.

18:04 Went to Dubai 12 June 1977 — 2026 is his 50th year abroad. 27 years employee, 20 years businessman.

20:21 Career lesson #1: left a 7–2 Etisalat government job (~8,000 Dh with overtime) for a van salesman job at 4,500 Dh selling chocolates in 50°C heat because he saw no future. 99.9% said he was mad.

22:59 Lesson #2: took the Gillette area-sales-manager job in Riyadh at 25% less pay and sent his family to Chennai for a year — for the future, not the present.

25:10 Core message: 'Many times in life you will have to take tough decisions. Don't look at short-term losses; look at long-term opportunities. Don't listen to people.'

26:50 Two objectives: (1) show a career that is highly rewarding but least prioritised; (2) a 'gift' — one module from his sales training that anyone can use.

27:47 Asks students their life objective. Almost everyone says 'entrepreneur' — none can say in what, or what the first step is.

31:47 'If you want to be a businessman and you are not a salesman yourself, you can't be in business.' Nobody ever says 'I want to be a successful salesperson'.

35:02 Look around the room: fan, clock, desk — every object was sold by someone. Sales is the process in between.

37:21 Why he does this free: ISR (individual social responsibility), sharpening his own training skill, and building a CV of sessions for future paid assignments. He was a founding contributor to SAFI.

44:26 From thousands of interviews: 90% fail because they don't talk, don't think, aren't vibrant — 'that's what I am seeing in this room'.

41:22 You can sell a product, a service, an idea, an event, a concept (digital payments to the Indian government).

46:30 Benefits: every business needs it; skills travel (communication, persuasion, resilience); results are measurable — your numbers speak louder than your manager; sales → management → leadership → entrepreneurship is the fastest route.

51:33 The Bounty story: 12 visits over 6 months to one airport grocery that kept refusing. 'My salary is paid for the effort, not only the sale.' Resilience.

56:00 Integrity (trust is built by selling the right product truthfully) and curiosity (a crawling child grabs, bites, smells — keep that curiosity about the customer's needs).

58:19 Self-discipline: plan the route before leaving home; nobody is watching a salesman in the field.

59:23 Listening before communication. OVT: Obtain, Verify, Transmit — illustrated by the 'main building' mix-up on the way to this venue.

1:02:32 Persuasion demo with his own bag: '200 rupees, will you buy?' → No. Re-pitched to a student as the sample bag she'll need in her first sales job → the odds change. Sell benefits to a need.

1:04:17 Product knowledge incl. competitors (Activa vs Bajaj vs Suzuki). Features = characteristics; benefits = what it does for the buyer. First correct answer of the day.

1:05:43 Objection handling: real vs false objections. Prioritising: lead with the best seller (Bounty) to get into the store, then widen the range.

1:07:29 Closing: alternative close ('don't take 15, take the 5 fast movers') and small-commitment close ('two boxes, 60 dirhams').

1:09:02 Pay (via ChatGPT): India fresher 3–5 LPA, mid-level 8–10 LPA, senior ~2 lakh/month.

1:09:42 Gulf: 3,000–7,000 Dh entry, ~22,000 Dh sales-manager average; he knows people on 100,000 Dh/month commission. Break.

1:12:15 Framed on Stephen Covey's habits — begin with the end in mind. He had 2 hours of material and 15 minutes left because the students' bus leaves at 3:30.

1:13:37 Football analogy: remove the goal posts and 22 players just run around exhausting themselves with no sense of achievement. That's a life without goals.

1:14:29 Three levels: lifetime goal, long-term goals, short-term goals. Students' lifetime goals: 'be happy', 'travel and make parents proud', 'be a good person'.

1:16:37 A lifetime goal is a compass: if yours is heaven, you won't lie or cheat; if yours is happiness, rewrite it as 'I and everyone who deals with me is happy'.

1:17:47 SMART goals — 'the most important lesson of the entire course': Specific ('mobile shop on SM Street, Calicut, 10 lakhs by 2030' not 'entrepreneur'), Measurable (10 lakhs in 4 years = 2.5 lakh/yr = 22,000/month saved), Achievable-yet-challenging, Realistic.

1:21:11 Homework: write 1 lifetime goal, 3 long-term goals (3/5/10 yrs), 5 short-term goals; check each against SMART; align short → long → lifetime.

1:22:20 Write them down, post them on your desk or fridge, review often, change only if truly needed, reward yourself when you hit one, and share them with someone who will follow up.

1:23:13 Asks students to WhatsApp/email him their goals and, at month-end, what they achieved — 'that will be the best gift to me'.

1:23:54 Feedback form handed out: 24 students responded and rated the overall event 8.5 out of 10.

1:24:42 Next step for would-be entrepreneurs: look at sales roles in structured companies, ask about pay mix, quota and growth plan, find a mentor who sells for a living.