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## Audio Transcript

Episode 241 of "[E&P Reports](#)" Vodcast Series  
with Mike Blinder

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### [Unveiling the secrets of sales mastery: Insights from Jeffrey Sleete.](#)

In this wide-ranging interview with Jeffrey Sleete, a seasoned media sales consultant with a rich radio and TV advertising sales background, we delved into his approach to media sales and the principles that have guided his successful career. Sleete, who now writes a column for E&P Magazine, shared his ideas on various aspects of how to successfully engage small businesses in today's challenging local media ecosystem.



**0:00:04.1 Announcer:** This is E&P Reports, a vodcast from Editor & Publisher Magazine, the authoritative voice of news media since 1884, serving newspapers, broadcast, digital, and all forms of news publishing.

**0:00:19.2 Mike Blinder:** And greetings to all, once again, Mike Blinder, Publisher, E&P Magazine. As always, we urge those listening in the podcast universe to please follow us. If you're watching the video on our YouTube channel, go below me, hit that subscribe button, bang or ring the bell to the right, and you will get an update each and every time we upload. This weekly vodcast series dedicated to news publishing we affectionately call E&P Reports. I have a brand new friend, his name is Jeffrey Sleete. Jeff, I am allowed to call you Jeff? Is that what you prefer?

**0:00:52.4 Jeffrey Sleete:** You are absolutely allowed. I give you my blessing.

**0:00:54.9 MB:** Thank you, sir. And the reason he's a good friend, he was introduced to me a few months ago, is that we think alike, at least from what I've been reading Jeff's columns. So Jeff, I checked you out on your LinkedIn profile. You only list your Sinclair background and. Of course, today, you're president of Sleete Sales Script. Is that your current company, right?

**0:01:17.9 JS:** Correct. Yeah.

**0:01:18.2 MB:** But you go beyond your 26 years as a director of sales and marketing at Sinclair, right? You've got some radio heritage?

**0:01:28.0 JS:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, I, was in the industry for over 50 years, started as an air talent, part time working through college. Was thinking I'd go into news, to be a correspondent, that was my goal. But an advisor of mine took me aside one day and said, "You know what, you got to go into sales." He says, that's a way into management.

**0:01:51.3 MB:** It was, yeah.

**0:01:51.5 JS:** And it was, and I bought into it. So I was fortunate to land in the top 10 market as a local AE, also did national sales. I became a local sales manager, a general sales manager. I was the general manager of a national rep office in the top 10 market, and general manager in two top 10 markets. And then took on a gig, kind of, which was the biggest challenge I had. There was a mentor of mine that bought a station in West Palm Beach for 17 times losses and he wanted to turn a profit in the first year and that was a real challenge. And we did it, and moved in another station with a tower move in and a couple years later, he sold everything.

**0:02:38.6 JS:** And then telecom hit, which was a really exciting time to be out of a job with 1000 other GMs looking for the same thing and companies were changing left and right, what have you. But I was fortunate to land a gig with Sinclair as their VP of sales and marketing for a radio division that they had brought into the fold of a 55 markets. They sold that about three and a half years later. I told my daughter when she started high school that I would not move again. So I was



fortunate enough to be kept on and I moved on the TV side and worked there another 24 years as their corporate director of sales, retired a couple years ago.

**0:03:05.9 MB:** There's the background of the man we're going to chat with as two old sale warhorses.

**0:03:08.4 JS:** There you go.

**0:03:14.0 MB:** God, that's an awful thing to say, doesn't it? Too venerable.

**0:03:15.7 JS:** It is.

**0:03:16.7 MB:** Two guys that have been around for decades selling advertising in multi media spots.

**0:03:22.1 JS:** Older than dirt.

**0:03:23.2 MB:** We're just gonna chat away about the about local sales and what's working and not working, and we'll do that on the backside of this message.

**0:03:30.1 Announcer:** This episode of E&P Reports is exclusively sponsored by BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews. Even though the name has changed, their commitment to the media industry is as strong as ever. BLOX Digital is now even better positioned to deliver integrated solutions like content management, audience development, advertising revenue, video management and more. Join the over 2000 news publishers worldwide that power their ongoing digital transformation with BLOX Digital, serving over 141 million monthly users who view over 6.5 billion pages of content each year. You can trust BLOX Digital to empower you, to connect you at scale with the community you need to reach. BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews, now reimagined to help meet the news publishing challenges of tomorrow and beyond. Learn more at [bloxdigital.com](http://bloxdigital.com).

**0:04:34.8 MB:** Jeffrey, you and I are similar. I was a GW and I just wanted to be an air talent, got a job at WIM in Washington DC.

**0:04:42.9 JS:** Oh, really?

**0:04:45.2 MB:** The WIM team.

**0:04:45.3 JS:** Okay.

**0:04:45.4 MB:** Graduated with my degree in marine biology, went around as a DJ, wasn't making much money and realized that my path to getting bigger and better was sales. And I learned from a mentor, a guy named Ron Frizzell in New England, who actually was the one that taught Jim Doyle.

**0:05:02.1 JS:** Okay. So I know Doyle well, yeah.

**0:05:02.2 MB:** We both came out of the same radio operation. Of course, you know Doyle. And I go back, way back like you in radio sales. I met Pam Lantos. I worked with Jason Jennings. I could go on and on about that era.

**0:05:15.2 JS:** Sure.

**0:05:17.0 MB:** But what I find fascinating about what you're doing is you're writing really good stuff that we just love here at E&P. We get tons of contributions, tons, from people who want to become columnists or send in their thoughts or musings. But the moment I read one of your first pieces, now, you write weekly, right? It's just a newsletter.

**0:05:39.6 JS:** Yeah, I do. One of the services I provide is I do daily services for my clients, and one is called Batting Practice. And it's for batting practice for sellers. You know, the how to's of the business. How do you have immediate sales? How do you perfect it with closing techniques and getting appointments, what have you? And another one is batting practice for managers. And I'll usually try to write one of my own for one of the two topics, managers or sellers. And then I'll go through and I'll look through other noted gurus that I appreciate in articles and stuff, and I'll provide a half dozen of those along with it with a link, a brief synopsis of what it's about and the title of the article. So, yeah.

**0:06:20.1 MB:** But I got to say that your advisor way, way back, who said, "Go into sale." You were a good writer. 'Cause you still are a good writer. I mean, we've already published two of your columns at E&P.

**0:06:34.3 JS:** I really appreciate it.

**0:06:36.1 MB:** First one, I'd like you to break this down. I want to close more media sales, take some advice from Sam I Am. Could you just give us a quick over and there will be links to that, of course, on our landing page.

**0:06:46.0 JS:** When you read the book, you just see how Sam I Am kept taking the product of his green eggs and ham that were being refused and he brought another idea to the table of how to utilize the product, and kept doing it over and over and over and over again. And, that's the key to sales, is keep bringing ideas. And the point I try to make in the article is that's how you take existing clients and you can increase your sales by getting them to do something else. Don't just take that they're saying they're on a hiatus, go back and see them with an idea. And, you'll close more, if you're closing ratio's 1 in 10, you're gonna add a decent remark, a mark to your monthly billing by making that kind of effort.

**0:07:31.0 MB:** I mean, the next second one was following the yellow brick road to sales success insights inspired by the Wizard of Oz. Now, mind you, not everybody under 25 or 30 may even know what we're discussing, but what was the theory on this article you penned for us?

**0:07:47.3 JS:** Well, it's just... I've always been told that you tell a story and make a point. And, I tried to tell a story about how I had a client once that used to be in the concert and the classic movie business. And I got to see Wizard of Oz on the big screen. It was like a real trip, seen it go from

black and white to color and stuff like that. And, you could actually see the glycerin tears in Judy Garland's eyes. It was so wild. But there's a point in the film where the scarecrow gets his brain and he does this, supposed mathematical equation, but it's wrong. It's not an isosceles triangle, it's a right triangle one he gives.

**0:08:30.3 JS:** And, that was deliberate by the writers, believe it or not. They did it on purpose to show the Oz was all BS, you know? And so I take, use as a transfer point to what you just talked about, to show people that there are mathematical equations in sales too. You got to know your numbers. You got to know where you need to be on a specific week in a month on a percentage basis, if you're gonna make that month. So if you're short, you got to turn up the heat. You got to make more calls, like you were talking about, things of that nature.

**0:09:01.0 JS:** I always, there's so many theories on sales management, but if you don't have the numbers on every single rep, how are you gonna coach them into perfection? It's just...

**0:09:10.9 JS:** Exactly.

**0:09:10.9 MB:** But just all back to basics. I'm gonna put that aside 'cause we're gonna get to that at the end of our dialogue. I got a little list here of things 'cause I want to get back to the basics approach where everyone seems to be returning. What I love most about how you present yourself is you don't brag about your past. Your LinkedIn profile only shows Sinclair. You don't even go through your, "I'm a venerable, I've been in all these millions of places." When you go to your site for Sleete Sales Script, you don't say, "Here's my resume, 6000 pages." You tell a story.

**0:09:42.9 MB:** The first thing you talk about is your Bon-Ton story.

**0:09:44.3 JS:** Yeah.

**0:09:46.5 MB:** And I think every sales rep has a Bon-Ton story.

**0:09:49.1 JS:** Oh, absolutely.

**0:09:50.4 MB:** Where they suddenly have the epiphany, damn, solution sales works. It's about them, not me.

**0:09:57.1 JS:** Exactly.

**0:09:57.2 MB:** So could you tell that story very quickly? 'Cause it's an amazing, everybody should go there. I'll have a link there on the page, but go ahead.

**0:10:03.6 JS:** Thanks, Mike. I appreciate it. It's my favorite one. I was VP of sales and marketing for the radio division. I was in Buffalo on a market visit and I got told by the management team that they were all going to a meeting, cattle call, with Bon-Ton and I didn't know squat about Bon-Ton. They're a department store chain, it's all I knew.

**0:10:21.5 JS:** So I call a mentor of mine named Kevin Sweeney, and he was a genius in the

industry. And I said, "Kevin, can you script me?" And he said, "Here, here's three names. Use these, you'll own them." I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. I just knew to drop the names in conversation. So we get into the meeting. The meeting was with some fairly heavyweight people. It wasn't the president of the company, but it was a general merchandise manager, a divisional merchandise manager and the VP of sales promotion, then all the agency people, what have you.

**0:10:51.5 JS:** And I sat down, the pleasantries went by and I said, "Excuse me, can you clarify something for me? 'Cause I'm not real clear on Bon-Ton, 'cause it's not in my marketplace. Aren't you kind of set up the way mercantile works in terms of scope of merchandise and market penetration?" And their answer was, "Yes, we are." And they talked a little pleasantries about that.

**0:11:11.4 JS:** That was name number one. Then I said, "And isn't this Warrior in with the May company here with Kaufman's? Isn't that kind of like the profit's [0:11:19.6] \_\_\_\_ God sucks war out West?"

**0:11:23.3 MB:** Exactly.

**0:11:23.4 JS:** Holy crap.

**0:11:26.5 MB:** You opened up their eyes, they just started shattering.

**0:11:26.9 JS:** Oh. Opened their eyes, floodgates open. They proceeded to tell me stuff that no one else got. They just got to present their wares and we're getting the story.

**0:11:36.5 MB:** There's so many stories, which brings us to our next part of the conversation, where sales hasn't changed. I mean, maybe I'm wrong, I'm an old war horse and maybe someday they'll finally put me to pasture but when I do speeches now, I have one I'm doing on the road that I call what's old is new. You know, it's déjà vu all over again. Circle back, everything's back to where we should have been.

**0:12:00.7 MB:** I always say in the 1600s to sell a cow, you nailed a note to a tree. And nothing's changed, just the notes in trees. In other words, why are we getting so caught up in social media now and AI? And all the different... Man, I go back to the days when cable started and I was going, "Oh my god, now I have to go against these guys." Remember?

**0:12:19.7 JS:** Sure.

**0:12:20.4 MB:** I mean, isn't it all about basics? This is what I love about your writing. It doesn't matter what the media is. The rep that understands the goals and needs of the customer and then creates the solution through that, that eventually puts it into the media, isn't that the whip that we're going for?

**0:12:38.6 JS:** Absolutely. We have too many people that still talk about their medium rather than getting a basic understanding of the person's business. You don't need to know a ton. I only needed three names for Bon-Ton. You just need a couple of cards to play on the table, and they'll open up because they're looking for hope. They're looking for something that will help them increase their

sales.

**0:13:00.0 JS:** They've allowed you into their office to present to them and they really have high expectations. You don't want them to roll their eyes back on their head when you do. Remember the old consultative sell?

**0:13:08.1 MB:** Yeah.

**0:13:09.0 JS:** When we were supposed to do with that questionnaire crap where you asked about though, "What are your peak seasons? What are your key demographics? Do you take Visa or MasterCard? You have free parking. You know what I mean? All that stuff. It wasn't that bad, but...

**0:13:21.8 MB:** I have a section in my book called NS, no stupid questions.

**0:13:25.0 JS:** Yeah, there you go.

**0:13:25.6 MB:** But it's on their website. How dare you even think of asking it?

**0:13:28.4 JS:** Exactly. But there's some basic stuff. Be curious. I mean, if you're calling a retailer, go into the store. Look at the signage in the windows. Look at the merchandise. What's the first thing that hits you when you walk in the door? What do they have a lot of? What are the price points? So you can at least engage in a conversation, and then you'll find out what we need to know. We find out their pain points, or you find out their initiatives. And that's where we can come back and sell ideas.

**0:13:52.6 MB:** But, let me ask you then. Everybody's saying, I can't keep an ad rep. I'm not hiring the right people. What is the quality you look for today? 'Cause remember, let's get back to basics. I'm gonna set this up now. Gordon Burrell just said it on this very program. He appeared right before you, and he talked about the new future of media. He calls this the final phase. We're all the same now. Digital has matured, and it's all about small business. I mean, duh. So you got to go mix it up now. Forget the national stuff. Forget the... That's not even selling. That's negotiating. Don't you agree?

**0:14:29.0 JS:** Absolutely.

**0:14:29.0 MB:** When you're in front of an agency, you're just negotiating.

**0:14:31.5 JS:** Different ballgame. Yeah.

**0:14:32.5 MB:** Totally. And different type of seller. You're not even selling, you're negotiating. You're schmoozing. But now we're at a point where we got to go back to those basics. So my question is, what is the best quality in an ad rep if you're looking for someone that's going to go out there and do the true street fighting sales of today?

**0:14:49.7 JS:** Curiosity, for me.

**0:14:50.6 MB:** That's... Yeah.

**0:14:51.6 JS:** Yeah, curiosity. And one other one. I forget who I learned it from, but it's like whenever I did an interview with somebody, then I would go to the window and watch them walk out to their car. If there was a hustle in their step, I wanted to talk to them again. I never thought it, but it actually worked. It was funny.

**0:15:09.4 MB:** I always say curiosity, yes, but a business curiosity.

**0:15:12.8 JS:** Yeah, exactly.

**0:15:13.5 MB:** I would write, now I can teach anyone what an insure and impression is, right? I mean, I don't care. It's do they have that ethic for business? 'Cause I think a small business owner can almost tell in the first 10 or 20 seconds whether you really get them or not. Does that make sense?

**0:15:29.0 JS:** Absolutely. There's one of the snobberies of business, whether you're calling on a CEO that has a walnut or oak paneled office or you're talking to a guy at an auto shop who has to wipe the oil drippings off his hands before he shakes yours. There's a language and there are terms that are specific to their industry. If you and I were to go to a football game and I were to refer to the entire game, the guy who takes a snap from the center as the goalie, you'd think I'm a complete idiot. Well, the same thing happens when you go and call on a guy and you're talking about a blouse or you're talking about a dining room set and you call them products and the term's item. I don't know why, it just is. It doesn't make so much sense as goalie or quarterback, but you've got to get enough about what they're about. You have to have at least a rudimentary understanding of how their industry operates.

**0:16:24.1 MB:** All right, so let's discuss today. Today, you and I just teased it. There's too many products, whenever I hear that. I still train sales teams. "You have too many products to sell." I say, "Good, you can eat them all. Put them all in your toolbox. Just use the right one for the right customer." In other words, it's good that you've got all this because it means you've got all your media. Everybody's got it all now, OTT and social media and email marketing. We all got the same tools in our toolbox. Your legacy brand, your transmitter, your press are all just your legacy heritage. It means very little now to the audience you're really going after. So it's all about... The problem I see is we're still training too much on the products.

**0:17:05.0 MB:** When I train sales reps at the infancy of the internet, I used to say, "I don't have to teach you how the press works to sell print. I don't have to teach you how the internet works to sell on it. I'm talking about the audience." Do you see that? 'Cause you come from the broadcast side. Is that one of the reasons that...

**0:17:20.6 JS:** It's one of the reasons. I think you nailed it really well. It's also on the compensation side. Rather than paying the person I'm making the sale overall, they've tied in the little pieces where you get certain percentages based on the products. It's crazy. It's nuts.

**0:17:36.8 MB:** The incentive is not to simply get the job done for the client. The incentive is...





**0:17:42.0 JS:** No. It's I have to sell X number of these and X number of those and X number of these. If I'm doing the job and the client's in the business and we got the money in the house, pay them.

**0:17:52.5 MB:** Read as good as they say. Finally, creativity. The problem with media, especially the media I inherited, I remember I came obliquely into print from radio and television because I was a nerd and the newspaper was putting on a website and asked me to come over as president of the broadcast association. I was carrying a computer in 1998. I'll start a website. So I see this fat and lazy industry. I'll say that to this audience. Classified, the phones were ringing constantly, all demand-driven. Union-based sales department, no creativity. You understand? They were just taking orders, taking orders. It was all demand-driven business. And broadcast a lot in the ways was that as well. I'm not talking about radio. I always say radio are the street fighters, but a lot of television deals. Where are we at today when it comes to the rep having to be a true, creative artist? Do you agree that's one of the most important things to be able to do?

**0:18:49.1 JS:** No, I think it's a huge problem. We allow our clients to do institutional advertising.

**0:18:56.0 MB:** That sucks.

**0:18:56.3 JS:** It doesn't work. It doesn't work. There's got to be...

**0:19:00.6 MB:** Trust the name you know. Right?

**0:19:01.0 JS:** Yeah. There's got to be a sense of urgency. There's got to be an item. There's got to be a price. There's got to be a motivation. And today it's got to be a message about value and what have you. But women are still buying shoes, but they're buying a cheaper brand of shoes. So you've got to get that message across. So yeah, I think we fail our clients too often by not going down screaming and fighting as to what they put into an ad.

**0:19:26.0 MB:** All right. So you have a company and I'm going to allow you to promote it 'cause you're writing for us. We appreciate the work. What does Sleete Sales Scripts do?

**0:19:37.9 JS:** Well, there's a lot of services out there that provide intelligence. They're all over the place. But they don't take it to the next step about now what. So what I tried to create was a system of daily leads that make intelligence actionable. On Mondays, I do a service called Express Scripts, which is a... I do a recap of the previous week's major news stories for various industries. I do a headline, I do a link, and then I do a brief recap of it, which people can use for seeding material or category focus or whatever the case may be. On Tuesdays, I do grab and go, which is me taking a handful of those things I shared on Monday and saying, here's what I would do with it. How to use it as an email solicitation to get an appointment, how to turn it into a presentation on something new that's happening in that industry that you can sell a client to advertise. Things of that nature.

**0:20:34.3 JS:** On Wednesdays, I do a thing called door openers, which is a list of specific leads. Some of them are OEM, manufacturer sales events or special APR incentives or whatever, that have some legs to them. Some of those category focus, whatever, but it's stuff that a salesperson can walk



into a client, talk about and have a warm call rather than a cold call, because they're talking about something that's going on.

**0:21:01.2 MB:** Exactly.

**0:21:01.7 JS:** On Thursdays, I do the batting practices for sales people and for managers. On Fridays, 'cause auto is such a critical part of any media outlets, as far as a category I do kind of what I do on Mondays. I take all the most pertinent auto articles that happened for the week, do the headline, link and a brief synopsis of that's about. So that you can talk to dealers language rather than just coming in and talking about your media. And then once a month, I do a thing called selling ahead where I do a look 90 days out. I think it's important to look forward. Like if I were this month, I'll be doing September. And I'll say, here's all the major care. Here's all the categories that... For September, they're lifting a sales peak, helping the sales peak, rather than trying to lift the sales valley.

**0:21:52.3 MB:** Precisely.

**0:21:53.6 JS:** And then take all the the calendar events that exist and the special monthly features, whatever, for categories.

**0:22:03.3 MB:** God forbid, you're prepping now. If you're trying to close the month now and you're not thinking towards September. You're...

**0:22:06.0 JS:** Exactly. Yeah.

**0:22:07.5 MB:** I mean, I hate that. I mean, right. And if you want to get some co-op into the mix, you better be working now for that September co-op, right? I mean, you could just...

**0:22:14.0 JS:** Yeah.

**0:22:14.1 MB:** That's a good... I mean, good sellers are way ahead of themselves and that's simple.

**0:22:22.4 JS:** Yeah.

**0:22:22.7 MB:** Jeffery Sleete, Jeff Sleete, excuse me. And that's S-L-E-E-T-E.

**0:22:27.9 MB:** T.E, my grandfather liked Es, he added an E to it. Yeah.

**0:22:30.5 MB:** You got three Es in there. President of Sleete Sales Script. I love alliteration as well. And of course, litany of the years within our industry and in various media sales. It's an honor and pleasure, A, to have you on the program. B, it's an honor and pleasure to have you now penning columns for us, which we're simply calling Sleete on Sales. And our audience is gonna be seeing more and more of them because they're truly our thought starters and amazingly relevant, I think, in today's multimedia world.

**0:23:00.6 JS:** I appreciate that, Mike. I appreciate the relationship. Thank you very much.

**0:23:02.6 MB:** Our honor.

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