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Area Businessman writes Book on Buying, Selling

by HENRY LANGE, News-Dispatch Staff Writer

The Crowel Companies of Northwest Indiana -- insurance, finance, training and automatic car wash locations -- have become a symbol of success, with entrepreneurship at the core and a founder who has decided to share his knowledge.

Thomas Ray Crowel, president and chief executive officer of Crowel Companies, has written a book on buying and selling. The proceeds are earmarked for Boys' Town.

With insurance as the primary business, Crowel established his group of companies in 1964 in Highland. He employs a full-time staff of 25, which includes 18 licensed insurance agents.

Simple Selling, Common Sense That Guarantees Your Success is the title of his new book, described as "a primer for the rookie and a diary for the pro."

Simple Selling offers readers a blueprint for success in both buying and selling, with advice Crowel gathered over 30 years as a successful entrepreneur. Crowel said that there are no secrets to success, "All it takes is hard work and the ability to learn from your mistakes."

Topics include: learning how to benefit from rejection, keeping motivated -- even when the chips are down, earning success through proven prospecting methods, and closing the deal to everyone's satisfaction.

Crowel began selling at age 10, marketing hobby horses made in the basement of his family home. Ten years later, he began his adult selling career that led to the founding of his insurance company, a finance company, an insurance training center and a franchise car wash. Along with his insurance office branch in Dunes Plaza, a Crowel-owned Spot-Not car wash operates at 5711 Franklin St.

Crowel graduated from Purdue University at age 40, and continued his graduate work at the University of Chicago. He has continued to serve on numerous government and civic boards, but selling has remained his number one interest, something he does with his two sons and partners, Thomas and Robert Crowel.

"I decided to keep my book simple for two reasons," Crowel said. "First, we, at times, overlook the important things in life. For example, remembering a name but forgetting what that name is about." He advises to never underestimate the need for a business card. "Second," he said, "We all should refresh ourselves of what we already know so we can keep on track."

"Therefore," he added, "for the already successful and seasoned salesperson, my intentions are not to attempt to show a different approach to selling, but rather to share with you, what you are already aware of."

"For the beginner, or those needing a helping hand at selling," Crowel said, "my modest advice is to treat your customer as they would like to be treated."

"The business of selling has been very good to me," Crowel said in an interview last week. He said he has taken the advice of mentors and bosses who also were successful and included it in his own business philosophy.

Crowel said the writing process took about two years -- and publication is an education in itself because of the give-and-take relationship with editors.

"I submitted the manuscript to different business leaders in Northwest Indiana, and received a very positive response," Crowel said. He said the book is something to keep in the briefcase as a motivator, because it has valuable tips on selling.