

# **Big Time Selling**

***Inside My U Factor Strategy  
How I Closed Deals with 150+ Celebrities,  
Executives & Athletes***

**By Robb E. Sullivan**

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## **Preface: The Purpose of the Book**

This book isn't just a collection of stories—it's a look behind the curtain at what it takes to succeed in sales, packed with real insights, hard-earned lessons, and strategies that work. But more than that, I didn't want to leave this world without sharing how one guy—armed with God's blessings, intelligence, and hard work—revolutionized the audio-video industry.

Now, let me be clear: I didn't do it alone. Along the way, I recruited one hell of a team, and hundreds of people helped make us what we were. I hesitate to single out individuals, but two were extremely instrumental and special to me.

First, there was Sean Babrow (deceased 2023), my engineer. If I were Batman, Sean would be Robin. Whenever I had a crazy design idea, Sean made it happen. He brought my visions to life and turned the impossible into reality. And then there's my mini-me, Crystal Streets, my all-around assistant. Crystal has gone on to become the powerhouse businesswoman and mother I always knew she could be from the moment we met in Cancun in 1995.

Thank you to everyone who supported me and my dreams—this story is for you, too.

From designing custom A/V systems for some of the world's biggest celebrities to influencing and implementing cutting-edge innovations in home

automation, we built something extraordinary in a constantly evolving industry.

This is a story about believing in yourself, grabbing opportunities when they appear, and never being afraid to take bold steps—whether you're in the sales game, the A/V world, or anywhere in between.

My Life's Motto:

"People will forget what you said. They'll forget what you did. But they will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

## **Preface: The Motivation behind the Book**

As a professional salesperson, I've had an exceptional career that I am proud of. I've been fortunate to win the prestigious CE Pro magazine Top A/V Company Award three times, and my work has been featured in Black Enterprise, Entrepreneur, Vibe, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and other notable publications. I've also been honored with a Whitney Houston gold album from LaFace Records for my work with them over the years. Additionally, I'm proud to say that I'm why TLC became a group—more about that story is in this book. Throughout my career, I've had the honor of working with over 150 A-list celebrities, athletes, and C-suite executives, all without the aid of social media.

Salespeople are experts at finding solutions and meeting people's needs. I've had the privilege of selling high-end technology products before they became popular—back when few looked like me at the top of the industry. Many consider me a trailblazer in this field—I say I'm blessed.

My specialty was designing and selling personalized home audio/video systems, security, lighting, energy management, cameras, communication, and climate control automation. Now, let me tell you, when I see all the amazing A/V installers on social media today, I feel a sense of pride.

But back then, it was a whole different world. There was no Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, or HD—everything was wired. You couldn't just hit "connect" or drop a few wireless speakers and call it a day. We were laying miles of cable through walls, floors, and ceilings. When I wired Evander Holyfield's 54,000-square-foot mansion (now Rick Ross's home), I estimated that I put nearly 50 miles of cable in the walls. Every connection had to be perfect, and every system had to work seamlessly. That's the kind of grit and innovation we brought to every project.

I want to share my knowledge, innovations, and experiences with other salespeople, hoping they'll be inspired to take bold steps, pursue their wildest ideas, and close more sales.

Now, I'm not a professional writer. I'm a salesperson who's been through it all, and this book is me telling my stories. I've packed it with real-world lessons, quick thinking, adaptability, and the importance of seizing opportunities. My goal isn't to prove how clever a writer I am (I'm not!)—it's to give you practical advice from the trenches of sales, things you can take before your next big meeting or call.

This isn't a tell-all book about my clients, some of whom are quite famous. You won't find personal details or anything that would compromise anyone's privacy. I respect discretion and confidentiality. I aim to inspire, not to reveal.

There are two things I've always found amazing about sales careers that rely on commissions. First, it's

one of the few professions where you can directly influence your income by selling more. Second, each sale you make sets a whole chain of people into motion—whether you're selling a car, an A/V system, or something else, you're not working alone. Your success leads to success for others: managers, service teams, and suppliers. Salespeople drive the economy, and you should take pride in that.

Aside from sharing the energy and opportunities to make a sale, I will also walk you through some of my unique experiences. These stories provide quick, insightful takeaways you can apply to your career.

In school, I remember being assigned books like *Beowulf* and *Wuthering Heights*. Those books could be intimidating, but then I discovered Cliff Notes—those little guides that made things simple and easy to understand. Sometimes, I'd come out of class discussions with a better grasp of the material than people who claimed to have read the entire book!

That's what this book is meant to be for you: your own sales Cliff Notes. You can dip in, grab the key insights, and apply them to your work immediately.

Enjoy the read, and I hope it empowers you to reach new heights in your sales career!



# Chapter 1:

## Where It All Began

I began my journey where many of us do: flipping burgers and managing the night shift at McDonald's. But this wasn't just any McDonald's—it was in the Houston Galleria Mall, and at 16, I was already stepping up as the night manager. Let me paint the picture: I was the first employee hired at this location (#601) because of my work ethic at The Magic Pan, a nearby restaurant. The owner saw my hunger for opportunity and believed I could handle the responsibility. So, when McDonald's opened in the Galleria, I jumped in headfirst.

My team? A crew of my high school friends—Byron, Dale, and Chuck. We trained at various McDonald's locations, prepping for the big day when our store would open. I'm talking about opening night-level energy because the Star Wars premiere *was next to us*. People were flooding in, and we were ready. Filet-O-Fish, Big Macs—you name it, we were cranking them out like pros. I was in charge of the buns. Yup, the “bun drummer”—making sure they were fresh, hot, and ready to go.

But here's where my hustler's mindset kicked in: our delivery situation was a mess. The truck couldn't easily pull up to the back door because we were in a mall, and deliveries were scheduled at the ungodly hour of 5 a.m. on Sundays. Other managers

struggled to find workers for the early morning deliveries, but I saw this as an opportunity. I went to my general manager, Dave Collins, and made a deal: if I could guarantee enough workforce to handle the deliveries, could I be promoted to night manager? He agreed, and just like that, I had a new mission.

Let me tell you, week one didn't go as planned. I ended up doing the delivery myself because nobody showed up. But by week two, I wised up. I picked up my crew at 4 a.m., ensuring they got to work on time. And guess what? We nailed it. I got my promotion and became the night manager at 16 years old. I even wore the iconic McDonald's 3-piece suit to high school while recruiting new employees! You couldn't tell me anything—I was loving it.

But like all good things, my McDonald's run had to end. My grades started slipping, and my mom shut it down really quickly. She didn't play when it came to school. Still, my time at McDonald's was crucial. It taught me discipline, handling pressure, and seizing opportunities when they came my way.

## Chapter 2:

### My Development of the U Factor System

After my McDonald's career came to an abrupt halt—thanks to my mom laying down the law about my slipping grades and constant tardiness—I was out of a job. At the time, I was devastated. I'd built my identity around that night manager title and my slick three-piece suit. But looking back, losing that job was one of the best things that could've happened. That's because DECA stepped in at just the right time. If you've never heard of DECA, it was *the* club for kids who had that early business hustle in their DNA. Through DECA, I landed a job at **Home Entertainment**, a high-end audio-video store in Houston.

This was no ordinary electronics shop. Home Entertainment sold the kind of gear that only the wealthiest clients could afford. The stuff regular folks didn't even know existed yet. And me? I started at the bottom—as the stock boy. My job was to unload the trucks, organize the back room, and do whatever grunt work no one else wanted.

But here's the thing about me—I don't do “just enough.” I knocked out what was supposed to be an eight-hour shift in about three hours. The manager noticed and started letting me get my hands on the actual equipment. Before long, I was learning all the ins and outs of high-end sound systems and video setups, way before they became household names.

This job wasn't just a paycheck. It was my playground. I soaked up everything—how to sell, test the gear, how to prep systems for installation, and how to make sure

everything was perfect before it ever reached a client's home.

That's when VCRs hit the scene. Now, for anyone who didn't live through that era, let me explain something—those first VCRs were complicated. You didn't just hit "record." You had to program them like you were launching a space shuttle. People had no clue how to use them. But I figured it out fast. And that skill turned into my first real side hustle.

After work, I started making house calls to wealthy clients, programming their VCRs, teaching them how to record their shows, and making sure everything worked like a charm. I was 17 years old, leaving these mansions every night with **hundreds of dollars** in my pocket. These folks didn't blink at paying me because, to them, I was solving a major headache.

That's when it hit me—people don't pay for products. They pay for someone who can make those products work **for them**.

My hustle got me noticed again, and soon enough, I wasn't just the stock boy anymore. I got promoted to salesman and assistant manager. Now, I wasn't just stocking shelves—I was helping design entire home entertainment systems. Custom setups for people who didn't care what things cost, as long as everything sounded amazing and worked perfectly.

That's when I learned my first painful sales lesson, the Spiff Story.

Every morning, the first thing we did was check the **spiff list**. Certain products came with cash bonuses if we sold them. Move this receiver? That's fifty bucks in my pocket. Push these slow-moving speakers? That's my gas money for

the week.

So, guess what I sold? The stuff that paid **me** the most. It didn't matter if it was the right fit for the customer. It didn't matter if it was what they actually needed. I recommended the products that lined my pockets. And guess what happened? After reflection I didn't like not really offering people what they needed or wanted. Instead, I was pushing what benefited me. Some people could feel it. They hesitated. Some left without buying. They didn't come back. I was selling for **me**, not for **them**—and customers can smell that from a mile away.

That painful lesson stuck with me. It gnawed at me until I realized something huge, **this is why most salespeople fail**. They're focused on the wrong "U." They sell for *themselves*, not for *the customer*. That realization became the foundation for what I began to call the **U Factor Strategy**, the system that has **driven my entire sales career ever since**.

Here's the secret: **great sales pros don't pitch. They uncover**. They dig deeper than the surface answers. They ask the **second, third, and fourth questions** that expose the real issues—the things customers don't even know **how** to say out loud. When you **uncover like that**, you stop being a salesperson and start being **their guide**.

But uncovering isn't enough. You also have to **understand** the person **behind** the purchase. Not just their budget or their wish list, but their **life**—what pressures they're under, what they're afraid of, and what's really driving their decisions. When they feel **understood**, they **trust** you. And when they trust you, **price becomes secondary**.

And here's the biggest piece—most salespeople back off at the first "no." The pros? They show up **undeterred**—or as I sometimes say, **undaunted**.

(\*\*I use the terms interchangeably, because whether you call it being unfettered or undaunted, the meaning is the same—**you keep showing up, no matter what.**)

They follow up. They stick around. Not out of desperation—but because they **believe** in the value they bring to the table. That confidence becomes contagious. If you believe in what you're selling enough to fight for it, your customers will believe in it too.

So that's the U Factor.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **LA & Baby face – My Big Ask**

Alright, let me take you back to 1990. I was 26, fresh out of the Army, and had just landed back in Atlanta, working as an A/V installer for none other than L.A. Reid and Babyface, two of the biggest names in music at the time. LaFace Records was on fire, and they had just relocated their entire operation to Atlanta. Here I was, a young guy grinding my way up, and suddenly, I found myself in their homes, installing A/V systems like my life depended on it—because, honestly, it did.

Everything went smoothly until I discovered that the company I worked for was on the verge of falling. Yeah, you heard that right. In the middle of L.A. Reid's home theater renovation—a project worth a pretty penny including custom marble TV cabinets and incredible front loudspeakers, the company I worked for was about to shut down. To make matters worse, the owner planned to disappear with the equipment and speakers L.A. had already paid for.

I couldn't let that happen.

I had built up too much U Factor rapport with L.A. and Babyface. They trusted me, and I couldn't let them get burned. So, I made a decision that changed everything. I decided to go to L.A. Reid directly and pitch him something big—my own business. But before I did

that, I prayed hard. I remember saying the Jabez prayer right before I walked in:

"Dear Lord, bless me indeed and increase my territory. Have your hand in everything I do."

With that prayer in my heart, I devised a plan to recover the speakers, start my own A/V Company, and take over the project myself.

Now, this was a bold move. I was about to walk into a room with one of the biggest names in music and ask for \$15,000 to start my own company. Most people would have been shaking in their boots. Not me. I walked in there and laid it all out—how the company was folding, how the owner was planning to skip out with the equipment, and how I could save the day. But I needed his help to do it.

I'll never forget what happened next. L.A. looked at me straight and asked, "Is that all you need?" "Yes, that's it—\$15,000 and your support," I replied.

Without missing a beat, he said, "Robert, you're in business—and I've got something else for you."

Stunned but playing cool, I asked, "What is it?" He smiled. "Our friend and business partner, songwriter Daryl Simmons, is building a new home. I want you to install his sound system, too. Just send me the bill."

That was when my company, Lifestyle and Entertainment Systems, was born. I went from being just another guy on the installation crew to running my own business. Let me tell you, it was all about timing,



prayer, and having the guts to ask for what I needed. I went from almost losing everything to having two major projects lined up and L.A. Reid in my corner

### **Interlude: I'm Your Baby Tonight - Night**

Let me tell you about a night that started me on the path of receiving a Whitney Houston I'm Your Baby Tonight Gold album from LA Reid and LaFace Records. Yeah, you read that right.

It all started a year earlier when I volunteered to run the sound system and DJ at a March of Dimes event in Southwest Atlanta. That night, this new group called Kris Kross—with their backward clothes and all—hit the stage, and I thought, “Whoa, this is different.” They had something special. After the show, I told them I worked with LaFace Records and promised to ensure L.A. Reid heard about them.

The next day, I went straight to L.A., excited about the group. But guess what? He never reached out to them. Six months later, Kris Kross blew up with their hit “Jump,” and L.A. asked if they were the group I had mentioned. I just smiled and said, “Yep.” Then L.A. told me, “If you spot any other talent like that, let me know.” From then on, he trusted my ear.

Not long after, I had someone in mind: Tammy Davis. Tammy was a good friend with an incredible Mariah Carey-level voice that could shake a room. She performed every Sunday and Thursday night at a club called Chit Chat in Decatur, GA, and she could sing powerfully and with great emotion. When I mentioned

her to L.A., he and Pebbles invited us to Whitney Houston's birthday party.

When we arrived the party was in full swing already and before we could even say hello, L.A. unexpectedly turned to Tammy and said, "Sing Happy Birthday to Whitney." And let me tell you, Tammy nailed that performance like nothing I'd ever seen. By the night's end, she had a record deal on the table. Mission accomplished!

Now, here's the funny part: I was quietly dating one of L.A.'s assistants, and during the party, we snuck off to check out Studio LA Coco (where monster hits were recorded right at LA and Pebbles' home) and wound up in the soundproof vocal booth in the studio. Let's say we were... romantically preoccupied. We didn't realize that everyone at the party had gathered in the studio to listen to the premiere of Whitney's I'm Your Baby Tonight. When L.A. got on the mic to announce that everyone was there, we looked up, and the whole room laughed. Later, after the song went gold, L.A. gave me the gold album—a little nod to that wild night and my years of invaluable service to LaFace Records.

### **Summary:**

I didn't just protect my client from getting burned; I built on my strong relationship with L.A. Reid and Babyface to launch my business. The lesson here? When the time is right, you must ask for what you want. Don't assume people will say no.

Sometimes, all it takes is one bold move to change your life.

Oh, and a little bit of crazy never hurts, either.

### **Extra Interlude: The Spark That Ignited TLC**

What if I told you I was the spark that ignited the creation of TLC, and I didn't even know it then? While working for both T-Boz and Chili, designing and installing home electronics systems in their cribs, we always had an easy, close chemistry. I didn't think much of it beyond our great working relationship.

Years later, I was on a cross-country trip by bus and grabbed L.A. Reid's book *Sing to Me* to read along the way. When I got to Chapter 7, I couldn't believe what I was reading. L.A. stated that his Audio-Video Specialist—me—had started the chain of events that led to the formation of TLC! I was floored. I had no idea then, but knowing that I was the spark behind bringing together such an iconic group makes me proud beyond words. T-Boz, Chili, and Left Eye became legends, and I'm so happy to have been a part of that journey, even if I didn't realize it then.

As I reflect on everything coming full circle, I realize how happy I am to have been able to give back to both Babyface and L.A. Babyface gave me the rocket fuel (that story later in the book) to believe in myself, trusting me with his projects and simply saying, "Just do it." L.A. also believed in me, giving me the funding and my first project to launch my audio-video business. That belief in me ignited my career, just like

I unknowingly ignited the beginning of TLC. It feels good to have been able to return the favor, especially to two people who played such huge roles in my life.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Evander Holyfield – Determination in Pursuit of a Goal**

Let me tell you about one of the gutsiest and most rewarding moves of my entire career. I was working on A/V systems for three MLB baseball players in Atlanta—Marquis Grissom, Dwight Smith, and Delino DeShields and on my way to their homes I'd drive right past Evander Holyfield's house daily during my commute. Now, this wasn't the over-50,000-square-foot mansion that Rick Ross owns today. This was before all that. It was a humble ranch estate, yet I couldn't shake the feeling that the world heavyweight champion boxer of the world needed me as his A/V guy- I know crazy but I truly thought that way.

In sales, confidence is everything. Every time I drove by, I promised myself I'd go in if his gate were ever open. I would drive in without hesitation. I knew I had what it took to sell Evander on my skills, and I was ready for the opportunity. And one day—it happened. The gate was open. Without thought or hesitation - no excuses. I pulled in, drove down that long driveway, heart pounding, and rang the bell.

And then he answered—Evander Holyfield himself, standing right there.

I quickly introduced myself and shared why I was there and that I was in the area working for the

ball players and my work for L.A. Reid and Babyface, and he invited me inside. But this wasn't just your typical conversation about just installing a sound system as I found out by employing my U Factor and began to understand Evander had bigger plans and he needed someone on his team he could trust. He was building a boxing gym in his backyard for personal training and needed a cutting-edge sound system to fuel those intense workouts. It was the perfect fit. He wanted the best sound possible, and I specialized in delivering deep bass and pristine sounds I knew he needed me.

As we talked, he **casually dropped a bombshell** because, through my **U Factor Strategy of being patient, uncovering his needs, and understanding the solutions I could provide**, I had positioned myself **perfectly to move forward unfetteredly**. He felt **completely comfortable** with me.

He then revealed his **future plans** to build a **massive mansion** on the property. I had **no idea** just how enormous the project would be, but one thing was clear:

**If I nailed the gym project, I'd have a shot at landing the mansion job, too.**

**Challenge accepted.**

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I designed a killer A/V system for the boxing gym, which paid off. Evander loved it. Not long after,

he asked to see some of my other work so I asked LA and Pebbles if I could bring Evander to their home to show him what I did there and they said yes “absolutely you can bring the world heavyweight champion to our house”. It was a great night, they invited some other celebrity friends over and we had a ball. Afterward Evander gave me the go-ahead to wire up his new mansion, which would eventually become that legendary 50,000-square-foot behemoth. Little did I know then, I'd end up laying nearly 50 miles of cable throughout the house, wiring everything from security

systems to lighting and, of course, the ultimate sound systems.

And it didn't stop there. Evander called me to install a system in a home he bought in Houston, where he was preparing for his first fight against Mike Tyson. It was surreal. I went from walking up to his ranch, ringing the bell, hoping to get a meeting—to working on multiple properties for the heavyweight champ of the world. I even installed a system in his mother's house—talk about trust.

### **Interlude: The Fight and the Call**

Now, here's where things got crazy. After I finished installing the sound system at Evander's mom's house, a big fight was coming up. Holyfield was scheduled to fight on a Friday night, and out of nowhere, his team called me up to say the cable was out at his mom's place. In the A/V game, when the cable's out before a fight, that's panic time.

I tried troubleshooting over the phone. Nothing. I called the cable company, but there was still nothing. So, what did I do? I spent the whole night calling his mom, round by round, telling her what was happening in the fight. The toughest part? Holyfield lost that night, and I had to be the one to break the bad news to his mom after each round. It was not fun, but sometimes you have to roll with the punches.



**Summary:**

Sometimes, you have to go after what you want, no matter how crazy it seems. Driving up to Evander Holyfield's front door and pitching my services on the spot wasn't just about confidence but recognizing and acting on an opportunity. Sales, business, life—it's all about stepping out of your comfort zone and seizing the moment.

In business or life, everything is a sale. You have to sell your vision, your ideas, and your abilities. And when the stars align, you make your move. No hesitations.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Recovering a Botched Sale with Ken Griffey Jr.**

Let me set the scene. It's the early 90s, and I'm on the verge of landing what could be the biggest sale of my career—Ken Griffey Jr., one of the most legendary players in Major League Baseball, was building a home in Orlando. This neighborhood was where other elite athletes like Shaq and Tiger Woods had homes. Griffey didn't reach out to me directly—my business partner at the time, Otis Nixon (who also played in the MLB), set up the meeting.

But before we get into the details, let me backtrack. I had just sold my first audio-video company, Lifestyles and Entertainment Systems, to Otis Nixon. Now, this was despite L.A. Reid himself advising me not to sell. He didn't think it was the right move. But here's the thing—L.A. supported me either way. At the time, selling to Otis felt like a great opportunity because Otis promised he'd bring big-name MLB players for me to sell to.

I knew it wouldn't turn out exactly as I imagined. Still, Otis did deliver four major clients: Pudge Rodriguez of the Texas Rangers, Mo Vaughn of the Boston Red Sox, Gary Sheffield of the Yankees, and Ken Griffey Jr. of the Mariners. I had already closed

deals with Pudge, Mo, and Gary, and now I was ready to go 4-for-4 by closing Griffey.

I was ready to go all in when Otis told me about the opportunity with Ken. I had two versions of the system in mind: a super top-of-the-line A/V setup if I wanted to be bold or an ok system if I decided to play it safe on price. But either way, I knew this was a sure sale.

I flew down to Orlando on the meeting day with everything meticulously planned. The timing was better when I arrived at Griffey's house. He was in the middle of signing the biggest contract in MLB history, and the media frenzy was unreal—ESPN, cameras, reporters, the whole nine yards. But once the dust settled, it was my turn to pitch my A/V system to Griffey, his wife, his mom, and his dad—Ken Griffey Sr., another baseball legend. Otis was there with me, and I was locked in, ready to close the deal.

I laid out my proposal. Feeling confident, I pitched the full super system design system, outlining what I envisioned: top-tier sound, a fully automated home theater—everything. The presentation was flawless, and Griffey was sold. When I finished, I went for the close: “Ken, we’ll need a check for 50% down to get this rolling.”

Griffey reached for his checkbook, ready to write that deposit check. But just as he was about to sign, my business partner Otis Nixon, the very guy who set this meeting up—said, “No, Ken, you're good. We don't need the check right now.”

I was floored. What? Otis had just killed the deal. The \$125,000 check I needed to lock this project down and my commission slipped right through my fingers, and there wasn't much I could do about it at that moment. Griffey's whole family was sitting there, and I had to keep it professional, even though inside, I wanted to scream. So, I left Orlando without the deposit and a signed contract.

But here's the thing about me—I'm not the kind of guy who gives up after one setback. I knew I could still make this happen. Once the season started, Seattle played in Toronto, and Otis arranged another meeting with Griffey. This was my shot at redemption.

I flew up to Toronto, and after the game, I met with Griffey again—this time without any interruptions. I re-pitched the system and went for the close; this time, there was no hesitation. Griffey signed the deal, and I walked away with the sale.

And let me tell you, Griffey was cool as hell about the whole thing. The next day, I had tickets to the game behind home plate, but I thought, "Why am I sitting here? My guy plays center field." So I headed out to the outfield, and the people around me were skeptical when I mentioned I knew Griffey. I yelled, "What's up, Ken?" He turned around, waved, and said, "What's up, Rob?" The looks on everyone's faces were priceless. Suddenly, people were buying me beers and treating me like a celebrity. That's the power of closing a deal with someone like Griffey.

## Summary:

Here's the lesson: sometimes, you must reclose the deal, especially when things get botched the first time. It doesn't matter if you're facing setbacks—if you're persistent and confident, you can still make it happen.

This sale was mine, but one wrong move from Otis nearly cost me everything. That's why it's important to be in control when closing a deal. Silence after asking for the check can be uncomfortable, but the first person who speaks usually acquiesces. And if you've got a business partner, ensure they understand your strategy. When I asked for that \$125,000, Griffey was ready. If Otis had just stayed quiet, we'd have closed right there.

But persistence paid off, and I made it happen in the end. In sales, there are no second chances unless you create them.

**Special Note:** Here's the thing about the Ken Griffey Jr. deal—it didn't end the way I would've liked. After securing the sale and setting everything up, I never saw the project complete. Why? Shortly after closing the deal, I made a significant decision. I left my company with Otis Nixon to start my own A/V business, which I would fully own and control. It was a fresh start for me, but it meant leaving the Griffey project behind.

It still bothers me that I didn't see that system go live because Ken Griffey Jr. was one of the coolest guys

I'd ever worked with. But the silver lining? My next big clients waiting in the wings were Puffy and Steve McNair. Talk about diving headfirst into new waters!

Looking back, it was a tough call to walk away from Griffey's project, but sometimes, in business, you have to trust your gut and go where the next big opportunity leads you. I regretted not seeing it through, but with new heavy hitters like Puffy and McNair in my lineup; my new company was on its way to becoming a powerhouse.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Puffy – How to Use Power against Power**

Have you ever been fishing with the big fish near the boat, just waiting to be reeled in? That's exactly how I approached Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs. He might think he initiated our first meeting when he called L.A. Reid to say he liked what I'd done with the A/V setup at L.A.'s house in Atlanta. But the truth is, I was already playing the long game to get Puff as a client.

One morning, L.A. called me and said, "Puff likes what you did at my house, and he wants you to come to New York." Now, you have to understand — L.A. Reid was my #1 client, and I knew taking on Puff would mean spending more time away from Atlanta. So, I asked L.A., "Are you cool with this?" Without hesitation, he hit me with, "Don't F\*\*K this up!" — classic L.A. I reassured him, "I got this."

But here's the backstory. Puff wasn't just some random client who landed in my lap. I first caught his attention at L.A.'s 40th birthday party. The guest list? A who's who of the music industry and Hollywood — Queen Latifah, Nia Long, Puff himself, and 500 entertainment A-Listers I stayed near the A/V system at the party, which was as state of the art high-end as possible—an absolute showcase piece. Many guests

had questions about it throughout the night, and I was right there, subtly selling and extolling the unique system features. It felt like my own showroom but at one of the biggest parties in the music industry. Party and sell—that was my vibe. L.A. and I had this unspoken communication—one look, and I knew if I needed to change the music, adjust the lights, or signal that it was time for the party to wind down.

I noticed Puff standing off to the side, checking out the scene. Right as I was beginning to play Toni Braxton's unreleased "You're Makin' Me High" video, Queen Latifah came up to me and said, "Damn, this system is dope" and asked "Why are you jamming so hard?" I told her I'd installed everything for L.A. She turned around, raised her hands, and shouted, "This is the MF that installed the system. Everybody give him some love!" Puff gave me a nod, and I thought to myself, *Gotcha!* That's when I knew I was on his radar.

So, Puff was interested in my work and invited me to come to New York to check out his new home and office for sound and video systems. Now, I felt I was truly in the big leagues—skyscrapers, high-profile clients, and all that energy.

During my first trip to New York, I didn't even see Puff—he never showed up to our meetings. Instead, I relied on my **U Factor Strategy** to gather as much information as possible from his executive assistant, Norma, at **Bad Boy Entertainment**. She was gracious and professional, and we discussed the work needed for his office. From there, I headed to his **new home on the West Side** to get a feel for the space. The



property was listed on the **National Historic Registry**, which meant there were **strict limitations** on what could be modified. Even though it was **his** home, any changes had to be approved by a board—a process I understood could take **years**.

That's when I decided the best approach was to install a **totally invisible speaker system**—not just in-wall speakers that were visible, but speakers that were completely concealed. I typically reserved these for **special occasions**, installing them in **formal spaces** like the **foyer, dining room, and living room**, where interior designers wanted **flawless aesthetics**—no speaker grills, no distractions. Designers **loved** me for this (because let's be real—**they hate** anything on the walls except art), and in return, I got a **ton of referrals** for offering this **seamless, high-end solution**.

That's part of the **U Factor—Understanding** your clients and their teams. I wasn't here to argue with designers over what could go where—I was here to **sell A/V** and make the project work **for everyone**.

I had **done this before** at **Gary Sheffield's house in Tampa**, and with the **bass pumping through the A/C ducts**, it **sounded incredible**, became a **conversation piece** with guests, and most importantly—**brought me more business**. It was the **perfect solution** for Puff's home, especially since major structural changes weren't an option.

So, I flew back to **Atlanta** without ever seeing Puff, but I knew I had **everything mapped out**.

Then came the **second trip**. I went back to **New York**, expecting to **finally** meet with Puffy. Once again, **he was a no-show**. Instead, I spent my time

**refining my plans**, getting **even more detailed** about the **invisible speaker system** I wanted to install. meet with him was frustrating, but I stayed patient and focused on my U Factor info gathering.

On my third trip, though, I finally got my meeting with Puff. It was just two weeks after Biggie was killed in March 1997, and I knew this meeting had to be perfect. Puff greeted me when I walked into Daddy's House Recording Studio and I asked how much time do you have- my way of referencing the 2

missed meetings and he said, "You've got 15 minutes." So, what did I do? I took my Rolex off, handed it to him, and said, "You let me know when my 15 minutes are up." That caught his attention.

**I launched into my presentation, breaking down everything I had uncovered and understood about him and his needs through my U Factor Strategy. I laid out every detail, diagram, and cost estimate, making sure my pitch was as airtight as possible.**

**Puff was into it, giving me that classic Puffy "Ah-haw yeah" response throughout.**

**Sensing my 15 minutes were up, I started packing up my things and casually asked for my watch. But before I could leave, he stopped me and said, "Wait, I have some questions."**

**I stuck to my guns. "Nope, you said 15 minutes, and I respect your time."**

**Then, I walked out, got in my limo, and headed straight to LaGuardia Airport.**

**By the time I landed back in Atlanta, my phone was blowing up with calls from Bad Boy staffers. Puff's team was reaching out to tell me the deposit check was already on its way.**

**I had closed the deal.**

**Special Note:**

Before we go any further, I need to be clear. I worked with Puff from 1997 to 2007 and knew nothing

about his current situation. When we worked together, I never saw anything related to his case happening. I want to make sure that's understood.

**Summary:**

Here's the takeaway: when dealing with someone as powerful as Puff, you don't rush things. You stay patient, stay calm, and never come across as desperate. You must stand your ground and let them see you're special, too. When you respect their time

and show confidence, they'll respect yours. Sometimes, you have to use power against power.

## **Chapter 7:**

### **Steve McNair – Where's the Bachelor Party?**

Steve McNair. God rest his soul. A great brother and I have to say — crazy, crazy, crazy — both in the best way possible and in ways that'll have you shaking your head.

Steve wasn't just any client. He was an NFL legend and a quarterback for the Tennessee Titans. Known for his leadership and toughness, he became an NFL MVP and even led the Titans to the Super Bowl. McNair was respected across the league for his ability to play through injuries and lead his team in the most intense moments. This guy defined resilience, and I wasn't about to let the opportunity to work with him slip by.

When I left Otis Nixon and Ozone, I already had Puff in the bag, and now I had Steve McNair in my crosshairs. Steve was getting married soon, building a new house in Mississippi, and the timing was critical. I knew I had to beat Otis to the punch on this one. Otis knew Steve, too, and I wasn't about to let him slide in on this deal.

I had an inside source—one of Steve's people—who told me about his bachelor party in Jackson, Mississippi, that weekend. The only problem? She

didn't know the exact location. But hey, how big could Jackson be, right? I figured I could find it.

So, it's Friday night, and my buddy Bobby and I are on our way from Atlanta to Jackson. We're hyped and focused and might've gotten a little buzzed on the drive down. Fast forward to Saturday afternoon, and we're up—kind of—around 1 p.m., trying to figure out where this damn party is going to be.

We spent the entire day hitting every spot we could—malls, bars, restaurants—asking people if they knew where Steve McNair's bachelor party was happening. No luck. It's starting to get late, and we're losing time. But then I had a plan. We hit Bobby's cousin's barbershop to get a fresh cut and regroup. While there, I asked, "How many strip clubs are in Jackson?" They tell me there's one main one. I'm like, bingo—it's on!

We cleaned up, got fresh, and headed to the strip club, thinking we'd hang out, watch the dancers, and wait for them to leave early—because where else would they be going? Sure enough, around 9 p.m., the most attractive dancers start leaving with their bags. This had to be it. Bobby and I hop into my Land Cruiser, duck down, turn the lights off, and go full private-eye mode, tailing these girls from the club.

We pull up to the hotel, and now we've got another problem. How do we get in? *Okay, I'm Robb Sullivan. Let's see if my name holds weight.* I approach the front desk and say, "Robb Sullivan is here for Steve McNair's party." They call upstairs, and Steve's good

friend Torrance Smalls, who played for the New Orleans Saints, answers. He's like, "Who the hell is Robb Sullivan?" Not the best start.

But Bobby has a wild idea. He goes to the front desk and says, "I'm here for the McNair party." They call again, and Torrance answers. He asks, "What's your name?" Having first heard the name Smalls, Bobby says, "Smalls." Torrance pauses and asks, "What's your first name?" Without missing a beat, Bobby says, "Biggie." At that point, everyone laughs, and Torrance says, "Wait, and are those the two dudes who followed the girls from the strip club?" We say, "Yup!" He goes, "Let them up!"

The party was on, and it was lit. Bobby and I are kicking it, but here's the thing, I'm not there just to party. I'm there to sell Steve a Robb Sullivan A/V home entertainment system. Steve showed up a few hours late, and by that time, I'd already had a few drinks, but when he walked in, it was go-time. I pulled him aside and said, "Steve, I want to talk to you." We stepped into the bathroom for privacy, and right then and there, I closed the deal. I walked out with a commitment, and my new A/V business had a heartbeat.

He who hesitates is lost and the price you pay is called the cost. When you want something bad enough, you go all in. Steve's bachelor party was my chance to land a high-profile client, and I wasn't leaving without that deal. The lesson? Don't get caught



up in every little detail. Just go for it. The path will reveal itself along the way.

## **Chapter 8:**

### **Cecil Hayes – The Power of Persistence**

Cecil Hayes—an absolute legend. Let me break it down if you don't know who she is. Cecil is a renowned interior designer, the only African American designer to make Architectural Digest's Top 100. Her work is iconic, and she's been featured in *Ebony*, *Essence*, and just about every major publication. When it comes to luxury design, especially for celebrity clients, she's the queen.

Back in the day, I was feeling good about myself. There are articles about me in *Black Enterprise*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, and other places. So, when I read about Cecil Hayes in *Ebony* and *Essence*, I knew I had to meet her. She was based in Miami, but I found out she'd be coming to Atlanta to speak at an event for the Organization of Black Designers (OBD). I had to be there. No question.

I signed up for every class she was teaching at that event. My goal was simple: get in front of her, tell her about what I do, and figure out how to work together. She was the top African American interior designer, and I was making my mark as one of the top A/V guys. We should join forces.

So, I am sitting in her class full of interior designers—the odd man out. By the second day, she looked at me and said, "What the hell are you doing in my class?" I laughed and told her, "I'm an audio-video

system designer. I read about you, admire your work, and wanted to meet you. **We could collaborate, and I'd love to take you to dinner to talk about it.**"

Cecil didn't miss a beat. "Well, I can't go to dinner without my team," she said. "Who's your team?" I asked. She replied, "My husband Powell, who makes all my furniture; my niece Shay, who runs my company; and her husband Mike, who's the marketing director."

I wasn't playing around—the **U Factor Strategy** was in full effect. I had **uncovered** her need for greater design control over how the A/V systems seamlessly integrated into her overall vision for her clients. Now, she had someone who truly **understood** A/V from a designer's perspective, someone who could deliver **incredible sound and video** without disrupting her **meticulously crafted aesthetics**. And when it came time to close, I was **undaunted**—every element of the **U Factor** was working in perfect harmony.

To seal the deal, I rented a **Lincoln Continental** from Hertz—upgrading from my BMW convertible so we could all ride together—and took them to dinner at **Prime Meridian in Atlanta's CNN Center**. It was a great night, and by the end of it, I had **successfully implemented the final step of my U Factor Strategy, unfetteredly securing Cecil's trust and business**, along with an invitation to Miami. She had a **major project for Ty Law, the New England Patriots defensive back**, and needed my expertise for a **custom-made A/V system**, as well as **several other high-end projects in Boca Raton and Palm Beach**

## **Gardens, Florida.**

That project evolved into a long-term relationship. I worked on multiple homes for her clients, and our collaboration spanned years. Let me tell you, working with Cecil wasn't just business, it was a learning experience. Her husband, Powell, knew nothing about furniture when they met, but he bought a furniture shop and taught himself to create the most beautiful, handcrafted pieces because he loved her. That's the kind of dedication I could relate to. Her niece, Shay, and her husband, Mike, were a powerhouse team; to this day, Mike is one of my best friends.

## **Interlude: Connecting Legends – Cecil Hayes and Oscar Harris**

One of my proudest moments working with Cecil was introducing her to Oscar Harris. If you don't know Oscar, let me put you on. He's an architectural giant behind the MARTA subway stations, Concourse E at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and Centennial Olympic Park. He's also the mastermind behind the College Football Hall of Fame. Oscar's resume is as deep as it gets.

I set up a meeting between Cecil and Oscar at Prime Meridian (the same spot I took Cecil and her crew). This was huge—two of the top African American talents in design and architecture meeting for the first time. I remember feeling proud but nervous, thinking, "I hope this goes well."

So, I am showing off Cecil's work, flipping through her features in Architectural Digest, Ebony, and Essence. I'm going on and on, but I haven't brought any visual examples of Oscar's work. Just as I'm about to apologize for not having anything to show, Oscar's wife, Sylvia, stops me and says, "Well, just look out the window." There it was—Centennial Olympic Park, designed by Oscar himself.

That moment was electric. They hit it off and It felt great knowing I had connected two legends in their respective fields.

**Summary:**

Sometimes, you've got to go the extra mile—whether taking a class you don't necessarily belong in, renting a Lincoln, or setting up meetings between the best of the best. Persistence, preparation, and seizing the moment can lead to incredible business opportunities and lifelong relationships. With Cecil and Oscar, I didn't just land another gig—I helped create something bigger than myself.

## Chapter 9:

### Jay-Z – Separation

Sometimes, in business, you've got to make the bold move and separate yourself from the crowd. It's not just about being different, it's about knowing when to step out, stand tall, and claim your space. That's why I call this chapter "Separation."

I had been working closely with a super-talented interior designer, Courtney Sloan, who owned Alternative Designs. She and I had teamed up on several projects, including setting up the studio apartment at Puff Daddy's house. We also collaborated on projects for athletes like Levon Kirkland and others, delivering high-end A/V installations for some of the biggest names around.

On this project, Courtney was in charge of designing the home theater, while my role was strictly handling the audio-visual equipment setup. Now, let me tell you—her design was **wild**. She envisioned an unusual and unconventional surround sound system—essentially, pod-like contraptions where you'd stick your head in to experience immersive audio. It was edgy, bold, and, quite frankly, different.

Typically, I thought Courtney nailed the **U Factor Strategy** with other clients we worked with, but this time, I felt she completely missed the mark. In my opinion, she hadn't **uncovered** or **understood** who Jay-Z was or what he was really looking for. And without

those two pillars, you **can't** close undaunted—you can't pitch with full confidence.

Fast forward to our meeting with Jay-Z in New Jersey. We weren't meeting in his house yet, but the conversation was about elevating his space. Jay's style was already dripping with luxury, and I knew his penthouse overlooking the Hudson River was on



another level. During the meeting, Jay looked directly at me and said, "What you got?"

And just as I'm about to drop my A/V knowledge on him, a security guard interrupts, saying Jay's Bentley is about to get towed. Without missing a beat, Jay tosses me the keys to his Bentley and asks, "Robb, can you move my car?" He's giving me this look like he's unsure if I know how to handle a Bentley, but I'm cool. I'm thinking, *Bruh, I've driven Puff's Bentleys—this is light work.*

Now, for those who don't know, Bentleys are built differently. They've got a unique way of shifting gears, and if you don't see what you're doing, you could end up stuck, unable to get it into gear—not a good look when trying to make an impression on Jay. But, Nah, I wasn't about to let that happen. I worked it out, moved the car smoothly as Butter returned upstairs, and casually tossed the keys back to him. Jay looked at me, surprised, and asked, "How the hell did you move that car?" I just smiled and hit him with, "I got this."

But let's get back to the project. Jay didn't like Courtney's out-there, futuristic design. It didn't fit his style. I'm not one to step on toes, so I kept my mouth shut since it was her meeting. I knew the design wouldn't fly, but I wasn't about to throw Courtney under the bus in front of a client like Jay-Z.

The next day, I called Rita Ewing and asked her to set up a meeting with Jay and herself. Rita, the ex-wife of NBA legend Patrick Ewing, was also a client of

mine

Before. You have to use your resources—I'd done her sound system—and she was now advising Jay on his house. She agreed to set it up because Jay still wasn't feeling Courtney's design, and he wanted me to come back and pitch my ideas directly to him.

This was my moment to step up, and I applied what I had learned by listening with a **U Factor focus** during the previous meeting to demonstrate what I could deliver for Jay. I came in with a completely new vision—one that aligned seamlessly with his **classic, timeless style**. I pitched a traditional theater design featuring **rich colors, luxurious seating, and an old-world, high-end movie theater feel** that perfectly suited his aesthetic..

I proposed an old-world, deep wood tone for the walls, paired with blue carpet and seats—and trust me, I did my homework. I knew Jay loved blue. He and Beyoncé even named their daughter Blu, so I was on my game. None of that avant-garde stuff this time. Jay's place was sleek and sophisticated and overlooked the Hudson River, with a view back into New York from high above—it needed to reflect that level of elegance, something that matched the view.

I laid out my vision, and Jay was sold—without hesitation. I closed the deal immediately, and Jay-Z became one of my top clients.

### **Summary:**

Sometimes, you're working with a team or a partner, but you've got to recognize when it's time to separate yourself. Not every idea is going to work for

every client. In business, you've got to trust your gut, know when to pivot, and step up with your vision.

Collaboration is crucial, but don't forget to make your mark when the time is right. That's what gets deals done.

## **Chapter 10:**

### **John Smoltz – Sometimes You Just Have to Shoot Your Shot**

When it comes to sales, sometimes you've got to bet on yourself and take the damn shot. And when I talk about taking a shot, I mean going for it, even when the odds seem stacked against you. That happened when I worked with John Smoltz, one of the best pitchers in Major League Baseball history.

Let me set the stage: John Smoltz was an absolute powerhouse. Pitching for the Atlanta Braves, he won a Cy Young Award and was part of the legendary Braves rotation with Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine. To put it bluntly, he was among the greatest pitchers ever to play the game. So, when Smoltz called me to bid on the A/V system for his new home, I knew this was a major opportunity.

But here's the thing—this wasn't just some solo bid. Oh no, this was a showdown between Atlanta's top three A/V companies. It was me, Randy Massey, and Walter Crowder. Let me tell you about Randy. In my eyes, he was *the* guy. The one I looked up to, and if I'm being real, the one I didn't think I could beat. Randy was my benchmark, the dude I had always been chasing. And Walter? He wasn't far behind. These guys were serious competition, and I was the up-and-coming challenger—hungry but unsure.

Still, Smoltz invited us all out to bid, and we each presented our proposals. I gave it my all but was mentally preparing for the worst. I knew Randy's work, and I thought there was no way Smoltz would choose me over him. But then, something unbelievable happened.

Smoltz chose me. I don't know what the other guys did, but I used the **U Factor Strategy**. I took the time to **uncover** what he and his family truly needed, sold from a position of **understanding**, and when it came time to close, I did it **undaunted**—and I got the job.

I couldn't believe it. I sat there, stunned, as the reality sank in. This legendary pitcher had picked **my** company to design and install his home theater and audio system. Not only that, but he split the contract—Randy got the security system, but I landed the A/V deal. Randy wasn't thrilled about this setup—he was used to getting the **whole** job. But to his credit, he handled it professionally, and we worked together just fine throughout the installation.

At one point, Randy pulled me aside and said, "**I don't get it, Robb. How'd you get this deal over me?**"

I didn't have an answer for him. (**Actually, I did—but I wasn't about to hand over my U Factor to a competitor.**) I was just as shocked as he was.

But that's the thing about sales, you **have to take your shot, even when you think the other guy has you beat.**

Looking back, I believe Smoltz saw something in me that day. The **U Factor** is about slowing down and truly getting to know your client—not assuming you know what they want, but **uncovering** it, understanding it, and **selling to that.**

It's simple.

Maybe it was U Factor Strategy, or maybe I presented something that just clicked with him. Whatever it was, this experience taught me one of the most important lessons of my career: **never count yourself out.** You might be up against the top dogs, but you'll never know what could have happened if you don't take the shot.



### **Summary:**

Here's the bottom line—sometimes you're up against the best in the game. You'll feel like the underdog and might even think you don't have a shot. But here's the thing: you have to shoot your shot. Always. Don't worry about the odds. Don't let self-doubt take over. Take the chance, give it everything you've got, and you might surprise yourself with the outcome.

## Chapter 11:

### Mr. A – A Favor Pays Huge Dividends

Let me tell you about a chapter where a simple favor became one of my career's most rewarding and unexpected relationships. Sometimes, in business, it's not about the biggest contract or the flashiest client—it's about doing the right thing and letting that decision pay you tenfold. This is one of those stories.

So, I'm in New York, grinding away at Puff's house, but I wasn't just working I was networking like a madman, shaking hands, making U Factor connections, and staying ready for the next opportunity. That's when I met an interior designer who referred me to a client, I'll call Mr. A. Now, Mr. A's name isn't important for this story, but what did he do for me? That is what matters.

Here's the setup. Mr. A was a very private businessman, and when I met him, he was in the middle of a serious lawsuit against some big players: American Express, Chubb Insurance, and his current A/V Company. He sued for negligence, and his interior designer thought I could help. She asked me to swing by his place, look at his A/V system, and see if I could figure it out. When I got to Mr. A's home and reviewed his setup, it didn't take long to spot the problems. His A/V system had been butchered, and I was there to clean up the mess. After carefully diagnosing the issues, I sat across from lawyers from American

Express, Chubb Insurance, and the legal team from the A/V Company that had botched the job. I laid it out for them—step by step—breaking down exactly how the system had been mishandled and what needed to be fixed.

It wasn't just a meeting. It turned into me testifying on Mr. A's behalf. I explained the condition of his system and how it had failed. And you know what? That testimony helped Mr. A secure compensation well into six figures.

But the real story isn't about the lawsuit. It's about how that favor—something I didn't even think twice about—changed everything for me.

Mr. A didn't just thank me and move on; he became something of a guardian angel in my life—someone I could count on, whether times were good or bad. And it wasn't just about the business opportunities, though there were plenty of those. When Mr. A bought a house in Miami for his daughter, who was attending the University of Miami, he had me install a full sound system in her new place. Then, when he purchased a home on Long Beach Island in New Jersey, I was back again, setting up another A/V masterpiece. And the referrals? Let me tell you, they were golden. Through Mr. A, I worked with some of the most prominent business people in the area.

This wasn't just a business transaction. It was a relationship built on mutual respect, loyalty, and the understanding that we had each other's backs. Mr. A

became more than a client—he became a trusted advisor, a mentor, and a true friend.

To this day, our relationship remains strong, and that simple favor has paid dividends in ways I never could have imagined. I've learned that sometimes, the most powerful moves you can make aren't about chasing the big deals. Sometimes, it's about helping someone when they need it most. That's what creates lasting, meaningful connections.

**Summary:**

Never underestimate the power of a single favor. Helping someone in need can lead to long-lasting, invaluable relationships. In this case, that favor paid huge dividends, providing both business opportunities and personal support that have been incredibly rewarding. Mr. A is more than a client—he's become a part of my life, and I'm proud to call him a friend.

## **Chapter 12:**

### **Pastor & Senator Warnock – Can't Beat God's Timing**

Sometimes, you find yourself in the right place at the right time, which feels like divine intervention. That's exactly how I felt the day I met Pastor Raphael Warnock. We all know him today as Senator Warnock—the man who made history as the first Black senator from Georgia and continues to inspire us with his leadership. But long before that, he was the new pastor at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, following in the footsteps of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I remember that Sunday as clear as day. I had no intention of going to Ebenezer. I was headed to my usual church, but something in my spirit pushed me to drive to Ebenezer instead. I had no idea the church had a new pastor, but when I heard him preach, I knew this man was special.

My first experience at Ebenezer years before hadn't been exactly what you'd call friendly, so I'll admit I didn't expect much when I walked in that morning. But Pastor Warnock? He changed all that. His energy and message hooked me in a way I hadn't expected. I joined the church on his second Sunday, but not without some internal struggle.

You see, I wasn't wearing a suit on that first Sunday. And even though my mama was a thousand miles away, in my mind, she'd still kill me if I joined a church without being dressed right! She always believed if you're joining a church, you better be in a suit. So, I waited. I held off until the next week when I could do it properly—suit and all.

When I finally joined, Pastor Warnock put me in the parking lot ministry. I thought, "Cool, I'll just help in the parking lot and enjoy the services." But a couple of weeks in, I started noticing something. Every time Pastor Warnock got up to preach, the sound was off. I mean, it wasn't good. His voice wasn't coming through right; you know how important sound is when delivering a message like his.

So, I asked him, "Has anyone EQ'd you on this sound system?" He said no and asked me what I knew about it. I told him about my years of experience in A/V, and that was it. He fired me from the parking lot ministry and made me his sound director just like that.

He trusted me, and together, we started fixing things up. There were some tough moments along the way—I had to let a few people go—but Pastor Warnock and I built a strong working relationship. Every Sunday, I'd go into his office to mic him up, straighten his tie, and ensure everything was perfect before he stepped up to the pulpit. It became our little routine, and we got things running smoothly from there on out.

We went through a lot together. I was his right-hand man during some big events—whether Senator Barack Obama was preaching during his first presidential campaign or the massive MLK Day services with CNN broadcasting live. I was on the ground, coordinating with musicians and speakers and handling the audio. It wasn't just work—it was a mission.

Eventually, Pastor Warnock and I decided to upgrade the church's sound system—a \$250,000 overhaul I oversaw. It was a big job, but it was worth it. I installed a sound system in his house, and our bond grew stronger.

But it wasn't just about work. Our friendship deepened through a special program Pastor Warnock started called *Faith, Fellowship, and Football*. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, he wanted to do something for the community. So, every Monday night during football season, we invited homeless brothers and displaced New Orleans residents to my car wash, right around the corner from the church, to watch *Monday Night Football*.

We'd have bible study, food, prayer, and fellowship while enjoying the game. It was beautiful. And it wasn't just about football—it was about bringing people together, sharing faith, and showing love to those most needed it. Pastor Warnock and I grew tight during those times.

Here's what's crazy: I knew from the first time I heard him preach that this man was destined for

something big. I wasn't surprised at all when he became a senator. Honestly, it felt like it was written in the stars. He had that fire, that conviction, and that ability to connect with people you don't see every day.

### **Interlude: Special Recognition at Ebenezer**

One year, Ebenezer had a list of the top 100 events in the church's history. Now, we all know Dr. King could have easily taken all 100 spots himself, but nestled in there at #65 was *Faith, Fellowship, and Football*. I can't tell you how proud I was to be a part of that legacy. There I was, working alongside a man who would become a black U.S. Senator from Georgia, helping build something special in America's Freedom Church.

### **Summary:**

Sometimes, you just can't beat God's timing. Meeting Pastor Warnock was one of those moments when everything aligned perfectly. Our relationship wasn't just about business, it was about faith, friendship, and a shared mission to serve others. You never know where your path will take you, but when God puts the right people in your life at the right time, it's a blessing you'll never forget.



## **Chapter 13:**

### **The Personal Paradigm Shift I Had Regarding Gay People**

This chapter is about something bigger than business, it's about growth. The kind of growth that challenges everything you thought you knew and forces you to face the truth. That growth came from working with three remarkable people: Thom Pharr, Scott Studds, and Courtney Sloane. All of them are gay, and back then, I was carrying around some real ignorance—deep-seated homophobia that I hadn't fully confronted. But these three? They changed that forever.

Let's start with Thom Pharr. Thom was, without question, one of the most talented interior designers in the game. His vision was next-level, and his reputation was rock solid. He was the creative force behind projects for Toni Braxton, L.A. Reid, and Puffy's West Side home. We worked together on these projects, starting with Toni Braxton's house. From there, it snowballed into collaborations on some of the biggest homes in the business. But at the time, I wasn't comfortable. I didn't understand what it meant to be gay, and I wasn't even trying to understand it.

Thom and I were working on Puffy's place, and it was Thom, his coworker Larry, and I all staying at the house while we were getting the project done. One

night, we sat down for dinner, and out of nowhere, the conversation shifted to their lives and my feelings about gay people. Thom and Larry could see I was uncomfortable, and Thom hit me with some real talk. He said, "Robb, we don't want you. We know you're straight. We do our things, and you do yours. It's not a conflict."

Man that hit me like a ton of bricks. I had been carrying around all these judgments and walls, and it took one honest conversation to knock them down. Thom wasn't trying to change me; he was just being real, and that moment changed everything for me.

Then there's Scott Studds. Scott was another amazing designer who was unapologetically himself. He didn't just own his craft—he owned who he was. Working with Scott showed me the power of being true to yourself, no matter what. It wasn't about proving a point but about living your truth. And when I saw that, I started questioning my thinking. Why was I judging people for living their lives? What did it have to do with me?

Now, let me tell you about Courtney Sloane. Courtney was sharp, talented, and a powerhouse in her own right. She ran Alternative Designs, and together we worked on some incredible projects—like Puff Daddy's studio apartment and Levon Kirkland's home. Courtney had this unique eye for blending bold, stylish designs with functionality and was a professional. She was also in a relationship with a woman at the time, and I had to confront my biases

once again. But here's the thing: Courtney treated me like family. She didn't care what I thought—she kept being herself, and we worked together like a dream.

Working with her made me realize that the problem wasn't with them, it was me. My thinking had been wrong. These were some of the most talented, professional, and kind people I'd ever worked with, and I carried all this unnecessary baggage. It was time to grow up, and they were helping me do that without knowing it.

The craziest part? They never judged me for my ignorance. Thom, Scott, and Courtney kept being themselves, forcing me to grow. I had to open my mind, drop the judgment, and start seeing people for who they are.

### **Interlude: Love and Growth**

Through all this, I learned that love is greater than anything else. You don't have to understand every part of someone's life to respect them. We need to love people for who they are and what they bring. Working with Thom, Scott, and Courtney showed me that judgment has no place in business or life. And here's the truth—God is big enough to handle everything. What He wants from us isn't judgment—it's love.

## **Summary:**

Sometimes, life puts people in your path who challenge everything you thought you knew. Thom Pharr, Scott Studds, and Courtney Sloane helped me break through my biases and open my mind to the importance of acceptance, love, and respect. They didn't just make me a better professional, they made me a better person, and I'll always be grateful for that.

## **Interlude:**

### **Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds – My Rocket Fuel**

Earlier in the book, I mentioned that Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds was my Rocket Fuel. This is the story of why.

I'm meeting with Kenny to discuss my ideas for his new Buckhead Atlanta condo. As I began my usual thorough presentation, walking him through every feature of the system and every piece of gear, making sure he knew exactly what he was getting, Kenny stopped me. He looked at me incredulously and said, "Robb, Just Do It. I trust you!"

That right there? That was my Rocket Fuel. Those words, "I trust you"—from Babyface himself was like pure adrenaline. That was all I ever needed as validation to know I could handle anybody's project if Babyface trusted me with his home.

That moment fueled me for the rest of my career. Whenever I walked into a meeting or got ready to close a deal, I heard that voice—"Robb, I trust you!" That's the confidence I carried with me from that day on.

But the story doesn't end there. Around the same time, I was finishing Kenny's home system, I got a call from Janine Poulet from Black Enterprise Magazine. She was in Atlanta, wanted to meet me asap, and was ready to do a photo shoot to feature me in the August 1993 issue. The only problem? The shoot had to happen the next day.

So, what did I do? I called Babyface and asked if I could do the shoot at his home since I was already working there. And true to form, he didn't even hesitate. "Robb, why are you asking me that? You're family. Of course, you can."

That right there? That was love, and I'll never forget it.

Now, I'm a man who believes in giving back, and I'm proud to say I could reciprocate for all the trust Babyface gave me. You see, he's the one who gave me the Rocket Fuel to believe in myself, and his partner L.A. Reid who gave me the seed money and my first project to launch my A/V business. Everything I've built, I built with the support of these giants. And when it came time for me to show up for them, I did. But as we said earlier, real men don't kiss and tell—we keep that between us.

Summary: Babyface didn't just give me a job—he gave me the confidence, trust, and fuel I needed to believe I could do anything in this business. That's why I call him my Rocket Fuel.

## **Chapter 14:**

# **The Golf Tournament That Almost Was**

Some of the best sales ideas aren't tied to products or services but to a vision, a concept so powerful it inspires action and creates opportunities for collaboration. One such moment in my career came when I conceived the idea of a nationwide golf tournament to raise funds for the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

The idea hit me one morning while listening to The Steve Harvey Morning Show. The executive director of the museum, Harry Johnson, was speaking about their mission to raise funds for this monumental project. As a golf enthusiast, I immediately thought, "What if we hosted a series of golf tournaments across the United States to bring people together and raise money for this cause?"

The concept was simple but ambitious. I envisioned golf tournaments in cities nationwide, uniting players and sponsors to support the museum's creation. Golf, as a sport, naturally attracts philanthropic efforts, and I believed this could be a compelling way to galvanize communities and corporate sponsors alike.

## **Taking the Idea up the Flagpole**

The first step was to see if this idea had legs. I began reaching out to golf courses across the country, pitching the concept and gauging their interest. To my surprise, many were eager to participate. With this positive feedback, I knew I had a solid foundation, but I also knew that selling this idea to the museum would require more than just enthusiasm. I needed a plan.

Enter Tommy Dortch, a man of immense influence and connections. As the president emeritus of 100 Black Men of America and president of TWD, Tommy was someone who knew how to make things happen. I reached out to him and shared my vision. He immediately saw the potential and agreed to partner with me. Together, we crafted a comprehensive proposal, complete with prospective sponsors, golf courses, media coverage, and partnerships. We even identified television networks that could broadcast the tournaments, ensuring the effort would receive maximum visibility.

### **The Pitch**

The day of the big meeting arrived. Tommy and I sat across from Harry Johnson, the executive director of the African American Museum, ready to present our vision. We poured our hearts into the pitch, walking through every detail of the plan. The room was electric with excitement as we painted the picture of what these tournaments could achieve—not just in terms of fundraising but also in building awareness and community support for the museum.



Harry loved the idea. He saw the vision and appreciated the depth of our plan. But then came the reality check: the museum's fundraising efforts were already nearing their end. Despite their enthusiasm, they simply didn't have the time or resources to execute such a large-scale initiative.

Looking back, this was a moment where I didn't fully apply my **U Factor**—not by choice, but by circumstance. I had no access to the end buyer until the presentation meeting, meaning I had no way of uncovering that their fundraising window was closing. This reinforced a critical lesson: **Uncovering and Understanding the client's true needs must come first**. Without those two pillars in place, even the most confident and unfettered pitch can fall flat simply because the timing isn't right.

### **Lessons from a Sale That Didn't Close**

This was a deal that didn't happen, but it wasn't a failure. The museum loved the idea, and their appreciation for the effort reaffirmed my belief in the power of bold, creative thinking. The only obstacle was timing, something beyond my control.

This experience reinforced that every element of my U Factor is essential. It taught me a crucial lesson about sales and business: success isn't always about closing the deal—it's about the impact of your ideas and the strength of the relationships you cultivate. I had the vision, forged the right partnerships, and presented a well-thought-out plan that earned both respect

and recognition.

### **The Takeaway**

Sales aren't always about walking away with a signed contract. Sometimes, it's about proving your ability to innovate, collaborate, and execute. This project demonstrated the importance of having the right connections and understanding how to "take it up the flagpole." Whether it's a golf tournament or a groundbreaking product, success often starts with a bold idea and the determination to see it through.

While the golf tournament didn't happen, the experience reinforced my belief that big ideas have a place in sales. Even when a deal doesn't close, the effort can lay the groundwork for future opportunities and strengthen your reputation as a creative thinker and problem solver.

In sales and in life, timing is everything—but so is the courage to dream big and act on those dreams.

## **Chapter 15:**

### **The Eco Auto Spa Vision – When Family Comes First**

Sometimes, life presents us with opportunities so monumental that they seem destined to change everything. My experience with Eco Auto Spa and Lanier Parking was one such opportunity—a bold venture that combined innovation, eco-consciousness, and untapped business potential. Yet, as life often does, unforeseen circumstances reminded me that some things are more important than even the biggest dreams.

In 2006, I was introduced to a revolutionary product: a waterless car wash solution that was both effective and environmentally friendly. At a time when businesses were striving to adopt eco-friendly practices, I saw immense potential in this product. The idea struck me: why not create eco-friendly car washes inside parking garages? The concept could transform how people cleaned their cars while reducing water waste.

Lanier Parking was the perfect partner for this vision. At the time, they managed 376 parking decks across the United States and Puerto Rico. I envisioned placing my brand, Eco Auto Spa, in every single one of their locations, providing convenient, eco-conscious car washes to their customers.

## **Pitching the Vision**

The road to closing the deal wasn't easy. It took several rounds of meetings, where I outlined how Eco Auto Spa could align with Lanier's goals of modernizing and greening their operations. I emphasized how the waterless car wash product not only conserved resources but also provided a premium service that would elevate the customer experience in their parking decks.

My persistence paid off. Lanier Parking saw the potential in the idea and agreed to partner with Eco Auto Spa. It was a massive win—one that opened doors to high-profile locations, including the High Museum in Atlanta, the new Piedmont Park parking deck, the AT&T building, and several other prominent spots in the city. I even secured a location in Atlantic Station, where I provided waterless car washes for their buses.

The success of these initial locations validated the concept. My long-term plan was to franchise Eco Auto Spa across all 376 Lanier Parking decks. Franchisees would buy their products, equipment, and materials directly from me, creating a scalable business model with enormous revenue potential. The vision was big, bold, and attainable—everything I believed in as a salesperson and entrepreneur.

## **The Unexpected Turn**

Just as the foundation for Eco Auto Spa was solidifying, life threw me a curveball. My father's

Alzheimer's had progressed to a point where my mother needed help caring for him back in Texas. It was a difficult decision, but I knew I had to step away from the business and focus on my family. My father had always been there for me, and it was my turn to be there for him and my mother.

Closing the business was heartbreaking. Eco Auto Spa was my baby—a venture I had nurtured from an idea into a reality. The thought of leaving behind a project with such incredible potential was painful, but I knew it was the right choice. At the time, the business was still new, and I didn't feel confident that it could run smoothly without my direct oversight. I chose to prioritize my family, a decision I have never regretted.

### **A Legacy of Vision and Sacrifice**

While Eco Auto Spa didn't reach the heights I had envisioned, I'm incredibly proud of what I accomplished. Securing a deal with Lanier Parking and launching the business in some of Atlanta's most prominent locations was no small feat. It proved that my vision was not only viable but also ahead of its time.

The experience taught me several invaluable lessons. First, it reinforced the importance of resilience and adaptability. Even when life forces you to pivot, the effort you put into bold ideas and innovative solutions is never wasted. Second, it reminded me of the importance of family. No matter how big the

opportunity, some moments in life require you to step back and prioritize what truly matters.

Looking back, I see Eco Auto Spa not as a failed venture but as a testament to the power of creativity, persistence, and bold vision. It's a chapter in my life that shaped me both as an entrepreneur and as a son, proving that success isn't always measured in revenue or business milestones. Sometimes, it's about knowing when to pause and focus on the people who matter most.

In this chapter of Big Time Selling, I hope you find inspiration in the power of bold ideas and the courage it takes to make difficult choices. Whether in business or in life, the key is to stay true to your values and priorities, even when the path forward isn't clear. Family, after all, is the foundation upon which all other successes are built.

## **Final Closing Statement for the Book**

**The U Factor Strategy isn't just a sales technique,  
it's a mindset, a way of doing business that builds  
trust, deepens relationships, and turns  
opportunities into long-term success.**

**When you Unravel, you dig past surface-level  
conversations and uncover what your clients *truly*  
need.**

**When you Understand, you align with their goals,  
speak their language, and become a trusted advisor  
instead of just another salesperson.**

**And when you show up Undaunted, you follow  
through with confidence, navigate objections with  
ease, and close with certainty.**

**Master all three, and selling becomes effortless—  
because your clients will feel the difference.**

**And as the great Maya Angelou once said:  
*"People will forget what you said. They'll forget  
what you did. But they will never forget how you  
made them feel."***

**So if you want to be remembered, make them feel  
seen, make them feel heard, and make them feel  
served.**

**That's The U Factor.**

**Go put it to work. Your biggest deal is waiting.**



## **Ending: A Heartfelt Thank You**

As I sit here reflecting on this incredible journey, I can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude for all the people who trusted me along the way. From the big names like L.A. Reid, Babyface, Puffy, Evander Holyfield, and Jay-Z to the hundreds of others whose homes and businesses I had the privilege to design and enhance with systems that shaped the way they experienced life—each one of you played a role in this story.

But this journey isn't just about clients. It's about the true mentors who shaped my career—those who taught me how to do business and succeed. I could write an entire book about these people alone, and one of the first would be Charles Thompson, who taught me how to become a stellar A/V salesman. Charles is a lifelong friend, and to this day, I credit him with helping me master the art of sales and teaching me the value of authentic connections in business.

Then there are my mentors: Dr. Calvin McLaurin (deceased), Leon Goodrum, Alan Antonucci, Tommy Dortch (deceased), and Oscar and Sylvia Harris. These are not just business associates—they are pillars of business success nationwide. They saw potential in me, supported me, and put me in the mix of opportunities. I am forever grateful for the doors they opened and for making me part of their

families.

Every one of you there are so many more stories and lessons that could be told —thank you. We've had our times, we've shared our laughs, my screw ups and you have mentored me in ways that go beyond business. For that, I will always be thankful.

## Some of the Clients Robb Has Worked With

- LA Reid
- Babyface
- Sean, P Diddy” Combs
- Jay Z
- J Lo
- Ty Law NFL
- Cornelius Bennett NFL
- Henry Jones NFL
- Levon Kirkland NFL
- Vinny Clark NFL
- Garrison Hearst NFL
- Ryan Sims NFL
- Greg Maddux MLB
- Mo Vaughn MLB
- John Smoltz MLB
- Gary Sheffield MLB
- Dr. Calvin McLarin – Cardiologist/ Mentor
- Marquis Grissom MLB
- Delino Deshields MLB
- Otis Nixon MLB
- T Boz w/ TLC Singer
- Chili w/ TLC

- Jermaine Dupri
- Dallas Austin
- Denny Neagle MLB
- Joe Barry Carroll, NBA
- Steve Smith NBA
- William Tolliver – Black Artist
- Ty Hill NBA
- Kareem “Biggs” Burke – Rockafella Records
- Dr. Louis Sullivan – Health and Human Services  
Director under Presidents Reagan and Bush
- Lee Leipsner – Music Exec
- Sean John Offices
- Bad Boy Entertainment
- Daddy’s House Recording Studio
- LaFace Records – Offices
- So So Def Music – Offices
- DARP Music Studios – Offices
- Evander Holyfield – Former Heavyweight Champ
- J. Alexander Martin – Co-owner of FUBU Clothing
- Jeff Hullinger – News Anchor Atlanta
- Justin’s Restaurant Atlanta
- Oscar & Sylvia Harris – Architect Designer of  
Centennial Olympic Park Atlanta/My Mentor
- Leon Goodrum – McDonald’s Owner/ Mentor

- Senator and My Pastor Raphael Warnock
- The Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Rita Ewing – Author, lawyer, and ex-wife of Patrick Ewing
- Bow Wow and His Mom, Teresa Caldwell
- Alan Antonucci, Amazing Father and Businessman/Mentor
- Mourad Bebawi Businessman/Mentor
- Yoshito Nishimoto – Coca-Cola Exec
- My MCI Execs Edgar Pruitt, Bob Greene, and Kevin Bennis
- Dan Loneragan Businessman
- Edsell Shively Huge Univ of Michigan Alum and Businessman
- JC Penney's Granddaughter- Mrs. Guyer
- Marvet Britto – Media Magnate
- Toni Braxton – Grammy Award Winner
- Mike Vick – NFL
- Mo Gardner – NFL
- Jeff Blauser – MLB
- Mark Lemke – MLB
- Thomas Smith - NFL
- Jason Jackson – Music Executive
- Charlie Walk – Music Executive

- Lionel Ridenour – Music Executive
- John and Catherine Wixom- UPS Executive
- Courtney Sloane – Top Interior Designer
- Ivan Rodriguez – HOF MLB
- Chris Doleman – HOF NFL
- Lew Sterner – Junk Bond Businessman
- John Ripoll– Wealth Manager,Friend and Amazing Businessman
- Lee Haney’s Gym
- Jerome Russell – Exec HJ Russell & Co
- Mary J Blige Home NJ
- Kelly Price Home Atlanta Area
- Patricia Russell McCloud – Amazing Motivational Speaker and Writer
- Cynthia Marks – Philanthropist
- Susan Taylor Chicago Office
- Cecil Hayes – Architectural Digest Top 100 Interior Designer
- DJ Clue
- John and Vicky Palmer – Atlanta Power Couple
- Tommy Dortch – President Emeritus 100 Black Men of America
- Otha Greer – Real Estate Agent
- Reverend McCloud – AME Church Official

- Henry Burns – Home Builder
- John Wieland Homes
- Venice Brinkley Walker – Top Atlanta Realtor
- Lisa Robinson – Top Atlanta Realtor
- Harry Johnson – Home Builder
- The Rock Ministries – Bishop David Pittman
- Thom Pharr & Scott Studds – Interior Designers
- Kirk Wright – Disgraced Businessman and Fraudster
- Dr. Keith & Dr Marie Bond
- Dr. Angus Howard
- Dr. Cleveland
- Solomon Smallwood – Friend and Amazing Businessman

This is by no means all of the clients I worked with, and if you are one and your name is not here, charge it to my head and not my heart because no matter what happened, I appreciate all of you who trusted me with your home electronics system design and installation.