

Sales and Service Excellence

SEPTEMBER 2006

Maxine Clark
Founder and Chief
Executive Bear
Build-A-Bear
Workshop

Boost Visibility
**Brand
Yourself**

Wow Your Customers
Partner Up

World Class
Cultural Standards

**Check Your
Alignment**
Strategy, Structure,
Execution

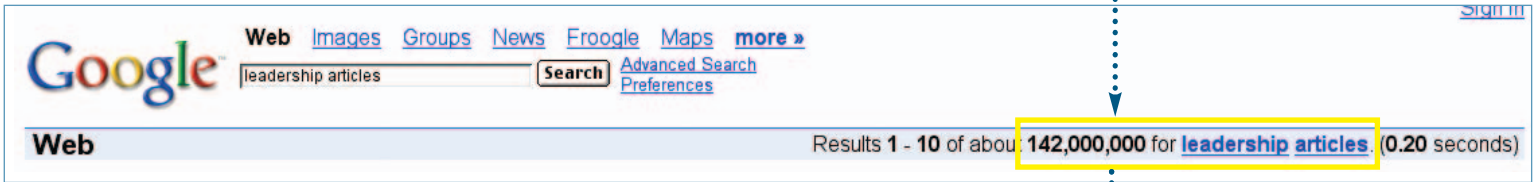


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Sales and Service Excellence

Volume 6 Number 9

September 2006

MARKETING/BRANDS

Become World Class

Develop maximum resilience.



by Mary L. Carrido

THE WORLD IS CHANGING so fast, we can no longer accurately predict the unintended consequences of our own warp-speed evolution. How can you thrive amid all this uncertainty?

We've developed a solution called *World Class Continuity Assurance*. Our goal is to help you become world class by developing maximum resilience.

So, what is WCCA? First, *continuity* is an uninterrupted succession or flow. When we speak of business continuity, we refer to the ability to keep moving forward "uninterrupted," despite extenuating circumstances.

Nobody thinks much about continuity when life is good. Money flows in, business is brisk, everybody's happy. Why worry about continuity? Because we see companies that once enjoyed a spectacular view from the top of the business world but collapsed because of their lack of ethics and inability to weather their self-induced storms. These fallen giants failed to foster a culture of WCCA.

WCCA is a business continuity approach that elevates the familiar common-practice and best-practice

concepts into a new realm of embedded, cultural standards, meaning that the new standards are second nature for everyone. When unexpected situations arise, you don't have to look it up in the manual. Your responses are based on standards and ethics you already understand. Your ability to thrive will be directly proportional to your ability to adapt to that change.



Is Your Race Won?

Our associate, Don Saracco, earned his doctorate in educational psychology with a specialty in human performance at work from the University of Southern California. At the tender age of 23, he thought that he had already achieved all the goals he was taught to pursue—a college degree, a wife, a child, and a job. Don said, "I had a home and a station wagon. I thought

my race was won. Only years later did I understand the vulnerabilities of common practice."

So what was wrong with his perfect little life? Nothing—on the surface. Don explains: "Almost everybody and every business functions as common practice—meaning they are competent but breakable. In fact, many are downright fragile. They work well enough—so long as nothing changes.

"But change, of course, is inevitable. Few seem to grasp this fact. Businesses get whacked by new trends, and people are suddenly rendered obsolete.

"Eventually, the race we all thought we won will be shockingly overruled. You'll get divorced or downsized. Your company's executives go to prison for fraud, and a \$40 billion-a-year mega-corporation will file for bankruptcy."

Clearly, common practice isn't enough. Hence, people now aspire to best practice. Let's say that 23-year-old guy with a wife, child, station wagon, and good job also started a college fund for his kids and a retirement plan. He read books on relationships and was open to coaching and strategic planning. Now he's coming into the best-practice level. Businesses that develop contingency and recovery plans fall into that same category.

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Best is a superlative. Nothing can be better than best, right? Not necessarily. We can find opportunities for growth and learning in any best-practice situation. We look at a concept like best practice and envision ways to make it even better.

Common Practice Continuity describes a method of doing business that covers all the bases. It uses the word *common* because that's the way the vast majority of businesses operate and the vast majority of people live their lives.

Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation." However, we hold a more optimistic view: *Most men and women lead lives of common practice.* Another great philosopher, George Carlin, said, "Most people work just hard enough to keep from getting fired and are paid just enough to keep them from quitting." That sounds suspiciously like common practice. In most cases, common-practice methods will serve to meet all regulatory requirements and satisfy audit inquiry.

Best Practice Continuity. In a way, the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC) plays a large role in the economic health of the United States and, by extension, the world. The council has a pretty good handle on best-practice continuity.

The FFIEC is an interagency body empowered to prescribe uniform principles, standards, and report forms for the federal examination of financial institutions. The council makes sure everybody's on the same page, speaking the same language.

Here's their definition of best-practice continuity as it applies to financial institutions: "The objectives of a business continuity plan are to minimize financial loss to the institution; continue to serve customers and financial market participants; and mitigate the negative effects disruptions can have on an institution's strategic plan, reputation, operations, liquidity, credit quality, market positions, and ability to remain in compliance with applicable laws and regulations."

Do you see how that differs from common-practice continuity? The people who watch over our economy (and their own interests) can't settle for commonplace. Yes, they make sure they're in compliance with laws and regulations, but they also aim to protect themselves, their assets, and their reputations against "disruptions."

With best-practice continuity, they aim to continue serving customers and the financial market despite any disruption because they've focused on mitigation of negative effects. In other words, they've made plans to prevent loss and damage and keep the boat afloat while repairs are being made.

World-Class Practice. The big difference between world class and the other levels of continuity assurance is that world class is embedded within the operations. It becomes a way of life. Common-and best-

practice continuities are like rules. World-class practice is like an ingrained set of ethics, or a natural sense of right and wrong.

Sometimes, you might have to refer to the manual to be clear on all the best-practice and common-practice rules, but a world-class practice company reacts almost instinctively to any situation. This is what makes it so robust. World-class practice continuity enables its practitioners to adapt to the unexpected. They're never caught off-guard.

Five Steps to World Practice

Here are five steps you can take to become world practice:

1. Cultivate flexibility, adaptability, and resilience. An organization embracing best practices will plan for only the predictable. It's like the 23-year-old who puts away money for retirement and the kids' college education. He knows those things are coming. But the organization that embraces adaptability at its core and is ready to respond to the *unpredictable*—that's the most resilient of all. That's the start of WCCA.

2. Realize that none of us is as smart as all of us. Teams working within the whole must be self-organizing and capable of re-inventing themselves without rigid supervision. No matter what their stated function, the teams hold at their core a focus on the design, construction, and management of the entire enterprise. They move beyond recovery thinking and become capable of continuous renewal. That's the beginning of flexibility, adaptability, and resilience.

3. Believe that honesty pays. Honesty works because honesty clarifies and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. World-class continuity thrives only when everyone is honest with themselves, each other and the world with which they interact. Self-assessments must be continual. Real intelligence begins with honesty.

4. Stop, look, and listen. World-class continuity depends heavily on craft knowledge. The artful conduct of meetings; effective communication, listening, collaboration, and cooperation with diverse people in complex relationships; skillful facilitation of information gathering processes—all these and more represent the craft side of planning and program development.

5. Embed the mindset in the culture. The essence of world-class practice lies in a revolutionary idea: the ability to adapt to change must be embedded in the culture. More than just a policy on paper, this adaptability must become second nature. It takes time and out-of-the-box thinking, but it can be done. And if you and your enterprise are to thrive, it *must* be done. SSE

Mary L. Carrido is president and CEO of MLC & Associates, a business consulting firm. She is a speaker and coach. Call 949-222-1202 or email mlc@mlc2resq.com.

ACTION: Cultivate continuity.

Volume 6 Issue 9

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Partner Up

Create something big.



by Maxine Clark

TODAY, YOU HAVE TO MAKE $1 + 1 = 10$ or more.

That's because consumers are bombarded with loud marketing messages. To get through all of this noise, your offering has to be really special. One way to accomplish this is by adding value through forming partnerships that create huge "wow" experiences for your customers.

It starts by not being afraid to seek the right strategic fits, even when the target you desire a relationship with appears to be much larger and unapproachable. For instance, several years ago I observed that many of our guests also shopped at Limited Too for outfits for our bears. At the time, we were just a \$200 million company, dwarfed by Limited Too's \$600 million in annual sales. But I knew we had a lot to offer and was convinced that by pooling our resources, we would make $1 + 1 + 10$ for both of us. The company ultimately agreed, and sales of our Limited Too wear for bears have exceeded even our most optimistic projections.

Bears and Baseball

Another 10 on our wow scale came when we approached Major League Baseball about offering licensed uniforms for our bears. Some might wonder what stuffed animals have to do with a nine-inning game played by a bunch of tough guys. I've found that putting together two seemingly divergent ideas can create some of the biggest connections for your customers. Indeed, our licensed baseball bears are now among our most popular, attracting interest from both sexes of all ages.

We've formed similar $1 + 1 = 10$ alliances with the National Basketball Association, the National Football League, Disney, Warner Brothers, Sketchers Footwear, and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, which has featured a Build-A-Bear Workshop float in its lineup for the past four years. These partnerships give us exposure to audiences and markets we could never reach on our own.

The same holds true when it comes to your employees. Whenever you put

teams of bright workers together with a common goal and ask them to join forces, they can quickly take a concept that might seem complicated or less obvious and turn it into something fantastic (and profitable). Since our associates are always on the front lines, I involve them in different projects throughout the company. As a result, every single accomplishment of major significance in our history has been largely a consequence of their collective input and involvement—from our decision to go into the party business to the opening of our biggest store in the world in New York City.

The formation of "friends 2B made," our companion doll making business, is a good illustration of this process in action. The idea to start a



doll store sifted in my head for years, though I never put the wheels in motion. Then I decided to meet with a group of 10 Build-A-Bear Workshop associates from various locations. I brought them to our World Bearquarters for two days and brainstormed about the concept and how we could develop it into something that would create an exciting, but different, experience from our core stores.

The input from these associates was invaluable, and much of it was learned from working with and listening to our guests. We put a plan together and launched our first "friends 2B made" store about six months later. It has been a successful concept that is growing at a rapid pace.

Keep in mind that $1 + 1 = 10$ when Disney partnered with Pixar Animation Studios to create "Toy Story," one of the most successful movies in history. Even though Disney knew how to make cartoons, it didn't have the expertise in the computer-generated animation Pixar had mastered. At the same time, Pixar didn't have a distribution channel or expertise for getting its films into theaters. By joining forces with Disney, Pixar instantly became a major player in the motion picture business.

Believe You Are Big

You might be thinking, "This sounds great, but I'm just a small player. How can I convince a large company to join forces with me?" The answer: Believe you are bigger than you really are.

You're as big as you think you are. With that confidence in mind, come up with a precise written plan about what you want to do and why the synergy makes good sense for both sides. Make the presentation to your potential partner clear and simple, and ensure that the benefits immediately come to life. You must also demonstrate what you are willing to put on the table in order to make the deal happen, which likely means investing some of your own time and money.

The smaller you are, the bigger you need to look. When we pitched World Wildlife Fund on the idea of selling Beary Limited edition stuffed animals to help protect endangered species, we had fewer than 25 stores. Nevertheless, our presentation was perfectly polished. We went in well organized, with our talking points planned out and professional-looking handouts and props in hand. We didn't want to provide them with an easy excuse for turning us down.

You need to find the right person to pitch your idea to. That's fairly easy to do. With a few Google searches, you can quickly come up with not only the correct contact with whom to speak, but also that person's telephone number and email address.

Remember, just because you think it's a good idea doesn't mean everyone else will—at least not right away. You may have to knock on more than one door and refine your thinking along the way before finding the right connection. But it's worth the effort. It's the only way I know to turn simple addition into a major multiplication of success. **SSE**

Maxine Clark is the founder and chief executive bear of Build-A-Bear Workshop. Visit www.buildabear.com.

ACTION: Find the right partner.

Check Your Alignment

Increase brand mileage.



by Ray Baird

Companies will spend about \$1 trillion this year on advertising, PR agencies, consulting firms, and branding experts to create and communicate their messages. But what if these messages are missing the mark—what if a company's view of itself is inaccurate?

Although consultancy firms, branding firms, and ad agencies may excel in their fields, they operate independently, without a strategic liaison or integrator to ensure alignment. This model often breeds misalignment and gaps.

Once we worked with a company that considered customer service to be its number-one asset. As we developed a strategic business assessment (SBA)—a quantitative measurement of perceptions of internal and external audiences—our findings clearly showed that the company's customer service was, in fact, horrible. And to think the management was prepared to spend millions of dollars on a customer service value proposition.

Gauging Alignment

The SBA is based on the idea that in order to achieve maximum market value, a company must be aligned with its strategy, structure, and execution.

Conventional marketing research tools can tell you about consumer awareness, attitudes, and preferences toward a brand. But often the brand fails to achieve success because it isn't understood or supported by the company.

The SBA allows leaders to quantify perceptions and gauge alignment. It uncovers issues that may undermine the success of the brand. It shows the alignment of perceptions and attitudes and identifies perceptual gaps on key dimensions of the brand. Finally, it recommends areas in which business and marketing communications practices need to be improved in order for the brand to reach its potential.

An online questionnaire is administered to management, employees, and sales channel to measure specific areas of business and marketing performance and alignment in the areas of strategy, structure, and execution. The findings are likely to be surprising.

So we decided that we would no

longer work on business strategies, brands, or marketing plans for companies that were not aligned for success.

Our concept involves a synergistic approach that includes business strategy, brand development, and integrated marketing. We identify the gaps between what you want to accomplish and your ability to achieve it. We then work directly with senior managers to develop strategic initiatives, validate business models, develop plans, and identify growth.

Once the strategy is in place, create and evolve a brand that is relevant, believable, and defensible—then execute an integrated-marketing program that can sustain long-term momentum.

To determine whether your com-

pany needs a business and brand review, ask: Do we have a clearly defined focus, vision, business strategy, and brand strategy? Does our messaging match our business strategy? Do our customers clearly understand our brand promise? Does all communication to customers reflect our brand message? The answers might surprise you.

Are you confident your company is aligned and that your messages and budget will hit the mark? If not, it's time for a reality check. **SSE**

Ray Baird is principal and co-founder of RiechesBaird. Call 949-586-1200 or email ray@riechesbaird.com.

ACTION: Align business and branding strategies.

SALES/PITCHES

Make More Money

No one is stopping you.



by John Tschohl

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT making more money, the solution lies entirely with you. You are in control.

You can take the steps to get ahead and be rewarded.

Here are six suggestions:

1. Educate yourself. Get additional training. Learn everything you can about the company, the industry, and how to provide the best customer service possible—to your customers and coworkers. Educating yourself is the best investment you can make. Enroll in seminars and workshops your company offers. You will learn valuable information and let others know that you are serious about your career and what you can do to contribute more.

2. Focus on customer service. Customer service means doing whatever you can to take care of the customer. It means greeting customers by name and with a smile. It means knowing about your company's products and services so that you can help customers make informed decisions. It means really listening to what customers have to say so that you can better meet their needs. It means going out of your way to ensure that the customer's experience—with you and your company—is a good one. The more service you provide to customers, the more they will buy, and



the more you will be noticed.

3. Develop a positive attitude. Your attitude determines not only how you feel about yourself, but how others feel about you. No one enjoys working with someone who is negative. Don't compare yourself to others—only compare what you are today with what you can become tomorrow.

4. Learn to handle complaints. Many people get defensive when faced with an angry customer. Instead, listen to what the customer has to say, ask questions to clarify details, apologize for the error, ask the customer what he or she

feels should be done to correct the problem, and then do whatever you can to correct it—as quickly as you can.

5. Empower yourself. You have the power to change yourself—and your life. If you are going to be creative and productive, you must be empowered. Empowerment means taking risks. That might mean taking steps to solve a customer's problem without first getting permission. It's often easier to ask for forgiveness after you take action than it is to take no action at all.

6. Work smart. Manage your time. Get organized. Execute tasks based on priorities. When you prioritize, you think ahead. You work on the roots of problems. You work on activities that prevent problems. Don't procrastinate. Do the most important or difficult tasks first. Make small decisions promptly.

Your success is much too important to be left to the decisions of others. Visualize yourself as successful. Get the training and develop the attitude that will drive success. **SSE**

John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is the author of several books on customer service, including *Ca\$hing In* and *The Customer is Boss*.

ACTION: Work smart and make money.

Break a Rule

It's the path to innovation.



by Thomas Ordahl

TODAY, EVERY LEADER FEELS the pressure to innovate. We see it blared daily in the headlines, the presentations of consultants, in the books and conferences of visionaries. We feel it in the parity of our pricing and in our attempts to articulate unique value. And we witness it as emerging markets move from low-cost laborers to competitors or as new technologies disrupt competitive advantage.

So we need to innovate. But how? We dive into the “fuzzy front-end” of product development hoping that by talking to customers or anticipating trends we will find that source of inspiration, that flash of insight.

Here's a suggestion: Break a rule! Do something that disrupts a basic tenet of your market or industry. In many cases innovators don't come up with an entirely new product or service but rather directly challenge a sacrosanct practice and best their competitors by changing the rules of the game.

Consider Barnes & Noble. They created a multibillion dollar business out of this quiet corner of retail. Not only can you drink coffee in a comfortable chair while reading a book, but they sold you the coffee in their in-store café. The bookstore went from being a place of foreboding to a social destination—in large part because they had the foresight and temerity to risk breaking many of the seemingly inviolate rules of their industry.

Starbucks is another example. Just a few years ago, what reception would you receive in a coffee shop, ordering just coffee and hanging out for an hour? At best you would have been made to feel like a bum; at worst you would have been kicked out for loitering. Today, Starbucks has become the meeting place of people everywhere.

Why has Netflix been so successful? Not because you can get DVDs through the mail. Netflix broke a rule that was sorely in need of breaking—late fees. Blockbuster made its money on fees that customers hated but accepted as normal. As a result, Netflix soared while putting Blockbuster and the other retail chains on the defensive,

forcing them to not only offer a similar rental-by-mail service, but to drop late fees at their stores.

Why Break a Rule?

A rule is a widely accepted business convention that is so common and constant that it seems like an immutable natural law. Take, for example, bankers' hours—an idiom for a short working day. Now consider Commerce Bank. They grew into “America's Most Convenient Bank” by being open on Sundays and late on weekdays. They exploited retail banking's notoriously poor customer service and picked one of it's most dramatic and memorable examples to shock the marketplace.

Why is breaking a rule a valuable approach to innovation? It's easier than coming up with the next big idea. Of course, we'd all love to invent our industry's minivan or iPod. But those don't come easily. Breaking a rule offers a tangible place to start. I am convinced that every market has rules waiting to be broken.

What does successfully breaking a rule do for you?

It gives you a position of market leadership. Being on the offensive inherently places your competition on the defense and scrambling for a “me-too” offering, which only compounds your position of leadership.

It creates barriers to entry. In many cases, there are rules for which you have a competitive advantage. For example, Netflix's personalization technology has yet to be matched by Blockbuster, and Commerce Bank could design retail spaces according to their customer service promise.

It signals to customers that you're on their side. JetBlue broke multiple airline industry conventions as they pursued the strategy of being a low-cost carrier and the airline that brings “humanity back to air travel.” Remember the ads that said, “Go ahead use

the call button,” or “It's okay to ask for another soda”? They weren't just showcasing a benefit, but were poking a thumb in the eye to the competition. They were provocations to an industry lumbering under the weight of outmoded conventions and attitudes.

Three Questions

Rules come in many forms—service levels, pricing models, distribution, product features, and customer experiences. I recommend approaching the task openly with three questions in mind:

1. What are the natural laws of your business? The practices that are so familiar and regular they are almost unnoticeable? This is a difficult task because, by definition, it requires seeing your business clearly without the bias of business as usual.

2. Is the rule relevant? Backroom processes and cost-reducing efficiencies don't count unless they translate to something meaningful for your customers. Ask: Which affects them the most? Are there ones that most frustrate or irritate our customers? (A clear indicator here is: what do you fight with your customers about most?) At this stage, focused customer research can be useful, particularly if you can test alternative service/product models.

3. Which practices, if changed, could have the most disruptive impact on the marketplace? What would change the rules of the game? Breaking a rule isn't just about creating new value, it's about repositioning. The question is as much about marketing as product/service innovation. It should send a dramatic signal that you do business differently. Even if few Commerce Bank customers go on Sundays, being open seven days a week gives credibility to their “most convenient” market position.

Ultimately, one great enabler of innovation is shedding assumptions. The fear of every leader is being blind to both opportunity and risk. Breaking a rule gives you a way to view the marketplace—something tangible to grab onto—so you can then tear it apart. **SSE**

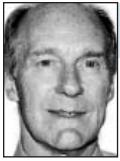
Thomas Ordahl is a partner at Group 1066 and has 10 years experience helping clients solve strategic marketing challenges. Visit www.Group1066.com.

ACTION: Break the industry rule.



Profit Power

Customer intimacy delivers.



by Gerard A. Abraham

PROGRESSIVE LEADERS ARE looking for the silver bullet to consistently deliver top-line revenue and earnings growth as means to increase share price and shareholder value. Customer satisfaction, flawless execution, process reengineering, and outsourcing can be good strategies to boost profitability. However, a basic lever of higher and sustainable shareholders' returns is customer intimacy.

Customer intimacy is the formal or informal set of relationships established between supplier and customer, with a diverse array of partners—from corporate leadership to functional leadership (engineering, marketing, operations, maintenance, or service) and end-users of products or services. These dynamic relationships provide multiple points and frequency of contacts between the company and its customers, and multiple points of view about the relationship and its benefits to both parties.

Benefits of Customer Intimacy

Customer intimacy provides two main benefits:

1. From the supplier side. Customer intimacy impacts revenue growth and earnings per share by creating long-term sustainable advantage through the early identification of unsatisfied needs. Contrary to the “if we can make it, they will buy it” syndrome, customer intimacy allows the adoption of a *customer-need-pull strategy*, as opposed to a *technology-push strategy*.

By establishing long-term relationships with key customers—representative of their targeted market segments—companies set a framework within which they have repeated opportunities to tap into their knowledge base. Voice-of-the-customer interviews, focus groups, and users' group meetings are some means used to access that knowledge base. But sales and service engineers can provide feedback more simply, since they interact more with the end-users.

Establishing close and frequent relationships with key customers allows companies to focus investments toward differentiated product features and away from me-too products, thus reducing the risk of commoditization.

Differentiated products and services that bring an innovative solution to recognized but unsatisfied customers' requirements are obviously easier to price and sell, on the basis of real value, thus avoiding the setting of list prices as costs plus.

2. From the customer side. Considerable advantage can be generated when dealing with vendors who are aware of the details of the business—its operations, its main drivers and constraints, and its objectives. If these vendors listen to issues with existing products and services or to new requirements that fall outside of their current offering, or if they invest in finding solutions, you can reduce costs and increase capacity, obviously leading to improved earnings.

How can you establish or improve customer intimacy? Every business has some level of customer intimacy, loosely exercised by its customer interactions by Internet, emails, phone calls, and sales and service calls. Every customer interac-

tion is an opportunity to improve customer intimacy. It requires the right attitude and the motivation to ask the right questions.

Attitudes can be developed through communications, training, and development. Motivation can be enhanced by the quality of the talent hired and by the compensation and reward systems. Employees are more likely to have positive attitudes and bring value to the customers when they can clearly see how their behavior in front of customers can increase customer intimacy, and how that customer intimacy relates to profitability and growth.

Beyond transactional customer satisfaction lies customer intimacy, which brings with it a virtuous circle of opportunities—to avoid the pitfalls of commoditization, secure sustainable advantages, and protect pricing power and profit margins. **SSE**

Gerard A. Abraham is president of the Process Instruments Division of Thermo Electron. Email gerard.abraham@thermo.com.

ACTION: Improve your customer intimacy.

SALES / PERSPECTIVE

What Is Selling?

Selling is serving people.



by Tessa Stowe

HOW DO YOU DEFINE selling? A lot of people think of selling as persuading or convincing people to buy things they may or may not want or need. To some, selling is all about closing a deal.

So what perspective can you take on about selling that will make you excited about it, enjoy it?

First, make a list of all the problems that you can solve for your target market. If you look at your list and you think about it, you are a big problem-solver. What you're really doing is helping people. Correct?

So try on this perspective on about what selling is: Selling is helping people.

Selling is serving. Selling is identifying and solving people's problems. See, feel, and know that selling is serving. This will cause a big shift for you. With this perspective, you will become passionate about wanting to help people. Find this passion and let it shine.

It is your purpose, your moral obligation, to have as many sales conversations as possible with people so you

can help as many people as possible. If you're not having these types of sales conversations, you are holding back the gift you have to offer the world.

Next time you're talking to a potential client, think about how you can help them, how you can serve them. Forget about trying to sell them something. If what you have to offer does solve their problems, and you facilitate the conversation using the strategies we are covering, people will sell themselves and will subsequently buy from you.

If you have a perspective on selling as serving and helping people, how do you think the people you're talking to will feel? Think about this: people hate to be sold. The minute they feel

they're being sold, they often want to get away—fast. Don't you? On the other hand, if they feel you are sincerely trying to help them solve their problems, they will relax and open up to you.

If you have a perspective on selling that is one of service and helping people, how do you think you will feel? Does energized, excited, relaxed, and natural come to mind? This perspective is simple but powerful and very *attract-ive* to clients. **SSE**

Tessa Stowe is author of Attract More Clients Naturally and the forthcoming Sell More Services by Being Yourself. Email tessastowe@salesconversation.com or visit <http://salesconversation.com>.

ACTION: Redefine selling.



Crack the Networking Code

Progress agents build business relationships.



by Dean Lindsay

THERE IS THIS UNASSUMING little word you often find in the biographies of famous people. The word is *met*: William R. Hewlett *met* David Packard. Dean Martin *met* Jerry Lewis. Sid *met* Nancy. Siegfried *met* Roy.

We meet people all the time. Meeting people is part of life. Meeting people is one of the steps to building priceless relationships. But it is not the only step. There is a big difference between meeting someone and building a priceless business relationship with them. It's a long way from *met* to *net*, and because people misjudge this distance, the term *networking* has gotten a bum rap.

I ask professionals to share with me what they think of when they hear the word *networking*. Far too often they say it conjures up images of manipulative, self-serving, insincere, and predatory individuals who are on the prowl for someone they can pounce on, try to sell something to, or solicit an unearned favor from.

This style of networking is a waste of time. True networking is not about arm-twisting. It is not about trying to get someone to do something that does not make sense for them to do. It is not about scary old backslapping sales shenanigans.

Why try to build priceless relationships through networking? Because, largely, who you associate with determines who you become in life. The most successful, well-rounded, and happy people are most often the ones who are best connected to other successful, well-rounded, and happy people. When these people need something, they know whom to call.

How well-connected you are determines your access to those with the most money, the best contacts, the real power and influence, and the best seats at events. Being connected to the right people opens up opportunities.

If you are hoping to win new business, deep down you already know that you need to get out there and connect with people. Sure, in a perfect world your track record and past successes would speak for themselves, but without professional and personal

contacts, your spiffy proposal is likely just going to be ignored.

Become a Progress Agent

To build great relationships, you need to help others progress. Everyone connects with others with the goal of progressing in some way. Everything we do is because we believe the perceived consequences of those actions will bring us the six Ps of progress: *pleasure, peace of mind, profit, prestige, pain avoidance, and power.*

This goes for eating, shopping, exercising, hugging, crying, working, going to the movies—whatever. Each of us makes decisions as to what to read, whom to talk to, what to buy,



where to eat, what to eat, whom to take phone calls from, and whom to help, based on whether we think these acts will bring us the six Ps.

At each moment, we make decisions based on what we think will bring these benefits—short-term or long-term. We think to ourselves, “Is taking this action (for example, talking with this person) helping me move toward pleasure, peace of mind, profit, prestige, power, or helping me to avoid pain? Will this action help me progress, or simply change?”

The people we meet must view being around us as progress, not change. It is natural to resist change, but we embrace progress. Building a relationship with us must be viewed as progress if we hope others will choose to alter their lives to include us.

Think of networking as a creative process: You are creating ways to serve and to help people progress. To build priceless business relationships and become a truly effective networker, you constantly need to search out

ways to help others progress. You must position yourself in their minds as a catalyst in their progress, as an agent in their progress, as a *progress agent*.

Four Steps of the Code

CODE represents the four steps taken by effective networkers to build priceless business relationships and become progress-effective networkers:

1. Create personal curb appeal.

Effective networkers feel successful and display a genuine desire to help others progress. They are progress agents. They look and act the part of someone you would want to have in your corner. They don't go to networking events looking for success; they take success with them to the events.

2. Open face-to-face relationships.

Effective networkers connect with new people everywhere they go. They also research the various networking event options and commit to a networking strategy. They proactively open relationships. Be aware that it's possible to go to a networking event and not have any “networking moments.” It is not just about showering and showing up. It's about connecting with people and finding ways to help them progress.

3. Deliver solid first impressions.

Effective networkers know their first impression sets up future impressions, and they make sure it's progress-based. Effective networkers stand out in a positive way in the minds of people with whom they want future contact. Effective networkers focus on being *interested*, rather than *interesting*. They turn people on to them by tuning in to others.

4. Earn trust. My definition of trust is the *promise of progress*. Effective networkers follow up and keep in touch. They stay involved with the people they meet and earn their trust through a series of progress-based impressions. They find ways to help—to “be progress” for those in their network.

Sure, being in business is challenging; sales can be tough to come by; marketing is a moving bull's-eye; people are often pressed for time. But people do business with, share information with, brainstorm with, offer help, and give referrals to people they trust and value. They trust and value people who genuinely care about them, provide progress for their lives, and offer the promise of progress. Be progress! SSE

Dean Lindsay is a speaker, founder of Progress Agents.com, and author of *Cracking the Networking Code*. Call 877-479-5323 or visit www.ProgressAgents.com.

ACTION: Become an agent of progress.

Self-Motivators

Try seven practices.



by Brian Tracy

INCOURAGE YOU TO embrace seven best practices in self-motivation:

1. Get serious—make a decision to go all the way to the top. Up to now you've thought about it. Up to now, it's passed your mind. Now make up your mind to go all the way to the top. Decide "I'm going to be the best at what I do. I'm going to be in the top 10 percent." Suddenly you go from the shadow into the sunshine, and your life is forever after different—wonderful. Get serious. Don't fool around anymore.

2. Identify your limiting step to sales success. What's your limiting step? What's the one skill area that holds you back? What's the skill, quality, or action? Ask other people. Find out what you need. Sometimes it may be only one skill. If you became really good on the telephone, you could maybe double your prospecting effectiveness and double your sales. If you became very good at getting the order at the end from qualified prospects, you could double your sales. If you became very good at managing your time well, you may double your face time and double your income. Find out what's holding you back.

3. Get around the right people. Who are the right people? They are seen and known as winners. Get around positive people—people with goals and plans, people who are going somewhere with their lives and have high aspirations. Get around eagles. As Zig Ziglar says, "You can't scratch with the turkeys if you want to fly with the eagles." And get away from negative people—from toxic people who complain and whine and moan all the time. Who needs them? Life is too short.

4. Take excellent care of your health. Take excellent care of your physical health. That means a healthy diet and regular exercise. Everybody knows they should eat better foods, get regular exercise and more sleep. That's very important. If you're going to work hard five days a week, go to bed early five nights a week. Get a

good night's sleep. Be fully rested.

5. Practice positive visualization. See yourself as the very best in your field. Remember, all improvement in your life begins with an improvement in your mental pictures. Visualize yourself. See yourself as the best continually. You are the best. Isn't that right? So, see yourself as the best.

6. Engage in positive self-talk. Talk to yourself positively all the time. Control your inner dialogue. And what do you say to yourself? Say, "I'm the best." Say it. Say I'm the best. I like myself. I can do it. I love my work." That's not lying to yourself. It's telling yourself the truth in advance. Because it doesn't matter where you're coming from—all that matters is where you're going. Talk to yourself the way you want to be—not the way you just happen to be at this moment. Remember, you may have arrived where you are today largely by

accident. But where you're going in the future is purely by design.

7. Take positive action. Get going. Move fast. Develop a sense of urgency. A sense of urgency will separate you from everyone else in your field. Develop a bias for action. When you get a good idea, do it now. Resolve that whenever you have an idea for something, you will do it now. The faster you move, the better you get. And the better you get, the more you like yourself. And the more you like yourself, the higher your self-esteem. And the higher your self-esteem, the greater your self-discipline. And the more you persist, the more you ultimately become unstoppable.

Remember: You're the best! **SSE**

Brian Tracy is CEO of Brian Tracy International and author of several books on personal success and professional achievement. Visit www.yoursuccessstore.com.

Action: Learn to motivate yourself.

SALES / PROSPECTING

Prospecting Skills

They are essential to success.



by Bill Brooks

HAS THE WAY YOU prospect for new business changed? The answer to that probably depends on what you sell, where you sell it, who your customers are, the nature of your competition, how you have contacted prospects and customers in the past, and the budget allocated for winning new business.

However, one thing never changes. Somehow, somewhere you must develop strategies to get you and your message in front of qualified prospects. That will never change.

I once worked with a sales organization that had such a strong backlog of existing customers that they hired salespeople who were excellent at managing accounts but lousy at finding new ones. They started to miss key delivery dates and then quality dropped. Disenchanted customers left by the handful.

The salespeople had little impact on customer retention. That led to low morale and a disgruntled sales team. In addition, their sales education had no training related to prospecting skills.

Now they must reinvent a sales force, quickly find new customers, redefine their

sales compensation plan, re-sell customers who left, and to attract prospects. How would you like those challenges?

Long-term successful selling is always a function of an effective prospecting and marketing effort.

Address Six Issues

What does this mean? Six specific issues must be addressed:

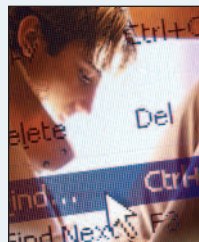
- The primary job of part of the sales force must be to find new business.
- The people who find new business and work to retain or service accounts aren't necessarily the same people. These tasks require different skills.
- Managers should recruit both types of salespeople.
- The pay plan should reward precisely the outcomes you seek for new business and retention of existing accounts.
- Salespeople need to be trained rigorously in both skills. Selling skills that are not used are lost.
- When you fall down in delivery, quality, customer service, or meeting commitments, you lose customers.

Finding, selling, and retaining profitable customers is the role of every sales team.

Perhaps you know what to do—but you just don't do it. Fix your situation before it's too late. Remember, it takes much longer to win a new customer than it does to lose one. **SSE**

Bill Brooks is CEO of The Brooks Group, a sales and business development firm. He is the author of The New Science of Selling and Persuasion (Wiley). Email Barbara@thebrooksgroup.com or call 336-282-6303.

Action: Hone your prospecting skills.



Brand Yourself

Boost visibility and credibility.



by Peter Montoya

PERSONAL BRANDING IS A great way for you to promote your value, build business, boost profit, and ascend the ranks into the setting of your choice.

Why brand yourself? Because every company is also a marketplace. Every day within your company, ideas and resources are bought and sold. Every company buys professional services from its employees. In effect, each employee is a professional service firm that has one customer—the company. The company will employ your professional service firm as long as the value outweighs the costs for services.

The basic premise of marketing and branding is to find a need and fill it. A good brand solves a problem or meets a need. You will advance your career by identifying the needs of your company or managers, and solving or meeting their needs. The greater the need of your company, the greater the need to have a great personal brand.

Branding Is Everything

Sales and marketing are all about generating opportunity. And branding is at the core of selling and marketing—and everything else you do. Branding means that people feel an irresistible urge to listen to your advice, hire you, or seek your leadership. The art of branding is the art of shaping or reshaping people's perceptions.

Branding is a reverse sale. Today, branding comes first. We don't want to be sold anything. Rather, we want to know a person's story—who they are, where they're from, and what they do—before anything else. Nothing is sold until it is branded. When your personal brand is crafted correctly, the sale is made virtually without effort. Companies are pre-sold on you. So, your brand objective is to gain and maintain meaningful and well-compensated employment. Your biggest challenge is this: How do I get more companies to think of me as their (blank) before they actually need one?

Visibility builds credibility.

Branding is all about visibility—and visibility builds credibility. If we see

you all over the place, we get the impression that you must be good—your presence attests to your success. Increasingly, people think that if they have not heard of you, you can't be that good. Lack of visibility kills new opportunities and hurts your credibility.

Perception is stronger than reality. Our reality is really the product of our unique perception. In truth, we are not so much trying to become better people as to create a better perception in the eyes of others. The wise person focuses on perception as well as performance and results.

Your most important service is advice. When you speak with a co-worker or manager, you deliver advice. When they accept your advice, you



gain influence. The key is to have more of the right people seek your advice.

The more influence you have, the stronger your brand. A good brand captures mindshare. The more people desire your advice, the stronger your brand. By capturing mindshare, you can not only advance your career, but also produce more results. The stronger your brand, the faster you rise.

Brand Roadmap

The brand roadmap identifies people holding positions of responsibility, influence, and power. It's a way to understand the needs of these individuals, who are really your customers. By communicating your brand to them, you can influence them to make decisions that contribute to your success.

To develop your brand roadmap, draw a chart of your department. Put the initials, not the names, of the people in each of the boxes. Then identify your #1 and #2 "customers." Now, answer these questions: Who is your

#1 customer? What are their needs? How could your brand help them? What would be the most effective way to communicate with them? Put a ★ next to the people whom you must positively influence in order to advance. Place a + next to people with whom you already have a positive brand. Place a - next to people with whom you already have a negative brand. Place an N next to people with whom you have a neutral or non-existent brand.

Two Branding Strategies

Here are two strategies you can start using today to build your brand:

Strategy 1: Specialization—think narrow. Brands grow with specialization. Specialization means carefully choosing an audience and developing your skills (services) to meet a company's needs. Specialization builds value, as you define a specific audience for your marketing, then deliver messages specifically crafted to appeal to that audience's needs and concerns.

There are three steps to specialization: 1) Choose your audience. Should your brand be aimed at everyone or a select subset? Which specific people should be supporting you? Who is your ultimate customer? 2) Know their needs. Get to know them inside and out: What keeps them up at night? What are their needs and challenges? 3) Position your brand to appeal to their needs and meet those needs.

Strategy 2: Boost your visibility. Here are 10 ways: 1) enhance your appearance; 2) engage in charitable activities; 3) get published; 4) have and give mentoring; 5) head committees; 6) lead presentations; 7) network; 8) gain outside recognition; 9) participate in meetings (speak up); 10) perform special projects.

Desirable personal attributes are the building blocks of brands. Branding is all about attributes—characteristics that are attractive or beneficial to your audience. List the 10 top attributes you think qualify you for your next position. Which are most compelling? This is your leading attribute and should be used as the core message driving all your branding efforts.

Personal brands are organic. Your brand should reflect every aspect of you—from your clothes to your hair, to your service and achievements, to your leadership and character. Today, everything is branding. Everything counts. **SSE**

Peter Montoya is president of Peter Montoya Inc., a personal branding agency. For information on strategic coaching call 888-730-5300.

ACTION: Build your brand.

Find Your Voice

You'll be confident.



by Martha M. Geaney

FINDING YOUR SALES VOICE is the first requisite of relational selling. For years

I've considered the sales profession as a form of leadership. Relational sellers, like relational leaders, engage in mutually high levels of accomplishment and motivation with their clients.

Last week at the conclusion of a business lunch, a potential client complimented me on my style. He explained that he had been responsible for selling consulting services and that it was difficult to initiate a cold call. He said he'd never received a cold call like the one he received from me the previous week. He described my tone of voice, and how I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my call. One week later, I was having lunch with him to discuss a request for proposal.

How often do your prospects agree to a follow-up meeting? How often do they call you back? How can you go from a cold call to a lunch meeting and proposal in one week?

If you're looking to be more relational in your sales, you first need to find your sales voice. How do you want to relate with your prospects and clients?

Six Ways to Begin

Here are six ways to begin building your sales voice.

1. Set aside a sacred cold calling time on your calendar. This increases your success in obtaining sales meetings. Define a specific time on your weekly, monthly, and quarterly calendars, during which you surrender yourself and focus totally on the process.

2. Keep a small mirror on the table in front of you. This reminds you to use affirmative body language during your calls. Alongside the mirror, you might hang a chart with questions and reminders: Tell me more. Can you give me an example? Let the conversation flow. These are memory joggers to listen attentively and ask clarifying questions.

3. Use a relational tone of voice. Speak slowly and in a matter-of-fact tone of voice. Be gracious. If you wish to be a relational salesperson, you will want to connect deeply with individuals—especially on the phone.

4. Develop a relational opening to your call or voice mail. This increases the clarity of your message. Your opening statement or voice mail should not be more than one minute in length. It should identify who you are, the company, the purpose of your call, and the question "Is this a good time for you?"

5. Express gratitude. Send electronic and handwritten thank-you notes.

Whenever I meet with a prospect in person or by phone, I send a handwritten note thanking them for their time. Every Friday, I send a free electronic Hallmark thank-you card to people in my firm who assisted me in my sales.

6. Spend time developing a sales strategy that gives you confidence when you pitch your company's services and products. When I discovered

that colleagues did not want to travel outside of the New York area to provide sales support, I developed a list of prospects in New Jersey and Connecticut. I further refined my strategy by choosing three services that I felt confident speaking about. My percentage of cold calls that turned into meetings skyrocketed. I had found my voice, and I was confident when I spoke to prospects.

Finding your voice is nothing more than deciding how you want to be in relationship to yourself and your prospects. What matters is being totally confident in your voice. **SSE**

Martha M. Geaney is a business development executive, workshop/retreat leader. Visit www.centerforleadershippraxis.com.

ACTION: Practice using your voice.

SALES/DISAPPOINTMENT

High Expectations

Take risks to win rewards.



by Barton Goldsmith

KEEP YOUR EXPECTATIONS low and you won't get disappointed, but you won't get much else either. Yes, it's safer to have preferences, instead of expectations, or not to expect much from yourself or your team, but what does that really get you?

Dealing with disappointments is different from setting yourself up for them. A setup might be approaching a Fortune 100 prospect when you've never done business at that level before, or selling more than your company can deliver. Not only will you be disappointed; you could lose the chance to ever work with that prospect again.

Even if all your ducks are in a row, when you put yourself out there, you are taking the risk of your prospect not responding the way you would like. Just remember that few people take risks, and doing so says great things about you and your company.

A brave person is not one who rushes into battle without the thought of serious injury or death—it's the one who is frightened but marches forward anyway. This is true courage. It may take a good leader, mentor, or teammate to point out to you that, even though things didn't go quite how you

would have liked them to, you have accomplished something huge and should be proud of yourself.

It's natural to reevaluate after a disheartening experience. It also doesn't mean you have to suck it up and put on a happy face when you feel like crawling into a hole. It does mean that you have to learn from your encounter and take steps to make the next time better. It also helps to keep things in perspective, which may mean simply believing that there will be a next time. If you have the fortitude to take your business to the next level, that's quite a feat. If things don't go your way, you then have to plan for the next

opportunity. And there is always another opportunity. It may take a different shape, but it will be there.

The problem for some people is that, if their dream doesn't work out the first time they try for it, they usually settle for something less. If you don't at least reach for the brass ring, you will always wonder what life might have been like had you successfully made the attempt.

If you have been disappointed in sales or business, take heart because nothing was ever lost by trying. In fact, the only way you can lose is by not trying. So take that idea to your boss or get a meeting with that big prospect. Even if you don't win the prize, you have more knowledge to do better the next time. **SSE**

Barton Goldsmith helps organizations develop creative and balanced leadership. He is a keynote speaker, business consultant, and author. Visit www.BartonGoldsmith.com or call 818-879-9996.

ACTION: Keep your expectations high.



Winning Proposals

Write better proposals.



by Tom Sant
and Bobby
Martin

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU evaluated the effectiveness of your sales proposals? Do your proposals: Focus on your prospect's needs? Showcase your expertise? Help you stand out from your competition? Demonstrate value and advance the sales cycle? If not, it's time to reevaluate.

Your objective in writing a proposal is to provide your client with enough information to prove your case and motivate the client to buy your services. So why do most proposals start out with the vendor's history? Company histories rarely lead to closed sales.

And why do most proposals focus entirely on the vendor's products and services, but never mention how those products and services will help the client solve a business problem or close an important gap? Facts alone don't motivate a prospect to say yes.

Winning proposals must be client-centered, not company- or product-centered. Most people buy because they're looking for solutions to problems, resources to close gaps, or the means to cope with difficult issues. This means that a proposal is not a price quote, a bill of materials, or a project plan. Those elements may be part of a proposal, but they are insufficient.

Four Categories

A winning proposal has four elements:

1. Evidence that you understand the client's business problem or need. Understanding customer challenges and pain points is an essential component to developing a winning proposal. People view major buying decisions with anxiety. The bigger the decision, the greater the anxiety. They know that even a well-intentioned vendor may end up wasting their time or their money or both. One way to reduce their anxiety and minimize their perception of the risk is to demonstrate that you clearly understand their problems, issues, needs, opportunities, objectives, and values.

For example, studies show that soft-

ware buyers place a greater value on a vendor's ability to understand the customer's business than a vendor's ability to deliver innovative technology. Whatever is driving the client's interest, you must show that you understand it and base your solution on it. Research your prospect's needs before creating your proposal to understand the key challenges of the decision makers. Then, in your proposal, demonstrate that you truly understand what your customers are worrying about today.

2. A compelling reason for the client to choose your recommendation over others. This is your value proposition. You may write a proposal that meets the customer's requirements, recommends the right solution, even offers the lowest price, and still lose. Why? Because a competitor made a stronger case that their approach offers a higher ROI, lower total cost, faster payback, or some other measure of value that matters to the customer. Most proposals don't contain any value proposition at all. They contain pricing, but no esti-



mation of the rate of return the client will get from choosing you. Failing to address the client's needs and present a compelling value proposition are the most serious mistakes you can make.

Provide insight that can help prospects manage risk and capture opportunities. Decision-makers are always looking for strategic advice they can use. When you illustrate benchmarks and information that can help them make more informed decisions and better meet their goals, you position yourself as a trusted partner or advisor.

3. A recommendation for a specific approach, program, system design, or application that will solve the problem and produce positive business results. Most proposals contain no recommendation at all. Instead they contain descriptions of products or services. What's the difference? A recommendation explicitly links the features of a product or service to the

client's needs and shows how the client will obtain positive results. And a recommendation contains language that unmistakably shows that the vendor believes in this solution: "We recommend..." or "We urge you to implement..."

Understanding the business needs of your customers should be the driving force behind your proposal, not the product or service you are trying to sell. Proposals should speak directly to your potential client. Rather than overwhelming your audience with more information, connect your product's features and benefits directly to your prospect's unique business issues. Adding intelligence can turn your product-centric proposals into a valuable next step in the sales process. By focusing on key issues and touching on their market, operations, products, or clients, you'll validate the business problem that your solutions solve and deliver a valuable proposal.

4. Evidence of your ability to deliver on time and on budget. You want to show the evidence that helps answer the question, "Can they really do this?" Good evidence includes case studies, references, testimonials, and resumes of key personnel. You may also include project plans, management plans, company expertise, and other forms of evidence (white papers, awards, third-party recognition). Avoid throwing in everything. Keep the evidence focused on the areas the customer cares about. Build intelligence into your marketing materials and proposals to demonstrate understanding of their key business issues and gain even more credibility with the decision makers.

These are the four essentials. Every scrap of data, figure, and paragraph in your proposal must provide one or more of them, because they address the three key factors on which every proposal is evaluated: 1) Responsiveness: Are we getting what we need? 2) Competence: Can they really do it? 3) Value: Is this the smartest way to spend our money?

If you follow the basic structure—first summarizing the client's needs, then showing their potential for gain or improvement, third recommending your solution, and finally substantiating that you can do the job—you will see an increase in your win ratio. **SSE**

Bobby Martin is an industry intelligence expert and president of First Research: www.firstresearch.com. Tom Sant is an expert on proposal writing and founder of The Sant Corporation: www.santcorp.com.

ACTION: Improve your proposals.

Selling Services

Sell service as product.



by Jon Whitcomb

WHY DO SO MANY SUPER-stars from the product industry fail in the world of services? Does it mean that selling a service is harder?

I don't think that it's harder to sell services; it's just different.

The services business is the business of selling things the customer cannot see, taste, or feel. Although the expected results are different for every organization, I've identified three musts in services sales:

1. You must figure out how to measure success before you begin the project. You can't manage what you can't measure. In the technology industry, we always measure whether we're meeting deadlines and staying within a budget. Determining a return on investment (ROI) is a key decision factor. Make sure you have a consistent model for measuring ROI when you approach the client. The hardest part about selling a service is giving the customer the confidence that what they're buying is real; therefore, the key for any successful intangible sale is to paint as clear a picture of the final outcome or product as possible.

2. You must understand the unique situation your client faces at that moment. Product salespeople use the same set of questions each time to determine if the client is a good fit for their product. Services salespeople use a consultative approach to figure out exactly how to develop a solution for that client's situation. Great services reps know how to fit their capabilities to the needs of the client. They quickly gain a client's trust and establish credibility so that the client invests the time to explain their problems. Services salespeople spend most of their time listening and asking questions.

Your success relies on your client's willingness to adopt your solution. You need to put yourself in the client's seat, customize your service offerings to fit their need, and then leverage your experience, capabilities, and potential to create a tangible solution.

3. You must try to productize your services. An excellent services firm tries to make as much of their service offering as repeatable as possible. To succeed in this goal, you must know the underlying delivery model for your particular company's service. Just as a product salesperson needs to know the features and benefits, a services salesperson has to know their company's expertise, best practices, and prior successes and failures.

For every project we do at my company, 30 percent of our effort is tailored to the specific organization. The other 70 percent are proven processes that we know work in most every situation.

In a services sale, you've most likely performed 70 percent of the effort

many times before. By focusing on a specific business process or industry solution, you may grow that repeatable portion to 80 or 90 percent. By developing repeatable processes, you can articulate to a client the expected outcomes and agree on the project's success.

As a manager, you need to give your sales team the confidence to put themselves out on a limb. When they do, their confidence in their sales and service capability grows, and they love their jobs.

Good services salespeople not only believe in their product, they prove to their client that they've provided a strong ROI. **SSE**

Jon Whitcomb is Sales VP for Digiener, a technology and management consulting firm based in Minneapolis. Visit www.digineer.com.

ACTION: Improve your ability to sell services.

MANAGEMENT/STORIES

Accountability

Build it into the culture.



by Bea Fields

"WHEN IS JOHN GOING TO get me that report?" "What is going on in marketing?"

When will they finish that project?" "I can't believe Mary is so late in making those phone calls." "Okay...who dropped the ball this time?" "That's not my job."

Does this sound familiar? If so, your team may be facing a big challenge with accountability, which results in finger-pointing, frustration, and broken trust. Personal responsibility and accountability can put an end to the blame game, saving you millions of dollars by increasing productivity, customer service, and job satisfaction.

I offer you five ways to increase accountability. They require building a culture of accountability and adopting accountability as a core value.

1. Communicate the big picture. Accountability stands a better chance of succeeding if everyone embraces a larger responsibility for success. Talk individually with team members about how their project affects the vision and mission of the company. People can make wiser decisions from the context of the big picture rather than from the perspective of what may seem to be a detailed and boring task.

2. State clear expectations. If one person on the team does not meet your expectations, the entire team can fail.

At the start of any new project, state the expectations clearly and repeat them often until your team really gets it. These expectations need to be crystal clear—including dates, who is responsible for what, the details of the task, and how you want the finished product delivered. If your expectations are fuzzy or confusing, your team can break down, and the fine details can fall through the cracks.

3. Form accountability work groups. Develop shared accountability among team members by forming accountability groups that give team members the permission to speak and listen in a frank and open manner. Members can discuss their struggles, weaknesses, and insecurities related to the goals and growth the team intends to achieve.

4. Move to action. For accountability to work, people need to know that failure of completion will come with certain consequences, such as written warnings, loss of a bonus, or extra hours served on a weekend to complete the project. Without consequences, your employees won't take you seriously.

5. Have a reward and recognition program. Employees need to know how their efforts are driving the company forward, and share in the fruits of their hard work. The offer of increased pay and benefits (vacations, time off, and other perks) can keep accountability and morale high and can motivate people to to high performance. **SSE**

Bea Fields is president of Five Star Leader Coaching and Training, and author of The Magnetic Customer Service Program and The 12 Foundations of Leadership. Visit www.fivestarleader.com.

ACTION: Increase accountability.



Sales Leadership

You can grow again today.



by Danny Cox

HAVE YOUR LEADERSHIP skills developed as fast as sales techniques change and markets shift? It's a sobering question that demands an honest answer.

The market demands new methods of selling along with an emergency call for managers to lead their salespeople across a new threshold and unmapped field. The ability to lead a sales team through treacherous times is needed.

Your success largely depends on your attitude toward personal growth as a leader. Today's problems can't be solved with yesterday's managerial techniques. The manager is in trouble whose daily plan contains such entries as: Bury head in sand early today. This could be the day I'll be saved by some brave knight on a white charger!"

You are the brave knight on the white charger! Now is not the time to throw up your hands, but to roll up your sleeves. It's not too late!

When you make the decision to be more of a leader, you need to understand that leadership isn't about threats—a threat is not an incentive to do well. Nor is it about cloning—salespeople do not wish to be carbon copies of their manager. They do want to know the basics of what has worked for others, but they also want the help of a leader who uses coaching techniques applied to each individual so that each may experience personal growth that complements each person's personality. Nor is leadership a demand for loyalty. Loyalty can't be demanded, only earned. The good leader knows that if loyalty is desired, it must be given away first. Loyalty is a two-way street that the leader more often than not must travel first.

Leadership is about respect—the recognition that salespeople grant to the person who has been instrumental in helping them grow. And it's about being a stabilizing influence. The salesperson looks to the leader as not only a source of growth but someone to turn to for help in solving a problem. This leader must also be "the bridge over troubled waters" during a tough market. This bridge is a well-laid out plan for the next 12 months and is paved

with encouragement for the deserving.

Questions to Address

Determine your present position in the market and with your salespeople by answering these 10 questions:

1. Have I surrendered my leadership to the market conditions?
2. If my salespeople are only as good at sales as I am at sales leadership, how good would they be?
3. My salespeople enjoy working for me no more than I enjoy being their



leader. How much is that?

4. My salespeople will improve as they see me improve as a leader. How much improvement have they seen from me in the last 12 months?
5. Salespeople should learn and improve with a personal growth program. If one of my people asked me to describe my own plan, what would I say?
6. How does each of my salespeople feel after a conversation with me?
7. My salespeople grade me daily on my mood, morale, enthusiasm, and motivation. How are my grades?
8. Just because someone needs my time doesn't mean that person deserves my time. How good am I at dividing my time on a priority basis?
9. Great leaders can control their temper, be patient, be more understanding, and show more class while doing it. How do I stack up here?
10. When salespeople succeed, the leader stands up and says, "They did it!" But if that group fails, the leader must say "I did it!" Am I willing to accept that responsibility?

Once you complete this soul searching, analyze your weaknesses and strengths and those of each person on your sales team. Write it down under

four column headings: Name, Weaknesses, Strengths, and Strategy.

You must know both positive and negative in order to deal with each person realistically. Since this is sensitive material, treat it as top secret; don't leave it where others can read it.

As you give thought to each individual's strengths, you gain a new enthusiasm for the potential of each person. It is then time to move to strategy.

Effective strategy is built on this principle: The great leader of people is aware of each person's weaknesses, but communicates with each person's strengths. When the leader shows salespeople how they can best use their strengths to get the job done more productively, dramatic turn-arounds happen.

Realistic goal-setting is the next order of business. Fantasy-setting means making a big goal but never taking the time to determine what has to be done daily to achieve that goal.

Setting realistic new goals means accepting responsibility to improve.

The moment a leader stops growing, leadership is surrendered to stagnation, followed by turmoil and panic. Therefore, one important goal is continuous growth as a leader—continually learning, innovating, and applying what works. This leader is inspired by many, but a copy of none. His strengths help others to apply techniques that inspire honest respect from the team.

This new leader becomes the personification of Albert Schweitzer's ideal: "Example is not the main thing. It's the only thing." Salespeople not only take note of their manager becoming more of a leader, but are truly inspired to use more of their own potential. The motto or mantra becomes *growth and accomplishment*.

The person who says "I can't change" is admitting that improvement as a leader is out of the question, and that the salespeople are as good as they will ever be. The "no new tricks for old dogs" syndrome is a self-imposed barrier—built by repeating too many yesterdays and creating a new plan for daily sales that dovetails with a long-range plan.

The person who fails in this attempt to become a leader is not the person who has no talent, opportunity, strengths, or goals—it is the person who quits. Success as a leader comes from the inexhaustible capacity to go on. **SSE**

Danny Cox is a business speaker and author with Acceleration Unlimited. Call 800-366-3101 or email Danny@DannyCox.com.

ACTION: *Grow in your sales leadership.*

Get Unstuck

Get the deal signed.



by Dianna Booher

STALLERS TYPICALLY SUFFER from indecisiveness.

They may or may not be a powerless tiger or political misfit, but the result to you proves to be the same: meeting after meeting; phone conversation after conversation; request after request for more information, proposals, pricing breakdowns, references, and evidence of results—and still no decision. Eight suggestions may help.

1. Ask yourself, "Why the indecision?" Buyers may stall for any number of reasons. Your response, of course, will depend on the reason: They can't decide about the product or service. (Response: Offer more evidence and proof.) They can't decide about you or your organization. (Response: Increase credibility.) They can't determine how the decision might go over. (Response: Help them gather input or show value.) They are posturing for a price discount. (Response: Wait.) The answer is no, and they're too timid to tell you. (Response: Ask point blank and tell them to be straightforward with you.)

2. Offer guarantees. Create opportunities for the indecisive to touch, see, feel, and experience your product or service. Provide all the possible evidence of results. Put them in touch with references. Delay payment options until the buyer can sample your service and trust that you will deliver.

3. Help the indecisive to pass the buck. If stallers can't make a decision no matter what guarantees you offer, help them to pass the decision off to others—their boss, colleagues, or task force. You still have a better chance of selling to an action-oriented committee than a stalled individual.

4. Create deadlines or incentives to buy. People tend to act under pressure and react in crisis. It may be that your buyers can't decide until there's a deadline. So create a discount that's good only until X date. Offer a bonus that's good for only Y weeks. Mention the benefit of seeing a demonstration and enrolling in X training for 50 managers—but only if a contract is signed in time to make the demo and training arrangements by Z date.

5. Decrease the frequency but increase

the volume. Decisions demand emotional energy for stallers. To remove the pain, decrease the number of buying decisions and the order frequency as you increase the order volume so that the person orders from you only one time per year instead of once a quarter.

6. Limit choices to the important few instead of the meaningless many. Don't let trivial decisions overwhelm stallers' overloaded circuits so that they pull the plug on the buying situation. Arrange all the details of your most popular choices into Plan A, B, and C choices. Offer those options as packages so stallers don't have to tackle them step by step, decision by decision.

7. Write contracts with automatic renewals. Allow stallers to make as few decisions as possible. For example, pro-

pose a multiyear contract. You then can add renewal clauses that require no action from the staller to remain in force unless you opt to raise your prices.

8. Rev your engine before you get to the intersection. Don't wait until you need a decision to ask for one. Start early and assume that the staller will renew an expiring contract, mentioning new value you'll be offering. Don't wait until a few days before you need to get a buyer signed on the dotted line. Chances are likely you'll lose the contract. Stallers need time to adjust to any change. **SSE**

Dianna Booher is president of Booher Consultants. This article is adapted from From Contact to Contract (Dearborn). She is the author of 42 books and delivers keynotes, breakout sessions, and training. Visit www.diannaboohr.com or call 800-342-6621.

ACTION: Get the deal signed.

PR/NETWORKING

Passionate Begging

Don't knock it—it works!



by TJ Walker

SOMETIMES THE MOST effective sales pitch has nothing to do with logic.

Occasionally, the best way to convince someone to do what you want during a presentation is to simply beg—with passion!

While on a family reunion near Charleston, SC, I found a fossilized shark's tooth. I showed it to all of the children at the reunion, including my favorite nine-year-old niece. I was planning to give her the shark's tooth after all of the other children had looked at it. When I showed it to her she said, "That's nice," and quickly moved on to her games.

I was still going to give it to her. But then I showed the Shark's tooth to my cousin's nine-year-old son, Cameron. His eyes widened and he asked me, "Can I have it?" I tried a little spin, "You can have it to look at for now!" "Can I keep it?" he asked. I tried dodging: "It's a nice shark's tooth isn't it?"

"Please, please, please, can I have this shark's tooth?" Cameron said. Alas, my powers of spin were no match for this nine year old. I gave Cameron the shark's tooth.

What did Cameron do well that is relevant to anyone making a pitch?

1. He asked directly. Sales pitches often fizzle because there is never a direct request for the business or a specific action.

2. His enthusiasm was infectious. People want to give new business to people who are excited about it.

3. He was persistent. When I tried to change the subject and even when I told him "no," he just kept asking me. He did not take no for an answer.

4. He was polite. At no time did he cry, pout, or act like he would be mad at me if I didn't give him what he wanted.

5. He was positive. He kept talking about how great the tooth was and how happy it would make him to have it. He was never desperate or depressed.

6. He was personal. He wants to be a paleontologist—the tooth fit in with his passions in a credible way.

7. He expressed his happiness and joy. I knew if I gave him the tooth he would be incredibly happy—and he was. Most people like to make other people happy when they award a contract.

Cameron made me understand that no one would appreciate the gift more. People often give new business to the person who wants it the most.

8. He made me comfortable by letting me know that no matter what I did with the tooth, he would still love me and there would be no hard feelings.

9. He made me slightly uncomfortable by letting me know he might keep asking for it and that he would be hugely disappointed if he didn't get it.

Learn from Cameron. When making a presentation where you want someone to take action in your favor, be positive, passionate, and persistent. **SSE**

TJ Walker is the president of Media Training. Call 212-764-4955 or email tj@mediatrainingworldwide.com.

ACTION: Learn a thing or two from Cameron.

Aim for Success

Focus on a narrow target.



by Thomas Winninger

ARE YOU MAKING THE mistake of thinking the whole market is your market? Are you advertising with the thought of reaching everyone? Then you are overspending on your ad budget, and with this shotgun approach you are missing your target market.

You are likely selecting advertising mediums designed for mass marketing rather than micromarketing. Think about the last ad you placed. Can you report the readership percentage? Did the people you wanted to reach even see your ad? Did you spend your money on a great ad only to get little response from it?

You can make smarter and more effective use of your marketing and advertising dollars if you utilize the micromarketing approach. It targets your message to the specific customer who has a high need or interest in your product or service. Micromarketing is more apt bring you a customer who has a higher incentive to purchase rather than the casual shopper.

Ask Three Questions

In selecting the media for micromarketing, you must define how close to a pure percentage of your customer that media reaches. The next time you want to advertise, clearly answer this critical question: *Of all the people picking up the newspaper, how many are actually enthusiasts for our product and proven investors or customers?*

Businesses that micromarket tend to use some type of database marketing, including direct mail or door hangers. You may effectively use door hangers in a neighborhood where your database shows you have previously sold your product. If you have satisfied customers in a specific neighborhood, other people in that neighborhood by their location profile will likely be interested in your product and service.

The key is to target specific customers. National consumer list companies can provide lists of people in your targeted market area with similar characteristics to your current customer profile. You will need to provide them

with critical profile information about your target customers—such as the magazines to which they subscribe, the cars they own, and the economic strata they are in. With the right data, a good consumer mailing company can identify by these characteristics the specific people you want to reach.

No one medium is less or more effective than the other. The wise manager isn't using just one format; the key is to use a good mix of several formats, then apply them with micromarketing techniques. Newspaper tends to be one of the most mass-driven rather than micro-driven marketing mediums. Television by network alone is much the same. You can be more micro-driven in TV if you select programs that your customers tend to watch. Your sales account rep can



give you detailed information about listener demographics, including what the average age is of a viewer at a certain time of day, the income, occupation, and lifestyle. Radio, by its listener profile, can be used more effectively in terms of micromarketing if you target customers that listen to certain types of programs at certain times of the day. Radio programs are effectively formatted around specific listener demographics. Cable advertising tends to be a reasonable investment because the cost of an avail per viewer is less expensive, and you can use the same technique of program or entertainment selection to pinpoint certain viewers.

The marketing manager who has a well-defined customer profile has made the first step toward micromarketing. Knowing your customers' lifestyle, for example, what cars they drive, what sports they enjoy, what organizations they belong to, what their leisure time activities are, will help you narrow your profile. Each time you find something out about a customer lifestyle, it makes your target purer and smaller. Lifestyle marketing in essence becomes micromarketing. It may seem that making that target smaller will make it harder to hit. However, if you work hard to aim your advertising at a specific customer, your micromarketing will become much more successful, and you'll get the bigger bang out of your advertising dollars. **SSE**

Thomas Winninger is the founder of Winniger Resource Companies, Inc. Contact Thomas at 952-896-1900 or visit www.winniger.com.

ACTION: Try micromarketing.

Game Plan

Gain a position.



by Rob Waite

STRATEGY IS A UNIQUE GAME plan designed to gain a position in a specific market.

It is unique because it takes advantage of your strengths while minimizing or neutralizing your weaknesses and exploiting the weaknesses of your competitors.

Obviously, this is easy to say but very hard to do. Strategic development is complex because markets are fluid; they change rapidly and frequently.

Nonetheless, a plan does need to be developed, tested, implemented, and revised as circumstances dictate. As I see it, developing a strategy has six steps: 1) you develop a concise mission statement; 2) you articulate a clear vision; 3) you think how to achieve that vision; 4) you test and revise the plan; 5) you implement and execute the strategy; 6) you revise the strategy as circumstances warrant.

Most business strategies go awry in three areas: 1) development of the mission or vision is either skipped or stated so broadly and full of fluff that it means nothing to anyone; 2) the business jumps directly from its strategic statement right to implementation, thus skipping the due diligence that would dramatically increase the odds of success; 3) the business spends far too much time on the due diligence, getting stuck in paralysis by analysis.

Strategy can be elusive to manage. It takes the view from 40,000 feet to the subatomic approach to development. It takes team thinking and acting like a manager. And it requires constant, dispassionate evaluation and adjustment.

Before you can develop a strategy, you must articulate a vision that will guide and focus the business. Address three questions: 1) Who are we? 2) Where are we going? 3) How are we going to get there? A vision needs to be exclusive rather than inclusive.

This is the essence of focus. If the vision includes too much in an effort to be all things to all people, it will become unwieldy or meaningless. **SSE**

Rob Waite is author of The Lost Art of General Management and co-author of Walking With the Wise II. He also produced the interactive seminar The Six Figure Job Search. Visit www.robwaite.com, call 724-934-9625, or email rob@robwaite.com.

Action: Improve your business strategy.

Authentic Speaking

Go from stage fright to delight.



by Matthew Cossolotto

THE ABILITY TO STAND UP and speak comfortably and effectively to audiences of all sizes is a recognized leadership skill. Sadly, far too many people suffer from trepidation, anxiety, or fear associated with speaking to audiences.

If you want to shift from stage *fright* to stage *delight* and become a more comfortable, confident, and authentic speaker, make five mindset shifts:

1. There's no such thing as public speaking. Speaking with ease and comfort to friends, colleagues, and loved ones comes naturally to most people. Only when you treat certain speaking as public speaking do you feel anxiety. The first step toward fear-free, authentic speaking is to believe there's no such thing as public speaking. This mantra will put you in the right frame of mind and expand your comfort zone. As you visualize speaking from within your inner comfort zone, you will tap into your natural ability to connect and communicate.

2. You can only speak to one person at a time. You only engage with one person at a time. While you're talking to one person, looking directly into the eyes of that person, others can listen in. But you're really only talking to that one person. Speak to that person for a few moments, then with others in the audience. This mindset shift enables you to replace the fear-inducing concept about speaking to audiences with the comfort-zone concept of speaking to one person at a time.

3. Don't be content with content! This shift opens the door to whole-brain speaking. You move beyond a left-brain focus on information and tap into right-brain imagination, intuition, enthusiasm, passion, and emotion. Yes, you should focus on the content, structure, and logic, and prepare and rehearse. But then think about the connection, the relationship, about bringing your heart—your emotion and enthusiasm—to the occasion. Try to engage the right brain—your own and that of the audience. What comes from the heart goes to the heart.

4. The audience supports you. This shift moves you from self-consciousness to support-consciousness—the recognition that the audience actually supports you. The fear of public speaking is often rooted in the notion that the audience is against you or judging you. The reality is the audience supports you. They want you to do well, to be engaging, informative, and motivating. Most of all, they want you to be comfortable being yourself. By believing this, you stop focusing on potential pitfalls, on what's at stake, on what could go wrong. You focus on the the wonderful opportunity to share your ideas.

5. Make sure the real you shows up. Fear-free, authentic speaking means making sure the real you shows up to do the talking. If you're fearful and ill-at-ease, stressed out and full of trepidation,

the real you won't make an appearance—you'll send a poor substitute to give your speech. Let the natural, authentic, comfortable you give the presentation, not a self-conscious, overly scripted, stressed-out version of yourself. Visualize how you feel when you talk with friends and bring that person to the podium to give your presentation. Charisma comes from being poised and comfortable inside your skin in front of an audience.

Make these five mindset shifts, and you'll go from stage fright to stage delight. You and your audiences will be glad you did. **SSE**

Matthew Cossolotto is president of Ovation International, providing executive-level speechwriting and coaching services. Visit www.ovations.com, call 914-245-9721, or email matthew@ovations.com.

ACTION: Make these five mindset shifts.

MANAGEMENT/EXCELLENCE

Starting Over

Create fresh opportunity.



by Robert Dammeyer

INCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE a more active role in your career success. It is easy to blame outside factors: "The boss is out to get me." "They don't value my abilities." In some cases, it is easy for you to cry foul, wallow in self-pity, and lament your losses.

The business world is constantly changing, and you need to embrace it. If you are positive in your outlook, you can brainstorm a new product line or a fresh start.

I choose to view adversity as an opportunity. In 2003, I came upon Swirl, a frozen beverage business, and was attracted to the possibilities. In a day when obesity is a serious issue, Swirl could position itself as a healthy alternative to calorie- and sugar-rich drinks. Also Swirl is enjoyable; after all, who doesn't enjoy a frozen chocolate-raspberry cappuccino or strawberry daiquiri?

My wife Cathy and I founded Culpepper Sales LLC to own, market, and support the Swirl brand. We built our business model on distributorships.

Many of Swirl's distributors remind me of myself, wanting (or needing) to start a new career. The transition is never easy, but there is a payoff. Most people enjoy working for themselves.

You need to be keenly aware of your position and prepare for the possibility of having to find or create a new life. The mentality of "it can't happen to me" often leads to a rude awakening.

Once you decide to begin anew, by choice or chance, you should treat the experience as a chance to re-invent yourself rather than as a road hazard.

Research. Learn about your market, margins, customers, and competitors. Immerse yourself in books, statistics, facts, figures, historical data, and other relevant information.

Take responsibility over your situation. Again, pointing fingers is easy. It is

more difficult to look introspectively after a job loss and see how it could have been averted. Learn from your experience when setting out to achieve new goals. Be confident, but not arrogant. Have the self-assurance that you can achieve your dreams with hard work.

Don't allow negativity to enter the picture. I have never worried about where my next paycheck will come from. Believing in yourself leads to wonderful accomplishments. Negative attitudes only produce negative results.

Plan ahead. Be in it to build and sustain a successful business. Commit for the long haul. Nothing worth having or building is easy.

Quality service and quality products are always in high demand. So consider the end of one opportunity as the beginning of another. **SSE**

Robert Dammeyer is the founder of Culpepper Sales LLC. Call Robert at 972-818-SWIRL or email info@swirldrink.com.

ACTION: See opportunity in starting over.



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