

Sales and Service Excellence

OCTOBER 2006

Build Loyalty

From the Inside Out

Identify Prospects'

Buying Signals

Moving From
Conflict
to **Dialog**

Dianne Durkin
President and Founder
The Loyalty Factor

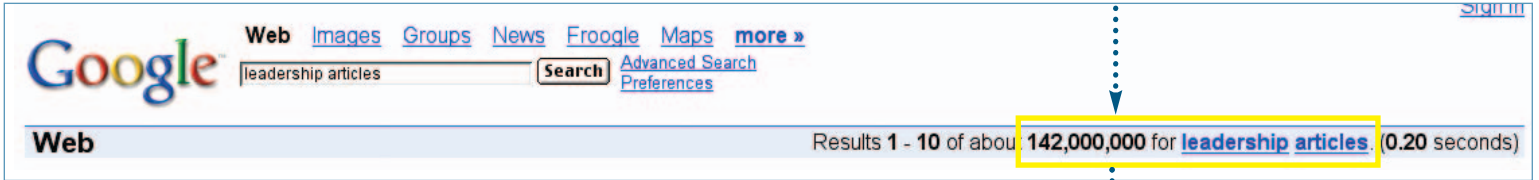


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Sales and Service Excellence

Volume 6 Number 10

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MANAGEMENT/LOYALTY

Building Loyalty

Take eight proactive steps



by Dianne Durkin

LOYAL EMPLOYEES MAKE A company solid, stable, and profitable, and unhappy, disgruntled, and disloyal employees have the opposite effect. When employees are loyal to their companies, managers, colleagues, and work, the quality of their work is better, the product or service they create is better, and customers are happier because they get better service and products, which makes them loyal to the company. The end result is that employees and customers, together, are responsible for building a company's brand. Employee loyalty builds customer loyalty, which builds brand loyalty. It's as simple—and as difficult—as that.

Companies that lack employee loyalty can change their culture and build loyalty from the inside out. Here are the eight most important elements to building employee loyalty:

1. State clearly the purpose and values of the company and share them with everyone. The purpose of the company is why it exists—the defining reason the organization was created beyond making a profit. The values of a company are akin to its ethics—the

standards by which it operates, and its expectations for how its employees will conduct business.

If a company is to have success, employees must feel connected and committed to the values and purpose of the company. Employees want to know that the company's purpose is to make the very best product for the price, or the most elegant, or the highest quality, or environmentally friendly. Employees want to know they, and their product or



service, are making a difference in people's lives in some way. If they do not believe their product or service is making an honorable, true, and valued difference, they will not stay. Every company needs to say what they do and why. They also need to tie the purpose and values to individual goals and roles within the organization. In this way, employees will know what they

are working toward each day.

For example, the mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of customer service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and company spirit. The commitment that Southwest provides its employees is as follows: *We are committed to provide our employees a stable work environment with equal opportunity for learning and personal growth. Creativity and innovation are encouraged for improving the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines. Above all, employees will be provided the same concern, respect, and caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest customer.* The results include 31 years of profitability and the highest employee satisfaction in the industry.

2. Align and communicate. Without good consistent communication at the top and all the way down and across the organization, people become concerned about the future of the company and their own future as well. This is when they update their resumes and leave.

Good communication starts with making sure everyone is aligned with the strategic direction, especially the senior leadership team. They have to be totally aligned, trusting, and supportive of one another, and communi-

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cate their alignment in everything they do and say. Senior managers are the visible signs that people watch. One step out of alignment, and concerns and rumors start.

Managers communicate with employees either by keeping them informed or by not communicating. Both ways send a message. When managers keep communication open, employees are aligned, and all work is transparent, the message to employees is that they matter and they are important. When managers do not share information with employees and do not include them in decision-making, the message they are sending is the opposite. Employees who feel that they do not matter to a company are poor producers and are quick to exit.

3. Listen to employees. A person on the manufacturing floor, an analyst in marketing, or a customer service representative may see and hear things that could improve productivity or the competitive advantage of the company. Companies need to provide a forum and an environment that is open and allows people to speak out without repercussions and make suggestions that can be acted upon. There are thousands of great ideas sitting in employees heads, and yet many managers suppress them, which brings employee morale down. Once morale is down, employees leave and find another company where their innovative and creative ideas will be heard and acted upon.

4. Engage people in solutions. Once suggestions and ideas are heard, engage those same individuals in determining the feasibility of implementation. This expands their thinking and enables them to think outside their present responsibilities. They have to consider long-term impact, cost of implementation, actual process, and timeframes for implementation. By doing this, companies grow their future leaders. People want to grow. Either give them opportunity, or watch them walk out the door.

5. Training is the new 401(k). Most companies train their people on the elements of doing their job: how to run a particular machine, competitive program, or financial processes and procedures, for example. This is important, and people also need to be trained on how to better interact across the company, what others functions and departments do, and how to quickly understand the company's financials. People want to be in a continual growth and learning mode. Training is a benefit to them and to the company. After the standard benefits are in place, companies can keep good employees on board by investing in their training. Give them the opportunity to continually learn new things and they will be forever loyal.

6. Celebrate successes. Rewarding and recognizing employees, on an individual level, team level, and company level, is critical. People need frequent reminders that they

are doing a good job and on the right track with what they are doing. Small and frequent awards are the best; for example, Dunkin Donuts and Starbucks gift cards, or pizza lunches. Managers must say "Thank you" with sincerity. Fewer words mean more.

7. Invest in your managers and leaders. An employee's manager, supervisor, or leader is the most important person to any employee. This person is their lifeline to information, recognition, challenges, and future vision. Being a manager is one of the best and most difficult positions. Managers and supervisors need to be coaches, friends, disciplinarians, and sounding boards for those in their charge, while also improving process, procedures, and setting new directions. They have to know how to work with people in their 20s and people in their 50s. They need direction and guidance, training and inspiration, and they need it consistently. People leave managers more readily than they leave jobs. To maintain productivity and loyalty, invest in your managers and supervisors.

8. Create a caring culture. Create a caring corporate culture that is based on trust, integrity, fun, and passion. Be sure it is open to provide for great communication. Ensure it respects and values everyone's contributions. Hire for the culture and attitude. It makes a huge difference. For example, Wegmans is a highly successful supermarket chain in upstate New York that recently expanded to Virginia. This company hires people based on the values of caring and trust, and the company expects their employees to live those values every day. Their corporate philosophy is that everything is a learning event for their employees and the more the company invests in training, the more it comes back to the bottom line.

At jetBlue Airways, everyone is known as a crewmember. Hiring is based on attitude, and a shared value system that consists of safety, caring, integrity, fun, and passion. In addition, the company operates under five principles of leadership, which include treating people right, inspiring greatness, and communicating consistently.

Building loyalty drives the global economy. Loyalty is all-encompassing. These eight considerations shape where people work, how long they work there, and how wholeheartedly they apply their mental energies. The companies named as *Most Admired*, *Best to Work For*, and *Best Run* are companies where management is dedicated to understanding the needs of employees, customers, and shareholders, and where trust and loyalty are elements of their business purpose. **SSE**

Dianne Durkin is president of The Loyalty Factor, a training and consulting firm. She is an adjunct professor at Penn State University's Executive Management Program, and author of The Loyalty Advantage. Call 603-334-3401 or visit www.loyaltyfactor.com.

ACTION: Proactively create loyalty in your organization.

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Identify Buying Signals

Pick up on when your prospects are ready to buy.



by Bill Brooks

IDENTIFYING BUYING SIGNALS refers to the ability to analyze the events in a sales situation and determine when the prospect is ready to buy. Salespeople with these skills are attuned to the signals of their prospects or customers.

This skill of identifying buying signals combines intuitive insight, people-reading ability, focus, and listening. To improve your ability to identify buying signals, look at three key elements: focus, nonverbal cues, and feedback.

Focus. Sometimes it's difficult to shift your focus away from yourself or your career. You enter the sales process with a pre-determined personal objective. However, to succeed in sales you have to focus on your prospects and their wants and needs at all times.

Salespeople who can't keep their prospect in the front of their minds mentally shift focus to their product or organization. This shift becomes obvious when the salespeople stop using the words *you* and *your* (speaking of, to, and about the prospect) and start using *my* and *our* (speaking of and about the product and organization). Remember, everything is about your prospect. If you're talking about the product or organization, keep the focus on what it means to, and how it benefits, your prospect.

Consider the different effects of these two sentences:

- "You can feel confident about the support you'll receive from our award-winning customer service reps."
- "We offer outstanding support to all our accounts based on our award-winning customer service department."

The first sentence is all about what the prospect will get. *You can feel*, and *you'll get* focus squarely on the prospect. The word, *our* obviously refers to the organization, but it's in reference to what the prospect gets. Further, the use of *reps* personalizes the experience the prospect can expect to have.

The second sentence keeps the focus on *we* and doesn't tell the prospect what it means for them. Try to avoid words that lump all your clients into categories or things, such as *accounts*. Also, let your prospects know they'll be dealing with

people, not bureaucratic *departments*.

This puts your customers at ease and ensures you keep your focus on them. In sales, you can only focus on one thing at a time—yourself, your organization, your product, or the prospect. To identify buying signals, you must focus totally on the prospect, yet remain flexible enough to recognize all the possibilities and opportunities.

Nonverbal cues. To identify those nonverbal indications that your prospect is ready to buy, remain alert to pick up on them. Positive physical cues include eye contact, nodding in agreement, leaning forward, smiling, and a wrinkled brow. All of these physical cues are ways your prospect or customer can alert you that they are



engaged and are forming positive decisions about your offering.

Some other nonverbal cues include: How many people are in the room during your presentation? Who's in the room? The CEO? Buyer? User? What are they doing? Are they checking their Blackberry or leaving the room to take phone calls? Do the buyer and user discuss issues you bring up in the presentation?

Looking at indicators—such as how many people are present and who they are—can indicate how seriously your offering is being considered. Watching people during the presentation can shed more light on buying signals. How would you interpret the situation if the CEO waved off an assistant who brought in a message? Be open to others and constantly listen and observe.

Feedback. Feedback means that you need to stop at various points along the way and test to see if your prospect is ready to buy. Start being alert for *how* to questions from the prospect: How do we receive the product? How do we

take care of paperwork? How do we handle any changes to the order? How would you help me implement this? Such questions presuppose an acceptance or purchase on the part of the prospect. The prospect is moving closer to making the purchase decision.

Also, look for *when* and *where* questions: When can we take possession? When do we put it in place? Where would we place it? Where can we get in touch with you?

Also listen for statements like *when we* or *as we*. *When* communicates some idea of *yes, I am interested in doing this—now I am looking for a time frame*. The transfer of ownership must occur first in the prospect's mind before it can ever result in a sale. *As* means *while we are doing something like this*. *We* suggests that your prospect is looking for a partner and has emotionally engaged you as their partner.

Make skillful use of feedback questions. These are weigh stations along the way that allow you to implement reality checks. These reality checks start in the application or presentation stage of selling your product or service.

When you ask for your prospect's reactions and feelings, you: 1) learn if your presentation is on or off target; 2) enable prospects to admit how they feel and commit to you how they'll act; 3) reinforce positive feelings; 4) clear up misconceptions.

Here are six ways to ask your prospect about their reactions and feelings: *How does it look so far? What do you think? Does it look like it might work for you? Does this look like it is something that might be of interest to you? How do you feel about this issue or benefit? Do you have any questions?*

As long as you get a positive response to such questions, continue your presentation. However, when you get a negative or neutral response, realize that your presentation is off target. You can then ask, "What is it about this (product, feature, or benefit) that causes you to say that it is not something you would like or be able to use?" Get your answer. Then ask if there is anything else that is causing your prospect concern. If not, you have isolated what is off target. You can then go back and ask what the specific concerns are. You have now identified and isolated the problem. Now you can resolve it before moving forward.

Don't get so wrapped up in your sales process that you miss the buying signals your prospects are giving you. **SSE**

Bill Brooks is president of The Brooks Group. Email dhillenbrand@thebrooksgroup.com.

ACTION: Tune in to these signals.

Sales Support

Be sure you can succeed.



by Richard Ilsley

HAVING A BETTER MOUSE-TRAP does not guarantee that customers will beat a path to your door. Your product or service, no matter how good it might be, does not guarantee success. You need to convince your potential customers that your product or service will deliver benefits to them—ideally, benefits that are not available from competitors. You must be clear about your plans for prospecting and selling potential customers, and provide sufficient prospecting and sales support.

To better support your salespeople, address three questions:

Question 1: How much prospecting and sales support do our salespeople need and get? The initial two-day sales training is simply inadequate.

Question 2: Which members of the team can offer business development mentoring? You should know who the top salespeople and the best mentors are. Look at those people who are already being successful and to learn what brings them success. What does best practice look like?

Question 3: Does a viable business development plan exist? Even if one does exist, draft a new plan to define what the business potential looks like for you and what support you need. Most plans are over-optimistic in terms of the time it takes to generate new business.

Ask Questions

What questions should you consider when you draft your development plan?

Who is the profile customer? You are not selling to everyone. Some customers are more valuable to you than others. Define these profile customers and then estimate how many you have and where they are. Most of your business will come from just a few customers. Be clear who these critical customers are from the start so that you can target them. Don't waste time and money chasing the wrong customers. How many of these profile customers are available and how many will you need to win to have a viable income and business?

Why should these potential customers buy from you? You need to be clear whom you will be selling to and why they should buy from you rather than their current suppliers. Chances are

that the need you are fulfilling is already being fulfilled by somebody else. So, what might persuade the customer to give the business to you?

How will the customer learn about your product and service? For some products and services, this will mean that you will have to meet the customer. This is certainly true if you are selling professional services to companies. You will need to be clear about how profile customers will find out about your products and services.

What benefits will each customer or type of customer receive as a result of using our product? The classic mistake made by inexperienced salespeople is to focus too much on product or service features rather than benefits. Features are

simply the criteria associated with your product and service, and there will be many of them. Benefits are those few things that bring value to the customer. You need to define why potential customers should spend time with you.

Finally, you need to define exactly what support you believe you will need and be sure that this support will be available to you. You need to be confident that all the support you require is available. Then write a simple business development plan and look for evidence that this plan is achievable. **SSE**

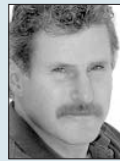
Richard Ilsley is the author of the Open University recommended book, Best Practice—A Primer.

ACTION: Support your salespeople.

SALES/EFFICIENCY

The 80/20 Principle

Dare to live without limits.



by Bryan Golden

ARE ALL OF YOUR EFFORTS equal in terms of the results they produce? Is there a way to leverage your time and efforts so that the energy expended yields four times the results?

The 80/20 principle states that that 20 percent of your efforts yield 80 percent of the results. Some applications of this principle include: 20 percent of the problems cause 80 percent of your frustration; 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work; 20 percent of the people cause 80 percent of your interruptions; 20 percent of your friends and relatives provide you with 80 percent of your support; and 20 percent of your recreational activities provide you with 80 percent of your enjoyment.

Even though the percentages won't be exactly 80/20, the relationship between cause and effect is rarely balanced. More than half the results in life are produced from far less than half of the actions. The objective is to utilize this principle to focus your energy on the 20 percent of the actions that produce 80 percent of the results.

What are the origins of this principle? In the late 1800s, Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist, found that 20 percent of the population owned 80 percent of the land, and that 20 percent of the peapods in his garden yielded 80 percent of the crop.

Application of this principle can lead to dramatically increased productivity and efficiency by focusing your energy on the 20 percent of the causes that produce 80 percent of the effects.

Addressing the 20 percent is not necessarily the easiest path. When confronting problems, the most readily resolved ones are often the ones that will yield a minimum of relief. So you tend to focus on the 80 percent of the problems that yield only 20 percent of the results, because these problems are easier to deal with. You want to address the big problems that yield the biggest results.

Many people apply the reverse of the principle. They spend 80 percent of their time and energy on those actions that generate only 20 percent of the results. They tend to be distracted by doing first those things that are easier. And then they feel frustrated that there isn't enough time to do all of the things they want to do.

By focusing on the 20 percent of the activities that yield 80 percent of the results, you leverage your time by a factor of four. If you take action without thinking and planning, you are likely acting emotionally. If you act emotionally you will address the 80 percent that yields 20 percent first. But if you plan your efforts, you can first do a cost benefit analysis to ensure that you are focusing on the 20 percent that yields 80 percent.

The people who achieve so much are most likely applying the 80/20 principle daily. Plan your work to focus on the 20 percent that yields 80 percent—and then work your plan. **SSE**

Bryan Golden is a management consultant, motivational speaker, adjunct professor, and author of Dare to Live Without Limits. Visit www.BryanGolden.com or email bryan@columnist.com.

ACTION: Obey the 80/20 principle.

Conflict to Dialogue

Use hostage negotiating techniques.



by George Kohlrieser

THE CHANCE OF BEING TAKEN hostage with a weapon is small. However, anyone can become a metaphorical hostage in a relationship with a boss, employee, colleague, or customer without a physical weapon being involved.

Most people are dissatisfied in their jobs. In fact, 72 percent of employees in the US (88 percent of employees in Germany) describe themselves as emotionally detached in their jobs, primarily because of poor relationships with their boss or colleagues. Employees who feel dissatisfied and powerless to change have, in effect, become hostages.

The fear of conflict and ineffective conflict management strategies cause employees to settle into a state of helplessness similar to what hostages feel. Yet there are ways leaders can influence others to feel empowered.

You tend to avoid conflict because your brain is hardwired to avoid potential danger. However, you can learn to do what is counter-intuitive—to step toward conflict instead of stepping back into passivity. Conflict must be seen as a challenge, a problem to be solved, an opportunity—something positive.

The techniques of hostage negotiators provide a powerful framework for managers to use in any situation where people are not functioning at their best. What managers can learn from hostage negotiators:

Create and maintain a bond even if there is not a natural liking of one another. Keep a positive state by focusing on constructive outcomes and on common goals regardless of any desire to defend, attack, or give up. Use this positive state to influence the other(s) into a cooperative relationship for finding productive solutions. Manage emotions by focusing the mind's eye in the brain on positive outcomes to see the *benefits* beyond the pain, loss, and frustration. Use questions rather than telling to overcome resistance, to invite a change of mindset, and to focus on the benefits. Address problems with honesty, authenticity, directness, and genuine concern for the dignity of others. Use the law of reciprocity and appropriate concession-making to build trust. Help the other person save face by offering

choices and encouraging self-regulation. Use dialogue to gain understanding, to discover new information, and to maintain social bonding. Learn to use yourself as a secure base to create trust and confidence to explore creative solutions.

Dialogue is an essential tool to develop a climate of collaboration—a powerful combination of listening and talking. The process of dialogue starts with an attachment and a bond between two or more people and the most important sign of dialogue is how mutual influence occurs in the process. If I do not let you touch me, influence me, change me, then I am not in a dialogue. Dialogue requires a mindset of discovery where thinking together leads to creating something new—a seeking of a greater truth beyond what each participant has alone.

Many leaders find it is easier to get into a debate or an argument. The exchanges usually go on too long with too many details and end in frustration. Effective dialogue is measured by the depth of understanding, the degree of mutual influence, and the quality of new ideas generated rather than the time spent talking.

Primary Blocks to Dialogue

There are four blocks to dialogue:

- 1. Passivity.** This is when a person displays and uses language of withdrawal or non-responsive behavior. The focus of the person is on inhibiting himself or herself rather than engaging in problem-solving behavior.
- 2. Discounting.** When people say something to minimize, maximize, disrespect, or put down another person or themselves, they are discounting.
- 3. Redefining.** This involves not answering a question or changing the focus of the transaction by avoiding something that may be uncomfortable or emotional. If this continues, the dialogue shifts away from the point being discussed. People appear to *talk past* each other and not *with* each other, or they simply go in circles. The original point may even be forgotten.
- 4. Over-detailing.** The dialogue does not proceed because the person gives excessive detail, overwhelming others

with too much information, and the important point is lost or hidden. It can also be recognized by exhaustion in listening to the speaker.

Secondary Blocks to Dialogue

There are six secondary blocks to dialogue. These may or may not occur in conjunction with one of the primary blocks.

- 1. Being too rational.** Conversation is conducted too analytically, without any personal warmth, emotion, or bonding. It discounts the feelings connected to the topic.
- 2. Being too emotional.** This is when an emotion such as anger, sadness, or fear takes over in the dialogue and the person stops thinking clearly about the subject. Emotions drive the person to say and do things he or she later regrets.
- 3. Over-generalizing.** If someone takes a small piece of truth and exaggerates it to an extreme or absurdity, they are over-generalizing—making statements that are meaningless, overwhelming, and lacking in relevance. Such statements often involve the words *always* or *never*.
- 4. Abstraction.** This occurs when the conversation moves too far off subject and the focus and thought are

lost. Ideas and concepts are not connected to a specific incident, are disconnected from reality, or are too philosophical.

5. Lack of directness. This means avoiding an issue or problem, or talking around the subject. The sentences are clear but avoid the topic.

6. Lack of honesty. When one or both persons are

not honest with the other, then open dialogue becomes impossible. This may involve a lack of self-disclosure, distortion of true feelings, or lack of authenticity that can be reflected in a simple or a serious lie.

More than one block may exist at the same time. Be aware when you or others are blocking dialogue.

Most negotiators engage in mutual monologues and other forms of ineffective communication as reflected in meetings that are too long and boring, adding little value and making participants exhausted and frustrated.

Hostage negotiators achieve a 95 percent success rate. You can achieve similar success rates by using some of the same techniques effectively. SSE

George Kohlrieser is author of *Hostage at the Table (Jossey-Bass)*. He is a psychologist, hostage negotiator, international trainer, consultant, and professor of leadership and OB at IMD. Email george.kohlrieser@imd.ch or visit www.imd.ch.

ACTION: Dialogue with your clients.

Twisted Thinking

It can kill your sales.



by Wendy Weiss

ONE OF MY FAVORITE BOOKS is *The Feeling Good Handbook* by David D. Burns, M.D.

This book looks at changing the way people think—and thus changing their personal behavior and job performance.

Dr. Burns lists 10 forms of twisted thinking that apply to sales and service professionals.

1. All-or-nothing thinking. Everything is black or white. If a situation falls short of perfect, then it's a total failure. One example is dieters who have one cookie and then eat the entire bag, since they've already "blown their diet." Another example would be salespeople who, since they do not have the time to make 100 calls in a day, make no calls.

2. Overgeneralization. Seeing a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. People who overgeneralize use words such as *always* or *never*. "Cold calling *never* works for me." "People *always* reject me."

3. Mental filter. Picking out a single negative detail and dwelling on it to the exclusion of everything else. For example, you receive many compliments about your presentation. If, however, you receive one critical comment, you obsess about it and forget about all of the positive comments.

4. Discounting the positive. You reject positive experiences by insisting they don't count. If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well.

5. Jumping to conclusions. You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. For example, you might conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you with no evidence to back that up. Before a making a phone call, you tell yourself, "They're not interested." "I'm bothering them." "They'll probably say *no*."

6. Magnification. You exaggerate the importance of your (or your company or product or service) problems and shortcomings. You also minimize your (or your company or product or service) desirable qualities.

7. Emotional reasoning. You

assume that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are. "I am uncomfortable making phone calls," so "Most people do not like to receive my calls"; therefore, "Cold calling does not work."

8. "Should" statements. You tell yourself that things should be the way you hoped or wanted them to be. "I should have made that sale." *Musts, oughts* and *have to's* are similar offenders. *Should* statements that are directed against yourself lead to guilt and frustration. *Should* statements that are directed against other people also lead to anger and frustration. "My prospect should call me back."

9. Labeling. Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. You attach a negative label to yourself or to others. Example: You make a mistake and then say to yourself, "I'm a loser." These labels lead to anger, anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem.

You may also label others. When a

prospect does not respond as you had hoped you may tell yourself, "He's a jerk." Then you feel that the problem is with that person's character instead of with their thinking or behavior. This makes you feel hostile.

10. Personalization and blame. You hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't entirely under your control. An appointment with a new prospect is cancelled because that prospect has left the company. You think, "If only I was better at prospecting, this wouldn't happen." Some people blame other people or circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways that they might be contributing to the problem.

If you use any of these forms of twisted thinking (most of us do), your performance will be negatively impacted. **SSE**

Wendy Weiss, the "Queen of Cold Calling," is a sales trainer, coach, and author of *Cold Calling for Women*. Visit www.queenofcoldcalling.com or email wendy@wendyweiss.com.

ACTION: Avoid twisted thinking.

SALES/DETERMINATION

Determination

It's a key to success.



by Tim Connor

WHAT DOES DETERMINATION mean to you? Is it sticking it out in tough times? Never quitting, no matter what? Believing in yourself in spite of setbacks? Pursuing your personal mission in spite of opposition? Hanging in there, regardless of the odds? Overcoming a sales slump or a tough year?

I am always fascinated with textbook definitions. Webster defines determination as "the quality of being resolute; firmness of purpose; the act of coming to a conclusion or resolving something or resolving a dispute." You can see that one word can have different meanings or interpretations. I believe there is much more to words than their definitions.

Determination: You have it, or you don't. You use it, or you don't. It is either a part of your emotional make up, or it isn't. You either believe in your destiny, mission or purpose, or you don't. You have faith in the fulfillment of your dreams, or you don't. You work through issues, challenges, problems, failure and adversity, or you

don't. You trust yourself to take right actions and make right decisions, or you don't. You believe in greatness, abundance, happiness and success, or you don't. You settle for less, second best, losing—or you don't. You try one new strategy, approach, action—or you don't. You stay with it until it works, regardless of whether the outcome looked similar to your plan, or you don't. You try something new, original or creative, or you don't. You count your blessings, or you don't. You are a survivor, or you are not. You enjoy learning and becoming rather than just the outcome, or you don't. You continually invest in yourself, or you don't. Your word is your bond, or it isn't.

I could go on like this forever, but I know you have other things to do besides reading my ramblings. Determination or de-termination contain the words terminate (end) and de (not). Determination, then, is to not terminate, end, or give up or in—no matter what. It's persistence personified.

How are you doing these days? Things a little tough right now? Or are you reaping the results of your previous determination? Either way, keep the vigil. You can't ever let up. Life won't let you. The moment you do, you invite life's scorn, wrath, and another opportunity for failure, disappointment, and pain. **SSE**

Tim Connor is a motivational speaker, sales trainer, author, and president of Connor Resource Group. Call 704-895-1230 or email tim@timconnor.com or visit: www.timconnor.com.

ACTION: Make this month a masterpiece.



Improve Your Presentations

Develop confidence.



by Ty Boyd

IF YOU HOPE TO GET RID OF your fear of speaking and presenting, forget it. Even though I train people how to improve their presentation skills and speak at conferences, I still get nervous before a speech or presentation. So does every other person I know.

These nine tips can help you manage your fear to improve your next presentation:

1. Before the presentation, practice relaxation techniques to calm yourself. Here's one exercise. In the privacy of your office or home, tense all your muscles, one by one, then loosen them. Begin with your toes. Curl them tightly, hold for a count of five, then relax. Appreciate how relaxation feels. Repeat with your calves, thighs, stomach muscles, up to your face. Allow the tension to drain out of you as you release each tensed muscle. Use your breathing to generate calm assurance. Breathe deeply into the diaphragm. Fill your torso with breath, then exhale. Imagine you're gently blowing out your tension and fears. Breathe in calm and confidence.

2. Fear is a habit. You can create a new habit by faking it until you make it. The simple task of walking through your fear—doing what you fear, then doing it again—transforms your fear into courage.

3. When you're in front of your audience, remember that most of us don't show our nerves. You likely look more comfortable than you feel. Confidence and nervousness aren't mutually exclusive. You can feel nervous on the inside but still have confidence.

Look out at those faces and see that the audience is on your side. The audience rarely wants or needs all the power we give them. Sometimes you may be in an adversarial relationship with your audience, but not often. Most of the time, they want to like you. They want to think you're smart and entertaining. They will meet you halfway.

Never tell the audience you're nervous, or that you haven't had time to prepare. When you do that, you create fear in them—fear that you'll fail and

they'll witness it.

4. Focus on the audience's needs rather than on yourself. Don't think, "Will they like me? Will they think I know what I'm talking about?" Instead, remind yourself that what you have to say is valuable. Figure out how you can deliver your message in a way your audience will hear.

Channel your fear into passion and energy for your subject. Focus on your passion and energy, not on yourself.

5. Reinforce your connection with audience members by seeking a positive response as quickly as possible.

Ask for comments or raised hands. Initiate a group activity. The sooner you can get a positive response, the quicker your anxiety will drop.

6. Be vulnerable. Many people, especially men, believe we give away our power when we allow our emotions or imperfections to show



through. But by being vulnerable, you let people see who you really are. And you put yourself on the line for something you believe in passionately. Vulnerability can be a cornerstone of your power.

7. Stop trying to be perfect. You've never been perfect, and you'll never be perfect. So if your benchmark is to be perfect, you'll fail every time. Make your goal to be the best you can be at this moment. Don't confuse excellence with perfection.

8. Compensate for your fear by coming prepared. Practice your presentation before you give it. Your preparation will kick in and prevent a poor performance. Once I gave a speech at Radio City Music Hall after a nearly sleepless night. Before the speech, the stage hands warned me that they had dropped the orchestra pit to clean it. They told me precisely how far I could walk without dropping off the stage. But after I delivered my opening lines, the audience was very responsive, and I was fired up. To create greater intimacy with the audience, I inched forward.

Fortunately, I looked down just in time to see that my toes were hanging over the stage edge—three stories down. My practice had been so thorough that I continued to give my talk, but my body froze. All I could do was stand still until someone realized what had happened and raised the stage. My practice enabled me to keep delivering my message. Your practice will, too.

9. After you prepare yourself to the best of your ability before the presentation, wash away doubt and fear by thinking, "So what?" The audience may not respond as I would like. So what? The event may not come off perfectly. So what?

If you follow these steps, you'll be in great position to do your very best. Great speakers have inner fire. They speak with authority. They connect with the audience through storytelling. They use their voices well. And they know how to prevent fear from overpowering them.

SSE

Ty Boyd is CEO of the Excellence in Speaking Institute and author of The Million Dollar Toolbox. Call 800-336-2693, email ty@tyboyd.com, or visit www.tyboyd.com.

ACTION: Follow these nine steps.

The Prospect's Bill of Rights



by TJ Walker

WE, THE PROSPECTS OF sales presenters everywhere, demand 10 rights: 1) The right not to be treated like a dumping ground for data; 2) The right not to be bored to death; 3) The right not to be read to; 4) The right to be addressed directly (and not have to stare at the speaker's back); 5) The right to know exactly what the speaker is talking about within the first minute; 6) The right to look at PowerPoint slides that are understandable; 7) The right not to have to read PowerPoint slides that have so many words they are better suited for handouts or books; 8) The right to have speakers who are prepared for every aspect of the delivery of their message and never make excuses; 9) The right to have speakers who start on time; 10) The right to have speakers who end on time.

We hold these truths to be self-evident so we will never be bored again.

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

Coach for Success

It's your primary job.



by Tom Reilly

IF SALESPEOPLE REPORT TO you, coaching is your number-one job. Even if you have account responsibility, coaching your salespeople is still your primary job. It's how you improve your team.

- **If you believe you are too busy to coach, reread rule number one.**

Imagine saying to your family, "I'm too busy to spend time with you."

- **If you believe that hiring experienced professionals relieves you from coaching, reread rule number one.**

Even Tiger Woods works with a golf coach. Are your salespeople better at their jobs than Tiger is at golf?

- **You can't coach from the locker room.** You must be in the field with your reps to provide them with accurate and meaningful feedback.

- **Coaching is for the salesperson's benefit.** This is not the time for you to unload pent-up frustration. Your goal is to guide your salespeople, provide corrective feedback, and inspire them to rise to the challenge. It is about *them*.

- **The quickest way to change behavior is to reinforce the effort initially, not the results.** Profit follows performance, and performance follows effort. If salespeople put forth the effort you desire, they will create the results you want, and they need your on-the-spot coaching to adjust their performance to work more effectively.

- **Coach behavior, shape attitudes.** You have greater control over your salespeople's behavior than you do their attitudes. However, the more you coach their behavior, the more you can influence their attitudes. If you coach them to perform at a certain level, their attitudes will shift to fit their behavior. For example, when the sales force realizes that cold calling is not so difficult, their attitudes will shift to parallel the calling behavior.

Tips for Coaching

Providing feedback is coaching. Use these ideas for delivering feedback:

- **Inspect what you expect.** If your salespeople recognize that you are not following through on your commitment to inspect what you expect from them, they get sloppy on their calls and paperwork.

- **Be specific with your feedback.** It does not matter whether you are praising or delivering corrective criticism, the salesperson must know exactly what he is doing right or wrong.

- **Ignore the small stuff.** Often, managers nit-pick. Focus on major critical issues that affect performance.

- **Use a variety of reinforcers.** Don't assume that commission or bonus on a sale is reward enough. Praise and recognition are effective complements.

- **Focus on behavior.** If your salesperson's attitude stinks, cite behavioral examples (cynical comments, tardiness, or frowning). It is easier to change attitudes when people know which behaviors signal a negative attitude.

- **Explain the feedback.** If you are having a problem with something the salesperson does or does not do, tell him why it is an issue.

- **Lend a helping hand.** Help the per-

son change the behavior. Change is easier when someone offers assistance.

- **Give three times more praise than criticism.** Reinforce the behavior you desire.

- **Do it often.** Ongoing dialogue is vital. Nothing you say in your annual performance reviews should be a surprise. Any surprise means you failed to deal with the behavior in the past.

- **Show empathy.** Everyone gets nervous and defensive when the boss starts handing out criticism. Understanding this shows your humanity.

- **Standardize your feedback.** Have a standard format for delivering your feedback. This helps salespeople know what to expect and on what they will be evaluated. Also, it keeps you focused on mission-critical behavior. **SSE**

Tom Reilly is the author of *Coaching for Sales Success: How to create the value added sales culture* (Motivation Press). Visit www.TomReillyTraining.com.

ACTION: Improve your coaching.

SALES / NETWORKING

Networking

Are you too self-centered?



by Bonnie Lowe

MOST NETWORKERS ARE too centered on their own needs. It's natural to look out for your own self-interest when you start any activity. So if you are focusing your networking efforts on obtaining things you want (more leads, referrals, sales, and business), it's understandable. But it's also a huge mistake.

You can suspend your self-interest by implementing three techniques:

1. **Ask yourself, "How can I help them?"** Think what you can offer them, such as: something they can't do, something they won't do, or something they don't want to do. Chip Tarver, author of *First Contact Secrets*, said, "If you can do any of those three things, you have value in their eyes. They will think you're worth getting to know. Your goal should be to help others. If your only goal is to help yourself, you'll become known as a *taker*, not a *giver*. Givers have the greatest networks."

2. **Be kind.** Practice random acts of kindness in your networking. Have you ever been delighted or pleasantly surprised when someone did you an unexpected favor? Didn't that make you feel good about him or her?



Imagine how you can stimulate such strong, positive feelings in others about you when you go out of your way to perform kind acts for others.

Helena Bouchez, owner of Lenalinks Creative Technical Writing & Consulting, said, "Acts of kindness create instant rapport. You become top-of-mind for the person you help. All help given comes back multiplied. So don't get fixated on keeping score and extracting something from the person."

3. **Be patient.** Some benefits of your kindness and generosity will be immediate, but not all. And that's fine, because you should be focused on lasting relationships, not quick sales.

As David Garfinkel, founder of World Copywriting Institute, told me, "Often you'll help someone, and years later, just when you need it, people will be there for you in ways you never could have anticipated." All business is ultimately about people and relationships. We all feel better doing business with people we like. When you are generous to others and genuinely care about them, they will want to help you in return.

Giving first invokes the law of reciprocity: If you do something for someone else, that person will feel obliged to return the favor. The result of all this generosity? Long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationships. **SSE**

Bonnie Lowe is owner of *Lowe-Commotion Publications*. She is the author of *Networkaholics Revealed!* and *The Job Interview Success System*. Call 707-447-1063 or email Bonnie@Lowe-Commotion-Writing.com.

ACTION: Learn to give first.

Coach to WOW

Create the right culture.



by Kimberly King

IN A WOW CULTURE, YOU consistently provide the most effective and efficient service to your customers while maximizing all sales opportunities. It is a progressive evolution of seeking opportunities to become more productive and customer-focused.

A WOW culture enables you to drive higher customer loyalty, boost employee morale, achieve higher productivity, and stimulate more sales. The goal is for you to evaluate your organization and identify areas that do not WOW you, generate a strategy to move to WOW, monitor your progress, and determine the change that you are making. Creating WOW is about being strategic and holding everyone accountable for their responsibilities. It's not easy, but you can make this happen in your company.

WOW Critical Components

The most critical component of a WOW culture is the effectiveness of your frontline supervisors. If you have the best mentors, you will achieve WOW. But what qualifies you as having the best mentors? Put yourself to the test with these questions.

1. Do you put the focus on the mentoring and motivating of your employees? Too often, the job description of a manager includes the task of coaching, but the reality is that they spend the majority of their time doing anything but mentoring their employees. Taking escalated calls, dealing with time off requests, attending meetings, sifting through emails, and analyzing reports take priority over coaching. In a WOW organization, the mentoring is not just part of the job description; it is the number one priority, responsibility, and focus of management. Identify the amount of time that supervisors spend in a mentoring capacity. Remember that individuals do what they like to do and feel comfortable doing. If they are not comfortable coaching or don't like mentoring, it will fall to the bottom of their priority list. Make mentoring a priority and provide supervisors with the knowledge and the processes so that they will like to do it and become good at mentoring.

2. Do you provide your supervisors with a mentoring mission statement?

Just as your company requires a mission statement to keep on track and ensure that everyone knows the direction and goals, your managers need a mission statement to ensure consistency and a defined course of action. Provide this mentoring mission statement to your supervisors and hold them accountable for achieving it. "Inspire others to continually strive for higher levels of performance through creative and strategic methods that are always focused to achieving your goals." Ensure that your supervisors truly live all four parts of this mission: Are they inspiring? Are they focused to achieving higher lev-



els of performance? Are they creative and strategic? Are they focused to achieving your goals? When I see supervisors failing to make eye contact, acknowledge their employees, ask strategic questions, and model the desired behaviors, I question their effectiveness as mentors. A good mentor lives all the components of the mentoring mission statement.

3. Do you ensure that your mentors know the standards and consequences?

What do you see, hear, and experience as you closely examine the activities going on around you? Do you see meetings that are unfocused, hear conversations that are not directed to solutions, see lethargic reactions to customer problems, or feel a sense of indifference to achieving your goals? Examine what is happening and develop your list to begin your plan of execution. What you tolerate becomes your standards. If you tolerate mediocre performance, you will achieve mediocre results. Once you

set your standards, ensure that everyone knows the standards and understands the consequences for not following the standards. Ensure that your supervisors feel comfortable with the communication skills that will enable them to mentor others in a way that holds the employees accountable while still inspiring them. When I hear employees use monotone voice inflections that sound bored, or word choice that sounds curt or rude, and the supervisors explain that "that's just the way they sound," I know that they are tolerating less than the desired standards.

4. Do you mentor your mentors?

Once you provide your mentors with a mission statement and training to effectively coach, they must be provided with reinforcement in order to master the art of mentoring others. As you observe supervisors mentoring, assess how well they:

- model the desired behaviors
- role-play different scenarios to ensure employee's understanding
- deploy creative and strategic methods for driving change
- engage the employee in performance discussions
- demonstrate word choice that convey confidence and assertiveness
- acknowledge the employees to inspire their confidence.

Look at the behaviors of your supervisors to ensure that they are obtaining desired results. Here are some key words and phrases that you DO NOT want to hear:

- "Do you think you might work on this?" (Too passive.)
- "That's okay." (Said when employees apologize for not meeting standards. You imply that you pardon them for not following the standard.)
- "That was a great job." (Provides false praise and is not specific.)
- "Why don't you think about creating a worksheet with the suggestions we spoke about." (Does not clearly state the desired expectation.)
- "The company feels this is the right decision." (Lacks ownership.)

Spend time with your supervisors and hold them accountable for living the mentoring mission statement. Listen closely to their words. Identify ones that come across as uninspiring, doubtful, aggressive, or unclear. Direction from your supervisors is the answer to achieving WOW results with higher sales and stronger customer loyalty. **SSE**

Kimberly King is president of InterWeave and creator of the Coaching to WOW workshop, products, and services. Visit www.interweavecorp.com.

ACTION: Improve your culture.

Share the Reins

Sell to your employees.



by John Abrams

IN 1987 I SOLD MY BUSINESS, South Mountain Company, to my employees (and myself). My sole proprietorship became an employee-owned cooperative. It was a hinge point in the history of the company. Ownership has become available to all employees, enabling people to own and guide their workplace. The responsibility, the power, and the profits all belong to the group of owners.

Shared ownership and control is our method at South Mountain. "Every employee, an owner" is our intention. More than half of our 30 employees are full owners. Each time another comes in, and each time a new management invention encourages more voices to be heard, we move toward the goals of democracy, fairness, and transparency.

When I first contemplated the conversion, I was both frightened and excited. I had the power, and the greatest financial and emotional investment; therefore, I had the most to lose. Under my ownership, the company had become a viable, profitable entity. Sometimes, it felt like control was slipping away. But it occurred to me that perhaps I had the most to gain. Aside from the lure of clearing this new path and seeing where it led, the possibility of shared responsibility and ownership promised new freedoms for me and new achievements for the company.

Our ownership system has turned out to be an important aspect of the stability of the company. People tend to stay. Nearly 20 years later, I am fully convinced that the conversion to employee ownership has been a critical factor in the long-term success of our company.

Ten Good Reasons

Here are 10 reasons why you should consider sharing ownership:

1. Maturity. Once a viable company has been established, restructuring to employee ownership can be a natural part of the maturation.

2. Commitment. Employee ownership encourages a sense of empowerment, deeper connections, and greater commitment (and retention) among the employee owners.

3. Freedom. The potential loss of control for the founder is more than bal-

anced by the new-found freedom that comes with shared responsibility.

4. Participation. If you keep the entry fee low, you encourage full participation.

5. Equity. By using a system of internal capital accounts through which the profit is shared and equity measured, owners can track their stake and accumulate a nest egg.

6. Effectiveness. Over 11,000 companies, with 8.5 million employees (and \$400 billion in assets) have employee ownership. Maybe these companies know something.

7. Legacy. Employee ownership is the ticket to legacy and smooth transitions. By sharing ownership early, the tough question that comes when founders are ready to retire—what to do with the business—is avoided.

8. Justice. The inherent injustice of our economic system (all wealth goes

to the shareholders) can be tackled by shifting wealth to the real stakeholders, those who actually create it.

9. Productivity. A democratic workplace gives meaning to our work lives and encourages good performance. A happy workforce is a productive one.

10. Accountability. If the people who will also bear the consequences, better decisions are likely to result.

Employee ownership at South Mountain has made us better problem-solvers and better dreamers. Ownership begets responsibility. As Tom Friedman once observed, "In the history of mankind, nobody has ever washed a rented car." **SSE**

John Abrams is the CEO of South Mountain Company, an employee-owned build/design firm. This article has been adapted from his book, The Company We Keep (Chelsea Green Publishing), www.chelseagreen.com.

ACTION: Consider sharing ownership.

JOB/INTERVIEW

Join a Winner

Interview the company.



by Gregg Stocker

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF A company you're interviewing at will be a good place for you to work? By asking the right questions at the interview, you can find out whether the culture is toxic, whether management cares about its employees, and whether the company will be healthy and the job secure five months from now.

There are ways you can find out if the organization is in poor health or a bad place to work. Here are 10 questions you should ask:

1. What is your company's mission and purpose? Be wary if you get conflicting answers from different people, or answers are focused on money.

2. How frequently are drastic cost-cutting directives initiated, and what is the usual response to these directives? Be wary if the usual response is layoffs, pay cuts, or other actions that negatively impact employees or customers.

3. What are your company's key metrics? Be wary if they are heavily weighted toward financial measures.

4. What can you tell me about your nonfinancial measures (customer satisfaction, on-time delivery, employee morale, employee teamwork)? Be wary if these things don't get the attention that financial measures do.

5. What is your process for developing leaders? Why don't you have anyone inside the organization to fill this position? Be wary if you get inconsistent responses from several people you ask, or if the managers you meet weren't developed from within the company.

6. How do you evaluate employee performance? Be wary if the company uses performance reviews. If they do, at least they should be using a 360-degree review process (where feedback is received from the person's boss, peers, and direct reports).

7. May I have a tour of the facility?

Be wary if your host won't give you one; if the facility is cluttered, dirty, or disorganized; or if workers aren't proud of their areas.

8. What's the most important issue regarding suppliers? Be wary if you don't receive consistent

answers from several people you ask, or if there is an emphasis on price containment, rather than quality.

9. What is your process for developing new products or services? Be wary if you get different answers from different people, or negative descriptions by people who aren't included in the process but should be.

10. How would my bonus be calculated? Be wary if the calculation involves meeting goals that other people and departments do not also have. **SSE**

Gregg Stocker is the author of Avoiding the Corporate Death Spiral (Quality Press). Call 845-679-2188 or visit www.cslewispublicity.com.

ACTION: Ask questions in job interviews.

SMART Communications

Drive performance and compliance.



By John Sammarco

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE communications to boost performance?

A SMART communication system is Succinct, Manageable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time-Based.

Succinct. Writing succinct communications requires effort—assessing whether portions of the communication are superfluous or tangential to the key point. It also requires a bit of emotional separation from the topic of communication. Often, individuals who have invested a lot in a project or task slip into *activity reporting*, writing and submitting a mini-journal of their activities. However, this activity clutters communications and ultimately works against them, as the manager might perceive them to be ineffective.

Some of the most profound communications ever written have been succinct: The Preamble to the Constitution (52 words), Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (272 words), the Declaration of Independence (3,000 words), and Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream speech (1,550 words). The explanation of the Pythagorean Theorem is only 24 words, and the Archimedes' Principle is just 67 words.

Manageable. A good communication system requires a defined structure for format and frequency, so that the lack of structure doesn't become a distraction or obstacle. Many executives leave the structure of their periodic communication process to the individual, leaving themselves in the position of receiving various types of communication in various formats and at various frequencies—making it impossible to process and keep pace. Email is, when used properly, a great communication tool. However, when used as a periodic status reporting tool, it often leads to *email swirl*, where managers spend valuable time unraveling email chains, particularly when multiple versions of the same email abound, or some individuals reply at the top of the email while others reply at the bottom, and still others reply to a snippet of an email, leaving out the surrounding context. When looking to retain key communications, some email systems require attachments to be stored independent of the email, leaving managers to hunt for

lost attachments. You need a periodic communications system with structure.

Actionable. Making a communication actionable means writing it in such a way that the recipient can readily determine whether the communication is info-oriented (an FYI) or action-oriented, making it a *to do*. This requires you to put yourself in the shoes of your manager and ask, If I read this (and only this), would I know what I am being asked to do? Does the *ask* have clarity? If a manager has to work to understand what the action being requested is, then the task will likely be set aside. Attention and priority are given to those tasks that are clearly actionable.

Relevant. It's common for people who spend a great deal of their time on a project or task to assume that everyone around them (including their managers) are as intimate with the scope, schedule, budget, and personnel aspects of the work as they are. This can lead to leaving out relevant background and facts. Of course, this needs to be done succinctly. A project often takes on multiple names and



descriptions, each centric to the person writing the communication. When the communications are escalated up the hierarchy, they can't be properly associated. This can be remedied by clearly linking the communication to a specific project or task that has a defined name and description during a project or task.

Time-Based. Whether communication is information-oriented (FYI) or action-oriented, communicate a date that would indicate when the topic of the communication will be, or needs to be, finished. Since demands can be placed on you from many different stakeholders, you need time-based communication that provides key information for personal time management.

Improve Time Management

Time management is a top priority. Here are three recommendations:

1. Highlight what has changed. In recognition that some communications need to be re-communicated or revised over time, it's helpful to have team

members annotate them as "New," "Unchanged," or "Revised." This helps you to determine how closely it must be read, since a new communication will need to be read closely, and unchanged communication can be treated as a reminder and skimmed.

2. Prioritize the communications. Remember the urgency and importance matrices? These help people manage their personal task list by assessing and discerning which tasks are *neither urgent or important, urgent but not important, important but not urgent, and both urgent and important*. Taking a moment to assess the urgency and importance of your communications can help you focus on the highest priorities first. Cross-prioritizing is even more powerful.

3. Reassess the frequency and delivery day of communications. Most organizations require weekly communications. However, weekly frequency can undermine, rather than reinforce, the process. When status reporting is weekly, some individuals can feel pressure to "fill a page" to justify their job, rather than focus on writing succinct communications. I suggest that you consider moving a weekly process to bi-weekly (every other week) so that the reporting process is more meaningful. I also recommend that periodic reports be provided, whenever possible, on Friday afternoons so that executives can read them while the information is current.

Once you become compliant, change becomes the enemy. Changes to product offerings, marketing and advertising systems, time-keeping systems, billing systems, and accounts-payable systems can impact internal controls. These systems make it necessary for all employees to be aware of how their work may affect a company's internal controls and compliance. This challenge requires an ongoing, enterprise communication system that serves to inoculate a company against non-compliance.

Because change is evitable and time is of the essence, don't wait for multimillion dollar Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) or data warehouse implementations to put a SMART communication system in place. Sure, these initiatives can improve visibility, but you can achieve a great deal by improving the communication of information and facts already available and known. You will then have a distributed neural network of unparalleled capability and capacity. **SSE**

John Sammarco is the president of Definitive Business Solutions. Email JSammarco@DefinitiveLLC.com, call 703-757-7276, or visit www.DefinitiveLLC.com.

ACTION: Engage in SMART communications.

Sales Leaders

Either change or fail.



by Roy Chitwood

YOU NEED SALES LEADERS, not just sales managers, if you hope to thrive. Most change efforts are mere buzzwords and fads. The reality is *change or fail*. In this period of change, you can't manage the same way you managed before—the old way doesn't work. People rebel at the authoritarian leadership style; and if they are forced to endure it, they likely perform at 20 percent capacity.

We want to be led; we want leaders with human values and respect for our unique talents and the contributions we make. We want leaders who create cultures that nurture excellence, risk-taking, and creativity. Yet we often get managers who intimidate, manipulate, and lie to us.

Success depends on people, and to achieve success, people need real leaders who cultivate eight values:

Vision. Leaders need to develop the vision, and articulate that vision to the entire organization. This creates a common purpose with everyone working toward a common goal. This communication needs to be face-to-face—not videos, publications, or large meetings.

Trust. Without trust, vision becomes an empty slogan. Asking people to take risks, be entrepreneurial, and give up the known for the unknown requires a strong foundation of trust. For people to trust their leaders, their leaders must walk the talk. To talk about change without any visible change in the behavior of the leaders is like shoveling sand against the tide.

Participation. The leader's challenge is to unleash intellectual capacity by getting everyone involved in developing and implementing the vision so all employees feel they own the work.

Learning. Companies that train workers, involve them in decision-making, and give them a stake in the business are more profitable than those who do not. Developing skills in management, leadership, and communication is the key to a successful change. Become a superior learning organization and apply this knowledge to create real customer value.

Diversity. Today's leaders appreciate people's differences. Their definition goes beyond age, gender, ethnicity, and

includes differences in lifestyle, religious beliefs, working habits, and personalities. The best leaders are not threatened by individuality. They know that people are less willing to abandon their identities. As a result, people who retain their cultural heritage are more committed. People who feel equal and respected are likely to deliver superior performance.

Creativity. If you can't create or sell products or services, your future looks bleak. The market is over for bureaucrats. Leaders who create a climate for creativity are rewarded. Focus on the strengths of your people. Discover what people do well and ask them to do more of it.

Integrity. Today's leaders are people of authenticity, honesty, and integrity. They stand for something. Companies

with ethical reputations attract the best talent. They also attract and retain loyal customers. Consumers like doing business with honest and honorable people. Most leaders want to be ethical, but they face constant challenges. When it comes to ethics, the leader must show the way.

Community. Today's leaders do not just measure success in terms of profitability or earnings, but also by what they do for others—their contribution to society. By caring for other people and causes, leaders find a deeper sense of self-fulfillment. **SSE**

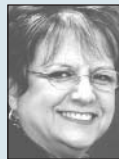
Roy Chitwood is an author and consultant on sales and customer service. He is president of Max Sacks International. Call 800-488-4629, visit www.maxsacks.com, or email contact@maxsacks.com.

ACTION: *Change the way you manage.*

MANAGEMENT/FEEDBACK

Feedback Fears

Enjoy productive interactions.



by Sharon Daniels

WHILE EVEN CONSTRUCTIVE criticism can be tough to take, often it can be just as difficult to give. Sharing feedback challenges managers partly because, if poorly received, their comments can spark a negative and unproductive exchange. However, with a little upfront planning and the right approach, you can get the results you seek. Here are five tips:

1. Communicate your positive intent. Approaching the conversation with a positive mind frame will make it easier for the other person to hear. Choose a time when you're not angry. Explain exactly what you'd like to discuss. By using non-accusatory statements, being objective, and pointing to a common goal—such as meeting deadlines or avoiding extra work—you'll get past the *us versus them* mentality.

2. Describe what you've observed. For feedback to be effective, the other person needs to believe that your points are valid. Make specific, concrete comments to establish common ground on which the two of you can build a solution. Avoid accusatory language, and use facts and figures whenever possible. One of the biggest hurdles in giving feedback is getting past a defensive reaction. By focusing on the behavior or action and addressing one issue at a time, you'll get a better response.

3. Discuss the impact. Let the other

person know how the action affects your or others' ability to do good work. It's best to state only one or two consequences or you might sound as though you're attacking. If you feel strongly about the situation, practice ahead of time so you can avoid sounding angry.

4. Ask for a response. If constructive feedback is going to pay off, you'll need both parties' ideas and involvement. Ask open-ended questions and pause so the other person can respond. Even if you don't agree, keep an open mind. Recap the person's key points to show that you understand and respect what they're saying, even if you disagree. That simple action can help defuse a negative situation.

5. Seek solutions. By focusing on solutions, you move the focus away from who's right and who's wrong. Take your cue from the other person. If he or she asks for help, offer suggestions and support. Offer to assist with problem-solving or provide training. If the situation becomes emotional, allow time for calming down. When appropriate, ask directly for the change you want, and leave responsibility for action with the other person.

Manage your expectations. Even if the interaction fails to transform your employee into a top performer, it will open a door to problem solving and mutual learning. And you may need to change your behavior to contribute to a solution. By making feedback a two-way street, you'll get the best results. **SSE**

Sharon Daniels is CEO of AchieveGlobal, a training and consulting firm providing research-based learning solutions. Visit www.achieveglobe.com, call 813.393-9360, or email sclarke@rfbcommunications.com.

ACTION: *Share feedback effectively.*

Captain Denny

Be the VP of customer satisfaction.



by Jeffrey Mayer

IT'S ABOUT 3:15 P.M. ON Super Bowl Sunday. I'm sitting at the United gate at LAX waiting to board a flight to Chicago after spending the weekend at the National Speakers Association's Workshop. Just as I start dozing off in my seat, a voice comes over the PA system announcing our flight. My ears perk up. I'm Captain Denny Flanagan. Welcome aboard. I'll be your pilot today. I want you to know that your plane is in good shape, and so am I. This is my first flight—today. We expect to have a smooth flight to Chicago this afternoon. I take your safety very seriously. Each and every one of you are my number one priority."

Moments later the announcement came to board the plane, and I got in line with everybody else. At the end of the gateway, Captain Denny was there to greet each of us as we boarded his aircraft. "Hello. Welcome aboard and enjoy the flight," he said, while handing each of us a 757 trading card. On the front is a picture of a United 757. The back side has all the aircraft's specs. Captain Denny handed out 182 cards.

I found my seat, settled in, and re-signed myself to missing the Super Bowl which had already begun. Minutes later a voice came over the intercom, "This is Captain Denny from the flight deck. If you want to listen to the Super Bowl, turn to channel 9. We'll try to get it for you as we fly to Chicago. We expect an on-time departure and arrival."

I put on my headphones and began listening to the game. For the next three hours, I heard most of the play-by-play as Captain Denny and the copilot searched for one radio station after another as we flew across the country. It's not easy keeping your radio tuned when you're flying at 10 miles per minute, but they did a wonderful job.

Shortly before landing I was given a business card, with a handwritten note on the back, by one of the flight attendants. It read, "Mr. Mayer, you are a valued customer and your business is greatly appreciated. Please let me know how we can exceed your expectations." It was signed, "Capt. Denny."

On the front of the card was a picture of a 757 with his name, email address, and cell phone number. The woman sitting next to me was reading her card. She had received the same handwritten note. So did the woman sitting across the aisle. Captain Denny had given a handwritten note to all 24 people sitting in first class.

A few minutes later came an announcement from the flight deck. "This is Captain Denny. When you boarded the plane I gave each of you a 757 trading card. On one of the cards I signed my name. If you have that



card, notify the flight attendant and she'll give you a United hat—or a Frank Sinatra CD if you're over 50."

Now that got my attention! Have fun with your customers. Provide good customer service. Pay attention to detail. Make your customers feel special.

I put Captain Denny's business card in my pocket. When the plane landed, he was standing by the door thanking us for having flown with him on United.

When I got home, I taped his card on my computer. Three weeks later I sent him an email asking if I could interview him. He called the next day from Portland. I asked him, "Where did you come up with the idea of writing a note to everybody on the airplane?"

"Hart Langer, Senior VP for Flight Operations for United, came up with this idea a few years ago. It's purely voluntary," Denny explained. "I do it for every flight when I have the time and the weather is accommodating. I write the notes in advance and leave space for the customer's name. Then I write it in when I get the passenger list."

Captain Denny says this about serving customers: "It's the customer who

signs your paycheck." His close friend, Bud Potts, a United Flight Manager, refers to Denny as the "VP of Customer Satisfaction." Here are just a few of his proactive gestures:

- **757 trading cards.** It was Denny's idea to create the 757 trading cards. He came up with the idea one day, and then tried to sell it to United's management. They had no interest. Being a good salesman, he wouldn't take no for an answer. Eventually Denny got to the VP of Advertising, who said, "I'll do it." And they printed up the cards. Denny shared his idea with his fellow pilots and found many who wanted to participate. His first printing was 1.8 million cards!

- **Helping kids who are flying alone.** Each year 250,000 children fly on United without an adult. One day Denny said to himself, "Wouldn't it be nice if these kids could call their parents, grandparents, or another loved one from the airplane and tell them they were fine and having a good time?" So, he came up with this idea: Give my personal credit card to a flight attendant and ask her to tell each of the kids that they can call a loved one. Today more than 400 United pilots are helping kids stay in touch with their loved ones.

- **Apples, oranges, and bananas.** On one flight he knew that there would be a long delay because of bad weather. Thinking ahead, he purchased several boxes of apples, oranges, and bananas. Once the plane was parked in the holding area, he walked down the aisle passing out the fruit to the hungry passengers. They were very grateful and appreciative.

- **Raffles for satisfied customers.** Denny and fellow pilot Captain John McFadden came up with an idea for a raffle. They tell the passengers to write down what they like most about United. Then they have a raffle. The winner gets a 15-percent discount coupon for a future flight.

Much to their surprise—and delight—they found that many of their passengers had wonderful things to say about United. This is a great motivator and re-energizer for the flight attendants. Denny then takes the passengers' notes and posts them on the bulletin boards in the airport crew areas.

Captain Denny has a simple motto: "Work from the heart!" When he looks at his passengers, he sees smiles. We should all try to follow his example. **SSE**

Jeffrey Mayer helps CEOs, salespeople, and entrepreneurs grow their business, reduce costs, increase revenues, and make more money. Call 312-944-4184 or visit www.SucceedingInBusiness.com.

ACTION: Follow Captain Denny's example.

Is Your Team Mission-Driven?

Or are you problem-driven?



by Don Midgett

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS have been crafted for years—with good reason, since organizations that have mission and vision statements outperform those that do not.

Here are a few snapshots to show the difference these statements can make:

- A family-owned inn had operated for three generations without turning a profit. Within one year of creating a mission and vision statement, the inn reaped a profit of \$500,000.

- A director for a non-profit organization reports: “To see within me the themes repeating themselves caused me to focus on what I am about.” As the organization aligned its mission and vision statements with strategic activities and actions, it increased in size by 50 percent and more satellite operations resulted, all sharing a common mission.

- The CEO of a financial services company recently went through the exercise of developing mission and vision statements, and he says, “Our company has benefited greatly. Every company, team, family, couple or individual should have one.”

When expectations are not met, these statements are seen as being a waste of time and money, and an organization continues to function as it always has. So mission and vision statements are not solutions—they are tools that must be used by willing and capable managers and supervisors. Where mission and vision statements succeed, there is top-to-bottom support.

How can your team be successful if you can't answer the basic questions, “Why do we exist?” and “Where are we going?” Mission and vision statements answer these all-important questions.

Mission statements are declarations as to why an organization exists and define the business. Mission statements concentrate on the present and are a reflection of core competencies—the basic skills or products provided.

Vision statements focus on the future. They state what you want the organization to be. Vision statements come from the heart as well as the head. A vision statement represents a

realistic dream and forces leaders to take a stand for a preferred future.

Mission and vision statements are critical to the success of strategic planning. A mission statement identifies a starting point or current state of business, but a vision statement is necessary to determine the direction that should be pursued. Without the clarity of vision, your strategic plan—your roadmap to achieve your vision—may prove useless. A strategic plan that is not constructed using a mission statement and a vision statement as the way to set attainable goals for a foreseeable future usually sends an organization into planning limbo.

Effective mission and vision statements also help with decision making, articulate a reason for being, create team unity, link diverse units, provide

focus and direction, and motivate members toward a more desirable future

Once mission and vision statements have been developed, they must be continually communicated, tested, and lived. This ensures that the vision stays alive and works. By their nature, mission and vision statements will bring about change, and change is accompanied by costs and risks. However, rather than fear change, you must embrace it.

Ensure that your mission and vision are properly aligned so that their benefits can be realized. Be a vision-driven team rather than a problem-driven company. **SSE**

Don Midgett is the managing partner for The Genesis Group, helping organizations and leaders discover their full potential. Call 805-646-1740 or visit www.missionvisionstatement.com.

ACTION: Be vision-driven, not problem-driven.

SALES/INNOVATION

Ten Questions

Play truth or consequences.



by Bill Blades

WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, you likely jumped into the lake, ocean, or pool without regard to how chilly the water was. Later, you put your toes in first. True?

As a new salesperson, you were unpredictable. You had a child-like appetite for experimenting. Over time, however, you morphed into conducting sales calls in a predictable way.

Let me ask you 10 questions:

In the last month, have you tried a new (for you) approach? If not, you've become stale.

In the last three months, have you done something bizarre that would make you appear silly if it bombed? If everything else has failed, why not fail greatly? Big successes correlate with big bombs.

Have you prepared a proposal containing personal, value-added services that cause a client to say, “Wow, this is incredible”? If not, you're stuck in the price game.

Do you act on new ideas? Determine several value-added services no one else provides and act on them. Why would you resist new ideas? Because you don't want to improve? Or make more sales? Or make more money? Mark Twain said, “Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the

rest of us could not succeed.”

Do you receive more gifts from clients than you give? Rarely does this occur, but it does happen to a rare breed of salespeople. Clients view them as the best of the best with helpful ideas, relationships, and more. You can learn to earn this level of respect.

When you grow up, will you become the person your dog thinks you are? Do you regularly help clients and non-clients because you want to be of service?

Are you normal? Normal often

means a lack of creativity and imagination. Many salespeople are boring. They drone on and on. These same people describe super producers as *eccentric*. They say such things due to the great disparity between those who are always boring and those who excel. Most great things in this world are achieved by

eccentrics—not by those who are always cautious and safe. Insanity doesn't run in my family. It gallops.

Are you still a great student of the profession? About 90 percent of sales books are purchased by 10 percent of the sales professionals. That means two things: 90 percent of the salespeople have gone stale, and your clients (and your employer) don't want you to sell like you did 10 years ago. Invest more money on the inside of your head than you spend on the outside. Skip a haircut and buy a book. IQ beats GQ.

Seek the truth for all 10 suggestions above and act this week. There are a lot of people counting on you. **SSE**

Bill Blades is a professional speaker, consultant, and author in sales and leadership. Visit www.williamblades.com, call 480-563-5355, or email bill@williamblades.com.

ACTION: Answer these 10 questions.



Eat a Spider to Be a Success!

Commit to do something.



by Bob Davies

IT'S 7 P.M. AND A FEW BUSINESS owners are returning from their evening meal

break at an all-day conference. I have just presented my *Performance Excellence* program after having been with this group six months ago. I'm sitting at a table, and a woman comes up to me and says, "I had to eat a spider because of you!"

Fortunately she was smiling. I said, "Tell me more."

She told me that she had taken to heart my challenge on behavioral contracting. I had explained how we are all wired to avoid pain and seek comfort. We are avoidance machines. We don't have to change to have performance excellence—just tap into our avoidance mechanisms and avoid our way to the top!

Our brain is like radar—constantly searching for the highest perceived pain. Once we lock into that perception, our entire mechanism of avoidance is turned on, and we are compelled to avoid whatever activity has triggered the perception.

For example, if you are in sales, you may decide that to build your business you need to call 20 prospects each week. You are motivated to do this. Before you take action, however, your brain will search for any links of prospecting to pain. Your brain instantly searches through all of your past experiences, and you dial into a past rejection, which is viewed as pain. This is the trigger. Now the instinct of avoidance kicks in, and your brain compels you to avoid this painful activity. Once you avoid, you protect yourself from feeling guilty by justifying your avoidance. You rationalize that you are just **too busy** to prospect.

This is what will happen to you—unless there is an intervention. What must occur is to leverage the brain's perceptions to lock onto a higher level of pain that will be avoided and compel you to take the desired action. You are looking to override the pain associated with the activity of prospecting with a more horrific perspective. That's where the spider and behavioral contracting comes in.

A behavioral contract consists of a specific declaration (committed action) plus

accountability. Accountability equals the check in—did you do what you said you would do—and an enforceable consequence for non-performance, like a fine of eating a spider.

This woman at the conference told me that she would show her business opportunity to five people the following week, and if she did not, she would eat a spider. The promise was realistic, but she got busy and failed to do so. I thanked her for honoring her word, and cautioned her to be careful with what she gives her word she will do.

Try this yourself. Commit to a specific activity you will do over the next seven days, and then place a horrific penalty for non-performance (perhaps



a fine of \$100, or washing your neighbor's car, or even eating a spider).

As long as someone else will enforce the consequence, your brain will see the consequence as the higher pain and seek to avoid it. You can't stop the avoidance. So you avoid the penalty by taking the promised action. You avoid your way to the top.

Your positive and negative thoughts and beliefs impact your life. What are you predisposed to see? What false assumptions are you operating from and holding as true? How's it going? If you don't like what you've got in your business and personal life, then create a new set of expectations and set out to make those come true.

What would happen, for example, if you decided that next year would be your best year ever instead of paying attention to the experts in the marketplace? Henry Ford was right when he declared, "If you believe you can or if you believe you can't ...you're right!" What do you believe?

I encourage you to create your business plan for next year. Make decisions on what you need to do to accomplish your goals. Next create a behavioral contract for the next seven days with what you will do, and make sure that you have a consequence for non-performance.

Choose Your Response

When something happens in your

life, it has no meaning—it is neutral.

Our meaning is constantly a comparison of our past experiences projected to the future. Something happens, and we tell ourselves a story about what it means. Then we store it. When we want to create our future, we step into a future filled with interpretations about what has happened in the past.

For example, a salesperson in real estate learns how to make a presentation to someone who is going to sell his or her own home. Next he calls a *for sale by owner* ad. The home owners are rude and tell him that he is the fifth realtor to call. They insist that they are selling their own home and hang up.

This person now has a negative impression to put into their past regarding prospecting to for sale by owners. The next time he wants to create a future for himself through prospecting, he will step into the previous negative past experience.

The reality of it is that the rejection had no meaning until you gave it one. The fact was that the homeowner said no. You made it mean something about you. You made it mean that you are bothering them, that you are imposing, that you are a bad sales person, that this will never work, that you'll never succeed in sales, that you are a failure!

You made up a story about what happened, and now you are living your interpretation of what it means. You live this as if it were truth. All of your thoughts, feelings, and actions are based on this lie that you made up. You believe that your story is the truth and react accordingly. Your story is an illusion. Your story is simply what you made up about what happened in your striving to give meaning to all things.

I challenge you to take the negative past out of your future—to have your future be empty of the negative past and without inherent meaning until you say so. You will then be enlightened. You will have the freedom to choose fascination over frustration, calm over upset. When you step into the freedom to interpret, you can choose your response and create any reality you want.

Think about this and try it on. Identify the stories you tell yourself. Do your interpretations serve you? Notice what you say about what has happened and exercise the freedom to choose a different interpretation. **SSE**

Bob Davies is president of High Performance Training. Call 949-830-9192, email Info@bobdavies.com, or visit www.Bobdavies.com.

ACTION: Choose your response.

Self-Evaluation

Increase the bottom line.



by Mark Fracalossi

FEW OWNERS OR SALES AND service managers have any system for growth in place; in fact, most fly by the seat of their pants. In a recent survey, we found that only seven percent of the owners even had a business plan! Without any plan, benchmarking, or measuring system in place, you can't anticipate changes that may affect you.

Four Easy Steps

I recommend the following self-evaluation that will help you identify areas where your business can improve:

1. Identify your weaknesses. Most owners are positive thinkers and don't feel they need to improve until it is too late. It is easier to correct problems before they become irreparable. Companies that are doing poorly tend to resist change. This could be avoided if a procedure to identify potential weaknesses was in place.

2. Listen to your managers and workforce. If you discount what your people tell you, they won't care to help you. Your employees are your best line of defense. Your relationship with every team member is important. Meeting with each of them weekly can produce remarkable results and boost employee engagement and productivity. These meetings should be informal discussions that allow all to be candid and frank, and ensure that openness is welcome. Most meetings are dissertations by the management, stating we have to do this and do that. They end up being one-way meetings, which are more demoralizing than instructive. It is amazing what can happen when management listens.

3. Do a comparative analysis with others in the same field. This can be done either internally or externally. The internal way is what coaches do: scout the competition. Study what the top people in your industry are doing and emulate them. Know your competition. Know their strengths and their weaknesses. If you often lose sales to Company A, ask the client why they went with company

A. Was their product or service better? Would you give us another chance if we could meet the expectations that Company A met? How can we improve to make you our client? If you ask *how* and *why*, you will improve your business and perhaps win the account the next time.

Another source for comparative information are trade associations that keep records and financials on companies in your field. By comparing yourself with your peers, you can often fend off potential problems.

If you can't identify your weaknesses internally, have an outsider facilitate this process. Outside consultants work with several companies and usually have a track record of making sensible changes and remedies. A new set of

eyes may see things you overlook.

4. Identify your strengths. You must be doing something well, or you would not be in business. Since your core business is likely your most profitable venture, drifting from the core and expanding into other areas usually leads to less focus on your strength. The key is to use your core strengths to get through today and the future. Re-focusing on the core strength will allow you to increase core business.

Be proactive in identifying your strengths and weaknesses and making changes as a team. Such teamwork will increase productivity, decrease turnover, and boost the bottom line. **SSE**

Mark Fracalossi is the president of AMT Media LLC, a consulting, public relations, and marketing firm. He is the author of The Nice Manager. Call 720-359-1596.

ACTION: Evaluate these four areas.

SALES/REFERRAL

What You Say

With and without speaking.



by Lillian D. Bjorseth

THE SUCCESS OF ANY PERSONAL encounter begins the second someone lays eyes on you—often long before either of you speaks. People may decide 10 things about you within 10 seconds of meeting you. Their decision is made by looking at you and is based on your image (a combination of appearance and behavior). That's why dressing appropriately is a key factor in your success. Choose the look that works best for you (business casual or traditional), and make sure that choice helps you meet your goals.

Color, style, and fit are the one, two, three punch in the appearance arena.

Color affects people physically and psychologically. Become attuned to the effects of various colors and how to gear them to your advantage for each meeting or relationship. The right color varies with the event, and sometimes aces out your favorite or most complementary color. It can be more important to create the right impression, mood, or feeling. You might use accessories in your best colors to accentuate your features.

Here's a what various colors say:

- **black**—most powerful color, dignified, sophisticated, and most slimming!
- **blue**—calm, reliable, serene.



- **brown**—dependable, practical, stable (not a power color).
- **gray**—success; perception increases as shade deepens.
- **navy blue**—authority, knowledge, responsibility.
- **pink**—friendly, flexible, sensitive, approachable, feminine.
- **red**—adventurous, exciting, but also sexually arousing.
- **teal**—dignified, prestigious, sophisticated.
- **white**—clean, formal, sophisticated.

Color influences the impression you make. You have so many choices in styles and colors that you need to be astute in choosing proper attire for your work. While rules have been relaxed, unwritten dogma still prevails. Top-level people often discuss the dress and behavior of others behind closed doors.

When you do speak, say *thank you* when you receive a referral or job lead. Keep people in the loop as the lead matures and when you get the sale or the job.

- Follow up with a short email, telephone call, or note of thanks when you receive a job, sales lead, or referral.
- Inform the person making the referral of your progress, especially when the sale is made or the job is offered and accepted!
- If you landed employment or the sale is substantial, send a small gift matched to the other person's interest.
- If the referral never pans out, you may wish to notify the person who gave it that nothing conclusive happened. **SSE**

Lillian D. Bjorseth is president of Duoforce Enterprises, Inc. Call 630-983-5308, visit www.duoforce.com, or email lillian@duoforce.com.

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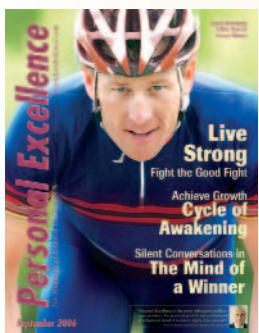
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