

The American Salesman Online

The National Online Magazine For
Sales Professionals

- Sales Lessons Learned at Sea
- Why it is so Easy to Become an Exceptional Salesperson
- The Buyer's Score Card
- Sales Standards and Success Cycles
- Turn Business Cards Into Business
- Memory Hooks
- Customer Loyalty - Is It Dead?

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Sales Lessons Learned at Sea

Plot Your Course for Success

by Larry Jacobson

Imagine that you're standing at the wheel of your beautiful sailboat you've always dreamed of owning. You untie the lines, back out of the slip, motor up the channel, and head out to sea. What direction do you head? The compass offers you 360 choices and if you don't choose, the wind and current will take you at their will.

Plotting a course for your boat requires having a destination in mind, and then you have to steer for that heading. Planning to sell to a prospect requires the same pre-planning. Without plotting your course, the forces of sales will carry you where they will and chances are that won't be where you want to go.

When planning a voyage, preparation is key. Ask yourself these questions before leaving the dock or before any important sales call or presentation:

Do I have the skills necessary, do I know who is going to do what tasks and do I have the right equipment?

What obstacles am I likely to encounter along the way and am I prepared to deal with them?

Do I have an alternate plan in case of hazards along the way?

Am I equipped with the time, manpower and materials to persevere for longer than expected?

And lastly, am I focused on the destination so that no matter what happens, I will achieve the goal?

When crossing a 3,000-mile ocean, just one degree off course can make you miss your landfall by hundreds of miles. Before you set on your sales journey, follow these guidelines to ensure success.

Practice

Before venturing out on a presentation to that big prospect you've always wanted to land as a client, practice until you're blue in the face. Run through your presentation over and over again until you know it cold. If you're presenting as a team, don't plan on winging it as to who will handle what portions of the presentation. Assign roles and plan the timing. Be sure your equipment including projector and presentation copies are in good order and are not in checked luggage. Just ask Suzanne who had to use a photocopy of her own outline as the handouts—all because her materials went to Dallas while she was presenting in Los Angeles.

Prepare

Are you ready for questions and objections from the prospect? Sure, you may have reviewed what you think are appropriate questions and objections, but have you looked at it from their point of view? They will ask questions you haven't thought of because they're looking at things from a different point of view than you are.

For example, when presenting an incentive travel program to a prospect, John thought he had everything in order for his presentation of Hawaii as the destination. Because he thought of options for the prospect, he also had a London trip and a Caribbean trip in his hip pocket and knew them both well. However, when he stood up to present the first of the three programs, the president of the company threw him to the wolves by asking, "Why are we doing this? Who says we want to take a trip anywhere?" John had been brought in by the marketing manager who was also surprised when the president vetoed the incentive plan altogether. Had John done his research, he would have been able to answer why an incentive travel program would work well for that particular company. He might have been able to save the day.

Persevere

Crossing an ocean in a small boat requires research, painstaking planning, and enormous tenacity. One must study the winds, currents, tides, and try to predict through this research what will affect the voyage. There's equipment to install, learn about, and repair and these studies never end. The setbacks that come from weather, equipment failures, and the emotional highs and lows of spending day after day at sea are enough to take the wind out of most people's sails—and keeps most sailors close to their home port.

Similarly, unless you're in a retail environment where sales are made on the spot, the longer-term sale is made with inquiry, patience, and perseverance. Insurance sales can take months to close the deal, incentive travel has an average of nine months closing time, and your industry might not be far behind. You are responsible for studying and knowing your prospect and calculating how your product can help them toward their goals and objectives.

Patience is a virtue, especially in selling. It might take hundreds of contacts before finding even one prospect that needs your services, and then it could be months before you even get an appointment. Consider it a passage across an ocean and persevere.

It is the tenacious salesperson that usually wins out in the end.

When selling, keep your final goal in mind and know the processes you are using to achieve it. If a change throws you off of your plans, if a competitor undercuts you in price, or the prospect postpones the purchase, stick with it. Come back to the course that you plotted in the first place and persevere. Try again. In the words of Winston Churchill, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue on that counts."

Larry Jacobson is a speaker, executive coach and author of the award-winning best seller, *The Boy Behind the Gate*, based on his experiences while achieving his lifelong goal of circumnavigating the globe by sailboat. As a speaker on sales skills and leadership development, Larry uses the six years of lessons learned at sea to speak with unique authority about conquering fear and staying the course whatever it takes. For more information please visit www.LarryJacobson.com, email Larry at Larry@LarryJacobson.com or call 510-500-4566.

Why it is so Easy to Become an Exceptional Salesperson

by **Dave Kahle**

When I was 18 years old, I got a summer job working for a company then called Jewel Tea, whose business was selling groceries, housewares and kids clothing to housewives on a route. I was hired to work the routes for the vacationing sales people who owned the route.

At age 18, I had no sales experience and little personal presence or confidence, but I consistently outsold the older, more experienced people who owned the route, and was recognized by the company as the “outstanding college student” summer employee.

I was astonished. I had no idea why I was successful. It really wasn't that hard. I just did what my boss told me to do, in the way he told me to do it. Didn't everybody do it this way?

Over my career as a sales person, I sold a variety of products in a variety of selling situations. From suits and sport coats in a retail men's store, to capital equipment to schools, to surgical staplers to surgeons in the operating room, to 70,000 line items for a wholesale distributor. I always did well, and was the number one sales person in the nation for two different companies and two distinctly different selling situations.

I was always a bit perplexed by my success. I always worked hard; always tried to do well; listened to my boss and did what he told me to do; and constantly sought out ways to improve my skills. I bought the books, went to the seminars, listened to the audios, etc.

For almost my entire selling career, I could never understand why I was more successful than others in my company. Didn't everybody do it this way?

It wasn't until I formed my sales consulting/sales training practice and began to work with sales people and sales forces that I discovered the answer to the question. “No, not everyone did it like this. In fact, very few do.”

What did I do that I now realize very few sales people do? These are the three cornerstone characteristics that I just took for granted, but which I have since discovered are the rare building blocks upon which sales success is built.

1. Work hard, every day. I can't believe I'm actually telling people to work hard. That 'work ethic' was just instilled in me by my parents. I was raised in a family of six boys, and we all had paper routes and part-time jobs as soon as we were able. We were expected to work hard. I never questioned the wisdom of it.

Of course there were times when I took that afternoon off, or those special long weekends. Every employer, though, got at least 45 – 50 hours from me every week.

In my practice, however, I run into sales people seemingly every week who have no problem with routinely leaving the house at nine and being done for the day at three. As one of my clients verbalized recently: “So many people in the work force today have an entitlement mentality, a short attention span, and inordinate hubris.” If he's right, that's too bad. Those are not qualities upon which success is built.

2. Try to do well. Again, I find it incredible that I have to mention this. Doesn't everyone strive to do well? Actually, no. The vast majority of people, sales people included, just want to do a job and forget about it at the end of the day. Only a small fraction – somewhere between 5 percent and 20 percent in my experience – actually strive, day in and day out, to do well. The reason why most sales people are not highly successful is that they don't want to be successful.

Let me be really clear. Everyone wants the results of doing well – the extra income, the higher degree of respect from bosses and colleagues, the feeling of accomplishment and the extra confidence that comes as a result of sales success. But very few are willing to pay the price for it.

I remember reading a quote from a famous coach, whose name escapes me at the moment. It went something like this: "Every athletic has the will to win, but only the winners have the will to practice." There is a price to pay to be successful. You have to want to be successful, and you have to want to be successful badly enough that you will invest time, money, ego, energy and emotions in it.

3. Constantly improve. Believe it or not, you are not as good as you can be. Ever. If you are going to be successful at sales, you have to become more competent than you are now.

Sales is a proactive profession. In other words, the customers don't send you a purchase order, and then you go see them. No, you must see them first, and influence them successfully. Your actions get reactions. If you act well, they will react accordingly, and you'll eventually get enough of the deals to become successful. If you don't act well, they will react accordingly, and you'll forever be relegated to mediocrity.

So, if you want to be successful, you must continually improve your skills, your habits, your attitudes and your mindsets. That's something that only a handful of sales people actually understand.

There are two things to do to continually improve:

a. Constantly reflect on your performance and your actions and identify things to improve. That means, reflect and evaluate after every sales call.

b. Expose yourself to the best practice of the profession. That means read the books, go to the seminars, listen to the audios, read the Ezines, etc.

Now, here is why it is so easy to succeed at sales. Sales is the only profession where most of the practitioners don't practice the three simple habits above. In every other profession, there is the expectation that serious practitioners will continually improve. That's why doctors go to conferences, nurses have in-service training, lawyers read case studies, executives attend roundtables, minister listen to webinars, etc. Every other profession in the world expects its members to constantly improve, and the vast majority of them do.

In the profession of sales, there is no expectation for constant improvement. So, most sales people don't bother. The reason it's so easy to be successful in sales is that your competition, other sales people, don't really want to be successful!

Dave Kahle has trained tens of thousands of distributor and B2B sales people and sales managers to be more effective in the 21st Century economy. He's authored nine books, and presented in 47 states and eight countries. Sign up for his weekly Ezine For a limited time, you can purchase his latest book, How to Sell Anything to Anyone Anytime, and receive \$534 in FREE bonuses.

The Buyer's Score Card

by Maura Schreier-Fleming

How do you think a buyer prepares for your sales call? Some do more than you know. One buyer's work on rating suppliers' sales calls gives us insight into how other buyers are scrutinizing our selling. It can also teach us how to be effective salespeople.

A hospital that makes selling better. Ms. Vicki Perfect is the former Director of Employment and Education at Greenville Hospital System in Greenville, South Carolina. She led the project to develop criteria to evaluate vendors and the products and services they sell. The hospital needed to evaluate for a variety of reasons. They needed to better understand the diversity of their needs and to establish a shared vision for the expected outcomes of the product or service. Buyers from different departments were purchasing similar products for different application needs. This was impacting the bottom line of the hospital.

They also wanted to create a shared understanding of the relationship between cost benefits and customer satisfaction. With the hospital industry undergoing significant cost constraints it was easy to select from the lowest bid. However, ultimately that selection of the product or service had an impact on the hospital's ability to deliver quality care. By creating standard selection criteria the hospital was able to evaluate financial impact as well as the service impact of its purchase.

The checkup. Hospital management brought staff from different departments and different disciplines together in cross-functional focus groups. Their assignment was to identify and prioritize their product and customer satisfaction needs. They then developed specific evaluation criteria. These criteria were to address the hospital's operational needs; impact on patient care; product or service presentation/quality; and provide references from other companies. Cost was also a factor. Each vendor was rated on a 10 point scale for each item. Then each item's weighted priority was factored into the results.

The operation was a success. The hospital found that the evaluation criteria resulted in decreasing the time it took to purchase the products/services and deploy them throughout the hospital. The members of the cross-functional teams became champions for the products/services that were actually selected and used the selection criteria as a mini-education tool to implement the product or service in their department. An added plus for the hospital was that this effort developed intelligent buyers so that the hospital, rather than salespeople, determined what they wanted and needed.

So the next time you prepare for your sales call, remember that your customers may be doing their own preparation as well. Ask your customers about their purchasing criteria. If you're going to be evaluated for your selling, you might as well know what your customer is looking for. It's one way to deliver just what the doctor ordered.

Maura Schreier-Fleming works with business and sales professionals on skills and strategies so they can sell more and be more productive at work. She is the author of *Real-World Selling for Out-of-this-World Results* which is available at www.BestatSelling.com. She founded her company Best@Selling in 1997. You can reach her at 972.380.0200.

Sales Standards and Success Cycles

by Chris Lytle

Everyone wants a sales team full of high-performance, hard-driving, revenue-producing professionals. However, few companies know how to achieve this. Take an honest look at your own sales department. Perhaps there are one or two high performers, a sizeable group of mediocre salespeople and a scattering of space wasters. To you this seems about average. What you'd really like to do is move the "mediocres" up to the next level and do away with the poor performers.

Poor sales performers do tremendous damage to your sales team. When you allow them to hang around without producing, you lose the respect of your entire team. The good people leave — generally when one person goes, two others follow — and with them go assets like institutional memory and sometimes, clients. What's left is a sizeable group of disillusioned employees who come to view your company as a place to work, not a place to grow.

Your problem lies not so much in the people you have working for you as in your culture. What you actually need to do is to create a high performance culture, one where success breeds success and where poor performers simply can't hide. You can meet this goal with the following tips:

- **Have standards, not wishes.** Of course you would like all of your salespeople to come to work every day all fired up, fill their calendar with productive meetings and close at least one big sales every day. Who wouldn't? But telling them the outcome you'd "like" isn't going to feed the bulldog. You need measurable standards by which you can separate the wheat from the chaff. There are four possible standards of measurement:

Quantity standards: Anything that can be counted: number of sales calls, number of client lunches, number of phone calls. These are the easiest standards to set but, as you will see, they're not often the best ones.

Quality standards: These are standards that include subjective criteria. For instance, a sales call that yielded data that can be used to write a proposal is clearly superior to one that yielded no new information.

Timeliness standards: Anything that can be measured by stopwatch, clock or calendar. For instance, the time between needs analysis and proposal, or the time between checking and returning e-mail, voice mail and return call.

Cost standards: These involve being a good steward of the company's resources. Such standards can mean refusing to give away too much to get the order; getting a certain price; not taking smaller, less productive clients on golf outings.

The standards you choose to measure are up to you and your situation.

- **Make sure your standards lead to the results you really want.** When you measure the wrong things, you end up shooting yourself in the foot. Take this anecdote about a Texas radio station sales manager. “This new sales manager told his staff, ‘You must be out of the office by 9:00 each morning and you can’t come back until 4:00 p.m.’”

So what did the salespeople do? They rented an efficiency apartment and put in three phone lines! So the sales manager was measuring a standard that led to a behavior he didn’t want! He should have said, ‘You need to be in front of customers from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.’ The standard he set had no basis in reality.”

- **Define “hustle.”** You need to clearly define what you want your sales team to do. Spell it out in no uncertain terms. I once did a seminar for a group of fast-food franchise managers, during which a woman asked, “How can I get a 16-year-old minimum-wage employee to hustle more?” I explained to her “hustle” means different things to different people. It’s subjective. If you can’t put a problem in behavior in terms then you don’t have a problem, you’re just complaining. The manager said the employee walked too slowly when she went to clean up empty tables. She added she wished the girl would at least create a small breeze when she walked by customers! So I told her, “Okay, go back and get her to practice walking by a table fast enough to make a napkin move, or rustle someone’s hair. Now your employee will know what hustle looks like! It will have a meaningful definition, instead of you just accusing her of being lazy.”

- **Enforce standards early (or, shovel the piles when they’re small).** My favorite business line is ‘You’ve got to shovel the piles when they’re small.’ This speaks to the importance of setting limits and following through with consequences right away. Suppose I set a standard that by Friday every employee must have at least seven sales meetings booked for the next week. Well, if I come in on the first Friday and Joe only has five meetings booked, then I can have a meeting with him and say, “Look Joe, we have a gap of two meetings here. You need to fix that right away.” This is a small pile to shovel. But what happens if I let it go for months and Joe has fallen into the habit of having only, say, two meetings booked for the next week? That’s a much bigger pile to shovel. If I don’t deal with it right away, when will I deal with it?”

- **Create monitoring systems that encourage teams to reinforce themselves.** If you adopted a seven-sales-meeting standard like the one mentioned above, you must create a systemic way to make sure it is enforced. You might, for example, hold a progress meeting every Friday afternoon to make sure every salesperson has his or her meetings lined up. If you’re too busy to do so, how long do you think it will take before people start slacking off? But if you do this every Friday, it won’t be long before your old pros are telling new hires they must have seven meetings booked by the end of the week — because “that’s the way we do it here.” The team begins to enforce the standard because it’s become part of your high-performance culture.

- **Think of discipline as teaching/coaching, not confrontation.** Most people dislike confrontation, which is one reason so many salespeople get away with poor performance. The manager simply avoids confronting the issue until it’s way beyond critical mass. But when you have strictly enforced standards as part of your company policy, it’s easier to discipline

as a teacher or coach, rather than a tyrant. The standards allow you to approach the employee as “you and me looking at the problem” rather than “me vs. you.” Instead of saying, “Joe, you lazy bum, you’ve got to start working harder!” you’re able to say, “Joe, you’ve only got five meetings set up for next week and our company standard is seven. You’ve got two weeks to catch up. What’s your plan today? What are your next five calls going to be? Who in your Rolodex can you call?” See the difference? You’re in teaching mode, not confrontation mode.

- **Create “success cycle” systems.** When you set high standards from day one, it ensures that even moderate salespeople will have early success experiences. These successes lead to increased confidence — and the self-imposed pressure to do it again — which in turn lead to more successes. And other people in the department see these successes and believe it can also happen to them. This is the success cycle, and it is a salesperson’s best friend.

- **Developing a strong bench lets you get rid of poor performers.** Sometimes you will decide a salesperson is just not salvageable. When this happens, you must get rid of him or her as quickly as possible. So interview regularly. If you’re interviewing two salespeople a month, you will always have a slate of potential employees to choose from if you have to let someone go. And just knowing that you’re interviewing keeps your team on its toes.

- **Try this no-fail interview question.** When I interview salespeople I always ask them to tell me about their ten biggest wins. Really successful people are driven to achieve again and again. They constantly “raise the bar” on themselves. So by asking this question, you quickly discern if someone is a winner or not.

Your salespeople are your most valuable asset. But most managers don’t know how to motivate them. Managers must teach their salespeople how to win — and to do that you must teach them the game within the game. I like to cite the example of University of Wisconsin basketball coach Bo Ryan. The standard he sets is “points per possession” rather than trying to reach a particular score. You can’t manage a score; you can only manage performance. Bo knows if his team scores 1.1 points per possession, they’re virtually a lock to win. Points per possession add up to victory, just like meetings lead to analyses lead to proposals lead to money. Understanding and coaching the game within the game — that’s what creating a high performance culture is all about.

An acknowledged leader in sales training, Chris Lytle is also in demand as a speaker and consultant in advertising, marketing, sales and sales management. For more information, call 800-255-9853.

Turn Business Cards Into Business Do You Manage Your Client's Information on a Paper Napkin?

by Athenee Mastrangelo

Your clients are your #1 priority, right? So how are you managing their information and your relationship with them? Do you have all their information stuffed in a shoebox or do you have an effective CRM [Contact Relationship Management] system? Or maybe you're somewhere in between? The difference between having the right and the wrong CRM system can make or break your business. Finding the right system for you is not an easy task. It's also a personal task - just because Mike next door is very happy and successful with his CRM system does not mean it's the right system for you! Every person, business, and situation is unique.

***Scenario 1:** Kevin wanted only top of the line for his team and chose one of the more expensive CRM systems. Unfortunately, it was too complicated and too time consuming, so in the end his team ended up never using it.*

***Scenario 2:** Becky started out with a free CRM system, but slowly had to start upgrading to a paid version to get the necessary options. In the end she was paying more than the average system, but was getting less in return for her investment.*

Rather than making those same mistakes, assess your situation and ask yourself some really important questions

5 Key Areas

Prior to investing your time, money, and energy into a new CRM system you want to ask yourself some important questions. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Contact Management

For starters, you know you need to store and manage all the people in your life from your clients, colleagues, leads, and vendors, but what is it that you need to save (aside from the obvious - like their name, address, phone numbers, emails, etc.)?

Do you want to store their family information, e.g. spouse and children's names, pets, birthdays and stories?

Are you a visual person and would like to be able to store their business card image/logo? What about their picture?

Do you want to be able to organize your contacts into groups? [Hint: Yes!]

2. Your Relationship

Now that you have their information, what about your relationship with them - your history... is this important to you? If so, what is it you want to store and manage?

Collect any and all phone calls and take note of important things discussed

Keep a record of things covered and discussed during meetings and presentations

*Any email correspondence**

* If email is an important part of this, you definitely want to look at a CRM system that syncs with your email.

3. Projects, Tasks and Events

Some CRM systems have their own calendar or they can integrate with your calendar system making it easy to share events, projects, and tasks with other people in your team. It is helpful to have your tasks and events synced with your contact system - this is definitely worth checking into.

With some CRM systems you can even automate a lot of your assignments and tasks - this is a great time saver! For example:

Let's assign a new task to Jane, asking her to call a new lead. That task will have all the details and instructions for that call - what to say and what questions to ask, for example: 'Is lead interested?' If Jane answers 'Yes', the CRM automatically creates a personalized email to the lead, thanking them for their time and....' it also creates a follow-up task for Jane to drop by their office with a welcome basket.' How cool is that?

4. Your Sales Cycle

Here is where you can go as simple or as detailed as you need to. Some things to think about:

Do you need to keep track of your sales cycle with each client?

If you sell products, do you need a system for keeping track of your inventory?

Do you need an online shopping cart?

Do you want to be able to invoice your clients directly from your CRM tool?

5. Your Team

How many people are in your team? Is it just you, do you have just a few people, or is there a big team? Size does matter when looking for the right system.

When working with a team you want to keep track of who is working on what.

Do you need a social network site for your team (something that works like Twitter and Facebook, but privately for your team)?

If there are more people on your team - are you all using the same operating system? [Hint: consider using a cloud-based system so this won't be an issue]

Consider looking into a time-tracking system, even if it is just you

Where does everyone work? At the office? From home? Or are they mostly on the road?

Important To Check Out

Now that you know a little bit about what you need, ask yourself the following questions about the system you are looking at:

Memory Hooks

Key Ingredients to Building High-Impact Intros

by Dr. Ivan Misner

Accessibility. *With today's technology consider looking into a cloud solution. You'll have access to your important information no matter where you are. All you need is a computer, iPad, iPhone, or any other smart phone.*

Security & Backup. *Is your information secure and is there continuous backup? Obviously very important things to look into.*

Pricing. *Know your budget and remember more expensive does not necessarily mean better (for you).*

Export strategy. *If you do decide to leave you want to be able to easily take your information with you.*

User friendly. *Is it easy to use and is there a good support system.*

Reviews. *Do you like what you are reading?*

Customizable. *Are you able to change things like your dashboard, fields, reports, etc.?*

Integration. *Does it play well with other systems like email, calendar, scanners, invoicing, online forms, etc?*

Social Media. *Some CRM systems let you sync your contacts with social media sites, so you'll always have the latest news and information.*

Athenée Mastrangelo helps busy professionals use technology to stay organized, productive, and connected. She is available for workshops, online training, and individual consultations. Connect with Athenée at www.ActionChaos.com or 407-435-2170.

Every business needs an edge in order to succeed today. Salespeople need that edge just as much, if not more, than other businesses. When introducing yourself to a large group of business professionals, memory hooks can be a business person's "edge." You may not know it, but you are already very well-versed in the use of memory hooks! You've been hearing and using them since you were in elementary school. Mere fragments of phrases, jokes, songs and rhymes remind us of people, places and events we have not seen or experienced in years — and they stay with us for many more years! For example, what do you think of when you hear "You got the right one, baby?" As a salesperson for any business, you can make sure your business leaves a lasting impression on potential customers by leveraging the power of memory hooks.

What makes a good memory hook? The key is the word “memory.” In order for a memory hook to be effective, it must be very memorable! Whenever your potential customer needs your product or service, your name will pop into their head as well as your hook. It has to be easy to remember. The best way is to make it vivid and short.

Short isn’t hard to figure out; one snappy phrase or short sentence is all that’s needed. Anything more is not only wasted, it can get in the way. Saying “what you see is what you get” versus “the items available for purchase during our special sale are the ones on display beneath this sign” is an example of this point.

See It, Hear It, Feel It

A good memory hook often appeals to the basic senses — sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. When meeting people in person or presenting your product or service using marketing materials, you should invoke the senses as strongly as possible — in a pleasurable way, of course. Here are some examples to show you what I mean:

Here’s a memory hook, used by a travel agent, that conjures up the memory of a popular song: “Come fly away with me.” Most people of a certain age will be reminded of Sinatra’s hit of several decades back. With the exception of smells, nothing cranks up a pleasure trip into nostalgia like the fond memory of an old song.

How do you conjure up the sensation of touch in a slogan? Here’s one way: “If you want to get rubbed the right way, see Jim.” This is how one inventive massage technician attracts business. And any Dallasite who hears “Sweat’s my name, air conditioning’s my game” will probably feel a shiver of dread thinking of that hot August day last year when the fan stopped working, and call air conditioning specialist Tim Sweat.

Make ‘em Laugh, Make ‘em Cry

Another “sense” that is often invoked in the best memory hooks may be the most important one of all; the sense of humor. When you want to catch and hold someone’s attention, tickling his funny bone is perhaps the surest way of being remembered. In fact, one thing most of the memory hooks in this book have in common is they are funny. Making people laugh is one of the fastest ways of breaking down the barriers between strangers and of winning the prospect’s good will.

Two of the examples you’ve just read are puns, a form of humor everyone groans at but tries to remember to pass along. The power of the pun comes from the element of surprise; your listener (or reader) thinks you’re saying one thing but suddenly discovers you’re saying something else because you’ve either distorted the word or defined it another way. Here are some other examples of memory hooks using puns or word play:

“We check your shorts,” an electrician offers.

“We’re dyeing to save you money,” says a company that can change the color of your carpet.

On the other hand, a memory hook doesn’t have to be funny to be memorable. Sometimes you just need to reach out and pluck someone’s heartstrings. Here’s a good example I once heard from a real estate person whose name sadly I cannot remember: “I help people find a home. Not a house, but a home; not a place where they just live, but a place where they love to live.”

Verse — Or Worse

Using verse is a sure way to catch someone’s interest. Before most people could read, storytellers passed down tribal legends in verse form to make them easier to remember. The tradition lingers. Most people can recite from memory poetry or humorous verse, whether sonnets or limericks, and anyone who can read

is instinctively attracted towards that rhyme. If you can use your name as part of the rhyme, so much better. Here are some examples:

“When things go blurry, don’t stop to ‘ponda’: stumble to 17th Street and see Dr. Honda” (an optometrist).

If you find yourself in trouble with the authorities, perhaps the following poem, penned by a lawyer in Portland, Maine, will spring to mind: “When the cops are in the foyer, call Marchese, your friendly lawyer.”

Piracy or Parody?

Many memory hooks work because they take a familiar saying and rephrase it, usually with humor. That is, they parody a song or a phrase the reader or listener will recognize. But you have to be careful; some authors, especially songwriters, are quite militant about copyright infringement.

“When you’re in a commotion, who’re you gonna call? Law in motion!” proclaims a paralegal in Long Beach, California. It’s a good bet she’s seen Ghostbusters.

A banker in White Plains, New York, offers this thought, perhaps borrowed from a farewell speech by a famous WWII general: “Old bankers never die — they just lose interest!”

And here’s one the borrower, a Glendale, California, dentist, can never be sued for: “I believe in the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth, so help me God.”

The Old Double Reverse

One of the most powerful language devices is a statement in which the second part either rephrases or reverses the first. The original meaning may be reinforced, slightly altered, or turned around entirely, leading to intriguing mental juxtapositions. For instance:

“A business without a sign is a sign of no business” (a sign company in Canyon Springs, California)

“If your hair is not becoming to you, then you should be coming to me” (a hair stylist in Covina, California).

These approaches should give you an idea of some of the tools and resources you can use to construct your own memory hook. Notice many memory hooks use a combination of these techniques. Almost anything you do in the line of word play will come out funny — and that’s the way it should be, unless you’d rather appeal to the heart. Song lyrics usually rhyme, so if you parody a song, it should rhyme as well. And any of these techniques can be more effective if your memory hook is short and snappy and appeals to the senses.

When And How To Use A Memory Hook

The best memory hook is one you can use in many contexts. It should work in a pure word-of-mouth setting, as when you are attending a meeting of a networking group. It should work on your business card, on your letterhead, your calendars, your giveaway pens (another reason to keep it short), even your print ads. Of course, networking opportunities are one of the most cost-effective forms of advertising. This is very important to most salespeople. The problem is, most people don’t know how to stand out in the crowd at these events. This is why sales professionals who understand networking techniques such as memory hooks have a distinct edge over their competition.

Whether it's mass advertising or face-to-face, you want people to think of you, and you alone, when they see or hear something about the product or service you offer.

So, the next time you're doing a brief introduction at a networking group, remember — it's not net-sit or net-cat it's called net-work! If you want to build your business through word-of-mouth, you have to learn to “work” the networking groups you go to. Memory hooks are one excellent technique to use in order to work your groups more effectively.

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Customer Loyalty - Is it Dead?

I have been hearing at an increasing rate that “customer loyalty is dead.” “People are only interested in finding the best price and the individual company, store or salesperson no longer makes a difference. Everyone sells basically the same products and/or services and the only difference is the prices they charge.”

My answer to these comments is “HOGWASH!”

Customer loyalty isn't dead! What is close to death, with one foot on a banana peel and the other one in the grave, is professionalism in the world of sales.

In my opinion people have grown tired of looking for the needle in a haystack of exceptional salespeople. The type of salesperson that causes their customer to never even consider buying their products or services from anyone but them. People are looking for “their friend in the business”. One they can develop a pleasant and mutually satisfying buy/sell relationship with.

The general public has a stereotypical perception of salespeople based on many factors including: past experiences, how salespeople are depicted on television and in the movies, and the tired, lazy, unenthusiastic presentations that salespeople give, etc. The perception the public has isn't good.

I would love to have a friend in the computer, furniture, insurance, real-estate, office supply, sporting goods, jewelry, automobile, banking, etc. etc. business. The unfortunate part of being a customer today is not many salespeople are pro-actively pursuing this type of relationship with their customers.

Customer loyalty isn't dead, but it is in critical condition, and only you and I can start to make a difference.

When was the last time you walked into a store or office and was actually greeted by name?

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