

Publisher

Debra Anthony

Managing Editor

David Young

Associate Editor

Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho

Designer

Tanya Bäck

Phone

832-766-1546

Website

nbizmag.com

Corporate Address

PO Box 6352

Katy, TX

77491-6352

NBIZ Magazine is published six times per year. All articles and advertising represent the opinions of the authors and advertisers and not necessarily the opinion of the publisher. The information contained herein has not been verified for accuracy, and its inclusion should not be construed as the publisher's endorsement of the products, services, or articles presented. No part of *NBIZ Magazine* and *NBIZ Website's* content may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher.

www.nbizmag.com



By Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

This year of 2017, I found myself reflecting upon my five plus decades of selling and the many lessons I have learned from others as well as from my own experiences. Possibly, some of these lessons learned may help you as you go forth to tackle those daily opportunities.

BE AUTHENTIC. For me, the number one lesson I have learned and one that continues to be repeated is *be truly authentic*. This means you must know and like yourself first before others will want to know and trust you.

Over the years, through my professional executive coaching experiences, I have come to realize many people don't like themselves. They are not happy with their results. This unhappiness becomes internalized. What is so unexplainable is that they continue to engage in the same behaviors while hoping for different results.

LEAD YOURSELF. If you can't lead yourself, you can't lead anyone else. Self leadership, like consistent goal setting and achievement, is thought to be learned through osmosis. Truly happy and successful people lead themselves first. They do not ask of others what they cannot do themselves.

HAVE A WRITTEN PLAN. People place more value on the written, everyday common grocery list than they do for their own lives. I learned this lesson when delivering a keynote speech when I asked those in attendance if they had ever left the written grocery list at home. Then I asked what happened. The responses included the following: *forgot what I wanted*; *spent more money*; *bought things I didn't need*; *wasted time*; and *felt stupid*. All agreed that a written grocery list had not only value but significant value due to the wasted time, wasted money, and frustrating emotions. My next question was, "Where is the written plan for the rest of your lives?" The looks on their faces revealed no one had a written plan.

GAIN CLARITY. Clarity is essential yet lacking for many individuals. The ability to see what is happening in one's world with crystal clarity is incredibly powerful. This clarity works to help people avoid misdirected decisions creating misdirected actions.

LEVERAGE TALENTS. People waste far too much time attempting to correct their weaknesses instead of leveraging talents. We live with a "red pen mentality" from our early school years—we focus our actions toward what we have been doing wrong.

Did noted football coach, Vince Lombardi, actively seek the quarterback with the weakest throwing arm? Of course not! So why do we waste so much time looking to correct our weaknesses while ignoring the talents that actually make the difference in our progress and results?

KNOW YOUR PURPOSE. Why are you here right now? What gifts do you bring to what I call the “Table of Life”? Your gifts are probably some of your talents.

IDENTIFY YOUR REWARD. As a former educator, executive coach, parent, grandparent, spouse, friend, and colleague, I believe everyone is in sales. Teachers are selling education. Parents are selling respect. Grandparents are selling their experiences. Spouses are selling new household tasks to be undertaken. What is the difference? Salespeople earn a monetary reward to sell while these other individuals receive a different type of reward.

MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION. A sincere smile and a firm handshake are the best way to start any conversation. These two simple actions can have incredible outcomes.

PEOPLE BUY YOU FIRST, YOUR COMPANY SECOND, YOUR SOLUTION THIRD, YOUR PRICE FOURTH, AND YOUR DELIVERY FIFTH.

GARNER TRUST. People buy from people they know and trust, not people they simply like. My father shared this lesson (along with the previous lesson and the next lesson). Dad believed the idea of *like* was not accurate. He defined *like* as “someone I would take home for dinner.” The word *like* is overused.

CONSIDER EMOTIONAL APPEALS. “May I say that I have not thoroughly enjoyed serving with humans? I find their illogic and foolish emotions a constant irritant,” so says Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*. People do buy first on emotion followed by logic or reason.

FOCUS ON BUYER PREFERENCES. People buy on values unique to them. Over the years, I have learned this lesson, and it is contrary to the current sales hype that salespeople create value. Why does one person prefer a red car and another a white one? I have a friend who always buys a neutral-colored car even though salespeople attempt to create value by showcasing the sporty, metallic red or blue color.

Also, when salespeople believe they create value, this only reaffirms an overly strong ego, which probably turns off most sales prospects. In sales, leaving your ego at the door is a must.

WORRY LESS ABOUT PRICE. People buy you first, your company second, your solution third, your price fourth, and your delivery fifth. Again, my father shared this lesson learned. He said salespeople believe they lost a sale because of price, but usually, that wasn't the case. The real reason was they, their company, or their solution failed to be bought by the potential customer.

KNOW SALES LEAD CRITERIA. Qualified sales lead criteria include interacting with a decision maker who has an allocated budget, want or need, urgency to take action, and commitment to take action. Again, my father shared the first three criteria with me. He explained many firms have money. The distinction is this: is that money allocated to the solution you are proposing?

From my experience, I added the last two: urgency and commitment. There may be urgency to take action, but the decision maker(s) may lack the commitment to take action.

DON'T GIVE IN TO HYPE. Value creation is 21st century hype to be sold to unsuspecting, desperate salespeople. (See *Focus on Buyer Preferences*.)

REALIZE SELLING HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOCIAL. Social selling is 21st century hype to be sold to unsuspecting, desperate salespeople. Selling has always been social. People buy from other people because human beings are social creatures. We live in communities. We build friendships. The more accurate description would be “social marketing.” However, marketing still has a negative connotation.

USE TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL. Technology is just a tool and does not replace actual, human, face-to-face, person-to-person interaction. Too many people believe buying this or that smart device or software application will magically increase sales or build better relationships.

BE A CRITICAL THINKER. People continue to use an elephant gun to kill a fly. This is a result of a lack of critical thinking skills and going for a quick fix.

DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN MOTION AND PROGRESS. Doug Brown, CEO of Paradigm Associates, pointed out years ago that people confuse motion with progress and activity with results. How often do people, regardless of roles, get so busy that they believe they have made progress? All of this activity lulls them into thinking that they have accomplished something. If you disagree, consider this: when you are in a hole, it does pay to stop digging!

APPLY KNOWLEDGE WISELY. Knowledge is not power; applied knowledge is where true power resides. We hear so much about lifelong learning. Those who really engage in self-directed learning and then apply that knowledge are truly successful people.

BE DECISIVE. Indecision is a decision not to take action. Living in the land of indecision only reaffirms the individual as a decision-maker who takes no action. Even a bad decision is better than no decision. How does one know a decision is bad until action is taken? Indecision potentially reinforces existing assumptions.

HAVE NO FEAR. FEAR is False Evidence Appearing Real. This is not my acronym but one I discovered years ago. How many of our fears are based upon false presumptions or evidence that we believe to be real?

SET AND ACHIEVE GOALS. Consistent goal setting and achievement is a learned behavior and requires a process supported by tools (assessments, action plans, and goal-setting worksheets). Attending college later in life, I was exposed to what was called a BINGO sheet. Courses were planned per semester to ensure all required courses were taken. This is one tool I have adapted for myself and my clients.

WATCH YOUR WORDS. Change your words; improve your results. The words we think, speak, and write have enormous power on our own behaviors and the behaviors of others. What really happens is you change your beliefs because your beliefs drive your actions.

STRENGTHEN YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. Emotional intelligence is what builds relationships. When we recognize and understand the

emotions of others while recognizing and understanding our own emotions, we can better manage both.

DEFINE WHAT SUCCESS MEANS TO YOU. Define your words. What does success mean for you? What does happiness mean for you? Each of us probably has different definitions. Until we have clarity around the words we think, speak, and write, we will continue to limit our ability to achieve what we want. (See *Gain Clarity and Strengthen Your Emotional Intelligence*.)

Is it time to create your own list of lessons learned and share them with others? **N**

Leanne Hoagland-Smith is THE People and Process Problem Solver. As a thought leader who challenges the status quo, she earned the position of judge for the 1st 2015 North American Women in Sales Awards. Follow her on Twitter@CoachLee.