

Physical Therapy Sessions: A Good Reminder for Professional Selling Fundamentals

By David M. Brudney, ISHC, April 2006

Former basketball great Bill Walton, no stranger to the O.R., defined minor or elective surgery as when they do the operation on someone else, not you.

Mindful of Walton's admonition, I have been doing everything I can to put off what may be inevitable surgery on my hip and possibly lower back.

This road I've chosen to travel has led to a very new experience for me: physical therapy - - in a clinic and in the pool. I had not been in a trainer's room since my days playing baseball. I remember seeing bats, balls and gloves back then. Now, I'm looking at canes, crutches and walkers.

As I was going through the drudgery of my twice-weekly 60 minute pool therapy, it suddenly dawned on me - - remember, I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer - - that I had no limp under water and I was walking and running the way I should be doing on land. Basically, I was relearning walking naturally.

While toiling away, doing my 30-second jumping jacks or the simulated bike riding exercise, I began thinking what a good idea it is for all of us who sell products and services for a living to revisit the fundamentals of effective professional selling.

I know I should be writing about more topical issues such as immigration, labor, gas prices, Gen X and new life-style products, but hey, I'm a Sales guy. Always was, always will be.

There are dozens of fundamentals in professional selling. Three that come to mind: *Attitude, Reaction and Testimonials*.

- Attitude. Everyone has bad days, days you don't want to go to work. Sales professionals can't afford to have bad days. Don't make telephone calls, don't make that in-person Sales call if you're feeling down

or if you've predetermined whatever you're selling will be rejected. Why? The other party will know. Scores of meeting planners have told me that they receive far too many voice messages from hospitality sales professionals with the wrong attitude. Too much frustration, disappointment, even boredom comes across in messages left. Who would want to return that phone call? So, before you make that client or prospect call, conduct your own reality check. Record your opening or a sample of the message you'll be leaving and play it back. Ask a colleague in the Sales office to listen to you and give you feedback. It's okay to call another department, Catering, Front Desk, and ask, "How do I sound?" Don't allow yourself to fall into bad habits. Work on sounding positive. Prepare yourself. Make sure you sound like someone with whom you'd like to speak.

Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind. As you think, so shall you be.

- William James

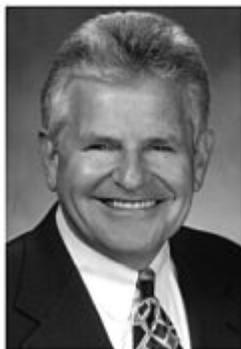
- **Reaction.** In this age of multi-tasking in business, sometimes it can be challenging to keep a client or prospects' attention on what you're presenting or attempting to sell. Multi-taskers can be sitting in a meeting, on their cell phone, working their Blackberry, searching the Internet - - possibly all of the above - - at the moment you call. It's always a good idea to check for acceptance before moving on to the next point, feature or benefit. After you've made that initial point, first stop and ask, "How does that sound?" or "Does that work for you?" Gauge the response before proceeding. You need some validation that the communication is real and the client or prospect is "on the same page."

- **Testimonials.** Introducing a powerful testimonial into the dialogue at the right moment not only helps you stay connected but also enhances your chances of making the sale. You need at least a half dozen of these; satisfied clients who have experienced your product and services successfully and are eager to tell others. The key here is to match the testimonial

with the prospect's needs or concerns. Know the testimonial content by heart. Deliver it with passion. Offer to deliver a copy electronically or, better yet, suggest facilitating a telephone conversation and/or meeting between the parties. Knowing when and how to leverage testimonials is one of the basic fundamentals in selling anything.

Mastering fundamentals is basic in every aspect of the hotel business - - cleaning a room, checking in a guest, preparing and serving a meal or valet parking a car. Sales is no different. Even the best pros revisit the fundamentals. Sounds simple? Simple to understand. Easy to overlook. Acquire the fundamentals. Revisit regularly. Never allow yourself to get stale. Remember, successful hotels are more than "location, location, location." In every department discipline, it's about mastering fundamentals and repetition, repetition, repetition.

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David M. Brudney, ISHC, is a veteran sales and marketing professional concluding his fourth decade of service to the hospitality industry. Brudney advises lodging owners, lenders, asset managers and operators on sales and marketing "best practices" and conducts reviews of sales and marketing operations throughout the U.S. and overseas. The principal of David Brudney & Associates of Carlsbad, CA, a sales and marketing consulting firm specializing in the hospitality industry since 1979, Brudney is a frequent lecturer, instructor and speaker. He is a charter member of International Society of Hospitality Consultants. Previously, Brudney held sales and marketing positions with Hyatt, Westin and Marriott.

Contact:

David M. Brudney, ISHC, Principal
David Brudney & Associates
Carlsbad, CA
760-476-0830 Fax 760-476-0860
David@DavidBrudney.com
<http://www.davidbrudney.com/>
<http://www.ishc.com/>