

Thanks to all those who expressed concern for my relative after last month's newsletter. I am delighted to say the patient is making progress – slow, but steady.

This month I want to explore the much-dreaded topic of sales. Whether selling the goods or services of our business, selling our virtues as a future employee during a job application or selling our attractive qualities as a possible spouse, romantic fling or one-night stand, we frequently have to 'sell' something to someone. Yet so many people I encounter have an aversion to the idea of selling. This newsletter looks at an alternative approach.

## *Recruitment versus Sales*

Gerard Burke, Programme Director for the BGP at Cranfield, gets a mention in consecutive newsletters, because his approach to selling the BGP is a classic example of my point for this newsletter. Gerard never talks about the sales cycle, or sales events. His language, I suspect deliberately, always revolves around the word recruitment. New participants aren't SOLD to, they're RECRUITED.

For whatever reason, people on both sides of the transaction seem to feel better about that word. Would you feel different about looking for new business if you were looking to recruit new people to the fold, not selling your services to a customer?

I found a similar shift in outlook when I worked at Biffpack, because we had members, not customers. It made them feel different, and it made us treat them differently. As I say, this change in language affects both sides of the sales process:

### **Your Mindset as Seller/Recruiter**

In my experience, considering yourself as recruiting people to the fold, not selling has the following benefits:

- It implies choice – when we recruit, we have the option of not selecting some people. This gives one a feeling of greater power in the relationship, and changes the way you appear to the customer – normally for the better as you appear less 'needy'.
- It helps you know your value – part of being less needy is to understand the benefit you provide to customers, so that you can help them to see it. When you recruit, you will be weighing up whether the person is right for your product, whether they will get the full benefit from the product.
- It helps you attract perfect customers – and put off the imperfect ones. When most businesses start, the ideal client can be described as financially solvent and clinically alive (and the second point can be debated!). A maturing business realises that some customers are not good – and others are better. A mature business targets and attracts only perfect customers.
- It changes your energy. Natural salespeople are a rare commodity – most people resist selling – especially if they are selling themselves (at least, they do in the UK). This means our energy is low when we think we have to sell. But if we feel we are recruiting new people to the fold, we have a different zeal about us.

## The Customer's Mindset

I believe customers change their mindset when they think they are being recruited, not sold to:

- Deep down, we all want to be liked – so if we fear we might not be selected as a recruit, we try harder to be accepted. I have talked with potential participants for the BGP who have been worried they won't be allowed to be customers!
- Exclusivity is a powerful subliminal emotion. We like to be in an elite group, however egalitarian we profess to be. Knowing we were recruited makes us feel special.
- Recruitment engenders a feeling of a long-term relationship. Being sold to is far more transactional. It is widely known, but not widely implemented, that sales to existing or past customers are easier and more profitable. For most companies (not undertakers), repeat business is key to success.
- We like to tell others about our exclusive club – unless we're in the Masons. If your customers feel recruited, and are therefore made to feel special, they are far more likely to tell others – and referred business is second only to repeat business in terms of ease and profitability!

I'm now reminded of what my friend Mike Watson says when I spout some of these ideas at training events we run together: "So What?"

If you consider your role, and where you are selling, how can you re-frame it as a recruitment process? How can you make your customer feel they have to try a little to join the club? What behaviour do you expect of your recruits? What will you do if a potential sale doesn't meet your recruitment criteria?

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## *Painless Business News*

I am thankful that the global economic meltdown continues to pass the door of Painless Towers, and it is great to be working with new clients (recruits?). My team of associates (Celia, Vicky and Ann) are working with more and more clients, and is great that we can spread our reach to more and more companies and individuals. That said, we're always looking for new opportunities, so if you or someone you know would benefit from some perspective, some insightful questioning or from some tough pressure to move forward, let me know.

One of my long-term jobs that I have finally cleared this month has been to immerse myself in Linked In – the social networking site for business people. As someone who avoids Facebook and Twitter, it has been an interesting experience building my network on Linked In. If you are a member, please let me know if you would like to forge a connection.

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## *Book Review*

With a background in the environmental sciences, and a passable knowledge of geology, topography and the like, I have always been fascinated by maps. I am part of that resolute vanguard defending the atlas against the march of the satnav (ever known a paper map lose signal?!). As a result, I really enjoyed *Map Addict* by Mike Parker. Whilst I think he had material for two thirds of a book, and the last third went a bit wayward, some of the map trivia was fascinating. If you enjoy maps, especially OS maps, this is a must-read.

## Painless Puns

The following quotes have caught my attention this month:

*If you want to achieve excellence, you can get there today. As of this second, quit doing less-than-excellent work.* Tom Watson (Founder of IBM)

*There is never a better measure of what a person is than what he does when he's absolutely free to choose.* William M. Bulger

As I continue to write entries for the good news blog ([www.goodnewsblog.org.uk](http://www.goodnewsblog.org.uk)), this quote seemed particularly apt:

*People deal too much with the negative, with what is wrong. Why not try and see positive things, to just touch those things and make them bloom?*  
Thich Nhat Hanh (Vietnamese Buddhist Monk)

Thanks to Carol and Simon, who responded to the last newsletter's puns with "Osteopaths do it with feeling" and "Geologists make the bedrock".

These two I have to take responsibility for:

Two peanuts used to drink together every night. One of them was always being beaten up as they left the bar. Finally, he could take no more and said to his friend. "Why can't I be a dry-roasted peanut like you? I'm fed up with being a salted."

A blonde walked into a bar. She said "Ouch!"

## Final Words

I hope you have a good month recruiting new customers!

Warmest regards

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