

So you think can sell?

By: Veronica Cool ⌚ February 16, 2015



COOL TIPS

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COOL

Maybe you are an engineer, project manager, analyst or an associate ... you really don't need to sell.

Au contraire, my friend!

You are always selling, whether you are selling your widget, service or YOURSELF. You may not be selling a car and haggling on the price, but EVERY interaction with senior leaders, co-workers, collaborators, and board or committee members is an opportunity to sell yourself, to build your brand and expertise.

Business development is a very popular subject, like losing weight and getting fit, and we are all looking for the magic pill. Amigos, there's no magic pill. But there are some proven tactics to increase your production and billable and origination hours along with building your personal capital.

First, know your stuff and deliver the goods — the specs, details, or features of your specialty. After all, you are the expert, no? Building and maintaining your credibility is paramount to creating and maintaining a pipeline of volume. Misspeaking or neglecting a key figure (as a pharmaceutical rep, think of neglecting to mention a potential side-effect for a drug to a physician and potentially causing a death.) Of course, not every situation is as dire, but being fully educated and speaking confidently on your specialty creates a beneficial ripple effect where you serve your clients well and you become known as the expert in your field.

Leverage this brand as "the expert" to serve on committees or associations within your industry. You're supporting your community while creating additional exposure for yourself. There's no reason generosity cannot also benefit you.

Now, knowing the entire tomes of the bankruptcy code doesn't help you unless you network yourself into visible, authentic engagements. Oh no, the dreaded "networking" with small talk, forced smiling and collecting cards you will never do anything with. Are you nodding your head in agreement? If this is the case, I hate to tell you — you are doing it WRONG.

Networking shouldn't be painful. Let's re-frame it: You are building relationships with your soon-to-be BFFs, colleagues or partners. Engage in authentic conversations wherein you

discuss interesting topics and seek the other's input, listening authentically. Authentically, again, authentically.

I can see through the sleazy salesperson's pitch or empty platitudes uttered just to pass time. So can you. For instance, when you are babbling about the weather while thinking about that idiotic Super bowl play Pete Carroll called you are not authentically engaged and it's evident to the listener. You've wasted his or her time and yours. And now the evening continues to drag on.

Stop.

Begin each interaction with a desire to learn, to engage. Ask questions and be interested. How does this relate to you, your children, your work, hobbies, interests or vacations? Finding commonalities and engaging in a back-and-forth conversation gets to the root of people's personalities to determine whether they are intelligent, experts in their field, kind and funny. In short, do you want to be around them? Do business with them? Refer them to your contacts?

I thoroughly enjoy the study of people. Their journeys, stories, lives. I ask questions to understand better, especially if unfamiliar with a topic or industry — and I immediately begin to build a web of connecting dots, or spider-webbing. (Gotta give credit to Jane Navarria for coining the term!) Who should/must they know? Who needs to know of their expertise?

It's better to give than to receive. Give a little, get a lot.

By purposely adding value, and making a worthwhile connection, I've elevated our superficial acquaintance to a relationship. Follow up and engage both parties; this intentionality generates deeper relationships that provide true benefits, not just empty exercises in name dropping. And the karma or rewards have been FANTASTIC. It always comes back. Like my Mami always says, "Vero, that's because you give, He returns it." Only she says it in Spanish.

The cultivation of genuine relationships require effort and time, an investment into your pipeline, firm or brand. Yes, you will deal with crazies, jerks and abusers, and you will learn (if you haven't already, I will discuss in a future column) how to exit these relationships and focus on those that are mutually beneficial. The rewards are great — from making money and earning bonuses to enlightening conversations, rewarding community support, career advancements, mentorships, legacy building and deep friendships.

Funny, this was a "How to sell" article yet we didn't use the word "Sell" a lot...

Amigos, I welcome your feedback. Till next time.

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<http://thedailyrecord.com/2015/02/16/veronica-cool-so-you-think-you-can-sell/>