

The Thinking Salesman Letter

August 1, 2011

Hello Everybody,

Al Brosseau, forty years identifying, setting up and administering distribution networks across the USA, Canada and Latin America as salesman, sales mgr., independent rep and now consultant.

Our Mission:

To openly discuss and challenge all aspects of sales and distribution and to promote the sales profession.

Al Brosseau,
Former President, ALBRO Export & Marketing, Inc.
Former CSI (Vermont chapter) & CDT
CPMR (Indiana U., 2003)
MANA board of directors (2002 to 2007)
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On the Firing Line

In the July 1st. issue we had an editorial about Canadian companies and short term relationships with Reps. A contributor who prefers to remain anonymous sent us the following:

My two bits... I think that many Canadians see us here as being just like them since we're next door neighbors and have (generally) a common language. On the other hand, we Americans see two distinct cultures sharing a common language. Therefore it comes down to communications and understanding.

For what it's worth, in our 25 years, we've never had a Canadian line last more than five years - At the same time we've had American lines whom we've been with for 18 years. At one time, we had five Canadian lines. All are now gone.

We feel like we generally did everything we could to retain them and to build their customer base. I think the proof is, however in the pudding. None of them have had much success with us or without us, while we continue to thrive and grow.

Once more, we've worked with EXCELLENT companies on both sides of the border; however we must also admit we have run into our fair share of less desirable Canadian companies to the point where we no longer believe Canadians "never lie". In any event, both Mfrs and Reps should do due diligence before signing up with anybody, eh?

Sales Managers,

The Four Basic Types (Part 1 of 2):

By sales managers, we mean those who have direct responsibility over their company's marketing, distribution network(s), sales force(s) including Manufacturer's Agents (Reps).

Throughout the years we worked with dozens of sales managers -including a few females- as factory salesmen, independent reps and consultants. With most we had great relationships with others, less.

What is sure is that the type of sales manager that management appoints and retains will determine to a great degree the success or failure of the Company's sales, whether it's with factory sales people or independent Reps.

Once more, we've been working with small and medium size businesses, therefore the situation may be somewhat different with large corporations but somehow, we doubt it.

**The three hardest things
[for sales mgrs] to say:
I don't know,
I was wrong,
I need help.**

Mark H. McCormack
What They Don't Teach You At Harvard Business School,

With "tongue in cheek" and keeping in mind we have been Sales Mgr for several Mfrs. we have identified four basic types:

- The Dinosaur
- The Pro-Rep
- The Control Freak
- The Manipulator

The Dinosaur

The dinosaur is the most prolific of the specie. They can be recognized with their deep and loud

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voices and back slapping jokes. They stick to “good old proven ways” because they don’t understand much else and ram through plans made primarily to impress their management and colleagues.

To the Dinosaurs shrewd management means throwing their weight around, imposing sales quotas (whether they make sense or not) and barking orders, (“*The management has provided you with the sales tools, go out and sell*”).

Dinosaurs make excellent truck drivers.

The Pro-Rep:

The Pro-Reps plans long terms, believes in combining their company’s manufacturing capabilities with their Reps’ marketing abilities, in synergy and **they are good listeners**.

Back in their natural habitat, they “tell it like it is”, quietly but persistently seeking new products and service improvements, fair compensation for their sales people and long term support programs that will increase sales and position the Company in the future.

The “Pro Rep” manager has several enemies. One is the accountant who reminds everybody that an in-house salesman could be hired for a fraction of the “high commissions” paid to the Rep. However, his deadliest enemy is the son of the owner who just took over the business and needs to make his mark.

The life span of the “Pro-Rep” sales manager is usually short.

To be cont'd Aug. 15th 2011.

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

I just finished reading Eisenhower’s “Crusade in Europe”. It’s about WWII campaigns but it also shows how the Allies organized themselves (read how the Americans organized the Allies) to defeat Nazi Germany.

What struck me the most is that immediately after declaring war, Roosevelt formed a committee to establish an overall winning strategy.

After extensive studies the committee produced, in only 5 months, a plan pinpointing England as the best base to invade Nazi Germany. The plan also called for the establishment of a single Allied command which had never been done before, armies yet to be formed, and equipment still to be designed in quantities never heard of and in factories still to be built.

They didn’t have all the answers but they had a plan, they had objectives and every decision made from then on was with THE plan in mind. We know the results.

Every business decision we make, every action we take must be with THE goal in mind.

Thought:

**If you don’t know
where you’re going,
you’ll end up in the wrong place.**

Anonymous

Next issue, August 15, 2011,

Sales Managers,

The Four Basic Types (Part 2 of 2)

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