

The Thinking Salesman Letter

August 15, 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)
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On the Firing Line

*(None of this stuff is made up,
the names may have been changed to protect the guilty)*

A former Client contacted us saying he wanted to expand his Rep network but that's after he's gone through dozens of Reps and he's not satisfied with the two he's got left.

We met. We listened. We asked him to send us his Rep agreement. It consisted of several pages of legalese "protecting" him from everything under the sun and downloading all responsibilities to the Rep. We sent him the following email:

Hi Abc,

This morning I went through your Rep agreement. There's one thing you forget after your enumeration of the "Rep's responsibilities..." You should have finished with "now that I've got you by the..." ☺

Abc, as one friend to another, you need to change your Rep approach. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.

*When you want to change your approach call me. I'll do my best to drag you into the 21st century ☺
Keep me posted.*

Al B.

It is said buyers buy when they're ready... However, the wise also knows when to walk away.

On Rep councils:

In the July 1 & 15, 2011 issues we looked at Rep councils. A contributor sent us the following:
...Rep councils in my experience have been a joke. Principals form them thinking it will help them win over their reps, and their time commitment to their line. They do it with control and underlying threats and intimidation. I have NEVER been involved with a rep council that was fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial. But, as they say, hope springs eternal.

There are Mfrs who know how to work with Reps but admittedly, they are not the majority.

Sales Managers,

The Four Basic Types (Part 2 of 2):

Cont'd from Aug 1, 2011 issue

Again, by sales managers, we mean all those, guys and gals, who have responsibilities over their company's marketing, distribution network(s), sales force(s) including Manufacturer's Agents (Reps).

With "tongue in cheek" and keeping in mind we have been a Sales Mgr for several, Mfrs" the following are the last two of the four basic types of Sales Mgr. we have encountered:

The Manipulator

He recruits Reps mainly to obtain the names of their customers and then he gets his "sales people" to contact them directly. He's oblivious to the fact that when he's doing so he misses on the most important part of what Reps offer Mfrs, is not a list of customers but the relationship they have with their customers.

He thrives on the mushroom principle: keep them in the dark and feed them BS".

The manipulator is eventually "figured out" by all in his distribution system leaving him without any other alternative but to sell directly which in turn gets him involved in a myriad of distribution functions he's not familiar with and detracts him from his forte, manufacturing.

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The Control Freak

He is neat, orderly and highly rational. He's oblivious to what goes on outside his four walls and insists on **one size fits all, policies.**

He's the only one to hold the truth; he does not need help and does not believe in adjusting relationships as conditions change. He abhors new ideas and surrounds himself with "yes men", and desperate Reps producing an even shallower gene pool.

We heard of a Mfr. whose President proudly referred to himself as a "control freak". He had highly rationalized national policies he never deviated from and dismissed any outside opinions.

He obtained a small degree of success in their particular industry. A consultant approached them to introduce them to a new market segment they were not aware of (Talk about a "Four Wall" mentality). They were put in touch with the best Reps in that market but the Mfr's arrogance and rigidity telegraphed at interviews and most Reps walked away.

The Consultant discussed this with the Mfr but he rationalized the Reps they were introduced to "were not the right fit" or "the timing was not right" or "if it's not this Rep it will be another one".

Towards the end of his contract, the Consultant estimated the program he introduced the Mfr to performed at less than 20% of its potential. When the Consultant pointed this out, the Mfr answered "we don't have the capacity to service all these Reps anyway".

Some people just can't be helped.

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

Email received from a contributor:

Last year, at [a marketing conference], we had a Mfr get up in front of a group. The first words out of his mouth were – are you ready for this – "I'm gonna teach you how to sell!" There was well over 500 years combined sales experience in the room.

This is one dumb statement but let's face it, Reps have also made dumb statements.

The real problem is that in the sales profession there are a lot more bad Reps and bad Sales Managers than good ones. The 80-20 rule, the Pareto principle in reverse, **it's the 80% that make the 20% look bad.**

I have been encouraging our associations to promote our profession to the outside world but I'm beginning to think we also need to also promote it to ourselves.

Consider for a moment the thought below. Can you imagine a team, any team, any organization where the coaches and players don't appreciate the other's role and keep sniping at each others?

Al B.

Thought:

On relationships between Mfrs & Reps
"It's a team sport"

Carroll Hollingsworth, DH Marketing, Inc

Next issue, Sept. 1, 2011,
Reps, The Four Basic Types

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