

It's all about sales

As I was thinking through today's post, which we'll get to shortly, I came to realize a certain truth underlying my original topic, thus causing me to change the title to the header you just read.

Whether it's serpents and apples, employees and raises, kids and toys or businesses and products, it's always been about sales. Tangible items, as above, or qualitative decisions, perhaps discussed between spouses (which can lead to some darn tangible actions); in all cases, some manner of salesmanship is employed.

Preface concluded; let's dive into what prompted our quick jaunt into the lands of the obvious. Recently, while visiting with some friends, we were talking of future plans and I mentioned the recent economic dreariness had played harshly with my investments. Such recent havoc has been caused in my portfolio that my "safety net" for the future is somewhat impaired. This led me to consider returning to work for a few years to cover the gap, conservative pragmatist that I am. Of course, the catch-22 of this is that the bad economy makes it difficult to find jobs but the need for a job wouldn't be there in a good economy.

My leaning was for a job, not a career; basically playing off my years of experience and definitely not in management. I wanted to just come in, do my job and go home, keeping my mind free to concentrate on my writing.

My friends suggested sales as an option, using a line I have heard from more than one person before: "You would be good at sales!" Where this opinion comes from, I'm not exactly clear, unless it's from my talent at bull...er...creative conversation.

These friends, of any I know, should have a better perspective on my sales skills.

I met this couple during my return to school in the late 80's-early 90's (finishing my Accounting degree). I'm not sure whether either of us recalls which was the chicken or the egg, the school or the telemarketing job I worked with the husband. We set leads for medical products; he worked on a chiropractic machine and mine was for blood clots. The entire "pitch" mostly revolved around Medicare reimbursements, though there were some reputedly factual tests supporting the equipment.

Now, calling into doctors' offices is a cold thing; even for cold calling it was icy. You would think I would be inured to rejection now, having been turned down by more women in a year and change than the career frat boy might experience in his entire lifetime. Needless to say, I showed no sales "magic" whatsoever.

I had barely left my last company when I was contacted by someone eager for me to work for them. They claimed to offer extensive training and support as I molded myself into a successful insurance salesman. The contact left me puzzled, since I could find no connection with anything I had done in the past to support his contention of my upcoming stardom as an insurance salesman (the irony here, is that my telemarketing friend actually *had* been an insurance salesman many years ago).

A close friend of mine who was looking for work recently and also had a financial background was contacted by the same company (different person) to fill the same role (undoubtedly vacant due to my not fulfilling my destiny). This may be a Pavlovian response by the insurance industry for any available bodies with financial background, though I suspect they may simply check to see if blood is flowing and the person can stand upright.

When my book was published, I was inundated with questions on what sales techniques I was going to employ to make the book a

success. They were valid questions; especially in light of the fact the only “technique” I had mastered was getting chilly rejections from women over the phone. I’m still struggling with any other concept, which makes the suggestion of my being “good” at sales generally amusing.

And it’s not exactly like I’ve been a great salesman all my life. I didn’t have much success in my former company regarding decisions either financial or cultural, despite my elevated position and lengthy tenure. I’ve not had much impact on family or friends with suggestions (when asked; otherwise it’s just butting in. And I don’t even want to discuss my last relationship.

Wrong though I may be, I see most “successful” sales jobs as requiring you to get people to buy more than what they need (specifically products, though I think you can see how this could apply in all the above cases). I’m just too practical and honest to feel comfortable in that position, even if there is nothing inherently “bad” about suggesting a higher quality (read: more expensive) item than the one the customer could “settle” with. And I definitely stink at fake sincerity (as my meager lead-setting spiffs showed), so I don’t know how someone could look at the body of evidence and say “You would be good at sales”.

However, I’m willing to bet that by tomorrow, this post will generate at least one contact offering me extensive training and support for my successful transition into insurance sales.