

P William Clarke

The Exception or the Rule?

A major problem I uncover in most selling environments is a lack of differentiation. Human beings make decision by a process of elimination. If you look, act, sound and treat your customers the same as everyone else, expect them to treat you like every other salesperson and make a decision on the only thing they can differentiate – price.

Consumers are always looking for an easy way to make a decision. If you separate yourself from the others it may be all they need to justify a decision. By being different, you make it easy for them to eliminate the others with you being the “last man standing.”

Although you may not own the company you work for it's natural to think you can't always change your environment. This doesn't mean you can't single handedly influence a change. Look at your business. Is everyone smiling? Are they inviting? Do they drop everything to attend to a customer? If not, you may have a cultural infection. Culture refers to the general practices individuals have become accustomed to engaging as a result of influence or observation. You may not see it, but I'll bet it's weighing in on your personal success.

It is actually easier than you think to make a change. Just lead by example not just when there are prospects present, but all the time, and drive a refreshing new culture through your actions. Just like bad habits, good habits rub off on those around you as well. You typically won't have to say anything or bring up the fact that you are making changes in the way you conduct your self. The people around you probably won't bring it up or even notice it on a conscious level. This does not diminish the impact of your positive actions. Remember, we observe and conform to our culture without being conscious of it. We pick up words and sayings in the same way. Jerry Seinfeld created a whole new lexicon and an entire nation jumped on board with “Yada, Yada, Yada.”

You will be pleased to know there is a way for you to accomplish being different and driving a culture by implementing a few simple practices.

The first thing you have to do is remember to be friendly with everyone you see. My rule is, just say “hello” to everyone you come within 10 feet of. Next, just like an old friend, ask everyone how they are doing.

How you can help them will come up soon enough. I talk to people all around the world and I always start out by asking how things are in their local area and it's no different for you whether you are working in a retail store or engaging in prospecting activities in direct sales.

Finally, a complement also goes a long way. I always like to select a somewhat unrelated subject and turn it into a complement of some kind. “That's a nice jacket,” which is personal. “What a nice statue in front of your office building,” a bit more formal. And, it's always nice to find an opportunity to tell a customer they have nice taste.

All of this brings me back to the beginning of this article. People are looking for something different, a reason to buy. All of these things are uncommon today, which is why people take notice. The human mind is more likely to pick up on an exception than a rule. This translates into positive emotion and gives your current and future customers the feeling you will take better care of them. What's even more powerful is your prospects and customers will end up feeling like they have a friend in the business. I don't know about you, but if I have a need and a friend in the business, the competition doesn't stand a chance.

I hope you will take a moment to evaluate these things and ask yourself, “Are you the exception or the rule?”