

THE FUTURE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT...
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE.



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....Quarterly Brief

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SELF EMPLOYED? How Successful is your business?

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**“IF YOU DON'T LOOK
AFTER
YOUR CUSTOMERS –
THEN SOMEBODY ELSE
WILL !”**

I saw this profound comment on the wall in the reception area of a client business recently as I waited to see the Sales Director. The accompanying picture was after the style of the famous “Kitchener” piercing-gaze recruitment poster of the First World War.

As I enjoyed a cup of tea I reflected on the simplicity of the message and wondered why there is an impression at large these days - possibly based on some experience - that so many organisations {and not just businesses} seem to have trouble acting on this message in a meaningful way – meaningful from a customer or user point of view that is.

In the final analysis the acid test of the effectiveness of any business is the extent to which not only are customers satisfied by the experience, but also whether they will recommend you to others.

But before we can begin to think about good stuff such as serving or caring for customers in a manner that gets them thinking along these lines, there are two fences of ‘Beechers Brook’ proportion which must be successfully cleared, and they are :

- {1} Finding a customer
- {2} Getting an order.

Getting an order is an essential part of “**Effective Selling Skills**” which is a 2-day workshop that has been designed and tailored specifically to meet the needs of **PRRT** clients who are now self employed and involved in selling a product or service.

The aim of **Effective Selling Skills** is to provide some insights into the process of developing selling skills for any **PRRT** client who has served the community in a policing role but is now building a new future in self-employment.

Effective Selling Skills is a good opportunity to get some focus onto clients’ ability to sell themselves and sell their proposition.

Selling is the lifeblood of any business which is put into perspective by this thought :



“ A business can survive for a long time without a profit – but only for a very short time without a sale”

Effective Selling Skills is based around a technique known as ‘structured selling’ which approaches every contact with a new customer or ‘prospect’ via ‘7 Steps in the Call’.

If you are the person in the business who meets customers or takes enquiries by telephone with a view to getting an order or agreement to carry out some work {either for goods or services} in exchange for money – then you are the sales person.

Effective Selling Skills has come about through experience of working with hundreds of sales people in recent years and it is worth looking at the 1st of the ‘7 Steps’ briefly to get a flavour of how it can work for you.

The 1st step is “Preparation”.

If you are the Sales Person – how can you prepare effectively to meet your

'prospect' {not a customer just yet!} and improve your chances of getting the order? – especially if the buyer is seeing more than one sales person and getting a number of quotations.

Much of the stress and strain in business for self-employed people derives from not generating sufficient levels of revenue to cover costs or expenses.

Self-employed business people carry many burdens. In addition to finding customers they also have to see that the work is carried out satisfactorily, then submit invoices and get paid, complete administration such as records and books of account, deal with any customer queries – and then find time for a life!

Preparation includes a fairly wide-ranging set of behaviours and attitudes on the part of the sales person – and not everybody engaged in self-employment has got the message just yet that if you start up a business and put yourself forward to provide goods or services, then somebody might just ask you to live up to your claims.

“Make the customer glad they talked to you today!”

Here's what I mean: I phoned a builder friend to recommend a supplier for a new aerial and duly got the details of Mr Aerial Installer who came “highly recommended” so I immediately looked up yellow pages for the number and made a phonecall.

The yellow pages advert claimed “24 Hour Service”. What this meant in practice was an answering machine where I left a message and received a response the next day – well I suppose that could be loosely described as a “24 Hour Service”. I had a bad feeling about this already, but “highly recommended” was good enough for me. I phoned back and got a mumbled answer in which I detected the name of Mr Aerial Installer; I explained who I

was and mentioned the name of my builder friend who made the recommendation {this is what self-employed business people want – right?}.

Then things took a turn for the worse with a line of questioning from Mr Aerial which went as follows :

Mr Aerial Installer : “Is the aerial broken?”

Me : “Well – it's lying in the garden right now – it looks in one piece – but I could not say whether it is broken or not.”

Mr Aerial Installer : “Do you want a new one fitted?”

Me : “Well – I suppose if the old aerial is broken then yes”

Mr Aerial Installer : “OK then leave that with me”

Me : {Being helpful} “When do you think you could fix it?”

Mr Aerial Installer {Not Being helpful} : “It's hard to say”

Me : {With great patience} “It seems a fairly straightforward job with good access to the chimney so when is a good time then ?”

Mr Aerial Installer : {Avoiding the prospect of getting some new business} “I don't know - my father looks after the aerial repairs and I would need to talk to him about it.”

Me : {Supportively} “When could you do that then ?”

Mr Aerial Installer : {Now making a big effort to avoid doing business} “Over the next few days”.

Me : {Now assuming a management role in Mr Aerial's business} “Would it be a help if I gave you my address so that your father could

look at the job and you could drop a quote through my door and I could get back to you immediately?”

Mr Aerial Installer : {Reluctantly} “OK”. {Takes details and promptly throws in bin}.

Me : {Clutching at straws now} “Thanks for your help – you came highly recommended.”

Mr Aerial Installer : “Bye” {Turns aside and says to his father – I'll show him whose boss!}

As at time of writing, which is 6 months after the event, I am still waiting for a response – but I anticipated this and got the job done within a couple of days by Mr Aerial's competitor.

It can be very expensive in terms of your time and money to build up a reputation and get to the stage where satisfied customers make referrals or recommendations in your favour – this is a much cheaper way of getting a stream of new business than, for example, advertising via any media channel {try it for yourself}.

Sound preparation is the foundation for successful selling and the next 6 “Steps in the Call” which help to manage a customer contact into a successful order.

So if you are already self-employed or in the process of starting up your own business, then **Effective Selling Skills** could help you to become more proficient at doing and saying all the right things to ensure future sales.

Look out for subsequent editions – or even better why not contact the PRRT training department and experience **Effective Selling Skills** for yourself.