

# Inside

## BUSINESS

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## The Canterbury Sales®

### Never Better

By Andy Gole

Last November, in the aftermath of the stock market crash, I overheard two businessmen bemoaning the recession. They were wondering what the government would do to help stimulate the economy.

I wanted to shake them, to ask them, "What are you doing to boost your business? What new products and services will you offer to *earn the right* to more business? What new techniques will you try to lower your cost, boost your productivity?"

I imagined their reply: "Yeah, but what is the government going to do? After all, demand is off. We need the government to stimulate demand."

Why not create your own demand?

I'm sure the conversation I overheard is not representative of our business culture. But I started speculating: what if it was representative?

Then I would have to conclude how far we have fallen – in our national ethos – from the early 1900s, when optimism was the national byword. When writers like Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone could teach us:

- How to Think and Grow Rich
- The value of a Positive Mental Attitude

We learned that, "What the mind of man can conceive and believe, he can achieve."

It was the age of optimism, of "can do."

This was the time when Bruce Barton wrote, "When you're through changing, you're through."

What happened to America since the 1920s? What could cause today's businesspeople to hesitate, to wait and ask, "What will the

government do?"

A young, burgeoning, industrializing nation matured. We lived through the Great Depression. We fought the Second World War. We encountered cutthroat overseas competition, which cost millions of jobs. Later we fought the Viet Nam War. Certainly these are grounds for pessimism (despite paradigm-shifting technological advances – including the transistor, the computer and bioengineering.)

In this mindset, I was reminded of a saying identified with a retired salesperson: "Never Better."

In the 1950s, America lived through two recessions of 10-month durations – one spanning 1953-1954, the other 1957-1958. During these recessions, the salesperson was disappointed to hear other salespeople – working for his company and working for competition – bemoan the terrible market conditions of that day. To make an optimistic counterpoint, to offer a positive view of life, when asked how things were, he responded, "never better."

This is sound advice for us to embrace in this current recession.

Although a recession is disruptive and widespread, there is something that can be even worse, that businesspeople face constantly – the declining market scenario. A recession is just a special case of the declining market scenario, which merits discussion.

In a mature economy, with mature technologies, it is inevitable that many of our products, services and even industries are facing decline. (Consider

the recent switch from CDs to IPODs, after CDs had replaced records.)

There are markets that decline 20-40 percent per year – think of print advertising as a result of the Internet.

It is the job of leadership to prolong the life cycle of declining businesses, to use the extra life cycle to fund new businesses being developed.

Salespeople have a pivotal role to extend the life cycle of declining businesses. They need to take a "do or die" approach – a "can do" attitude plus nonstop creativity. Best efforts are a recipe for disaster. Neither business owner nor sales people have a chance of success if they are waiting for the government to do something.

They need to embrace life with a "never better" attitude.

I have some knowledge of declining businesses – I have been hired by management in about a dozen declining businesses, to help arrest the decline.

I have been very fortunate to be inspired by that retired salesperson who always said, "never better." This attitude helps me inspire sales teams in very difficult markets.

Yes, I have been fortunate. Since I was a boy my father – that retired salesperson – always taught me that things were "never better."

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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 17 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, Urgency Based Selling®, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at [www.bombadillc.com](http://www.bombadillc.com) or by calling him at 201.415.3447.