

Inside BUSINESS

This is a publication of The Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce.
Please visit our website at www.gatewaychamber.com

Volume Eleven, Number Two
February 2008

The Canterbury Sales®

The Peacock and the Lion

By Andy Gole

Old Proverb: What happens when a peacock meets a lion in the wild? The lion rips out the peacock's throat. Moral of the story – don't be a peacock.

Manufacturer's reps can have a very challenging business life. They typically work on straight commission, representing several factories. If they don't sell, they don't eat.

Having built and run a sales agency for 10 years, I know first hand the 14-hour days that go into building an agency.

About 20 years ago, Jack – a successful independent sales rep selling to retailers – did an incredible thing. He earned so much money in commissions, he could afford and bought himself a Lamborghini.

This was ostentatious, but not incredible.

Here is what was incredible: He actually drove the car to his largest retail client. He then compounded the felony by inviting buyers with whom he was friendly to take a break and step out to the parking lot to see his wonderful new car.

This man was a peacock, a show-off.

You might ask, what is wrong with being

a bit of a show-off? After all, Jack had earned the business. We have a free market system. What is wrong with flaunting it?

Being a peacock contradicts the "humility" principle in selling.

We must always be grateful for opportunity. We always must remember we have to "earn the right" to the prospect's business and make it clear to prospects we understand we need to "earn the right." An urgency approach to selling, built on a peacock's feathers, is like building a house on quicksand – it will sink.

In general, no one wants to buy from a peacock.

There is a yin and yang to selling, involving urgency and humility. We must oscillate appropriately between the two states. If there is no urgency, the prospect has no business reason to talk to us. If there is no humility in using the urgency, the prospect will not want to buy from us.

At one point, Jack undoubtedly was humble in building his business. Not that day, driving the Lamborghini.

Of course, he probably did not expect to encounter a lion that day. But somewhere

in the universe, the scales of justice were being balanced.

Here is what happened.

The founder of the chain – who focused obsessively on reducing costs and who saw independent reps as an unnecessary expense – drove into the parking lot at about the same time Jack was showing off his new car.

He was not driving a Lamborghini. The founder was driving a beat up old pickup truck, with about 200,000 miles on the odometer.

You can imagine how the founder responded to the buyers lining up and admiring the rep's Lamborghini.

Within days, a new edict was announced – independent reps could no longer sell to the retailer. Only direct factory salespeople would be welcome.

Jack not only ruined the selling environment for himself – he ruined it for all honest, hardworking, frugal reps.

The moral of the story bears repeating – don't be a peacock.



© Bombadil LLC 2012

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 or by calling him at 201.415.3447.