



The Travel Agency Training Series

Lesson 1: Become More Likeable

Brought to you by AmaWaterways with Mike Marchev (The first in a series of ten articles)

When I had the opportunity to share some of my sales and marketing information with you, I jumped at the chance. I have so much I want to share. You are about to find that I look at marketing and sales from a different angle. The older I get, which means the more experienced I get, the easier it gets.

Sometimes we shoot ourselves in the foot. We complicate this thing called sales and it doesn't have to be that way. In the next series of articles, I'm going to share much of what I've learned over the last thirty years of selling travel. I've been in the travel industry since 1984 and I want to share little secrets and tactics that will help the home-based entrepreneur and storefront travel professionals alike become more successful.

I consider you as entrepreneurs, not travel agents. I really don't care what you sell. I know it's travel-related, but today I'm talking to entrepreneurs.

I want to start by sharing a story. I'm going back a few years. I was selling meetings to a large corporation. It was my first sales call on this organization when the first thing I saw on the table as I entered the conference room were balloons.

Here I am calling on the decision maker with hopes of selling my services when the first thing I see are celebratory balloons ... next to a cake.

"What are you celebrating?" I asked. As it turned out their current vendor (our competitor) had just won an award for the service they were

providing. Wait a minute. We were making this sales call in an attempt to knock them out of the box, trying to replace their current vendor. And they are celebrating. With balloons. With a cake. With a trophy. This is called bad timing.

I wanted to turn around and exit for the door. I said to my boss who was attending this initial meeting with me, "We can't sell these people anything. They just won an award. What are we going to do?" My boss replied, "We're here, let's talk to them." We sat down; we told them what we had to say; we left. To me, it was an exercise in futility.

Two days later my phone rang and they awarded us the business.

As all good salespeople know, when you are awarded the business you stop talking. You graciously accept the opportunity and prepare to put your promises into action. Period!

That decision puzzled me for a year. Having befriended the decision maker over time, one day I asked, "Dan, why did you give us the business the day after your current vendor just won an award?" He looked at me and said without the slightest hesitation, "Mike, it was an easy decision. I didn't like them." I will always remember his words.

This is a key selling point: people do business with people they like. If you want to increase your sales, become more likeable. There's also another point worth mentioning: people like people who like them.

So, if you want to get to the point where more people will start liking you, start looking for more things and more reasons to like your customers and to like your prospects. This will work.

Bottom Line: If you want to be more successful in sales, become more likeable.