

Business and Success Articles – By Don Doman



My wife, Peg, and I have written three business books published by Self Counsel Press of Vancouver, Canada. The books are “Producing a First Class Video for your Business (Work with professionals or Do It Yourself).” “Out of Work? Get Into Business,” and “Look Before You Leap – Market Research Made Easy.”

In addition to our business books we have written hundreds of interesting articles. We tend to use humor to help explain and offer as examples. You may use our articles in various publications and for training. Please, credit our articles and quotations.

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Delivering Customer Service to the Doorstep

By Don Doman

At its core, customer service is common sense: what's best for the customer. This goes for most interactions within organizations and in facing the public. It's a simple fact.

Let's take my morning newspaper for example. Recently I ordered the morning newspaper from a neighboring city. It's delivered right to my doorstep. And that is the problem. My local paper is delivered first. The delivery person walks up to my storm door, opens it and drops the newspaper on the welcome mat. I come along later open the door, bend down and pick up the paper.

With the new delivery, the paper is dropped on my steps immediately outside the storm door. This is okay. I can easily walk an additional three feet from the front door to the storm door and open it, bend down and pick up the paper. The problem, however, is the fact that the paper is dropped in the most inconvenient spot: either right in front of the storm door, or to left of the door.

When the paper is dropped in front of the storm door, it's pushed down the steps as I open the door. This means that I have to open the door, go outside, and step down the stairs to pick it up. If the paper is dropped to the left of the door, again I have to open the storm door and step down the stairs and reach around the door to retrieve it. If the newspaper was merely placed on the right side of the storm door, then I could open the storm door a crack, bend down, reach out and pick it up. This should all boil down to a simple question by the delivery person of what is best or easiest for the customer. Currently a decision is being made every morning, and it's always the wrong decision, so it makes me wonder.

I know this sounds petty, but it happens every day . . . every single day . . . each day of the week. If I ever see the delivery person I will point this problem out. However, this is not such a huge problem to involve the newspaper delivery company, but obviously it does bother me as a customer. And it just doesn't make sense.

Good customer service always makes sense, whether it means acknowledging the a waiting person in line at the counter, being pleasant over the phone, letting a diner know that their order is coming up in a couple of minutes or delivering the morning newspaper. We all need to consider what is best for the customer. It is that simple.

Happy Cows Produce More Milk and Happy Workers Produce More Everything

By Don Doman

I recently watched a program on the Science Channel. The focus was animal behavior and their feelings. One of the studies was about cows. The conclusion was that cows who were happy or contented with their handler produced more milk. Handlers that were calm, patted the cattle, and exhibited kindly and friendly behavior resulted in higher production.

This is not the first study of feelings and behavior of cows. Dr. Donald Broom, professor of Animal Welfare in Cambridge's Department of Clinical Veterinary Medicine challenged cows with situations requiring them to think and make decisions in overcoming a set of obstacles. As the cows succeeded, "their brainwaves showed excitement, their heartbeat went up," the report showed. They liked challenges.

In another study Psychologists at the University of Leicester, UK, played music of different tempos to herds of cattle. The results? "Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and Simon & Garfunkel's Bridge Over Troubled Water were a big hit in the milking shed." Easy listening produced more milk than fast-paced rock and roll. There is a direct relationship between friendly handlers, music, and work. Reducing stress usually produces healthier and happier workers and they in return produce more work for their efforts.

In a Gallup pole of two millions workers from 700 organizations found that "the length of an employee's stay in an organization is largely determined by his relationship with his immediate

supervisor." Contented workers continued working for a supervisor he or she liked, however 46% quit if they didn't like their supervisors. I guess the difference between cows and workers is that cows can't quit and look for different handlers.

Contented workers are developed by trust, expectations and challenges, and responses by their supervisors. Supervisors that provide praise for a job well done, usually end up with employees returning the favor by producing more jobs done, well. In other words if we appreciate how we are being handled or cared for, we produce more milk.

Some organizations might milk this information for all its worth, but organizations that form a bond with management and employees should expect the cream of the crop and "butter" relationships.

Where Everybody Doesn't Know Your Name

By Don Doman

The owner of a popular restaurant entered the banquet room and "glad handed" several of the guests. It was a wedding rehearsal dinner. He looked over at my table and beamed and said, "Pastor, it's always nice to see you. Are you marrying the happy couple?" I smiled and said, "Joe, how are you doing? No, I'm the brother of the bride tomorrow." He came over and shook my hand and then continued on with some jokes and wished everyone well. It was a nice gesture.

The only thing wrong with the scenario is the fact that I am not a pastor. Joe knows my face, but probably couldn't come up with my name from even a short list. He just knows he knows me. That's fine. He recognizes someone from the community and makes them welcome. That's important. The guests glowed and felt a little more important, the host recognized one of the wedding party and went out of his way to wish the guests a good time . . . and they all did. I doubt anyone cared that he called me "Pastor." Some of the guests may have even assumed

that I was a pastor in my spare time, and I bet that most people didn't even hear what he called me. The name didn't matter.

Don't we all feel special when we are recognized? If you are being recognized because you are a client, it makes you feel valued and you want to return. Some businesses use shopping carts on their website, and that's how orders are placed and money is exchanged. It takes the personality out of doing business, but it doesn't eliminate the need for recognition nor the ability to do something about it. Even with shopping cart, purchasers leave their names, email addresses, company name, and location. This gives us the opportunity to still make connections AND make the customer feel recognized and appreciated.

If you have the chance look at online transactions, you can respond with a thank you note AND a comment. I have responded to people merely because I've always wanted to visit a certain location. Or maybe the local university is a possible opponent of one of my favorite schools from the Pacific Northwest. Sometimes a curt reply is the only result of an email from me, but other times I get information about a vacation spot, or a weather report, or even better I receive questions about my hometown, comments about a product I have supplied, or questions about another possible purchase from my company. Ah, communication and recognition . . . wrapped up in feeling special . . . just as if I really knew their name . . . and if more online transactions come in, maybe I will know the name tomorrow.

The Ice Cream Man's Top Ten Sales Techniques

By Don Doman

The little truck pulls onto your street with bells ringing and people come running with smiles on their faces. This is as true today as it has been for more than half a century. People love to see the ice cream man (man, woman, or person). Don't you wish the same thing happened every time someone knows you're nearby selling your product?

Do people come running when you're in town or on their block? Do they merely put up with you and avoid you when they can? Sure, you say, selling ice cold popsicles and ice cream on a hot day is one thing, but selling your multi-faceted widget week after week is another. I agree timing is everything, but still . . . if you could bottle the customer service of the ice cream salesman, you might do better at selling your own products.

Here is what the Ice Cream Man has to offer:

They see someone come running and they stop what they are doing just for that customer.

They are as happy to see their customers as the customers are to see them.

They give each customer their full attention.

They recognize old customers and call them by name.

They make suggestions, even when the customer already knows what they want to order.

They deliver the product right then and there.

They know their product line and easily recommend something that will do the job as well if they don't have exactly what the customer is looking for.

They don't run down the competition or even mention them.

They use good taste to measure success.

They cater to enthusiastic people enthusiastically.

As always, it's a combination of product and salesmanship that matter to people. Think about the Ice Cream Man and how he uses attitude and customer service. For the ice cream salesman, it's a two-way street. If you want your customers to come running, you should be just as eager to run towards them.

Dreaming and Ignoring Bubble Popping Questions

By Don Doman

In general conversation a young lady says "darling." Or you think she says it. Do you ask for clarification? In a crowded room you hear your name announced as the winner of a raffle? Does it take a while for the information to soak in that you won? Do you look around for confirmation? Ed Taylor is facing the same kind of predicament.

This professional jazz musician is walking around in love and his best girl has a classic hour glass figure . . . with skin, a golden perfection. However, this object of affection is not a woman, it's a Gibson hollow-body guitar - all the better to play Ed's brand of smooth jazz (edtaylor.com).

On his face Ed had that combination look of adoration and fear reminiscent of young love when he told me that the Gibson Guitar Corporation had given him this brand new guitar. It's everything he ever dreamed of, but the problem is . . . is the guitar really his? Is it on loan? Can he keep it? Has Gibson signed adoption papers? Have they taken him underwing? Have they become an official sponsor of Ed Taylor?

My viewpoint is always, "The Big Print giveth and the Small Print taketh away." Of course you are thinking why doesn't he just ask Gibson? Wouldn't that clear up any mystery? The answer is yes. But until he asks, his dreams are alive. His life is filled with possibilities. His love is in his

arms forever, even if forever is only a couple of days. The wrong answer might return him to earth. How long can you hold on to a dream and put off reality? Many people do it forever.

My advice is grab it, hold it, cherish it, and above all make beautiful music together. Isn't that what young love and smooth jazz is all about, anyway?

Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game

By Don Doman

The greatest blues song of all times starts out with the lament, "I hate to see, that evenin' sun go down." Some say that the W. C. Handy wail is a precursor to another night alone and homeless on the streets of St. Louis. If you've ever experienced a winter in a mid-western city with relentless wind, freezing temperatures, and dark alleys offering no warmth or haven, then you can almost feel his pain . . . his blues . . . and his aching for a better tomorrow.

If you've never seen a mid-west winter or the streets of St. Louis, then perhaps Ed Taylor's (edtaylor.com) Don't Hate the Player will drive home that same feeling of dread and hope for a better day.

Ed Taylor's music is usually of the smooth jazz variety. And, it's often just an instrumental. Ed lets his music speak for him, but in some cases, perhaps, he wants to add his voice to make sure he's understood . . . completely.

In Don't Hate the Player, Ed mixes a nice slow funk and blues with his smooth jazz. Ed's lament isn't about the sun and being homeless, it's about people living just above that level - people living from paycheck to paycheck . . . struggling every day and every week as they try to support a family in America.

"I've got five dollars in my money clip,
And I was supposed to buy my daughter some brand new shoes.
I know my wife is not going to be happy,
And I feel like a lowly fool."

Haven't we all been there? Haven't we all come up short and faced disappointed faces?
Sometimes the worst thing to do is look in the mirror at the most disappointed face of all.
Birthday presents, anniversary presents, and Christmas presents just add burden to backs
already tired and bent from paying rent and putting dinner on the table.

Ed's philosophy is "Don't hate the player - hate the game." He says, "The game is all a poor man
has, and even that is not secure." I like the advice. If we look at each day as a game, we may
actually already be a winner. It let's us start off each day without the emotional baggage we
ended with the day before. With the weight off our back, we can look forward to the new day
and new challenges . . . but if we don't make it and that evenin' sun starts goin' down . . . hate
the game.

Learning about Presentations from Robin Williams

By Don Doman

In the feature film *RV*, Robin Williams plays an advertising executive. His boss orders him
around and it looks like Robin will be put out to pasture. Showing no respect to Robin, the boss
orders him onto an assignment. To make a presentation in Colorado, Robin must cancel his
family's vacation plans. Hawaii is out. An RV trip to the mountains is in. He is ashamed to admit
to his wife and kids that the trip is anything but an attempt to reestablish some quality time in a
family that has become fragmented.

Robin stays up at night writing the presentation and fires it off from a mountain peak when he is able to find a signal strong enough. He abandons his family to make the presentation and only then finds out that his boss has brought along a replacement for Robin. Robin is only a backup. The first-string guy fumbles and Robin must step in.

After meeting the clients and noticing their reactions to the first-string guy's emphasis on profits and money, Robin takes a different tact and talks about nostalgia, love and the environment. He saves the day, and the account.

Whenever I have to make a presentation, I always leave myself some wiggle room. I'll switch horses in mid-stream if I have to . . . and sometimes I even plan it that way.

Recently, I was to review a fund-raising video with a client. I played the rough draft version of the video they had approved. They were happy. They loved it. I could have walked away and finished the production, but instead I said, "But, that's not the video I recommend for your fundraising event." In editing, I had fallen in love with a single interview. I was unable to use any "soundbites" from that interview for the approved video, but with a few simple edits, I was able to use the interview itself as a heartfelt fundraising presentation. There was not a dry eye in the conference room after I played the video.

I was confident with both videos, but if the client had hated the first video, I would have redeemed myself with the second. The client loved them both. The interview video was played at the big fundraising event and they were both distributed on DVD and placed on the web. My budget was increased slightly and the client was extremely pleased with their two fundraising videos.

When making presentations, you must know your clients, you must listen to your clients and by all means you must watch your clients during the presentation. If you need to make adjustments, don't make them lightly. But if you sense that something else is needed to make the client happy, stay loose and try a little adjustment.

The Pursuit of Happiness and Getting Hired

By Don Doman

If you are looking for a new job, you should prepare a great resume, read up on hiring and firing in the corporate world . . . and take in a movie.

In the feature film *The Pursuit of Happiness*, Will Smith plays Chris Gardner, a struggling single parent. Set in 1981, Chris is a salesman of a high-tech medical gizmo that most medical facilities can do without. Chris has no future selling these gizmos and he knows it. He can't pay his rent. He can't pay for childcare. He can't even pay his parking tickets. He's looking for a better job, a better product, and a better life. Chris sees an opportunity. He applies for a prestigious stock brokerage internship. It's a gamble. Only twenty applicants are selected from a huge file of wannabes. Chris doggedly pursues the job by searching out the manager who reviews the applicants. He is relentless and lands an interview. The night before the interview Chris is painting his apartment and is arrested for not paying his parking tickets. He writes a check, but must wait for the check to clear, just 45 minutes before his interview.

Shirtless and smeared with paint Chris rushes to his interview. Knowing that he is underdressed and looks without merit, he does what we should always do, anyway. He tells the truth. He is hired. His determination and of course his dress, while going after the job carry the day.

In an interview, you can forget all the flash and dash. What matters is the truth and your desire for the job. If your qualifications match up with those of the job and you look like you both can handle the job and want the job, you have a great advantage over those who are simply looking for a job.

Ambush, Dogfights, and Empowerment

By Don Doman

While watching a historical cable program called Dogfights I saw a great example of empowerment with individuals acting on their own skills and leadership abilities.

Robin Olds, a World War II Army Air Corps fighter ace, took over a fighter wing in Vietnam. His group flew the F-4 Phantom, designed for fighting enemy bombers. The F-4s had missiles, but no guns. Opposing them were Vietnamese pilots flying Russian MiG-21s, which were great fighter planes at high altitudes. They were equipped with a 30mm cannon as well as missiles. The MiG-21s were limited in number, but were devastating flights of American F-105 "Thunderchiefs". The F-105s sometimes called "Thuds," although designated as a fighter were really designed for low-level penetrate of enemy territory and dropping a single nuclear bomb. They were vulnerable to the MiG-21s.

Col. Olds realized the F-105 and the F-4 formations used the same approaches time after time. Intelligence and flight analysts in Hanoi became expert in identifying the more vulnerable F-105 "Thuds" from the F-4 Phantoms, from their radio frequencies and call signs. Olds came up with Operation Bolo, an aerial ambush. He would fly a large F-4 formation using the same routes, altitude, and call signs as the F-105s, hoping that the MiG-21s would be guided towards them, expecting to find Thunderchiefs, and when they realized the truth, it would be too late for them. To add to the delusion a radar scrambling pod, standard feature on the F105, was installed on the F-4s.

The first decoy flights flew under their false colors and were rewarded with MiG-21s. As soon as the MiGs realized they had been tricked they radioed headquarters for instructions. Headquarters did not respond with instructions, but rather kept sending up flights of MiGs. Without the empowerment the American pilots enjoyed the MiGs became easy prey.

Within twelve minutes seven MiGs were shot down. Credit goes to the technique of empowerment. The American pilots reacted from their own perspective and were allowed to handle the situation in the best way they saw fit.

While it was a life and death situation that day in Vietnam, in business it's even more important. Empowerment and its co-pilot delegation are great ways to handle problems on the front line.

Doing What It Takes for a Team Win

By Don Doman

In the feature film Rookie of the Year, Gary Busey plays the part of a one time great major league pitcher, Chet "Rocket" Steadman who has his playing time reduced.

A young pitching phenom, Henry Rowengartner is signed for the team. The reality of playing ball hasn't set in yet with Henry. He is thrilled to be meeting the players he has only read about and seen on TV. As a pitcher he worships "Rocket" Steadman.

Chet Steadman: Do me a favor: Don't call me "Rocket".

Henry Rowengartner: Why not?

Chet Steadman: 'Cause I'm not the "Rocket" anymore.

Henry Rowengartner: Yeah, I don't get it, you're throwing so slow.

Chet Steadman: Well, Thank you very much.

Steadman knows his days are numbered. When Henry is introduced into the line-up, Steadman is asked by a reporter, "How does it feel to be out pitched by a twelve-year old?" He replies, "I don't care who out pitches me," indeed all he cares about is the team. The same feeling should permeate both sports and business.

In the movie Steadman becomes a teacher, friend, and mentor to the youngster. Henry is only playing because a broken arm has left him with an incredible fast ball. Steadman gives the rookie a piece of advice, "Henry, don't take this serious. But it's nothing to joke about. But one day, your gift will be gone."

The team supports the effort to win the division championship. At the end of the movie we know that the team has won the World Series, but we don't see them win it. What we see is that in the championship game, both Steadman and Henry lose their gift.

Steadman has gone through physical therapy and with one pitch late in the game he knows that his career as a pitcher is over. Henry is sent in as a relief pitcher for the final inning. Walking onto the field he slips and lands on his pitching arm. We know that his gift is gone and one pathetic practice pitch proves it.

Instead of taking himself out of the game or simply throwing a few pitches to the opposing team and losing the game, Henry signals for his teammates on the field to join him on the pitching mound. He explains what the problem is and asks for their assistance. He has a plan. With a little trickery and good ball handling, they win the division.

The team plays through the World Series and is victorious without the physical gifts of Steadman and Rowengartner. That is the trademark of a great team. It's easy to win games with good players. It's easy to have successful projects with great workers, but in the end a team or a business that can win without the superstars has reached a level of success seen by few. A great team has players or workers that care more about the team than they do for individual attention. A pitcher or a salesman shouldn't ultimately care if someone younger or newer on their team out pitches them as long as the team wins.

Setting Records and Attaining Lasting Achievement

By Don Doman

Do we do enough? Do we have limits for what we can do? What we should do?

My best friend Randy, took me out to breakfast and we talked for a good hour and a half. Some of

the conversation centered around the University of Puget Sound. Randy and I, along with my wife,

attended school together, but did not know each other at the time. UPS is and was a small liberal

arts institution in Tacoma, Washington. Randy had been a language and business major. Peggy was a

German major, and I was a fine arts major.

I mentioned to Randy that I had almost attended a recent football game. Two weeks before I read a

great newspaper article about a current UPS "Logger" running back who was on-track for being the

most prolific rusher ever in school history. But, I didn't make it to the game where Rory Lee set the school record. To my dismay, the game was played in Spokane, which would have been a good six

hours plus drive over Snoqualmie Pass and across the state. I would have started out in the darkness and returned in the darkness. I also would have probably ended up driving in rain and snow. That trip was much more effort than I wanted to put forth. I would have driven the two miles from my home to Baker Stadium on the UPS campus, however. I'm a very fair-weather supporter.

The UPS Loggers lost the game. "Lee finished the afternoon with 101 yards on 27 carries and two touchdowns. The game bumped his career rushing total to 4,051 yards and his season total to 1,278 yards, both new school records." Randy bemoaned that fact that it's hard to compare current record holders with those from the past. As always, statistics don't really tell you about the people. Records fall. Record holders change. Fame is fleeting.

Randy brought up the name of the football hero from when we attended school: Joe Peyton. Peyton had been a marvelous athlete in multiple sports. Randy knew Joe from track & field. He told a story of one track meet. Joe arrived late. As a member of ROTC and the reserves he had parachuted twice that morning and then rushed to the track meet. Once arriving at Pacific Lutheran University in nearby Parkland, he took part in the one hundred yard dash, the 220, anchored the 440, and did everything but give out towels. He took first place in each of seven events. How many people would have just stopped at jumping out of the airplane?

Joe set records in many sports and eventually came back to UPS as football coach. His widow still teaches Physical Education there. Rory Lee still has most of his life to set new records and achieve goals. The world is waiting. Actually, I think the world grows tired of waiting for most of us to contribute . . . anything.

So, how much can we do? More than most attempt. How many limits do we have? Fewer than we

suppose. What should we do? I think we should risk failure at every opportunity. We should do as much as we can do. Who knows what records we could break, if we would just try. Like Joe Peyton jumping out of an airplane should be only our first step.

Getting Back the Lost Client in Six Steps

By Don Doman

When you lose a client it's almost always because of service. Price is rarely the problem. Before you try to win back that lost client you need to examine the problem and figure out why you lost the client in the first place. What does your client think was the problem? What do you think the problem was? If you work together again, is the problem going to resurface?

Here are six steps to help you get back a lost client:

1. Give it some time. Don't go rushing after the client. Let them think about the problem if there was one. This will also give you time to think over your approach. Client problems are sometimes like lover problems. Time will often heal the wound without you having to do anything else.

2. Provide a referral or offer your assistance. In the world of business we run into people who need this or need that. Keep your clients in mind AND keep your lost clients in mind for anything that could benefit them. By knowing the needs of our clients, it's sometimes easy to make suggestions that could help them either with a referral for business, or your assistance with any problem, which could help them.

3. Do not sever communication relationships. Keep them on your mailing list. Stay on their mailing list. If you send out a newsletter, keep sending to them. If you use email to stay in contact with your clients, keep the lost clients posted. It also wouldn't hurt to mention any good news concerning the client in the newsletter or email.

4. Make it easy for the client to return. If they call, sound happy to talk to them. If you meet them face to face, shake their hand and give them a big smile. This will remind them why they worked with you in the first place.

5. Have the client solve a problem for you. If you're working on a community project and you think the client might be able to help you out, give them a call. If you respect their taste in food, ask them for a restaurant suggestion for an anniversary dinner. Ask about software. Ask about people. Ask about virtually anything, just don't sound phony.

6. When the client comes back thank them profusely. Everyone likes to be thanked. We enjoy believing that we make a difference and that we are appreciated. Show that appreciation to your lost client.

It takes an effort to leave. If your clients feel wanted in the first place it is almost impossible to have someone else steal them away from you. Once lost you just need to gently keep after them by reminding them of your services, your appreciation of them, and your knowledge of their needs. Once you have them back, keep them and treasure them.

Five Attributes of Entrepreneurs

By Don Doman

Entrepreneurs have personality traits that make them ideal people to work for themselves. These same traits, while helpful as an entrepreneur can be irritating and dangerous for normal on-the-job relationships with bosses, managers, and supervisors.

1. Willingness to take risks. Being an entrepreneur is demanding. Everything is a risk to someone who only depends upon themselves. Entrepreneurs learn to take calculated risks. They can't throw complete caution to the wind, but they are much more willing to take a risk which seems within reason.

2. Ability to identify good business ideas. For an entrepreneur one of the greatest abilities is that of identifying a good business idea. If a person sees a good business idea, even if it is already being done, just recognizing the idea validates the entrepreneur.

3. Determination and confidence. When every penny spent on an endeavor belongs to you, you must believe in yourself. You can't half believe in an idea, you must be determined and confident.

4. Single-mindedness. An entrepreneur must be focused. An entrepreneur must be able to shut out distractions. Sometimes they must pretend they are wearing blinders.

5. Willingness to put out whatever effort is needed. When you only have yourself to depend on, you have to be willing to put forth whatever effort is required to achieve success. If you won't work for your success, who will?

Although in business, nothing is every 100% certain, if you have these five attributes you might be entrepreneur material. If you have some of these attributes, you might take the calculated risk and open your own business. If you have none of these attributes, self-employment would seem like the wrong career choice.

Life is Like a Carwash

By Don Doman

Today is the kind of day that cries out for adventure. To celebrate I suggest you go through a carwash. You know the ones where you pull up to the entrance, pay your money, and then pull in at the green light and stop when the red light comes on. Your car is showered and soaped and scrubbed with canvas or plastic daubers and then rinsed and blown dry. I did this recently and I got to thinking . . . Life is Like a Carwash . . .

Unless something unusual happens you know about how long it's going to last.

You can go it alone, or you can have friends and family join you on your little journey.

You're spit at.

Everything seems to come at you from all directions with things flailing away at you like furies from Hell.

You have the feeling that you're moving forward, even when you're really just stuck in one place.

And sometimes all you have to look forward to is a blast of hot air at the end.

But Life is Not a Carwash . . . You can complain, and talk to upper management, and perhaps you'll get guidance, but no divine intervention. You'll never get a rain check. You can only go through once. So, sit back, relax, set your sites, keep going straight ahead, stay clean, and enjoy the ride.

The King of Queens and a Horrible Business Idea

By Don Doman

One of my favorite television shows was King of Queens. A married couple, Doug and Carrie, are the main characters. They are selfish and self-centered. After being rejected at a number of job interviews, Carrie becomes depressed and tries to find herself. She has great plans to read more, learn more, and do more. She also plans to start her own business. Doug is supportive.

After weeks of staying home, she realizes that she's read nothing, learned nothing and done nothing. She swings into action and starts her own business. She wants to design, manufacture, and market personalized cell phone covers. She hires her father and one of his cronies to decorate the cell phone covers. What she doesn't do is conduct any market research. She's doomed.

Carrie invites friends, associates, Doug's co-workers, and neighbors to her home. With virtually no preamble she launches into a sales presentation. When no one volunteers to buy, she starts assigning phones. She overcomes every objection, but not well.

One friend complains that \$49.00 is too much for a phone cover. Carrie responds that he needs to protect his investment. He replies, "The phone was free." Another "sale" has the objection that his phone is a PDA and won't fit Carrie's stock size. She ignores him and crams the PDA into the cell phone cover. With the pressure of the small cover, the phone begins placing a call. When he complains, Carrie cracks that he needs new friends anyway.

As her sales party dissolves in shambles, Carrie faces reality. She's worse off than before. She's lost money, she's wasted time, and her support base of friends and neighbors may never speak to her again. Carrie should have conducted market research. She could have had the same party, but used it as a focus group BEFORE any money was spent and time wasted. She could have presented her idea and then written down her group's responses and then she could have used her friends for a brainstorm of ideas. She might have found out right then that her idea

wouldn't work, but she also might have discovered other ideas that would fill needs and produce a profit.

Market research is like investing pennies on the dollar. It can save time and money, AND it can present avenues for business that you may have missed. Market research doesn't cost, it saves . . . time, money, and friends.

Bargain Hunt: Listening to the Experts

By Don Doman

For many people, both in and out of business, one of the hardest things to do is listening to experts. Why? Because experts generally give advice that runs contrary to what people want to hear. Experts are not always right, but their opinions are worth consideration, especially if all you have to go on is a gut feeling.

There are two television shows where people generally ignore the experts to their own detriment. On *Cops*, as police officers try to sort out circumstances, they continually tell people, "Sit down and be quiet." But as Blue Collar comic Ron White says about his own arrest, "I had the right to remain silent . . . I just didn't have the ability." On *Cops*, people ignore police advice, even after several warnings and are finally hauled off to jail.

On the antique show *Bargain Hunt*, David "Cheap as Chips" Dickinson provides two separate teams with two hundred pounds and an expert. The teams then have an hour to roam around a flea market and purchase two or three items, which are sold at auction a week later. The team that makes the most money gets to keep the profit. However, there usually isn't very much profit because the teams don't listen to their experts all that much.

On a recent episode the two women of the Blue Team came up with a child's chair. The expert suggested a different child's chair for about the same price of 20 pounds. The expert's chair was

from the previous century, had "turned" rather than "straight" supports, and had some worn spots that gave the chair character. The Blue Team chose the one they found rather than the expert's find, because they liked it.

Next the team came back with a metronome, which wasn't that old and made odd sounds. The expert voiced disapproval and gave his reasons. His opinion was ignored. Finally, the Blue Team approved the purchase of a wooden collection box the expert suggested for only 11 pounds. I think the Blue Team approved it because they felt guilty. The expert seemed relieved.

The Red Team didn't take all of their expert advice either, but they listened enough to make a 24 pound profit. The Blue Team made a profit of 14 pounds, which mostly came from the expert's collection box. The box sold for 28 pounds, making a whopping profit of 17 pounds, but that wasn't enough to offset the Blue Team's combined losses with the child's chair and the metronome.

When given expert advice, the first thing we need to do is listen. The second thing to do is evaluate. If an expert's opinion runs completely against what we want to do, then we should consider changing our opinions. We should remain silent and make our final decisions based on facts and reasoning, not on our hopes and feelings.

Success: Can You Spell That Without Any S's?

By Don Doman

The wonderful feature film *Akeelah and the Bee* is about friendship, community, achievement, and love. If I had enough money, I would give multiple copies of this movie to every single educational institution in the world. I can't give away that many DVD copies, but I can give a few and so can you.

"Akeelah Anderson can spell. She can spell better than anyone in her school in South Central Los Angeles, and she might have a chance at the nationals. Who can say? She sees the National Spelling Bee on ESPN and is intrigued. But she is also wary, because in her school there is danger in being labeled a "brainiac," and it's wiser to keep your smarts to yourself. This is a tragedy in some predominantly black schools: Excellence is punished by the other students, possibly as an expression of their own low self-esteem."

-- Roger Ebert

We see Akeelah as she struggles to get by in school. She's never missed a spelling word, although she doesn't study, but she does love words. She plays Scrabble on her computer. Her dad also loved words. He died when she was six, and now five years later she feels closer to her dad than her mother, a single, over-worked mom trying to raise a daughter with her own baby, Akeelah and her gangsta-wannabe brother.

This is a movie with relationships and my favorite one is between Akeelah and her best buddy, Georgia. Georgia is always supportive and she has dreams of her own. She wants to be a flight attendant. She is unwavering in her encouragement of Akeelah, and Akeelah repays with encouragement and support in kind. When Akeelah is invited to a birthday party for a fellow spelling bee contestant in the prestigious Woodland Hills area, Georgia goes with her. At the party, however Georgia refuses to get out of the car and instead chooses shopping at the mall. She knows she doesn't fit in with Akeelah's new friends. As Akeelah gains notoriety and becomes a local celebrity, Georgia sees Akeelah less and this saddens her, but she never fails to offer encouragement. They remain friends . . . and Georgia will probably grow up to be a flight attendant.

Throughout the movie, the characters never take the easy way out. There are so many clichés that could have been easily applied. They weren't.

Akeelah meets every challenge with determination and pluck. She chooses her own path from forging her permission slip, to skipping a tutoring session, and to misspelling a word on purpose. She makes decisions and suffers the consequences.

Akeelah and the Bee is a movie that deserves to be shown over and over again to young people, old people, friends and strangers as well. Share the experience with your neighbors and students. Support your local schools at every opportunity. Now, that spells success.

Following Flawed Leaders

By Don Doman

The Searchers (1956) stars John Wayne in one of his most compelling films. I've seen the movie countless times. I've owned my own copy for years, and yet when I come across the film as I flip through the channels on my remote I stop and watch it again. The film is about heroes, revenge, leadership, and doing the right thing.

The Searchers tells the emotionally complex story of a perilous, hate-ridden quest and Homeric-style odyssey of self-discovery after a Comanche massacre, while also exploring the themes of racial prejudice and sexism. Its meandering tale examines the inner psychological turmoil of a fiercely independent, crusading man obsessed with revenge and hatred, who searches for his two nieces (Pippa Scott and Natalie Wood) among the "savages" over a five-year period. The film's major tagline echoed the search: "he had to find her...he had to find her."

-- Tim Dirks

John Wayne plays Ethan Edwards, a dedicated man, a hate-filled man, a driven man . . . a man of contradictions and flaws. Ethan comes home to Texas three years after the Civil War. When Reverend Samuel Johnson Clayton (Ward Bond) says, "I ain't seen you since the surrender. Come to think of it, I didn't see you at the surrender." Ethan replies, "(I) don't believe in surrenders."

A group of Texas Rangers and deputized posse go looking for some raiding Indians who have stolen some cattle. They find the cattle slaughtered and Ethan realizes they have been lured

away for cause. Fierce Comanche Indians, led by the chieftain Scar, kill Ethan's brother and rape and then kill his sister-in-law. His two nieces are kidnapped.

A large posse set out to search for the girls. As time goes by the posse dwindles. It becomes clear that Ethan considers the girls dead or worse. They may have become Comanche themselves. He is now only seeking revenge. Reverend Clayton of the Texas Rangers asks Ethan if he is ready to quit his search. Ethan replies, "That'll Be The Day."

Ethan and his brother's adopted son, Marty, who is part Cherokee and therefore less than human, continue looking for the Comanche and any evidence of the girls. Ethan finds Lucy, raped and tortured. The two continue on with Ethan the driving force. Marty stays to protect Debbie from Ethan if they ever find her.

In the end Ethan gets his revenge and rescues Debbie. He cannot kill her.

In the film we see some of the best shots ever recorded on film. We hear memorable lines. We see excellent acting. We see relationships develop. We experience great directing. But most of all, we see the face of leadership.

In Ethan Edwards we see a leader we can depend on. We know him. We can depend on him. We honor his decisions. We know that he will arrive at his destination. We know too, that we will arrive with him.

Some leaders you would follow into Hell because you feel that you will reach your goal AND continue to live . . . or at least have a better chance of surviving. We see this in the leadership of Lt. Col. Hal Moore (Mel Gibson) in *We Were Soldiers*, Richard Winters (Damian Lewis) in *Band of Brothers*, Lieutenant John Chard (Stanley Baker) in *Zulu*, and Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) in *The Godfather* series. Each of these people have flaws. All leaders have flaws. We should never stop following because leaders have flaws, but we should never be blind to them.

Ethan Edwards has major flaws. He overcomes many on his journey. We see him struggle with his thoughts and decisions. Great leaders are worth the search and effort to find them. Ethan Edwards is a hero. He is a leader. In the end he does what is right. To do less is unthinkable. As Ethan says, "That'll be the day."

When You're Extraordinary, You Gotta to Do Extraordinary Things

By Don Doman

I can't image a life without music and song. A good song can heat up your emotions. It can promise greatness. It can fill your mind with creative thoughts. It can inspire you to greater achievement and success. When a good song is matched with good lyrics, it can talk to your soul.

"Every man has his daydreams

Every man has his goal

People like the way dreams have

Of sticking to the soul."

-- Corner of the Sky by Stephen Schwartz

In the fall of 1973 I found myself in Philadelphia with a little time to kill. I was there for corporate training, but had finished. Everyone flew home except Ed and I. He had been to New York once. I had never been there. We decided to travel the short distance to New York City and enjoy ourselves.

We visited Macy's department store where I bought my wife perfume. We stayed at the Waldorf-Astoria. We ate at a fancy fondue restaurant, which was the current rage. We attended a Broadway show and finished off the evening at The Playboy Club. That one day in New York cost me more than I could afford, but as the saying goes, the memories are priceless.

The Broadway show was Pippin starring John Rubenstein, Jill Clayburg, and Ben Vereen. Pippin was a Bob Fosse musical. At the time I didn't know who Bob Fosse was, but I found out. I've grown to admire his dancing and direction. I had seen John Rubenstein and some of the dancers perform a number from the show on Johnny Carson, but that was all I really knew about the play.

The music was inspiring. I've always had self-confidence, but the music pumped me up, so I was like self-confidence on steroids. One of my songs was Corner of the Sky.

"Rivers belong where they can ramble
Eagles belong where they can fly
I've got to be where my spirit can run free
Got to find my corner of the sky."

-- Corner of the Sky by Stephen Schwartz

I had completed a course in goal setting and at the time was president of the Tacoma Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). I wanted to help humanity and accomplish great things. That song combined with the message of another song stuck with me. The other song was Extraordinary.

"When you're extraordinary
You gotta do extraordinary things"

-- Extraordinary by Stephen Schwartz

I didn't return home and set the world on fire, but I did return home filled with fire. I'm not the king of the universe, but I have accomplished many things at home, in business and in the community.

Many times while I'm working I'll sing to myself the phrase "Rivers belong where they can ramble, eagles belong where they can fly" and then slip into "When you're extraordinary, You gotta do extraordinary things." I stop what I'm doing, and think back to my one day in New York City. Then I get back to the task at hand . . . and work and dream . . . a little harder.

The Wiley Coyote is the Acme of Success

By Don Doman

We've all seen him trying to catch the roadrunner using rocket propelled skates, painting fake tunnels on rock walls, and running off into space from a cliff and standing there until he notices he is completely without support. He never catches the roadrunner, so why should we copy him? The coyote is a survivor, and in today's business world that's success.

In an article for Smithsonian Magazine an amazing story of change and adaptation is told featuring the coyote.

"The coyote, that cunning canine of wide-open spaces, has come to the nation's capital. And to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and other cities. In fact, coyotes have spread to every corner of the United States, shifting their behaviors to fit new habitats and spurring researchers to cope with a worrisome new kind of carnivore: the urban coyote."

-- City Slinkers by Christine Dell'Amore

Each day there are innovations in technology and communications. We need to be like the coyote and shift our behaviors to fit new challenges. We need to look for different ways of doing things and finding paths to success. We need to reach more people, communicate better with them, and deliver products and services that will be beneficial. How can we do this?

"One of its most celebrated traits is its trickiness; coyotes have been outsmarting trappers for centuries. Recently, biologist Jon Way, who has been studying the predators in Massachusetts, set a trap near the Boston Airport. Coyotes somehow snagged the rib meat put out as bait

without getting caught. In the Navajo version of the creation of the world, old men had just finished embroidering the sky in brilliant patterns when the trickster Coyote ran across their work, scattering the stars."

-- City Slinkers by Christine Dell'Amore

Stan Gehrt, a wildlife biologist at Ohio State University, has a theory that the successful coyotes are now teaching their survival skills to new generations. I like that. If they are staging "Success and the Coyote" seminars across the country we should all be standing in line for tickets.

Until Wiley Coyote comes to your town, there are other training methods available, however. I like a training program from Australia called Creative Problem Solving. This turn-key seminar comes with video, complete script, and participant handouts all on one CD-ROM and an accompanying video tape. The only thing it doesn't have is a coyote . . . or even a dingo.

"In an age of computers and technology, the one thing that sets us apart from machines is our ability to be creative. Managers and supervisors who can nurture an ideas environment where employees and team members are encouraged to see problems and solutions through new eyes - and then develop solutions that add to the organizations value through improved processes, new products or better marketing, will achieve success."

- ad copy for Creative Problem Solving

We need to look both inside and outside our organizations. What will work? What could work? What's worked ages ago that might work for us now? We need to ask these questions and more. We shouldn't be afraid of ideas and innovations. We should embrace them and the opportunity to survive. We should think of ourselves as hungry coyotes out on an adventure. Each day brings new wonders. Isn't that exciting? Doesn't that sound like fun?

Christine Dell'Amore ends her article with a description of two coyotes caught on film. She says they look curious, fearless and eager. Curious, fearless and eager? Isn't that what we should all be?

Business and Success Articles – By Don Doman



We hope you enjoyed the previous articles.

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