

Selling Results Well

I have question for you. If someone says: “last year we finally received an order from a customer with whom we really wanted to do business“ is that a special achievement or not? Really think about it. What do you think? I have discovered that there is no objective yes or no answer to this; there is only ‘it works’ or ‘it does not work’. The statement as it currently stands, does not blow you away.

To start with, an achieved result is neutral. There are no objectively great achievements, only achievements that *appear* great.

A business consultant tells his potential customers the following story at a presentation:

“I would like to give you an example of how we operate. Last year we received an order from a mechanical engineering firm in Stuttgart. We undertook a thorough survey of the company and looked to see what could be improved upon. The biggest challenge was to speed up the production of a round casing component for a punch press of which 8,400 were required per month. Business consultants had already been working with this company two years previously, and they had reduced the production time for this component from 12 to 8.4 minutes. We saw no way of bringing about a further acceleration in this instance. The previous consultancy firm had done some very sound work. The problem was that the operators, who made the part, had already reached their physical maximum speed.

We had a meeting at which a colleague of mine said: “If we exploit all possibilities I think we could achieve a maximum improvement from 8.4 down to 7 minutes. If we can achieve that I think we will have brought about a revolu-

tion.” I left the meeting thinking to myself: “We’ll never do it!” Then we went to work on it. We had many ideas, all of which we tried out at the works.

Four weeks later the big day dawned: we took the final measurement of how long the production of the component actually took. All of us had the previous duration in our minds: 8.4 minutes! The operator fed the part in at the front of the assembly line whilst our own Mr Jefferson, standing at the other end with a stopwatch, pressed ‘start’. Jefferson’s eyes were glued to the operator; all of our eyes were glued on Mr. Jefferson. The man on the inside processed the part and put it in the container when it was ready. Mr Jefferson pressed ‘stop’, looked at the stopwatch and entered a figure in a table in a note pad. To get statistically relevant results, 10 consecutive tests were to be carried out. The second piece landed in the container; again Mr Jefferson pressed ‘stop’: again he made a note of the time in his table. The third, fourth and fifth work-pieces exactly the same ... until finally the fervently awaited tenth piece dropped into the container. Mr Jefferson took out a pocket calculator, typed in a few digits and then called over to us: “The average time is ... four point two minutes!”

It sounds exciting doesn’t it?

Most people are not able to communicate an achievement in such a way that the audience is also impressed. Describing an achievement in such a way that it also causes admiration in the person you are speaking to, is one of the most powerful confidence inspiring elements.

The preceding story is told in such a way as to adhere to a guiding principle. In a moment I will introduce this structure to you. You can use it to put across any arbitrary achievement just as effectively as in the foregoing story.

Whether you are a business consultant, who has halved the production time, or a lawyer, who has won a case alt-

though it had seemed hopeless, or if you are the owner of an advertising agency that has implemented a successful advertising campaign ... this golden thread makes it possible for you to communicate your own success story with the same power and the same effect. And if you can narrate it so impressively, the potential customer will develop a profound confidence in your abilities. People tend to credit a successful person with the ability to do anything. If you have had success in one field, then people will believe that you can do the same in every field. "Success follows him around".

Here is the golden thread to which I have slavishly adhered with my story and with which you too can transform any arbitrary story into a highlight story.

The Slow Motion Method

- 1) Describe a dramatic difficulty
- 2) Set a false expectation
- 3) Draw out the moment of the result in slow motion
- 4) If the way you did it was exciting, reveal it but only at the end.

And this is how to proceed in detail.