



Food For Thought: Week of March 17, 2014

Interesting Ride Home

As we wrapped up the 2014 Affiliate Conference in Orlando, I made my way home to Clearwater in a van that was rented from Enterprise Rent-A-Car. After dropping off the conference materials, I brought the van back to Enterprise, settled the invoice and asked for a ride to my home (so I could get my car and return to work). The driver was very personable & engaged me in conversation immediately. He asked the standard questions; how my weekend was, how did the van work out, and whatnot.

Out of curiosity (I love learning how businesses work), I asked who their main customers were. This particular branch is nowhere near an airport and is surrounded by residential areas. He told me the bulk of customers are those with cars recently involved in accidents and pointed out there were well over two dozen body shops within a 2-3 mile radius of the branch. So I asked if they had an outside sales rep that cultivated relationships with those shops (in an effort to make Enterprise their first call). He explained they have one full-time person doing that as well as in-house staff making phone calls during the slow periods of the day. The driver went on to explain that moreover, Enterprise is in the business of selling cars and they just happen to also rent what they sell (I had no idea). It was a great segue into some qualifying questions. He asked about my car, my wife's car, how they're running, if they're paid off yet, and so on. I was invited to keep Enterprise in mind when we started thinking about our next car.

Now we're getting close to my home. I tell him to turn at the corner where the bakery & cafe is located. He repeats the business name and says he's never been there before. So I tell him how great the food is and share a little insight. At the core of the business is the bakery & catering services. They make bread for a number of restaurants, cater tons of events, make wedding cakes and just recently added the cafe portion as an afterthought (probably to move the overstock). The driver says he'll want to stop in sometime and try it. We pull into the driveway, bid each other farewell and continue with our day.

So why am I sharing this with you?

-I could have easily burrowed myself in a phone call or text messages. Instead, I had a great conversation with a fellow salesperson. I learned about one business. He learned about another.

-A ten-minute car ride turned into an education about a company I've been doing business with for years.

-I related their outside sales efforts to our affiliate's school service representatives and was reminded of how important it is to cultivate & maintain relationships with those in a position to steer business to (or away) from you.

-It was interesting to observe another salesperson's approach to the Five Parts of a Sale (intro, qualifying, offering solution, overcoming objections, closing). We've all been part of a good, bad and ugly pitch. This guy was good (and had only been with the company for three months).

The Point: Seize every opportunity to learn, especially with regard to how businesses work, how people work and how it all might relate to your business. The best way to be successful is to learn from those who are successful.
Always be observing!

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