**Change Your Agenda. Change Your Results**

When I was a young sales manager, I hit on an idea that seemed to help salespeople who had fallen into a slump. “For the next two days,” I would tell them, “go on your meetings to get to know your prospects instead of trying to sell them something or tell much about our radio stations.”

And quite often the salesperson who used this strategy would come back with a story about a customer who had a problem they wanted to address and a next meeting to discuss it further. Sometimes the came back with an order they weren’t even trying to get. Visiting a prospect without pitching them usually resulted in an advance or a sale.

But why? Because when their agenda wasn’t to make a sale, they didn’t raise the defenses of the buyer. You can stop reading now if you have never been in a slump.

Here is a short excerpt from *What Great Salespeople Do* by Michael Bosley and Ben Zoldan. It looks at selling from the buyer’s side of the table.

“During a sales call a buyer sizes up a seller, imagining what it would be like to work with that person: Who is this person? Is she only out for her own good, or does she have my interests in mind as well? Does she “get” me? If a buyer feels that a seller is trying to persuade him—that is, to push and agenda—the buyer will instinctively resist. By contrast, if a buyer feels cared about and tended to by the seller, the buyer will instinctively move toward cooperation.

The psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion says, “The purest form of listening is to listen without memory or desire.” When we listen with memory, we push and old agenda. When we listen with desire, we push a new agenda.

When we listen without memory or desire, we let go of our agendas in a way that allows buyers to open up... Any questions we ask a buyer should not come from a sales script but from what we learn through empathic listening; they should pertain not to a sales agenda but to a sincere curiosity about where the buyer is coming from. If we pay attention to the clues a buyer gives us, they will lead to a deeper understanding of that person and his or her needs.”

Radical idea? Think about it. How do you sell when you have already made your quota? And if you have never made quota, how do you think you would sell if you didn’t have the pressure of a quota hanging over you? Does it make sense to set aside your agenda, your sales goals and your bosses’ admonition to sell, sell, sell in order to listen and understand?

If you didn’t have a quota to bring in and could just go out and help people, how would you do it? And would you help more people if you could relax yourself and the person across the desk long enough to have a real conversation instead of a sales presentation?

(Permission granted to reprint this article with attribution to the author, Chris Lytle.)