

Everybody Is A Somebody, Somewhere

BY ROBYN HENDERSON CSP

Don't just focus on the BIG KAHUNA!

Mastering the gentle art of conversation can help you avoid trade expo disasters and set sales records

Picture this scenario: You have blown your budget on your trade display, had thousands of brochures printed, CDs burned, updated your website, have a full compliment of national staff flown in for the expo, and on day two, you still haven't taken your first order! What is happening—or rather is not happening?

Many networkers and sales people would love potential buyers and prospects to wear signs saying, "My name is John Smith and I am in the market for one of your \$50,000 widgets—be nice to me and you may get the order." OR, "My partner is the head of the company you are trying to secure a contract from. If you treat me as the intelligent person I am, rather than ignoring me as you are doing now, I may introduce you to my partner." OR, "I am the company scout—I am checking out all the stands today, before the big boss arrives tomorrow. If you keep patronising me today, you will not see my boss and the decision maker tomorrow—I will make sure of it."

That would be really simple for everyone and then all we would have to do is to be able to read. Sure, when you read the name badge of the potential customer, interpret whatever code the organisers are using (be it colour or symbol), we could then only speak to those that we perceive to be important.

How foolish that would be!

Remember it's not what you know, but who knows what you know!

No one is a nobody. Yes, their name badge may have a lesser code than someone else, however, whom do they know and why are they looking at your stand? Certainly not for something to do to fill in their day—people are way too time poor for that.

Sometimes exhibitors don't realise how important it is to take the time to have a conversation with everyone we come into contact with—whether they look like buyers or not!

Pick up *The Big Kahuna* DVD with Danny De Vito and Kevin Spacey when you can. It brings home well and truly the "no one is a nobody" theme. The Big Kahunas—the N° 1 buyers—often deliberately avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Think about some of the high achievers you know; what makes them different? Why is it some trade stands are buzzing with people and others with very similar product ranges are empty? Take a close look, you will probably find the staff are really connecting with each person who walks onto their stand. They are focused on the general conversation. They are listening with their ears as well as their heart.

When we speak from our head only, we often become flustered and nervous, stumbling over words. We are so worried about missing the next 'important' person that comes onto the stand and we mentally try to weigh up whether this current person is a potential buyer or not. Meanwhile we have lost two potential customers, the one we are speaking to and the one who came onto the stand, overheard your distracted conversation and made a decision to leave and not come back.



The exhibitors who get results at trade expos are the people who are the most prepared, the most helpful and the friendliest!

They usually have a couple of open-ended questions ready to ask anyone who walks onto their stand. Here are a few examples:

- Tell me about your business, where do your customers come from?
- How many businesses in your area sell similar products to you?
- What specifically did you come to the trade show for?
- What effect has the internet and e-business had on your outlet?
- What has been the highlight of your day, so far?

They are also prepared to redirect the client to a competitor if they know in their heart their product does not fulfil the client's brief, and your competitor's does (this time). This is seen so rarely in business today, but it is the standout memory hook. You will ultimately gain more business long term from that client purely for being honest with them and finding a solution for them.

Rather than constantly looking for the sale, look for a quality conversation and an opportunity to find solutions for people.

No one wants to be treated like a dollar sign! However, quality conversations build trust and rapport and from this basis comes business opportunities and referrals. The quickest way to turn a prospect into an advocate is to make a heart-to-heart connection with them. Focus on the person in front of you, not those walking down the aisles, those you think you may miss.

They will come back to you again and again. You see, good communicators are hard to find. Communicate today, listen to your prospect's needs and wants, build trust, and most of all, have fun—and watch the orders and referrals follow. Why not try it and see for yourself?

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