

Mastering Fear of Rejection

It's Really You That Upsets You ...

Salespeople all over the English-speaking world tell me the single biggest reason for not making cold calls is fear of how the callee will treat them. None of us really enjoys being treated badly.

Students of the behavioral sciences have been telling us for years that rejection is a chosen response. No one can reject you, they only reject your proposition. Rejection of you, as a person, is a response you choose for yourself.

I'm sure we can all understand, at the intellectual level, this premise. The problem is, rejection doesn't hurt you at the intellectual level, it hurts in the guts. Therefore, what we need is a method of dealing with rejection that appeals not to the intellect but to the viscera. Such a method is "paradoxical therapy."

Put simply, paradoxical therapy says: "Find that which you fear most and get yourself a truckload of it." You'll find the fear of the occurrence far exceeds the pain of the occurrence itself. If you fear heights, take up skydiving. How does this relate to selling? Paradoxical therapy can, in only one day, cure you of fear of rejection forever.

I first learned of this method in Seattle in the early 1960s. Seattle's major employer, Boeing Aircraft, had just lost the Dynasoar contract, and employment fell from 103,000 to 38,000 people in less than a month. At my company, business was so bad that even the people who didn't intend to pay weren't buying. We were selling funeral insurance (a fun business) for the Green Lawn Life Insurance Company of Boulder, Colorado, one of the industry biggies. It was hard to tell who had the worse attitude, the customers or the salespeople. We considered putting revolving doors on the front of the office to facilitate salesperson turnover. They simply couldn't handle the rejection.

Bob Quinn, our General Agent, struck upon the idea of paradoxical therapy. He could neither spell nor pronounce paradoxical therapy, so he just called it "Getting the crud kicked out of you."

Quinn had each of the salespeople pick 100 people at random from the phone book, call them, give his or her real name (we wanted to be sure the customers knew who they were going to reject), and offer to sell them one of three commodities: china, encyclopedias, or vacuum cleaners.

Why these products? For one thing, because nobody wants to buy them. Why else? We didn't have any to sell. Even if they said "yes," we couldn't win. The whole idea was to make 100 calls with the dead certainty of rejection on each one.

I chose vacuum cleaners and developed a canned pitch; I'll never forget it:

ME: "Hello, Mrs. Gotrocks?"

SHE: "Yes."

ME: "Mrs. Gotrocks, my name is Hank Trisler from the Green Lawn Vacuum Cleaner Company. We have a terrific vacuum cleaner. Sits on four wheels, got a water pot on the bottom and little chrome cap on it-it'll suck all the dirt outa your rugs real good. Can I bring one out and show it to you?"

SHE: "You @\$%¶&&*0)+@\$%¶&*&*()+!" (Click, Buzzzzzz.)

Anything that doesn't kill you outright builds character, and this is a real character builder.

We have been doing this for years with our new salespeople, and it indeed is a fascinating process to observe. Am I going to tell you with a straight face that all our new salespeople made 100 of these calls? No way. Many people couldn't make it through the first half dozen, and left. Good. They undoubtedly saved themselves a lot of pain that they were going to experience if they went into selling. A healthy view of rejection is essential in this business.

The first half-dozen calls are the hardest. With each group we trained, the salespeople sweated profusely and sometimes shook so much that their finger slipped out of the dial hole and they got a wrong number. Actually, it doesn't matter who rejects you. We told them to talk to whoever answered.

After the first six calls, the beginning of therapy occurred. The salespeople began to talk to one another about the calls. Therapy is, after all, the ability of one person to express to another person what is going on in his world. They'd say: "You should have heard the one I just got. Never have heard such a mouth on a woman. She must drive a gravel truck. You should have heard what she said about Mom." The salespeople would discuss it and grin a bit, and the next call was just a little less frightening.

After about fifteen calls, a really amazing phenomenon occurred. The salespeople stopped talking to each other and started talking to the customers. "Please don't yell at me. I'm just trying to sell you china. There's no need to swear. My mother wasn't that way at all."

The realization was dawning, not intellectually but viscerally, that no matter how mad the customer got, he couldn't get his hands on you. His anger was his problem, unless we chose to make it ours.

After about 50 calls, the real confidence occurred. **"Hey, a dirty talker. I had no idea when I called you that you wanted to talk dirty. Here's some words you haven't used yet: @\$%¶&*(+@%\$#*&*! Have a crappy day, you old bat!"**

No one can reject you. Rejection is a chosen response. No one can embarrass you either. I didn't believe that, as all my life people had been telling me: ***"Don't do that, you embarrass me."*** Quinn proved me wrong again.

He had the first telephone amplifier I'd ever seen. It sat right up on his desk in two little boxes. Quinn didn't have a Cadillac, so the amplifier was his status symbol. He drove it everywhere. All his calls, incoming and outgoing, were amplified for all to hear.

His other status symbol was his office. He had *a big* office, which was good because it was the only office we had. One day we were having a sales meeting in his office, twenty three salesmen sitting around his huge T-shaped desk. Green Lawn's president and general sales manager were out from Boulder to get us all pumped up to sell lots of funeral insurance. It was a terrific meeting. The phone rang and Bob answered it, which was good because he was great on the phone. Also good because we had no secretary.

BOB: "Good morning, this is Green Lawn Life."

VOICE: "I'd like to speak to Mr. Quinn, please."

BOB: "You got him bunkie. What do you need?"

VOICE: "Well sir, I'm the assistant manager at the Tradewell store out by your home. We have one of your checks here, it's been returned by the bank."

Now any normal mortal would have been decimated by this. I mean, the president of Green Lawn was there. I was so embarrassed for Bob that I wanted to crawl over his desk and yank the phone out of the wall, to somehow save him. Quinn didn't blush, he didn't even raise an eyebrow.

BOB: "What the hell did they do that for?"

VOICE: (Taken slightly aback) "Well, sir, the check was marked N.S.F."

BOB: "Right. Now, you called me and since you're on the line, suppose you explain to me what N.S.F. means."

VOICE: (increasingly rattled) "Well, sir, it means non-sufficient funds."

BOB: "Oh bull. Have 'em run it through another bank. They can't all be out of money."

And then he hung up.

***No one can reject you.
No one can embarrass you.
You do it to yourself.***

Source:

No Bull Selling Bantam Books Hank Trisler <http://www.nobullselling.com/index.html>

The Foresight Institute has expert capability in developing the kind of Mental Toughness that Bob Quinn showed. The kind of "Thinking Style" that enabled him to put rejection aside quickly. If your business needs people with that capability bring us in to train them and then watch sales soar.

Contact us on email: services@foresight.co.nz