



NSA-Oklahoma

www.nsaoklahoma.org

**Consulting Tips from the Million Dollar Consultant:
How Do You Become An Object of Interest to Others?**

By Alan Weiss, Ph.D.

I was recently at a client event as the after-dinner speaker. As I took my seat prior to dinner, I noticed that a very senior-level person was sitting across the sparsely-occupied table. He was clearly looking for a more interesting or powerful setting for himself as he studied the room.

A subordinate sat down, recognized me, and introduced me to the executive. Attempting to at least be polite, he asked me if I had any reaction to a sales team that was highly successful yet unwilling to try new things. "They're too complacent he said," clearly repeating a mantra, "and I can't motivate them to move on to greater levels."

"They're scared," I said promptly. "You can't motivate them anyway, since motivation is intrinsic. They are big fish in a small pond and they're afraid to move to a larger pond where there might be unknown predators."

He moved into the chair next to me, changing the place cards as he did so, and peppered me with questions through dinner until I actually had to speak. He asked for my card, took notes during my talk, and I'm sure I'll be working with him in the near future.

I'm an introvert, but I realized early in my career that I must quickly move to become interesting to others as a marketing technique (perhaps because I'm an introvert and otherwise shun "small talk"). So I offer rapid, contrarian, provocative, and often controversial suggestions, opinions, and reactions. What is there to lose? If you can't offer some immediate value, why should the potential buyer be interested in spending time with you to any degree at all?

Here are some techniques to consider to establish an instant rapport and project professionalism, authority, and credibility virtually immediately:

- Make sure you're on top of today's news. Use examples that just occurred, headlines that have just appeared. Not only will the other person be able to instantly relate, but if he or she hasn't yet heard about the example, you'll be seen as someone better informed than they are.
- If you're uncomfortable being as aggressive as I am, "soften" your approach with phrases such as, "Can I suggest an alternative that may at first seem contradictory?" or "Here's what I've seen work elsewhere, and you can judge whether or not it makes sense for you."
- Learn just two or three highly relevant and timely facts about the prospect. Don't memorize the annual report (which is mostly propaganda, anyway) but listen to others to find out about recent turnover, current competition, the CEO's management style, etc.
- Don't back down. A controversial suggestion will often be met with, "I don't see how that can possibly work here" or "You must be kidding!" Reply with, "I could be wrong, but here's my rationale for that position" or "I usually feel the same way you do, but here's why this might work in this case." Don't fold. In for a dime, in for a dollar.

The last thing a prospect needs to hear is another "yes person" from the outside, because there is already a surfeit of them on the inside! There's no way you're going to obtain important

NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION



NSA-Oklahoma

www.nsaoklahoma.org

assignments merely mimicking the company line or telling the prospect that he or she is an enlightened leader. The entire purpose of considering a consultant is to obtain a breath of fresh air, untainted by company politics, retirement plans, and culture.

I'd rather risk being either instantly rejected as too radical or accepted as a unique object of interest than attempt to hang on for the ride wondering where my opportunity may lie. It saves time, and is far more challenging. Ironically, the higher level person you're with, the better a contrarian, provocative approach works. Lower level people strive for conformance, but higher level people strive for results and power.

E-mail info@summitconsulting.com

P.O. Box 1009

East Greenwich, RI 02818-0964

Telephone: (401) 884-2778

Fax: (401) 884-5068

© 1996-2007 Summit Consulting Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

Reprinted from www.summitconsulting.com and with permission of the author.