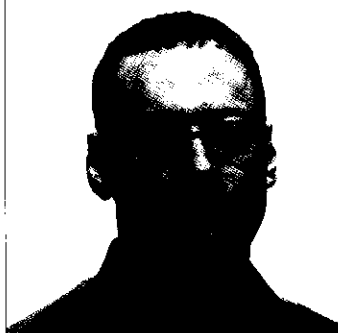


# the soapbox

opinion  
Andy Szebeni



## Putting the passion back into selling

**T**HE FAST Show actors Mark Williams and Paul Whitehouse had it right with tailors Ken and Kenneth:

"Good morning, sir. How are we today, sir?"

"Fine. And you?"

"Radiant, sir. Radiant. Woo that is a lovely suit, isn't it sir?"

"Yes, it's nice."

"Suits you, sir, suit like that, Ooh! Do you want one off the peg or do you want one made up?"

"Well I'm looking for something a bit smart; I'm starting a new job."

"Ooh, congratulations! Will you be having your own secretary, sir?"

"Yes, yes I think so."

"Will you be giving it to her, sir?"

A persuasive sales technique if a little off-the-wall! But what effusive enthusiasm. It strikes me that this is what is missing from modern business to business sales. We are so caught up on professionalism and image that the emotion has gone.

OK, I am not suggesting we need to ask customers whether they were serviced by their partner the previous night, but we can build so much better emotional ties.

Contrast Ken and Kenneth's approach with that of a recent encounter I had with an Ikea customer service representative over some tables my partner and I wanted to buy.

Me: We want to buy two white bedside tables but we have come down to the warehouse and the bay is empty.

Ikea: Then it is out of stock.

Me: I see, when will it be in stock?

Ikea: [Silence. Spends two minutes tapping on computer during which time I expect him to look up and respond: "Computer says 'no'"]. Three weeks.

Me: Do you have any other white bedside tables?

Ikea: Look in the catalogue. [Hands me catalogue looking around store but not at me].

I spot three others and ask him to check if they are in stock. Lo and behold they are out of stock. At this

point I think that I could settle for another colour but life is too short.

We bought the bedside tables in MFI two days later.

Don't get me wrong, not all companies have missed the point. While I passionately hate Vodafone for the appalling service they gave me last year, a recent encounter with one of their call centre staff mellowed my attitude. Julie had been with the company eight years and she passionately felt that my attitude was misplaced and she personally vouched for the

*While I passionately hate Vodafone for the appalling service they gave me last year, a recent encounter with one of their call centre staff, mellowed my attitude.*

company and pleaded that I give them another try (and it worked). What would you do for staff that put that much emotion in retaining and winning customers?

Kevin Roberts has written a book, *Love Marks - the Future Beyond Brands*. He should know, he is the chief executive officer of advertising agency Saatchi & Saatch Worldwide. Kevin rightly points out that human beings are powered by emotion, not by reason. The neurologist Donald Calne explains: "The essential difference between emotion and reason is that

emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions."

How many times have we gone into an electrical store - you know one of those ones with the red logo and white letters and a spotty youth has asked if he can help us? Let's assume it is one of those rare occasions that we have not taken the opportunity to answer that closed question with a "no" and we let them make their presentation. And we marvel how they read off energy ratings, cubic capacities, freshness coefficients and other riveting statistics. And then they stand there and are surprised when you look at them blankly, thank them and part ways.

Aside from the inability of these staff to ask questions about your requirements - I actually think it is a phobia on their part - it is the lack of emotion in the presentation that kills the sales opportunity. Frankly we get the same service and better prices if we go online.

Time and again I ask friends why they bought the car from the dealership they eventually chose. What is the most common answer? They were offered the biggest discount? Best servicing record in their group? Most local dealership? Or the most awards? Of course not - they liked the salesman. And this emotional decision is made over the second most expensive asset most of us ever buy.

In the words of Maurice Levy, chairman of the French division of advertising group Publicis: "Con-

## question of the month

If Europe forces Britain to abandon the Working Time Directive opt-out clause, would this be an infringement of our civil liberties and human rights?

Email your thoughts and opinions to [editor@venturer.co.uk](mailto:editor@venturer.co.uk)

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