CRUCIAL WORK SKILLS

Almanac

A BANYAN TREE

STRATEGIES PUBLICATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

1. **Connections** 3
   How to positively impact the lives of those you know.

2. **Faith** 5
   How to feed your mind, body, and soul.

3. **Career Success** 7
   How to align and apply your interests, strengths, and style in your career.

4. **Personal Fuel** 10
   How to create your own energy.

5. **Community Involvement** 13
   How to enrich your life and others with causes greater than yourself.

6. **Re-Creation** 15
   How to refresh and restore yourself with diverse pursuits.

7. **Sales** 17
   Learning to listen – say little and count to six.

8. **Culture** 21
   Aligning your personality with your work to run downhill towards success.

CRUCIAL WORK SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

November 30th, 2022, has a chance of becoming a landmark date in human history as this was the day ChatGPT was released to the public. 2024 marked the second full year companies and professionals had to adapt to the new AI-empowered tools. We chronicled some of the changes as we sought to share what we thought were the crucial skills a professional should acquire and hone over their career.

Crucial Work Skills is meant to accompany our Essential Elements of Close-Knit Teams white paper from 2023 as a one-two punch that sets the reader up to combine their best skills within the context of working with others.

I selected these skills because they have had a personal impact on my ability to maintain and sustain my contributions during my professional career. Enduring requires energy, and understanding how to create your flywheel of energy in different settings is essential.

The Sales section sticks out relative to the other topics and yet might be one of the most Important. When you understand sales, you will never go hungry, and when you overlap that on a well-nurtured network of connections, you may eat very well!

Crucial Work Skills can be read from front to back, or you can pick and choose topics based on your current needs. We hope our observations empower you to deploy your skills more efficiently and effectively.

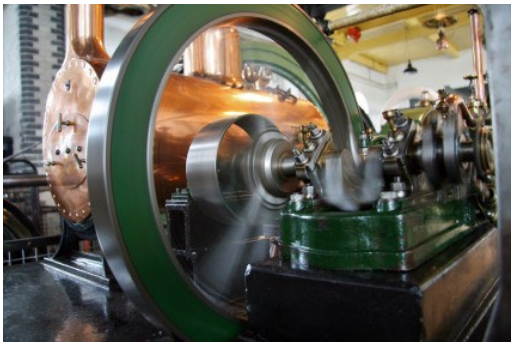
Please reach out to us with your insights and observations.

Thank you for your readership and friendship,

Drew Y. Sanders

December 28, 2024

1. Connections – Positively Impact Those You Know



It Takes a Network – Your Personal Flywheel for Success.

The adage that "it is who you know, not what you know" may take on new importance as generative AI erodes the relevancy of what we know. However, with the AI timing variable still hard to quantify, it might be more appropriate to focus on having definable skills and more deeply impacting the lives of those you care about.

A personal interest and strength in competitive golf allowed Sara and I to spend long periods with interesting people early in our lives, which helped us get to know a diverse range of people earlier than most of our peers.

LinkedIn came along in the early 2000s when we were both relaunching our post-professional golf careers. This took the power of Metcalf's law of networks and made it more transparent and approachable.

Venture Capital firms and their partners who were playing power law games quickly learned the force of being well-networked. Even Reid Hoffman, a self-proclaimed introvert, wrote about the power of a good network in his first book, "The Start-up of You."

Once we founded Banyan in 2013 and had complete autonomy over what we could publish, we tried to memorialize what we had learned. We identified best practices for building solid and mutually beneficial relationships.

Tools to Help You Build a Strong Network

You can find an in-depth look at the business lunch with "50 Lunches a Year that Will Change Your Career."

This template gives us a short overview of preparing for a business meeting.

We created two short email courses for college students (www.drewsanders.com) to help them understand that the point of education is action as much as it is knowledge. Their potential employers hope they will do something instead of just thinking.

We self-published a 100-page book called "The Next Gen Almanac" for new college graduates. It outlines the recipe we learned from others about the power of a **meaningful shared experience**.

- [SE=C=T=Joint Success]
- SE stands for shared experiences.
- C stands for a window into your character.
- T stands for Trust.
- The formula is perfect for young people who want to do well but don't know where to start.
- Start with helping others.
- One of the natural byproducts of helping is that you meet other people with the same interests, and your relationships build quickly in that environment.
- Here is a quick how-to on community service.

All these resources represent just how much we have learned and benefited by being in relation with and helping others and **matching the goodwill** of others can be contagious.

Pro Tip

Write about the pains you are solving at work and publish it on LinkedIn or a blog. Take the people involved out of it and focus on the issue at hand and the process followed for success. Most industries have little intellectual property; they just apply hard work and tactical empathy to a problem.

It may seem counterintuitive to give it away, but our experience has shown that it is the best practice.

Courses Offer

If you have a young person in their 20s who you think might benefit from these resources, please forward this publication to them.

If they complete one of the email courses (it's only eight emails), I will meet with them for 30 minutes via video call to discuss their answers to the questions provided.

Drew Sanders Website Courses

Your network is a huge asset that is magnified by the length and significance of your relationships. Start cultivating it today

2. Faith – How to Feed Your Mind, Body & Soul

Is this just another way of talking about breathing exercises?

Mental Health has come into the lexicon with strength in the last decade and appears to have staying power.

Different regions of the world and the United States will talk about similar things with various phrases. If you have a loved one going in for surgery in the South, you will hear that people will pray for you. Have that same loved one going in for surgery in the West or New York City; you will hear people say they will keep you in their thoughts. What is the difference? We aren't sure, but both phrases assure you that the other party cares about you.

It may seem odd that we are calling out faith as a crucial business skill, but in the last 11 years of running Banyan, we have noticed that believing in the company's vision has been vital. **Faith and believing are highly correlated**. Leaders want you to have the capacity to believe.

Having the capacity to believe with the right amount of ration to accompany it was at the core of what we focused on when we created a Self-Leadership module in 2016. We used the image of a boat's keel and a coherent live narrative at the bottom to help you create a deep, heavy ballast for life's storms.

Faith at Work

Your first few work assignments will most likely be directed by a manager looking for more task compliance than inquiries on why this is the best way to build a mousetrap. At this point, it will be a good idea to put the college cynic to the side.

We created a mapping your boss questionnaire that can help you start building out your tactical empathy here:

Mapping Your Boss.pdf

As you move from being directed to being responsible for others, you may observe that you prefer influence over power. In this case, you will look to create alignment around a set of core beliefs, which are often called values.

We assembled several frameworks and created a "Group 2 Team" or G2T process. Here is the DIY version of it, which starts by asking your team who they admire most and then follows up with a

question about what traits they admire most about those people. It is interesting to note that most people we have run through this process all have faith in those they listed.

Faith in a Higher Power

Finally, when it comes to the concept of a higher power and a reason for being, we have encouraged others to remain curious throughout their lives and to practice a faith. We practice a faith tied to the life and resurrection of Jesus, and several years ago, we wrote out the benefits of that faith titled "O'Holy Night," which uses the famous song to outline the benefits as I see them.

O Holy Night PDF 2022.pdf

Writing about how I process and practice my faith was a healthy exercise. It allowed me to create a communication line with our children as they age and matriculate through adolescence into adulthood.

Turning towards the beginning of Q2 in 2024, we hope these templates and documents will encourage you and those in your care to invest in your mental health and add credibility to your faith. **Teams work at the bleeding edge of how much they trust each other; having faith in each other is a fantastic fuel.**

3. Career Success – Building Out Your Interest, Strengths, and Style

We interview people for jobs almost weekly on behalf of our clients and offer free career insights for professionals across the spectrum of their working lives.

If you have anyone in your life who is graduating or recently out of school, this article is for them. We hope this is helpful.

Think like a Start-Up

Start-up companies are looking for "product-market fit," and so are you. However, you are the product, and the company culture is the market you want to fit.

While you need to understand the culture of where you work, which involves being curious and using your tactical empathy skills, in this section, we will focus on how you can best understand and position your skills to stand out in a sea of sameness.

The diagram below highlights the maximum impact zone, which comes after you have a solid understanding of your strengths, your team player style, and where those combined skills overlap with an employer's needs. The greater your contribution, the more likely you will achieve personal product market fit.

Individual Strengths

It is essential to tease out the subtle differences between something you are interested in and something you have a strength in. You can be interested in playing the drums and banging away in your garage or singing out in the shower to your heart's content. **Strength in something means you are valued in that area relative to others.**

When you combine an interest with a strength, you begin building out your personal product. Interest will help you push through the time and sweat it will take to make your relative ability to others stand out.

Good questions to ask yourself are:

- Where do you lose track of time?
- If you had two areas to spend your day, what would they be?

Team Player Style

Dr. Glenn Parker coined this phrase and has a simple diagnostic tool that provides some key insights for often-overlooked people. Most of us work with others in teams, and we all have built-in dominant traits when it comes to working with others. A lack of Team Chemistry is one of the biggest roadblocks in the workplace, and many will say that they don't know how to create it, but they know it when they see it.

As an individual, why would you leave this to chance?

Understanding how all four traits work together will allow you to join the right team and adapt as team members change.

Parker's four traits are:

- The Contributor
- The Communicator
- The Collaborator
- The Challenger

You can find the short survey here: Parker Team Player Survey .pdf.

Style

How you get your work done will also significantly impact your success in many different places. Are you brittle and grumpy if things aren't perfect or are you affable and able to get your work done in a storm?

In a world where it is hard to distinguish between one person with an excellent college degree and the next, being flexible and having an easy-going manner can make all the difference. It will be difficult for you to state this in an interview, but your references should be able to articulate it.

Questions that will tease this out are:

- What does it feel like to work with you?
- What does it feel like to be directed by you?

These are not easy questions, but as you do your inner work, they will help you understand others. This will improve your chances of landing the right job at the right company with the right people.

What Does the Market Need Now?

Once you have defined your Interests, Strengths, and Style and added your Team Player Style traits, you are ready to compare them to the current market realities of employment.

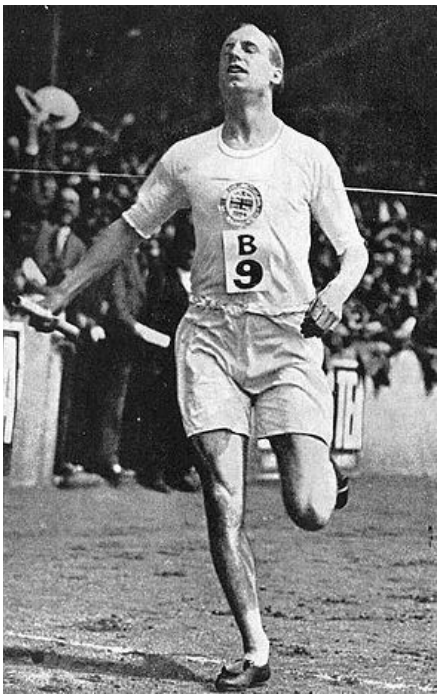
LinkedIn is the right place to showcase your skills and is also where you will want to start building out your list of key influencers. You will want to meet with these influencers to find the best job openings and then seek to earn their sponsorship for the position, which is much preferred to mailing in your resume through a job board.

We outlined how to build out a network on LinkedIn in our Crucial Work Skills #1 post, which can be found here: LinkedIn Networks.

4. Personal Fuel – How to Create Your Own Energy

The Paris Olympics of 2024 were a global phenomenon, with television and streaming ratings setting records everywhere. The performances, pageantry, and patriotism were contagious as different countries' best and brightest faces went all out for bronze, silver, and gold. **It didn't matter if it was the 40th time the Star-Spangled Banner played or the first time for Botswana; there were tears of joy on the medal stand, in the bleachers, and at homes worldwide.**

It reminded us of the excellent movie scene from "The Chariots of Fire," where Scotsman Eric Liddell tells his concerned sister of the power he felt when he was running for God and his country. Ironically, that movie is about the Paris Olympics from 1924, which was also a big success.



The Olympics' inspiration is a supercharged fuel that can be euphoric, but we doubt it has much staying power. This begs the question we would like to address in this edition of our crucial work skills white paper:

Where do you get the fuel that lasts and sustains for a career and a lifetime?

It makes us think of the quote, "A man with a why can overcome any how" F. Nitsche.

Simon Sinek published a best-selling book in 2010, "Start with Why."

A three-year-old understands the power of asking why.

I asked why so often as a child that eventually, I heard a classically bitter response, "**yours is not to reason why; yours is but to do or die."**

That quote ended up being one of several I had next to my senior picture when I graduated from high school, as I found much of primary education a lesson in compliance as much as discovery.

Yet developing an internal why is a vital exercise for everyone. It is typically easy to spot those who have done the work **because they are said to have a great sense of purpose**.

Developing a sense of purpose is both an individual and collective experience. You need to connect your actions into areas of strength to create the internal flywheel that can sustain your focus and skill over long periods. We covered this in our last post about combining your interests' strengths and style to maximize your contribution.

Applying your skills to magnify the contributions of others is where the magic fusion of everlasting fuel appears to be found.

Watch the spirits of a great-grandmother light up when, at 90 years old, she holds the newborn baby for the first time. She is the matriarch at that moment, with decades upon decades of firsthand experience of how to raise a child in that family. **No one can possibly know the stories she knows and the people she knew who lived almost 150 years ago.** Her chance to pass on this knowledge and love can infuse even those who are seriously ailing.

Turning back to a sport that is classically aligned with the Olympics is the rowing story from the 1936 games in Berlin. The University of Washington junior crew famously beat the varsity boat, then the Cal boat, and then the East Coast schools to represent the United States. At each step, if they had lost, the season would have been over, as there were no excess funds amidst the depression. Even when they won the right to represent the country, they had to raise $5,000 in less than a week, or another wealthier team would attend.

Daniel James Brown's best-selling book The Boys in the Boat chronicles the stories of the times and the people who made up that gold-medal-winning 8-man crew. One of the main challenges in making the boat "swing" was getting the athletes to feel the water and work in unison. **Part of the story that resonates with so many is that it was in rowing for each other that the peak performance emerged.**

Combining your skills and contributions to a business effort to house, clothe, and feed your family is a noble cause that few movies will be made about. Yet, having this sense of purpose is a defining feature

of adulthood. Sustaining purpose throughout life requires a natural curiosity when things change rather than becoming jaded that the old ways were better.

With the internet turning 32 years old and generative AI improving daily, we are at the dawn of a new age for entrepreneurial actions and behaviors. **Staying curious about the flood of options for new tools to help us solve problems would appear to be crucial.**

Here are some closing questions that we hope will help you create that inner fuel that sustains you.

- What do you want to build?
- Who do you want to build it for?
- What pain are they living with now?
- Whose life will be better because of your effort?
- Who would be the proudest of the contribution you are making with your gifts?

Do you have any new fuel building up inside you as you read this.....What are you waiting for?

Go for it!

5. Community Involvement:
How to Enrich Your Life and That of Others with Causes Greater Than Yourself.

Our fifth installment in the Crucial Work Skills white paper focuses on Community Involvement. A give-back component in your life is vital to a well-rounded adult experience. It also has some unique benefits that are often overlooked or poorly described. We will attempt to outline how to identify the right causes that matter to you and how to maximize your contribution.

Identifying

We have outlined the process of self-discovery called Interests, Strengths, and Style previously with an eye towards your vocation and suggested you never lose sight of how the needs for your strengths may change as the tools that are valued in the marketplace may change.

When it comes to helping others, the process is similar. What are your current interests? List a few areas, and as you do this, consider getting out of your core comfort zone. We have found that in giving back your time and talents, there is less of a concern that you are great at something. It can be as vital that you want to show up and help. In addition, unlike a job, you are not making a full-time commitment, so this is an area in which you can dabble a bit to find the right fit.

Dabbling with different causes will allow you to expand the network of people you meet as you volunteer, which is an important byproduct of volunteering that we will address later.

What is your second strength?

In the working world, very few people can worry about a second strength; we need to maximize our contribution with our greatest strength as the market is so indifferent to our presence that we need every ounce of ability to drive revenue to create economic safety for ourselves and our families.

An unintended consequence is that we seldom get a chance to round out our skills, and this is one of the secrets of giving back: you can flex into an additional area and get better. No one is teaching you marketing if you are great at sales; they just want you to close deals. Yet, over the last 30 years, the relationship between sales and marketing has changed. It behooves a good salesperson to understand marketing and vice versa.

When you show up to help a non-profit, and they assign people to committees, it is okay to identify some of the other areas of running an entity that you may not be strong in and offer to be a grunt on that committee. The committee leader could be a great mentor, and you will get to cross-train, all while helping the target demographic you care about.

Common interests for the common good can create uncommonly wonderful friendships.

Not only is helping people good for the recipient, but it can also help you build new skills and have meaningful shared experiences with your fellow volunteers.

In 2004, I volunteered at the Guardsmen Christmas Tree Lot, which is one of the largest indoor Christmas Tree lots in the United States. A crew of 25 new guys had put in a solid 10-hour shift on a Saturday setting up the lot, and it was early the next day, so we had another 10 hours ahead of us. I found the local greasy spoon to get some chow, and sure enough, several of the guys I had just gotten to know were of a similar mind; it was a good place to fuel up for the day.

That Christmas season, I started making friendships that last to this day, and I am sure that even if our paths had crossed, the trust would never have been established at such a level without that year of service we all volunteered together.

In 2010, we wrote a book called The Next Gen Almanac, which outlined the potential benefits of a strong and meaningful shared experience.

We called this magic formula: SE = C = T = Opportunity

SE = meaningful shared experience (like working at a tree lot together)
C = window into the other person's character (with character being highly portable and long-lasting)
T = trust with the size of trust correlating to the meaningfulness of the shared experience.
Opportunity = Now that you trust each other, the opportunities that you can create together are limitless.

Thinking back to Peter Drucker's key questions, he suggested three main questions to ask yourself all your life: How can I maximize my contribution while I am alive? Once I have figured out what I want to contribute to, how am I allocating my time and capital? Finally, what is my next most important task?

We hope that as you allocate your time, you consider helping others as one of the most significant force multipliers available to everyone.

What cause that is greater than yourself are you helping?

6. Re-creation: How to Refresh and Restore Yourself with Diverse Pursuits

We can hear you remarking to yourself:

Recreation: how is recreation supposed to be a crucial work skill?

We break the word up a bit into two parts.

Re, which means to do again or repeat.

Creation which means to begin or start.

Flip it, and you must start again.

Why should you care about starting again when it comes to yourself?

Because the process of working and the pursuit of a profit can be quite a banal pursuit.

Schumpeter's law of creative destruction posits that the buyer will always be looking for it faster or cheaper and that a new supplier will meet this demand by providing a similar product or service for less or in a shorter period.

The worker and the employer have been at similar odds for centuries. As capital-light enterprises have proliferated, more workers have now understood the employer's feelings as they start companies and then stress over the cost of an employee. How quickly the perspective changes when it is your asset you are protecting.

Regardless of your position, it is vital to be able to put down the shovel or plow and, like Fred Flintstone of old, yell Yabba Dabba Do as you beat the street to some time off.

We do not have any strong thoughts about your chosen recreation. We have met thrill seekers who believe that it isn't worth it if they are not a bit scared, and we know others who think sitting at a poker tournament in Las Vegas with sunglasses on for hours is the bomb.

Wherever you fall on the spectrum, the key is to take yourself mentally and physically into a new state. Over the years, we have witnessed that at some point in the recreative period, other things your brain has put on hold will present themselves in a new light. Here are a few we think you might identify with.

- Getting away from your team will allow you to reflect on how they are aligned with your goals and each other.
- The mountain of a work conflict that has been costing you sleep when placed against the backdrop of a river's edge in Yosemite might pale in comparison, but you will know how to proceed.

- Listening to another friend talk about what they are going through while sitting on a beach or after a hike could reveal how your customer base is changing.
- Is it time to set higher goals, take more risks with your capital, or sit tight and let a few things play out?

Regular exercise, weekends, and vacations are key components for any executive. No one will prioritize your time with as much understanding of your needs as you. We encourage you to take the leap, put the laptop and phone down, get your bare feet on some grass, and engage in a little re-creation of your mind, body, and soul.

7. Sales – Learning to Listen

I have noticed that in many cases, sales is who says what, when, and why, but it took me a while to realize it wasn't about what I was saying that really mattered. I have enjoyed the challenges of sales since my first magazine-selling contest in middle school when they released hundreds of us in the community to go door to door and hawk everything from The Wall Street Journal to Good Housekeeping! I loved the interaction with people and the thought that the next house could be the jackpot.

In the 45 years since that contest, I have learned through trial and error and now build custom sales systems for companies. At the root of these systems are these four magic words. Here is a quick breakdown of each word and why it matters when you or anyone on your sales team is having a sales dialogue with a prospect.

WHO

You and I are in many rooms with many different contexts and sub-contexts of influence, power, and purpose. These variables drive the type of conversations and dialogues we have, and we typically have had some "sense" of them since about the age of seven.

Eventually, we end up in a room where something is being sold, and this dialogue feels different. There is a different type of tension in the air. **(Think of the front door of a house when a young man is there to pick up the daughter to take her out on a date; mom and dad have no problem setting the mood in that setting**.)

It is easy to accept the false notion that good salespeople talk a lot and are effusive and loud. Many of them are. When they are not in a sales dialogue they are making up for how quiet and measured they are when they are **when they are hunting**.

All humans started selling at birth by making sounds and emotions to acquire what we require at that moment.

> **Selling does require efficient and sometimes lively communication.**
> **But it also demands timing. Not in a comedic sense, but close.**

The first rule of a sales dialogue is WHO talks. Depending on where you are in the sale and how many people are on the buying team, it is essential that the ratio of talking to listening tips towards the buyers.

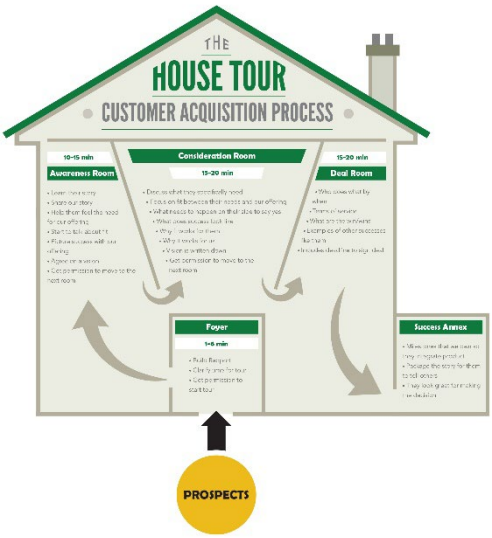
This is accomplished by asking the right question at the right moment with the correct body language and tone.

Think through your process and layout the Who piece and ask yourself how this area could be nuanced and perfected in your next sales dialogue.

WHAT

Part 1 looked at "Who" is speaking, and the key takeaway is that if you don't know why you are speaking in a sales dialogue, you should see a big Red Stop Sign that says WAIT.
WAIT stands for WHY AM I TALKING?

Part 2 is about what is being said, and this has much to do with where the potential deal sits on the timeline. When teaching this in the past, we have used rooms in a house as an example, as the link below shows.



HOUSE TOUR!

What is said is driven by the room you are in; the room drives the context.

Another sales framework we have created is WHY, HOW, WHEN. This framework contemplates the following questions a buying team may consider.

- WHY would this product or service be good for us?
- HOW will it work within our company?
- WHEN will we have the time to integrate this change?

All three questions are in the air of every call, but getting the sequence correct is vital.

- WHAT is about getting the buyers to talk when you are in sales, and that comes with the right questions and statements.
- WHAT is also about tone and, if in person, body language.
- WHAT is also about what is not said.
- WHAT is also about being quiet after you have asked your question and giving the buying team time to think and respond.

PLEASE DON'T TALK OVER A QUESTION THAT MIGHT HAVE A LITTLE EDGE TO IT.
We call this "puking on your shoes," and it typically occurs when a member of your team is more worried about the relationship than the deal.

People buy with their mouths, not their ears, so if you don't shut up, they can't buy.
WHO says WHAT....is about planning and practice.

Great sales teams don't WING IT, even though they may look like they fly in with no prep.

The WHEN part of a sales dialogue is about timing.

If you are speaking in a sales environment, you had better know why.
A way to think about your meetings with buyers is that they are like parts of a scripted movie or play. It is never enough to know your lines (heaven help you if you don't remember your lines; you will not last long); **you must be able to deliver them with the correct body language, tone, and nuanced context of the exact moment you are in**.

A three-act play or movie has a structure, and the audience gets used to the "turns" in the story. Change up the structure or miss a turn, and most of the time, your audience will not enjoy being caught off guard and will disengage.

Your enterprise sales process should also have a script and structure. **The art for you, the salesperson, is nailing the style and the nuanced context piece, which is all about "when."**

In your own process, review the last 10 interactions you had with buyers and try to recall the Moments of Maximum Influence.

Is there a question you could have posed that starts with "what" or "how" that might have augmented the outcome?

We have noticed that asking a "why" question in a "what" or "how" manner gets you much further because the buyers' internal integrity to the truth compels them to answer.

It is almost like they are on the witness stand, but they will not help you. You must nail the question and deliver it at the right moment.

There is plenty of room inside a sales structure for you to be yourself, and much of your wisdom will come from your tactical empathy skills as you learn to observe the buyers' pain and reflect it to them in a way that allows them to drop their guard and say, "That's right."

A good "that's right" can get you on the road to a sale much faster than a series of "yeses."

- Nail your observations.
- Nail your when.
- Win the deal!

WHY

Why is such a strong word.

- Why gets used early in life because the 2-year-old in all of us knows it has the most power.
- Why also is dangerous if misused, especially when you don't have the power or influence to use it in a business setting.

As a salesperson, you know that if the buyer makes the wrong decision and the switching costs are high enough, it could cost them their job.

That is where the line "no one ever got fired for hiring IBM" comes from. But as a salesperson, you also know that asking, "Why aren't you picking us right now?" is a lame question that will not be answered truthfully.

You need to up your game and **substitute what and how questions to get the answers you need** about when they are deciding and why your team is going to win.

This gets us back to the final word in our series, "WHY."

Because on an internal team, you can build trust by using this word correctly to help you nail the body language, tone, and words of your positioning statements and questions.

Multiple people will need to know their roles when preparing for an enterprise sales meeting. If you share new information, someone on your team will be the presenter. However, it can help if someone else is the conductor who sets up the call, lets the presenter speak, and then is able to frame the information in the proper context and ask the right question in the right way at the right moment.

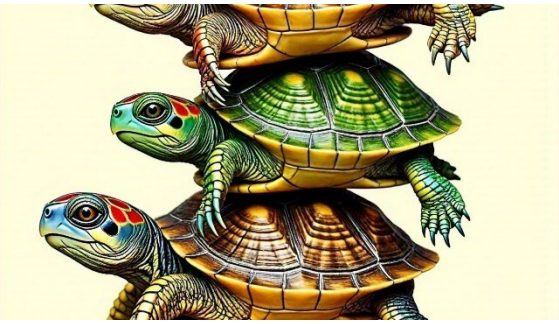
AND THEN EVERYONE ON THE SALES TEAM DOES NOTHING AND SAYS NOTHING

Now, the leader on the buy side will speak, or if the decision maker is absent, the person who reports to the leader will answer. The why part of our enterprise sales call mantra is so that you can win more often and save time by not working on deals when you are not going to win.

Get your roles down, practice your phrases, and learn how to be quiet and watch as you spend more time on the right deals and **less time on deals that have you flat on your back, like Charlie Brown** after Lucy pulled the football out at the last second.

8. Culture: Your Team Player Style

Aligning your personality with your work to run downhill towards success



No matter what your primary discipline is on a work team, you will eventually need to be able to work across the company channels and have a plan for dealing with conflict that naturally occurs. Even inside your department, a constant stream of conflicting ideas or personalities necessitates one's ability to get in and out of a hard conversation.

The consulting firm Vital Smarts out of Utah wrote a best-selling book, Crucial Conversations, over 30 years ago and has trained thousands of employees worldwide. Their aim is to help companies have a common language for handling the foreseen and unforeseen issues that arise in delivering their goods and services. **All their research shows that how people communicate with each other matters in calm and tense situations.**

Jim Collins wrote a best-selling business culture book called "Good to Great." After a massive regression analysis, Collins identified the highest-performing or great companies and their common characteristics. Along with leaders who saw problems like a mirror and successes like a window, the concept of **getting the right people on the bus was the key to success.** It appears that culture matters.

Glenn Parker spent a career developing systems for team communication and collaboration at large companies and then published his work along with a short 18-question survey that allows people to learn what their dominant team player style is and how to work with others once they are aware of how that style impacts how you in a group setting. Parker's work is helpful to a leader who is inheriting a team and reminds us of Peter Drucker's simple observations that readers and listeners will sometimes struggle to collaborate well. Click Here for Managing Oneself White Paper.

All this research on culture and team success is important as leaders like Jeff Bezos evangelize their 6-page summary style of communication for two pizza teams. Everyone rushes to emulate what worked for him and assumes it will work for them. We don't think it is that easy.

You need to have a plan to lead yourself and others, and once you are the leader, you are entitled to run the system you think fits the objectives of the moment.

Our last crucial skill might appear to be an accumulation of these nuanced people skills, which start with having a full tool belt that allows you as an individual contributor to listen with compassion, ask

questions with the right tone, be prepared to navigate conflict, state your points of view clearly, and work within the system that the leader has outlined.

As a front-line manager, you should seek to enhance these skills by further understanding how your team should communicate and which channels will be the single source of truth (CRM, Slack, email, meetings) **as you work together.**

Finally, if you are the CEO and are looking to recruit the best leadership team you can, it would appear vital that you outline the system you have in place for operational excellence and how you intend to manage and lead the communication mechanisms for **building a company culture that runs towards the problem.**

Without a plan and a process for identifying MOMI's, the more people you hire, the more variety you will get in how they handle or avoid conflict. This clutter and confusion will be hard for your early people to define, but they will feel it, and it can crush your morale when you need it most.

An intuitive leader will also look for hard conversations that aren't happening inside and outside of the company and look to unlock those MOMIs with the right communication topics and skills.

An easy way to tell when meeting with a company is to ask when the right time to have a hard conversation is.

If people look at their feet, you know the answer is never.

If they look you in the eye and say, "Now would be fine," you know you have a winner.