

“You Had Me at Hello”

In the movie, “Jerry Maguire,” Tom Cruise reaches an epiphany which he has to share with his wife, Dorothy, played by Renée Zellweger. Here’s his spiel:

Jerry: Hello. Hello. I’m looking for my wife.

Dorothy looks up, robbed of words. Stunned, she does not move and looks quite apprehensive.

Jerry: Wait. OK, OK, OK. If this is where it has to happen, then this is where it has to happen. I’m not letting you get rid of me. How about that? This used to be my specialty. You know, I was good in the living room. They’d send me in there, I’d do it alone. And now I just ... I don’t know. But tonight, our little project, our company, had a very big night. A very, very big night. But it wasn’t complete, wasn’t nearly close to being in the same vicinity as complete, because I couldn’t share it with you. I couldn’t hear your voice, or laugh about it with you. I missed my wife. We live in a cynical world, a cynical, cynical world, and we work in a business of tough competitors. I love you. You ... complete me. And if I just had ...

Dorothy: (interrupting) Shut up. Just shut up ... You had me at hello. You had me at hello.

Do you know when to shut up? How often do you oversell? Can you read the signs that your patient or team member already “gets it”? In other words, she’s ready to buy, ready to accept, or ready to change; BUT you keep talking ... which may jeopardize the whole deal.

Recently I was shopping for clothes in an upscale boutique clothing store. It was down to decision-making time. I stared into the mirror trying to decide whether to purchase the vogue pantsuit. I liked it. However, it was a different “look” for me and I was unsure of how often I’d wear it. Given the pricey price, I wanted to know

I’d be pleased with this purchase. The new owner of the store came into the fitting room and she kept talking about the outfit, about me, and about the various ways I could use this pantsuit in my wardrobe. Suddenly, somewhere in her verbiage, she inadvertently stated that this outfit suits someone who is tall. I’m not that short, but I’m not what you’d consider tall! She had me at hello, and lost me at goodbye. I did not buy.

Up-selling vs. overselling

In an article for the restaurant industry titled, “Up-Selling vs. Overselling,” Maren Hickton, principal of Maren Incorporated, a full-service hospitality consulting and marketing firm, wrote, “It is a good idea to offer items that may not be on the menu and also guide your guests through the dining experience so that they can fully enjoy your wonderful restaurant. But short-term ‘overselling,’ putting your guests in situations where they feel put on the spot or ‘embarrassed’ into buying more expensive menu items, or where they feel a loss of control with respect to this business transaction, will hurt your restaurant. Good operators understand that if you put the needs of your customers first, the money follows. The real bottom-line goal is to form long-term relationships with consistently satisfied customers encouraging sales and repeat sales to ensure long-term growth.”

The idea of up-selling in the dental industry has its pros and cons. I’m reminded of the infamous *Reader’s Digest* cover article several years ago that lampooned dentists for adding too many à la carte options to the dental menu. Therefore, use

Karen Cortell Reisman, MS

Ms. Reisman teaches organizations how to increase productivity by communicating effectively. She has been a visiting faculty presenter at The Pankey Institute, a speaker at dental meetings, and president of Speak for Yourself® for 14 years. To get Karen’s Top Ten list on how to blow it as a communicator, send a fax to (972) 385-7652. Contact Ms. Reisman at www.SpeakForYourself.com.



your discretion with add-ons to your patients. Sell as if the patient were in your own family.

Hickton, in the above article, hits upon the true bottom line. Your goal is to form long-term relationships built upon credibility, trust, and service. Overselling detracts from this goal.

Why do you oversell?

There are several reasons why you oversell:

- ✿ Lack of confidence in your product or yourself
- ✿ Lack of observation of your listener's non-verbal signals
- ✿ Lack of business savvy

How do you overcome overselling?

Successful selling has to be conducted carefully by assessing your patient, who is your customer. Here are some tips on how to be successful (i.e., learning when to shut up):

① *Pay close attention to facial cues.* This means that if the listener frowns when you initiate selling toward him, stop selling immediately and simply present the basics. This also means that if the listener stops looking at you, you're about to lose him. Get to the point.

② *Do not blather ad infinitum with superlatives.* I love the adage "Less is more." Winston Churchill once said, "If you want me to speak all day, I'll begin right now. If you want me to speak for 20 minutes, it will take me a week to prepare."

③ *Keep the end in mind.* (It's about time I quoted Covey in this column.) Know what you'd like to sell ahead of time. Better yet, know what would be best for your patient or team member BEFORE you begin. This vision will help you stay on track.

④ *Believe in yourself.* You have the knowledge and the credentials. You are a successful leader in dentistry. You use current technology and a fabulous dental lab. Keep this in mind, even when you experience a "Murphy's Law" kind of day, and you'll be able to sell with just the right amount of finesse. ■

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