

Are We Having Fun Yet?

A four-component system could change the way you sell to your clients

By Terry Begue

I remember when I started my painting business; it was a daring, exciting time. I was just a kid. I couldn't wait for someone to hire me to paint something – anything. It didn't matter back then. Just the thought of being my own boss and not answering to anyone else kept me psyched up every day. At age 18, I looked only 15. That's probably why so few people hired me, but that was OK; freedom was a blast. I was the only boss of me.

It didn't matter how much money I made at first, only that I was working for myself. The worst day as a business owner was 100 times better than my best day working for others. I was doing what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it.

I got married at age 21. Along with my new bride came something I wasn't completely ready for ... reality. I never saw it coming. Reality snuck up on me and revealed itself in the form of rent, food, insurance and utility bills. In other words – adult responsibilities. For me responsibility was just another word for “fun-sucker.”

I wanted the fun back. Sadly, it was gone until I discovered ways to care for my new reality. No money = no fun. The only way to bring the fun back was to get serious about my painting business. The irony was so thick I could cut it with a putty knife!

How hard could it be? Run a few ads, make some sales calls and decide how much to make, right? Slap on some paint, turn in a bill and collect a check. Piece of cake, right? It was an easy formula, right? Wrong!

My would-be customers rarely followed my script.

I spent years battling it out in low-price wars with competitors, taking any painting job out there. Usually the ones no one else wanted. I missed the fun days. Then, one

day my wife said those three little words that changed how I saw everything. The words weren't “I love you.” No, they were “Terry, I'm pregnant.” That was it. That was the inspiration and motivation I needed.

I made up my mind instantly that I wouldn't raise kids in a home where the parents scrape and struggle. I thought about the good times I enjoyed as a teenager. I never waited for someone to give me permission to start a business or permission to have a good time. I just went for it!

That's the day I stopped whining and making excuses for why I wasn't getting the results I wanted. If I wanted to blame someone, all I had to do was look in the mirror. That's the only person who was holding me back.

I learned success in the service industry boiled down to how good you are at getting hired. I started talking to salespeople in any industry who could help me learn to sell better. I read every book I could get my hands on. I spent the next three winters selling cars, furniture and even vacuum cleaners.

I picked my colleagues' brains; I questioned prospective customers about what they wanted in a painter and in a painting company. I became the “Piers Morgan” of house painting, asking “hard hitting” questions like why they chose one painter over another. Gradually, I discovered what they were looking for and became very good at providing it.

I started focusing entirely on getting hired, and the rest fell into place. After all, nothing happens until a sale is made. Over the past 20-plus years, I've fine-tuned and turned my process for lead conversion into a valuable system. A system made up of four components. I call them the four abilities:

- Likability
- Believability
- Trustability
- Wowability

These four simple yet critical abilities are the building blocks of selling success in your painting business. When I started focusing on embracing and embodying them in the late '80s, I began closing eight out of every 10 painting jobs I bid. Still do.

Oh, and the best part: I'm having the time of my life. The fun is back, the money is great and it has been for many years.

Sure, owning a business can be serious stuff at times. However, keep in mind that good or bad, happy or sad, we create our own reality. Your fun is out there; sometimes you just need to reveal it to yourself.

In the upcoming issues of *APC* I'll dig deeper into each of the four abilities – why they are important and how to get them for yourself. Remember, business should be fun. Don't think of your customers as just paychecks. Treat them like good friends.

That's all for this issue. Talk with ya soon!

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