

"You can't always be motivated in life so you have to be disciplined." »Ash Dykes



Not a Canned Approach

I've long suggested to bankers that the more competitive the industry, the more personal gestures and connections matter.

That belief was reinforced on a recent visit to a supermarket.

Now, the supermarket industry is about as competitive as any you can name. They have razor thin-margins and aggressive competitors.

As I stopped into a store last week, my wife texted me a short list.

I have a long running theory that she always includes at least one item on each list just to see if I have the patience to find it.

Tomato bisque was on the latest list. I learned long ago that tomato bisque doesn't mean tomato soup.

Don't walk in the house thinking they're the same thing! Just saying.

As I approached the soup section, a young employee was busy stocking shelves nearby. He nicely asked, "Can I help you?" I confidently said, "No, thanks. I got this."



What's Your Calling Card?

We began a real estate adventure just over a year ago that has thankfully come to a close.

The process of moving my parents from one house (requiring work to sell) into another house (requiring work to live in) has been challenging but rewarding.

I've been exceptionally pleased with our new real estate agent, Lisa.

She came recommended by Jared. He was the fantastic agent we worked with on the first purchase, who had been recommended by a banker I've known and trusted for years.

When it came time to list my parents' home, I asked Jared to be our agent on that home, as well.

He told me that while it was not incredibly far out of the market he focuses on, he worried he could not be as hands on with the listing as he strives to be.

That surprised me. In my mind he was turning down easy money.

I soon learned, however, that I didn't. After 30 seconds or so of scanning the wall of cans before me, the young man walked over and asked what I was looking for.

When I told him, he said, "Oh, yeah. That's gotta be here."

For the next minute or so, he and I both failed to find tomato bisque.

We found lots of tomato soup, which I was quick to explain to him was not the same as tomato bisque.

He said, "I don't eat tomato bisque or soup. Are they that different?" I smiled, the older man dispensing wisdom, and said, "Uh...apparently."

He took out his phone and pulled up his store's app. We were in the right place, but still couldn't find it.

He apologized, I thanked him for the effort, and continued shopping.

Five minutes later, he came jogging up to me in another aisle.

He continued looking after I left and discovered that someone had placed cans in the wrong slot that had totally hidden the bisque.

He then jogged around that large store looking for me with a can of tomato bisque in his hand.

I smiled and said, "Dude, they need to give you a raise." He smiled, "Nah, just doing my job."

I walked away appreciating not just that employee, but the culture that fostered that kind of focus on stopping everything to help a customer.

That young man's personal gesture left a lasting impression on me.

How ready are you to make lasting impressions of your own this week?

But I was impressed that he didn't want to risk disappointing us.

I asked him for referrals. The next day, he called and listed a few folks he respected (some of whom actually worked for other agencies), and then identified Lisa as someone who regularly impresses him at their regional meetings.

True to what Jared promised, she was his equal when it came to responsiveness and outright hustle.

Along the way, we asked her for suggestions on various service providers, as well.

After the final closing, it dawned on me that every provider we used - from realtors, to lawyers, to contractors, to painters, to tree specialists, to moving companies, to exterminators, to sewer system inspectors came from word-of-mouth referrals.

I don't believe we did a single Google search.

Our process was purely asking family, friends, and folks we came to know, like, and trust to recommend other folks they personally knew, liked and trusted.

Even in today's age of uber-connectivity, with the universe of service providers in the palms of our hands, my family's largest purchases of the past year were made from, or handled by, folks we found through word-of-mouth recommendations.

The professional networks you build and personal referrals you earn impact your business in far-reaching ways.

The responsiveness, professionalism and helpfulness you exhibit to others is quite often your most effective calling card.

Remember, however, that true word-of-mouth advertising cannot be bought.

It's earned each day.

"One day, the people who didn't believe in you will tell everyone how they met you." » Johnny Depp



Dave Martin, author of [The In-Store Advantage](#), has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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