

**"Talent is a gift, but character is a choice." »John C. Maxwell**

## Unlikely to Like That Approach



On occasion, I find myself debating in my own head how much marketing is too much marketing.

For two-plus decades now, I've preached a "Market Hard, Sell Soft" approach to business.

I point out to folks that most of us have an incredible overestimation of what customers and potential customers know about us.

I suggest that they should always remember that even existing customers really don't know that much about you.

Sure, they may have (a little) knowledge about the product(s) they currently have. Even then, it's unlikely that most could pass a detailed quiz on the features of even the accounts they use often.

## Jumping Off the Screen



Like most folks walking the planet these days, I spend more time than is healthy staring at a smartphone screen.

I've kidded that it's odd that having all of the world's information and innumerable entertainment options in the palm of our hands has turned us into a world of introverted loners.

It's a fair bet that at no other time in human history have humans in close proximity to each other so totally ignored one another.

I am as guilty as the next person is. I've been on many 2+-hour flights, literally rubbing elbows with another passenger, without ever exchanging a word.

While making that point to an audience recently, I had one of those saying-it-as-it-comes-to-your-mind moments.

For that reason, I usually try to be understanding when they get just a bit aggressive with marketing and promotion.

Sometimes, however, they likely end up doing more harm than good.

I decided that I needed a haircut before heading out on a recent business trip. When I popped into a local location of a regional hair salon, the menu board partially blocking the door asked me to "Like them on Facebook".

Uh...no, thanks. But, thanks for asking.

When I was called to a chair, I noticed that every mirror in the place (and there are many) had handwritten, "Like us on Facebook" messages.

I get it. Okay...no, thanks.

As she began cutting my hair, my otherwise nice stylist pointed to the message written on the mirror (like I could miss it) and said there was a \$2 discount (on a product I didn't want) if I took out my phone and "Liked them on Facebook".

I did not want to argue with a person holding scissors 3 inches from my eyes, but I kidded, "Shouldn't I wait to see what you do to my hair before I tell anyone else that I like you guys?"

She smiled and said (under her breath), "I know, right? I hate that we have to do this, but my boss over there is going to ask me if I asked you to 'like' us."

I felt a combination of sad for her and annoyed at that business for forcing employees to badger customers.

I wondered if the fact that we are always connected to our current friends these days promotes (or allows) us to be less interested in possibly making new ones wherever we are.

Why make conversation with strangers in our presence when we can send bad jokes and complain about stuff via text and direct messaging to our buddies?

There is no reason to look like a loner anymore when we can show the world how much we have going on by never looking up from our screens!

After taking a test, my younger son recently had to wait for 40 minutes, without his phone, in a room with other "phoneless" teens. I asked him what that was like.

He said, "Not gonna lie. It's hard to look cool when you're just staring into space."

I laughed and asked if he struck up a conversation with anyone.

He looked at me as if I had asked if he had broken into interpretive dance.

I asked if he would be bothered if someone started a conversation with him. He thought for a second and said, "No, not really. That'd be cool."

Don't be too quick to judge those kids.

As the learned scholars in the band Bowling For Soup hypothesized, "High School Never Ends."

I often suggest to folks that they can become the highlight of just about anyone's day by actually asking other

And for what...a "like"?

I also thought it might make a little more sense for them to focus first on being, you know, really good at what they do.

Then, they can promote whatever they "like" after doing a great job with what customers came to them for in the first place.

In a healthy growth (sales) environment, we earn the right to ask for more business and referrals by, first, being impressive at what customers actually come to us for.

How impressive can you be today?

people about themselves and the things they care about... and then listening to them.

The key to productive "small talk" is usually not what we think to say. It is what we allow others to share.

These days, showing interest in other people usually makes you the most interesting person in the room.

And that is not a bad person to be.

How interested - and interesting - will you be this week?

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**"All the world's a stage and most of us are desperately unrehearsed."**

**»Sean O'Casey**



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