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**"Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery."  
»Joyce Brothers**

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## A Complimentary Outlook      Nontrivial Pursuits



A recent episode around our home had me reflecting on things like generation gaps and the breakdown of personal communication in our culture.

Oddly enough, it was brought on by observing my high school senior washing his truck.

I walked over to tap his shoulder and let him know I would be moving my car. He was oblivious to his surroundings with earbuds blaring.

As I approached, I noticed his process was not terribly efficient.

An (initially unwelcomed) 30-second coaching session saved him considerable energy and improved his results.

As I drove off, I reflected on the fact that I had likely washed cars a few hundred times by his age.



Almost every time I attend a large sporting event, I find myself reflecting on something Mark Cuban said a few years back.

For those who only know him as a guy on "Shark Tank", he is also the owner of the Dallas Mavericks NBA franchise.

Cuban and his team spend loads of time and effort studying ways to increase the excitement and fan experience at their games.

Obviously, a winning team is the best way to accomplish that feat.

However, you don't always know how competitive a game will be. Cuban's team works to find ways to engage and entertain the crowd during timeouts and intermissions.

They spend sizeable amounts on video productions, dancers, games, etc.

I'm guessing my son has washed a car less than five times, tops. That is not a knock on him.

His experiences have mostly been with automated washes.

It's unreasonable to expect a person who hasn't done something much to be adept at it.

Whether it's a job, athletic, or academic skill... it takes practice to be good at something.

With that thought in my mind, I reflected on the fact that actual conversations...the kind that involve speaking and listening to words...are in danger of becoming a diminishing skill, as well.

Some would argue that we've already reached a crisis point in that area...and they may not be wrong.

Sure, Millennials and Gen Z's come to mind when we discuss this, but look around.

I often see as many 40-year-olds glued to their phones in public places as anyone. No one is talking to anyone.

With that, I believe more than ever that the ability to communicate face-to-face in an engaged and inquisitive manner is a differentiating behavior.

In a world where people stare increasingly at smartphone screens, folks who have an ability to smile, look people in the eyes, and engage them in conversation stand out.

To make that point, I've sometimes asked banker groups to try an experiment. I give

Cuban stated that even with all that, the most exciting thing during timeouts is always the tee-shirt slingshot.

The slickly produced video entertainment they broadcast during timeouts does not match the engagement levels that a chance of having a free tee shirt land in your lap generates.

While I am as big a fan of sophisticated marketing as the next person is, the tee shirt slingshot phenomenon always makes me smile.

It's not a sophisticated campaign. It simply works.

I smiled, reflecting at that observation this week as we are in the midst of a remodel project in our home.

Each day, a few of the painting crew are wearing bright, white Sherwin-Williams tee shirts. Their local supplier provides these shirts to them.

The genius of that incredibly simple marketing gesture is that they are embedding their brand in our minds as we see improvements shaping up.

Let's face it. Do most folks really give much thought to what brand of paint is on their walls?

I've had more than my fair share of marketing directors at various banks give me a hard time (some kidding, some not) about my fondness of things like logoed coffee mugs, caps, pens, and all manner of "trinkets".

(Maybe it's in my in-store banker DNA.)

them a goal of paying at least 10 compliments each day.

Preferably, they will compliment customers and prospects, but complimenting peers is powerful, as well.

Many are actually surprised at how many more pleasant conversations and positive interactions this one practice generates each day.

The best thing many people can do today is to look up from their phones.

Give them a reason to.

I make my case that “trinkets and stuff” aren’t a substitute for high-level marketing. They support it.

They put a personal touch on things. These simple items allow our teams to make easy and ingratiating personal gestures to customers and prospects.

Moreover, I’ve yet to see a business that doesn’t benefit from having its name and logo in people’s eyes, hands, and minds more often.

What simple gestures can you make today?

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**"Run if you can, walk if you have to, crawl if you must;  
just never give up." »Dean Karnazes**



*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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