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Sales and the Art of Private Investigation

By Leroy Cook

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A high pressure salesman is exemplified by the salesman who sold two milking machines to a farmer with only one cow and took the cow in payment for the machines. Sales, like any other powerful tool, can be misused. The necessity of marketing and selling your services though, is acknowledged by anyone in business except the extremely stubborn and the foolish. Being in any business without selling is like trying to clap with one hand. Ironically, some very good private investigators who feel "sales" is below their dignity are unwittingly practicing sales daily while doing investigations. The same skills and tools are used by sales professionals everyone admires and the high pressure salesmen none of us wants to be identified with. These skills are also used by professional private investigators and by slick con artists. Some people seem to have natural sales and or investigation abilities but, the skills separating the professionals in both fields from the rest must be studied, learned and practiced.

When I went to work with the General Adjustment Bureau many years ago, I was taught, how to read and interpret an insurance policy. Over the next eight years, through continuous courses and on the job training, I learned about taking statements, photography, casualty law, the rules of evidence and many other areas of knowledge that have served me well. During my 8 1/2 years as an adjuster and manager, I was taught nothing about sales. Selling was believed to be something done only by the agents. Most people who work in law enforcement are probably also taught many technical things and very little about sales. A badge can effectively eliminate the need for salesmanship. Police officers who develop and use good salesmanship in police work find the transition to private investigation much easier than those who relied solely on their authority.

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Only after leaving adjusting with a well earned ulcer and going to work for Field Enterprises did I learn what I had been missing that had contributed to the ulcer. During my three years with Field Enterprises Education Corporation, I first sold door to door and then trained and coached others to sell door to door. What an education. After "graduating" from Field Enterprises, I started my own investigation agency and enjoyed eleven years of business success. I attribute my success as a private investigator more to my sales training than to the technical training I received as an adjuster.

Yes, I prospected for potential clients and I gave sales presentations to some of the ones I successfully contacted but that isn't the way my sales knowledge helped me most in the PI business. It made me a more effective investigator.

Let's talk about using sales tools in investigation. When you work a case and need to find a piece of information, you turn over every stone, right? If you don't, what are the clients paying you for? Turning over every stone is another way of describing "prospecting", an essential sales tool. When you make contact with an important witness or keeper of records, you must gain their cooperation to get the information you need. You must sell yourself or making the contact doesn't do anyone any good.. When you take a statement, you need the subjects signature on it to prove you didn't make the information up. That requires a process called "closing" in the sales world. Whether you use them while investigating or while getting more work, sales skills are worth learning. Here are a few examples.

The next time you need to get into a building past someone standing in the doorway, try wiping your feet as you say: "May I step in?" You might be amazed at the power of kinesics. The next time you secure a statement from a reluctant witness and need a signature, try leaving the whole bottom line empty and instead of saying: "Sign here." Say: "Which side of the page do you prefer to sign on, the left side or the right?" and hand them the pen with the paper in a comfortable position for them to sign. Many people resist following instructions (Sign here!) when they still aren't sure you are both on the same side and many more have a terrible time making decisions. ("Gee! Should I sign this?") Everyone makes many choices daily so choices are easy and comfortable for them. (Left side or right?) Handing the pen and positioning the paper is another use of kinesics.

One of the toughest sales tools to master, either while selling or investigating, is the proper and effective handling of objections. We recently conducted a marketing program offering a free book to potential clients of investigators. When a book was requested we gave local ION members the opportunity to deliver the book. Delivering the book was meant to be a door opener for the investigators to meet and hopefully sell themselves to possible clients. As with getting the order for a referred investigation, some of our members succeeded in meeting with and establishing rapport with most of the leads provided. Others complained that none, or very few of the clients contacted about the book were willing to meet with them. A good salesman knows the sale begins when the prospect says no. To sell something, even yourself, to someone who accepts

what you offer with no hesitation does not require a salesperson. Easy sales only require order takers and clerks. You won't find many millionaire or CEO former order takers or clerks but there are countless millionaire and CEO former salespeople.

Have you ever had someone call about possibly doing an investigation and they talk a lot but never turn into a client ? Whatever their reason was for not going ahead with working the case is known is sales as an objection. Maybe it was your price or what you said or failed to say but, usually it is their inability to make a decision. In many such cases, offering them a choice instead of leaving the decision up to them would have been a service to them. It would have eased their stress by helping them decisively deal with one more thing in their life and for you, it would have made the difference between an almost case and money in the bank for you. Most people, even attorneys and SIU directors sometimes need help making decisions to do things they know they should do. Making decisions involves risk whereas doing nothing seems more safe. Inertia on the part of potential clients costs private investigators who refuse to accept the need to sell themselves, more than 25% of what their incomes could otherwise be. Our "cancellation

rate" statistics from 20,000 referrals demonstrate the difference between PI's who know how to close a sale and those who don't. Here is a sample choice question to try after discussing the potential case. "Shall we start on that this week or next?"

No one should sell people things or services they don't need. The main difference between a professional salesperson and a high pressure salesman is their sensitivity to the interests of others. The high pressure salesman I described at the beginning of this article didn't care about the farmers situation. Con artists who call themselves private investigators don't care about the problems of their mark. The goal is not to turn private investigators into high pressure salespeople or con artists. Professional private investigators care about people and enjoy helping solve their problems. Learning professional sales skills however, will make you a better investigator and a more successful and affluent businessperson. If you would like ideas on how to get sales training and/or skills, send me a note online to lc@ioninc.com..

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The Science Of Forensic Investigation

By Carl Walker

The science of forensic investigation has been around for hundreds of years. In the past hundred years however, Forensic investigation has developed and the progress that has been made is astounding. The art of forensic investigation is used every day on crime scenes throughout the world. A forensic investigation refers to the investigation of a crime scene. A crime scene investigator

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reconstructs the crime scene, analyzing evidence and carefully documenting each one of their findings. If only one piece of evidence is documented incorrectly, it could put the whole criminal case in jeopardy, potentially setting a criminal free to run the streets.

Crime scene investigators are specially trained members of the police force. They are the first people on a crime scene, and only they can release any property or information once the investigation is completed. There are different types of forensics that fall into the category of forensic investigation. The most simple of type of forensics is fingerprint. This is when a crime scene investigator gathers finger print evidence from a crime scene and analyzes it to get a finger print match.

Perhaps the most recognized form of forensic investigation is DNA testing. This testing is done by testing physical evidence such as secretions or blood from a crime scene and testing it to determine if it belongs to the victim. It doesn't, the sample will reveal certain genetic markers including the blood type of the unknown person. In cases such as assault, robbery, rape and murder, an experienced crime scene investigator is critical. They are trained in what to look for and how to test the evidence. Even the smallest piece of dust or a single hair can yield a wealth of information to a trained investigator. A single hair found at a crime scene can literally tell the investigator if they are looking for a male or female, or if the hair belongs to an animal.

A trained forensic investigator can take a half eaten apple and use the bite marks as identification, sort of like finger prints, thus catching a criminal who thinks that he or that they got away with a criminal act. A forensic investigator not only investigates murder scenes, their services are also used to detect forgeries by handwriting analysis, and testing water for purity.

Performing a forensic investigation is a long and complicated process. Every inch of a crime scene needs to be processed, starting with collecting finger print evidence from every inch of the crime scene. Once the finger printing is done, the more tedious task of collecting every bit of dirt, dust, paper, clothes, fluid samples and everything else that is on the scene. Often, it takes weeks to process an entire crime scene.

Forensics HQ investigates the world of forensics and crime scene investigation.



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