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## ***Fear of selling***

By Paperitalo Staff

You can't run a competitive business without selling, the function probably the least understood and hardest to successfully execute in any enterprise. Evidence of lack of understanding of this subject is presented in the never ending plethora of books, CDs, videos, conferences and so forth. Each one of these proclaims it has the key.

Yet, as technical professionals we often look askance at those who sell for a living. They often have a different (read: inferior) education to our high and mighty technical knowledge. The reality is, however, one cannot spin the invoice printer without sales and one cannot employ anyone without spinning the invoice printer. Sales are the lifeblood of any enterprise.

These days, casting about and looking at all the pitches to which I am exposed, I think the most outrageous are the ones trying to sell us gold. I have mentioned this before, but it is worth repeating. If you consider their pitch for a moment, it is absolutely contradictory. They are really saying this: holding cash money is a bad idea, give us your cash money and we'll give you gold! Wait a minute, if holding cash money is such a bad idea, why do they want mine? Shouldn't they be keeping the gold and forego the expense of advertising?

Emotional sales are the easiest--medical, legal, and, these days, cell phones. All of these touch on a basic human need (respectively): stay comfortably alive; keep my money, take yours or stay out of jail; and human communications with a flair and coolness of being absolutely up to date.

Enterprises like to have the government as a partner because sales to the government are relatively easy. The government sells by legislators, wanting to be re-elected, passing laws. Legislators' sales pitches are simple, but as nonsensical as the gold sellers (in a different way): "I am going to make sure you get more back than you put into the government." This is obviously a situation that cannot apply to a country as a whole (when they try it, they run up deficits). Notice that governments do not have sales and marketing departments--they use the tax collector, coupled with severe penalties to spin their invoice printer. They are unique in this way--they spin their invoice printers with threats.

We suffer in the paper industry, as I have mentioned before, due to our ubiquitous nature. We have become so valuable to consumers that we are invisible. We have no emotional sale except when our products are absent (you do get emotional when you discover, too late, there is no toilet paper, don't you?).

I am wandering, but I have no solution to this problem. I would say this to you, however: the next time you see one of your company's salespeople in your mill, thank them for what they do for you. They have a very serious function to perform.

When I think of sales people, I recall years ago a fine gentleman that came to my office and sold me business suits. He came around about once a quarter, showed me the last cloths and fitted me for a new suit. One quarter, about the time he would normally visit me, I got a call from a stranger with the same company. I asked him what happened to my old friend. He was killed in a car accident was the reply. If you sell, you no doubt travel, and traveling is dangerous. Be careful out there.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##