



ebook ISBN: 978-9625977-3-2
228 pages
Release Date: 2009
Retail Price \$39.00

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To Sell Yourself, Give of Yourself

by Keith F. Luscher
Author, *Prospect & Flourish*

We all have to prospect, whether we are seeking our next client or our next job. That's a given. And there are many things that job seekers and sales professionals may learn from each other. When I am out talking about prospecting to members of various business communities, I encounter people in both situations.

Yet, the challenges remain very similar. Just one example lies in a very important lesson that job seekers are most keenly aware, yet sales professional can sometimes forget. It's a point that author Harry Beckwith states so succinctly in his most recent book *You, Inc.*: "The first thing you sell is yourself."

This was a lesson I learned from my own manager when I began work with Principal Financial Group a little over a year ago. Ours is a household name brand; a FORTUNE 500 company that was founded in 1879; is a 401(k) leader, and remains financially strong even in these turbulent times. (Okay, enough with the plug.)

"Those points are all good and important," I recall him saying to me, "but it won't matter unless the prospect knows and likes you first." Indeed, business is about relationships, and if you cannot get another person to like you, they certainly won't hire you—or buy from you. Ultimately, the decision to buy (or hire) is typically driven by feelings. Without feelings, the world would be an empty place.

So people must feel good about you, and they must feel good around you. Effective job seekers (as well as successful sales professionals) know this. They are all about selling themselves and building relationships—and they do this through value. They give of themselves—both their time and their expertise. Most importantly, they do it from the heart. At **Scioto Ridge Job Networking Group** in Columbus Ohio, which is now opening its fifth chapter in Grove City (and where I will be speaking April 27), this is one of the most important rules of the job seeking professional.

Quite simply: to sell yourself, you must give of yourself. I am not saying you must "give away the store;" nor am I saying that you give so much that it diminish the perception of your value. You give of yourself when:

You are socially mobile, volunteering and contributing to your community

You seek opportunities to help others, such as facilitating introductions between colleagues and friends

You exercise empathic listening, with genuine interest in the needs of others

You play a key role in helping another person create a positive outcome in their life, while expecting nothing in return.

Expecting nothing in return? A tall order for those of us with bills to pay. Perhaps we might call it a leap of faith. In the mid-1990s, while writing my book *Don't Wait Until You Graduate*, I interviewed a Rice University medical student who was a student leader on campus. "Gandhi used an expression, *Sarvodaya*," I recall him telling me. "This term expresses how we serve others throughout our lives. We start by serving ourselves, by providing basic needs. Then we serve our family and friends. Beyond that, there is an element of risk, when we serve 'strangers.' Taking that step is one way communities are formed."

And it is also how new relationships are built.