



By Harry J. Abramson
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This is What I Believe... A Rep's View

It's seldom that I read the verses of great poets, but when I fortuitously stumbled upon the words illustrated in my opening paragraph, they made an impact. Read on – I hope you'll agree that they depict the perfect rep - principal - distributor relationship.

I believe in the words of the American poet, Gwendolyn Brooks: *"We are each other's business; we are each other's harvest; we are each other's magnitude and bond."* In other words, we are interdependent entities.

With the aforementioned prose in mind, wouldn't it be ideal if we respected each other without an iota of greed or malice? This is especially applicable to today's business world. Presumably, we all know the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We may know it, but the question is, "Do we practice it?"

Reps Change the World

I believe that reps/salespeople are the engine of change. They may not be inventors or scientists, but they are chartered with the responsibility of taking great product innovations to the corporate and private world by explaining the benefits of new products and services. I believe great salespeople love what they do, not only for the money, but even more so for fueling change, improvement, efficiencies and ultimately making people happy. It's called "ego gratification" and provides salespeople with a high. The vast majority of salespeople love what they do on

a daily basis. Warren Buffet refers to it as "tap dancing to work". Personally, I "tap dance" to my computer every morning before breakfast to start my day, and do more of a "soft shoe" every night before bedtime. In between, I try to contribute in a positive way to the world around me.

Quiet Heroes

I believe that reps are quiet heroes, who seldom get the recognition they deserve. They often deliver millions of dollars to their principals' bottom lines while helping their customers realize multimillion dollar solutions, savings and efficiencies. They are also heroes for putting bread on the table of their immediate and extended family.

Reps Are Optimists

I believe that sales reps are among the most optimistic people in the world. Dare we forget that salespeople receive more rejections than any other profession? I believe that this makes them special human beings, because God blessed them with resilience and tenacity.

Learning

I believe that outstanding salespeople have an absolute and unlimited

thirst for learning. How else can they convey valuable knowledge to their customers and prospects? It coincides with my personal mantra, "I share what I know, to help others grow". In simple words, true salespeople are educators and problem solvers.

Achievement

More than ever before, I believe that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things by deciding to take action. I see it in the world of technology, and hopefully we'll all see more of it in the world of health care, world peace and spiritual values. When you pause to define selling, it's a matter of convincing others to see things as you do, be it your children, parents, co-workers, customers, friends or neighbors. Our clergy sells us on the virtues of a higher power – they are salespeople as well. In summary, I believe that we are all salespeople.

Reps Are Talented

I believe that manufacturers' reps/salespeople are some of the most unique people in the world. The reasons why are numerous, and I'll do my best to list some of them:

- People Skills: This is the ability to

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establish relationships with principals, customers and colleagues. The most gifted are rapid rapport builders.

- **Management Skills:** This includes everything from managing people, P & L's, recruiting, educating, motivating and a vision for sound future decisions. In other words, I believe that successful reps are gifted with exceptional business acumen. They are the best and the brightest!

- **Product Knowledge:** The perfect rep/salesperson understands the product he sells and its applications. More than anything else, I believe that manufacturers' reps are among the hardest working people I know. Unfortunately, I do not feel that they get the recognition they deserve as risk-takers, who sell solutions while working hard to establish trust and build confidence. When they achieve it, I call it "well earned acceptance." This I believe.

Reps Are Misunderstood

I believe that manufacturers' representatives are among the most misunderstood professions in the business world. College graduates who majored in business typically give you a blank stare if you ask them what the function of a manufacturers' rep is. Unfortunately, the rep function is not well described in business schools. The very fact that we have multiple designations/monikers tends to cloud our identity. We are called manufacturers' agent, manufacturers' rep, sales agent, rep broker, independent sales company, factory rep, and various combinations of these terms.

I believe that today's textbooks devote far too little space about becoming the professional outsourced sales company – it's a great profession.

Introspectively Speaking

I believe that I am privileged to be an American, who can express my views, personal philosophies and core values about our great country. For the purpose of this article, I reflect on my profession as a manufacturers' representative and, more specifically, a businessman in sales.

I believe that our personal and business ethics have been mortally compromised, and we have the Herculean challenge of rebuilding them in the best interest of our children and grandchildren. I do not consider myself to be an extreme right-wing conservative or an ultra left-wing liberal. As an

"independent," I believe that every issue should be evaluated on its own merit and totally independent of political party lines. I think it's time for introspection to determine if we have the same set of morals for our personal and business lives? Shouldn't we?

In this I believe.

Corporate Greed

I believe that corporate scandal has run rampant at the expense of employees, stockholders and U.S. taxpayers. Headliners such as Enron, Tyco, WorldCom and Quest are just the tip of the iceberg, because they are the biggest. I believe that many of these corporate executives were nothing more than thieves, who amassed great wealth for themselves and others. They siphoned company money to support their lavish lifestyles, while emptying pension plan coffers. I believe their actions were despicable, and I feel blessed that I never represented any of these unethical companies.

American Manufacturing

I believe that America must maintain some semblance of a manufacturing nation in order to be a world power. Outsourcing to China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and other countries creates greater dependence on nations that historically have not been our soul mates. I believe that China has the potential of being the RED MENACE of an economic cold war. This can only be offset with balanced trade and national budget.

Conclusion

I believe that today's world is inherently a very good place to be. However, I also believe that it can all go bad very quickly. We need honest government and corruption-free corporations. We need clear-minded, ethical leaders to sustain and grow all aspects of America and, obviously, do not need another Enron. We need leaders to help grow our economy without compromising the continued development of third world countries. Needless to say, we desperately need world peace!

I believe that we have to solve the energy crisis and rid our country's dependence on oil and the associated profiteering.

I believe that we must do our best to eliminate poverty.

I believe that, if we all honored the same higher power, the world would be a better place.

That's what this rep believes! ■

