

By James Collins

I learned of this story in 1970 when I was a graduate student at Adelphi University in Garden City Long Island. Louie C., the professor, who previously sold advertising taught a course in marketing at night, and during the day was now a sales representative for restaurant fixtures. He had a wealth of experience, which he willingly shared with the students.

Sol Swartz an older, successful, active, businessman, owned a few restaurants in Midtown Manhattan among other enterprises. Louie had been trying to sell him advertising for about two years, but try as he might the professor was never able to get any business from Sol. They met on a regular basis about every two weeks and became very friendly but Sol turned down any requests for advertising business. Finally, Mr. C figured he had invested enough time and he would have to try to force the issue. He invited Sol out for lunch and made a presentation wherein he reviewed their long-term relationship, meetings and their friendship. He then put it straight to Sol Swartz.

“Sol, I’ve tried everything under the sun to get you to buy some advertising from my company which would help you grow your companies and increase your cash flow. We have been meeting for a couple years now. I believe we are good friends. Yet every time I approach you about getting business, you turn me down. Something is holding you back and until I find out what it is, I can’t do any business with you. I am getting very frustrated. Can you help me and be very straightforward. Sol, why won’t you buy any advertising space from me?”

“Well to tell you the truth Louie, the reason I am not willing to buy any advertising from you is that I do not believe that advertising will cause people to learn about my company. I do not believe you can write anything, which will make people read the information, become aware of my business, and buy from me. That’s it in a nutshell.”

“Sol, thank you very much for being so direct. Now for the first time I understand what caused your reluctance to buy advertising. I think I can allay your fears. Advertising is an art based on understanding your customers and knowing their needs, wants and fears. I have years of experience in his business and I know how to get people to read the copy we put on the paper. If I can write something which will make you read that article will you reconsider and buy advertising from me?”

“Louie, if you can write a piece that you guarantee that I will read, I will buy advertising from you.”

Louie reached over the table held out his hand. Sol grabbed it and they shook hands.

“Sol, thank you for that affirmation. We do not even have to leave this table. I will describe to you what I will place in the New York Times tomorrow morning that I guarantee you will read.”

“Louie, you’ve got my attention. I can’t think of anything that you would write that I would have to read but if you do, I will give you the business.”

“Sol I want to take out a full-page ad in the New York Times and put it on page two. It is titled; *This is the history, life and times of Sol Swartz, the famous New York businessman.*

Sol started to smile, and then he chuckled and then he broke into loud guffaws and he slammed his hand on the table.

“Louie I’ve met my match. We damn well know I have to read that. You’ve got my business.”

From that day on Sol purchased all his advertising from Louie and his businesses prospered and grew. They maintained their friendship and both made a lot of money.

I learned from the story that if you want to sell something to somebody, make sure you incorporate their name into the product or the write up or the proposal. If their name and facts about them personally are incorporated it is guaranteed that they will avidly read it and send it around to all their friends. Also you will make a new friend. I successfully applied this on a couple of business occasions.

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