

Is Your Message Vanilla?

Ever wonder why you don't get more referrals? Ever wonder why, when money wasn't the issue, a prospect didn't buy from you? It may be because of your message. (or lack of one!)

Often I'll ask an agent why someone should do business with them. Their answer often goes something like this:

"I have good products/services, competitive pricing, and give good customer service."

That's a good answer, but if I went down the street to your competitor and asked them the same question, what do you think their answer would be? "Same answer."

You see, it's a "vanilla" answer. It really doesn't say anything. In fact, I doubt whether a prospect would even consider doing with you without those benefits being present. It's like saying, "We're honest." As opposed to what??? It's expected.

Just take a look in the Yellow Pages under "Insurance". What you'll find is a collection of ads which state the obvious or dubious: In business for 27 years, we carry Auto, Home, Disability, Business, Honest, blah, blah, blah... Vanilla. Do those ads generate calls? You bet. Are the calls from serious buyers? Are they calling just to shop price? (after all, what else is left after a vanilla statement?) Are they the kind of client you're looking for? Do you KNOW who you're looking for? Do you know who your ideal client is? Do you know why they would want to do business with you?

My experience has shown that if you're not known for something, then you're not remembered at all. If you don't put a stake in the ground, if you can't say why you do what you do, if you aren't clear about what sets you apart from all the others, then you aren't remembered.

How can you change all that? It's simple...but not easy. You need to start by defining your purpose. You need to be clear as to why you do what you do. It's not so much the mechanics of it all, but rather the meaning behind it. An inappropriate purpose statement would be, "I help people protect their assets by offering a wide range of insurance products." The statement is dull, mechanical and has no energy behind it. It doesn't offer you a reason to get up in the morning, nor does it attract anyone. A more meaningful statement of purpose might be something like, "I help people build a secure financial future." Better, but not very dynamic. How about, "I help my clients painlessly avoid financial surprises." This last statement may not be the best statement of purpose for you, but it DOES have several aspects which make it a great purpose. For one, it's a bit provocative - it causes someone to ask about it. Another aspect of it is that it addresses the "Why" of what you do, rather than the "What". Finally, it's stated in a way which certainly sets you apart from "vanilla" competitors. You get remembered.

A great exercise to help you appreciate what sets you apart from others is to ask five people who know you (not family!) for five things about you that make you a great agent. You'll be amazed at the answers you'll get. You'll hear things you always knew, you'll hear things that you knew but didn't think that anyone else recognized, and you'll hear some wonderful things about yourself that you weren't even aware of. These traits and skills make up the core of what sets you apart. By incorporating who you are with why you do what you do, you'll eventually arrive at a statement of purpose that will catapult you towards great success.

In addition, you'll want to spend some time identifying or redefining who your ideal clients are. The more clearly you can define who you want to target, the better you'll be able to identify where to find them, how to find them, and what you'll say to them. People you network with

will also end up with a clear picture of who you work with and that will allow them to make better referrals.

Once you decide on the statement of purpose that best defines you and what you do, you need to incorporate it into everything you do. You need to speak it, breathe it, and live it. Make it the opening of your “elevator speech”. Consider putting it on stationery, on a website, on your business cards, and in ads. When you network with people, make it the focus of what you’re about. Become memorable. People are attracted to someone who stands for something. Why are they so attracted? Because so few people can state what they stand for. The more clear you can be about your “why”, the more compelling your work becomes. The more compelling your work becomes, the more self-motivated you become. The more self-motivated you become, the more good things happen for you. And best of all, not only will you win, but all the people you’ve helped along the way win because they’re better off for having done business with you.

Make a decision to put in the effort to develop a clear purpose and a clear understanding of what sets you apart. You’ll be glad you did.

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