

Jeremiah and the Gatekeeper

You can never leave work, even when you are on vacation. I took a trip a few weeks back and visited Kim in Nashville, TN. She was doing some training down there and we always wanted to go visit Music City. With our anniversary in March, no better time than now!

As I waited for Kim's plane to arrive, I couldn't just sit in the hotel room. It was time for a cold beer or two or well, I quit counting after a couple hours. The story of Jeremiah starts around beer two and I remember it so well. After striking up a conversation with the bartender Faith and learning about what brought her to Nashville, I noticed a well dressed man coming into the restaurant. Yep, one of us! A salesperson on a mission. Lugging his laptop on one shoulder and carrying flyers in his other hand. I watched as the Faith, quickly chased him off. Another failed cold call! Flyers in the trash!

Smiling and laughing as Faith came back to my area of the bar, she asks what's so funny Mike? I tell her that I'm one of them, but I don't use that approach in getting business. She goes on to tell me that when they ask for the owner, she says Jeremiah is not available, can I take a message for him? You see folks, Jeremiah does not exist. Faith created him because she is the Gatekeeper that protects this establishment from cold calling sales representatives that lose every time they don't build a relationship with Faith. Some even call later on and ask for Jeremiah. How funny!

To get to the owner, you must build a relationship with the Gatekeeper. They control the flow of information that goes to the decision-makers. They are the people that in most cases, sales people just blow by and don't acknowledge. At least the unsuccessful ones. After 30 minutes of talking with Faith, I was introduced to the owner, John. She did not know that I was visiting, nor did she know at first what I did for a living until I told her. I built a relationship with her and showed interest in what her position was at the restaurant.

Folks, if you want to get to the owner of the business, you need to respect the Gatekeeper. They need to trust that you are looking out for the best interest of their business. They've been entrusted by the owner to screen all people that come and try soliciting their business. Sell on relationships first, if you build the relationships, you will see sales of your product grow larger than you ever dreamed.

A couple of nights later, Kim and I went back into Faith's restaurant. It's nice when you hear "Hey Mike from Pittsburgh, introduce me to your wife!" Now that's getting to the Gatekeeper!

Great Selling,

Mike Popella

Note: Names of Faith & John were created to protect my new found friends in Nashville, TN. Hey, if you want to meet her and get introduced to the owner of the restaurant, you go in and do the leg work.