

My First Time

Someone once said “You never get a second chance at making a great first impression!” Well, I’ve wanted to write about this topic but I’ve pushed it off to other topics for several months. The funny thing is that several things pointed me in the direction of featuring this title this month and writing about this subject.

There is never anything like the first time you’ve been somewhere or done something. You have nothing to compare it too. It can’t be the best or worst. So you go along preparing yourself to do and hope for the best. Once completed, you ask yourself, was it what I expected, better than expected, or just plain confusing or a waste of time?

I remember a lot of first times in my life; my first kiss with Kim, first real big sell, first sales presentation, first meeting with my subordinates, first ride on my Harley, first article written, etc... However, there are many first times that happen daily in our lives. Heck, I just got back from my first trip to a city I’ve never been too. I tried this new restaurant for the first time. Now I need to set up my first meeting with them. As the saying goes, “There’s a first time for everything”.

When does your first impression happen with another person? Every time you meet someone for the first time, they begin to assess you as a person. Good or bad, you are making an impression on them and whether they want to meet you a second time. Same goes for ourselves and our first impressions of others and things. I remember the first time I had Sushi. I didn’t like it. But I also knew that where I had it the first time was probably not the best place to try it. So, I gave it another shot. Love it! I learned from the first time that I need to choose where I eat my Sushi, wisely.

So, what does all this jargon have to do with sales? It has everything to do with it. You need to make good first impressions at all times in life. Imagine you walk in to meet your prospect for the first time or so you think. Earlier in the day they witnessed you making a scene at the local coffee shop. The interpretation of your first impression is different. The client had seen you do something intolerable by their company standards. You don’t even have a chance at this opportunity. Your first time in front of this client was not what you thought it was. Think about it, you never know who is watching you.

I was getting off the Atlanta tram in January at the airport going to another terminal. Many of us were exiting, when a bunch of folks began walking in at the same time. It created a bottleneck and inconvenience. A guy with his company’s logo on his shirt started a confrontation with another person. Not only did he make a bad impression for himself, but his company was what really got the bad impression. No one knew his name, but that small company logo on his shirt just got magnified on the big screen in everyone’s mind. Not good for them. He became the face of the company and it was not pretty. It may have lasted only a few seconds, but it still became a negative representation of his company.

Do you want to make a bad first impression for you or your organization? I certainly hope not. In the scenario above, I was thinking similar thoughts as that guy. However, I knew to keep my mouth shut. I have a reputation to uphold for my faith, self, family, and company. I've said many times that it is important to treat all folks you come in contact with in a professional manner. Hey, the gatekeeper may be watching you.

As a sales person, no matter how experienced or good you are, prepare like it is the first time you are doing this but act like you've been there before. My first meeting with my first prospect, I spent a lot of time researching the company. In the meeting I didn't need 80% of that stuff, but you know what? If I did need it, I was prepared to address it. I still try to download as much information as possible on a client or prospect. It is never bad to know more than what is needed.

Let me end with just enjoy all you do in life. Whether it's the first time jumping out of a plane, eating something different, traveling to a new part of the globe, or wearing a different hair style, do it with style and pride. Everything we do in life has a beginning or first time. Some are memorable and others we can't forget soon enough. So go out and enjoy all your new first times this week. Take note when they happen and stop and think to yourself, WOW that was the first time for me. Enjoy it when it happens, what do you have to lose? For the first time in my life, I feel like Andy Rooney on 60 minutes.

Great Selling!

Mike Popella