

The Secret to Power in Business

by Glenn Clark

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III. Fairness to the Customer

All the religion a person has, all the praying in the world, cannot make amends for trying to palm off on one's customers an inferior product. First of all, be sure that what you have to sell can honestly fill the need. Then direct your efforts, your plans, and your prayers toward filling that need, and do not attempt to have it accomplish things it was not meant to accomplish. Finally, do your best to see that this product reaches those whom it would benefit, taking care to see that no pressure is put upon those whom it would not benefit.

A great oil company in the middle west adopted a new method in their sales force in the last few years, turning their salesmen into counselors for their customers rather than salesmen. The entire purpose of these salesmen now is to study the needs of their clients and urge them against over-buying as much as in the past they urged them against under-buying. The unique outcome is that the sales have doubled and their patrons have increased by the hundreds.

"I have long been preaching the doctrine," said a wise trainer of salesmen, "that products are made for purposes and should not have to be sold against the resistance of a suspicious purchaser, but merely fitted into place."

One of the most outstanding examples I know of this is the Clifton restaurants in Los Angeles. No one needs to pay there if he does not wish to. They lose \$10,000 a year in unpaid meals. But their customers have increased so greatly that they take in \$10,000 a day.

Many years ago my sister wished to sell two cottages which she owned and put the money into a chicken ranch. The high-powered agent in whose hands she had placed the matter was doing his best to sell these to some people who did not really need them. When all the efforts of the agent seemed futile, I suggested that we pray about it. Her husband, who was a very pious man, thought it would be a selfish use of prayer. "Why should we ask God to harness His giant Niagara to our little pinwheels?"

"You are right," I replied, "where you imply that prayer should never be used for petty, selfish purposes. But prayer, if properly used, is never selfish. If we put this in God's hands the first thing that He will do may be to protect these prospects from buying the property. We do not need to pray selfishly for money to come to *you* for the property; we can pray for those who need the property to find it out. Somewhere in the world there must be someone who would be made very happy by the purchase of these two houses. Let us pray, therefore, that those who dream of owning some cottages like these, may have their dreams come true."

My sister became deeply interested in this, so I went on:

"The physicists maintain that there is no negative-poled atom in the universe, but that it has its corresponding positive ray somewhere in infinite space, even if it be a million miles away, and that nothing in heaven or on earth can prevent their ultimately finding each other out. Is it not reasonable to believe that there is a similar law prevailing in the relations of man to man, and that when one has a beautiful thing to dispose of, another somewhere, even though he be thousands of miles away can be made happy by that very thing; and that, if we but trust all to God, we might find that nothing on land or sea could prevent the supply and the need from finding each other?"

A few days later a young man named Demaree Bess, at that time a reporter on the *Minneapolis Tribune*, knocked on the door. "I am on my two weeks' vacation," he said, "and I heard that you were summering here in La Jolla, so I came up to see if you would care to go swimming with me." On the way to the beach he said, "This is a wonderful climate out here; if I could get a job on a California paper I would never go back to Minnesota, but I expect there's no chance. There must be a hundred applicants out here for every job!"

On the way back from our swim he exclaimed, "If I could get a job out here the first thing I would do would be to buy a couple of houses to invest my savings in."

"A couple of houses!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he replied. "The only way a bachelor can ever save would be to have something to put his surplus savings into."

The following evening he came to my cottage and exclaimed, "Rejoice with me! I have been in San Diego all day, and have just secured a job on the *San Diego Union*! By the way, you know a lot of people out here. Do you know of a couple of cottages that are for sale?"

"Do I!" I exclaimed. "Just come with me!"

My sister had remarked that all she was requiring was \$1,000 payment down, and the rest on time. When I showed him the houses he said, "These are exactly what I want." When I told him the price he was delighted. "But," he added ruefully, "I can only pay \$1,000 down."

"Don't let that bother you," I replied, and straightaway brought Demaree Bess and my sister together.

Then I witnessed an amazing thing. He was arguing that she was trying to take too little, and she was arguing that he was trying to pay too much. But as I had been the go-between, and there was no agent's commission to pay, both were benefited by the mutual transaction and I was aware that there had been an exchange of some subtle and penetrating law of need and fulfillment, through which both their lives became more blessed.

Is it not a law of good business that in every transaction both parties should be benefited? Listen to Thomas J. Watson of International Business Machines:

"We must give more than we get. I always get much more than I give. That is because I can give only what is within me, one single man, whereas I can receive what all other men have to give. All of our dealings with men must be mutually beneficial. They must be balanced. Both sides of a transaction must give happiness, not just one side. If you think you have got the best of a deal with any man go think it over. If you conclude that he has not benefited equally with you then you have surely gotten the worst of the deal. If, in my dealings with men, I lose money that is as nothing; but if I gain money and lose a friend then I have lost heavily and I will run fast to catch his friendship and bring it back. If you hurt anyone you hurt everyone. Therefore, if you help anyone you help uplift the whole human race."