



Using every letter will spell success

By HARVEY MACKAY

First published: Sunday, April 20, 2008

Not long ago, I listened as one of my grandchildren practiced his ABCs. He had a little picture book that helped him remember what the letters stood for, and he studied it intently, determined to be the first in his class to know all the letters and words.

With his determination, I knew he would master the alphabet in no time.

As he worked, I started thinking about what those letters mean to me, after a lifetime in sales and years of helping young hopefuls get started in their careers. I didn't draw pictures, but these are the words my alphabet book would include:

Availability for your customers is essential, so they can reach you with questions, concerns or reorders.

Believe in yourself and your company, or find something else to sell.

Customers aren't always right, but if you want to keep them as your customers, find a way to make them right.

Deliver more than you promise.

Education is for life -- never stop learning.

Follow up and follow through. Never leave a customer hanging.

Goals give you a reason to go to work every day. When you reach your goals, set higher ones.

Humanize your selling strategy by learning everything you can about your customers.

I is the least important letter in selling.

Join trade organizations and community groups that will help you both professionally and personally, such as Toastmasters, the chamber of commerce or Junior Achievement.

Know your competitors and their products as well as you know your own.

Listen to your customers or they'll start talking to someone else.

"Maybe" is the worst answer a customer can give. "No" is better than "maybe." Find out what you can do to turn it into a "yes."

Networking is among the most important skills a salesperson can develop. Someone you know knows someone you need to

know.

Opportunities are everywhere. Keep your antennae up.

Price is not the only reason customers buy your product, but it is a good reason.

Quality can never be sacrificed if you want to keep your customers satisfied.

Relationships are precious: They take time to develop and are worth every minute you invest.

Service is spelled "serve us" in companies that want to stay in business for a long time.

Trust is central to doing business with anyone. Without it, you have another word that begins with T: trouble.

Unlimited potential is possible whether you sell computers or candy. You are the only one who can limit your potential.

Volunteer: It's always good to give back. You'll probably find that you get more than you give, and there is no shortage of organizations that need your help.

Winning doesn't necessarily mean beating everyone else. A win-win situation is the best of both worlds.

X-ray and CAT scan your customers so that you know everything about them -- so you can serve them better.

"You" is a word your customers need to hear often, as in "What can I do for you?"

Zeal is a critical element in your presentations, service and life in general. Let your enthusiasm shine through.

Some things never change -- including the importance of knowing how to treat your customers and what really matters in your relationships. And as you can see, most of these items cover far more than just sales.

Someday, I think my grandchildren will still be able to use my little alphabet book. Nothing would make me prouder.

Mackay's Moral: Now you know my ABCs -- sales skills from A to Z.

Harvey Mackay can be reached at Mackay Envelope Corp., 2100 Elm St., Minneapolis, MN 55414 or <http://www.mackay.com>.

All Times Union materials copyright 1996-2008, Capital Newspapers Division of The Hearst Corporation, Albany, N.Y.

[HOME](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [SUBSCRIBE TO NEWSPAPER](#) | [HOW TO ADVERTISE](#) | [PRIVACY RIGHTS](#) | [COPYRIGHT](#) | [CLASSROOM ENRICHMENT](#)

HEARST newspapers