



FORGET THE EAGLE, PEACOCK, OWL OR DOVE ... ARE YOU A CANARY?

You may be familiar with the Eagle, Peacock, Dove and Owl from the program that identifies your behavioral social style. This isn't about any of those birds. It's about being a Canary - or not!

From the early 1900's to the mid 1980's, coal miners around the world used canaries deep in the mines to alert them to dangerous levels of carbon monoxide gas. If the birds stopped singing, it was time to get out of the mine ... fast.

After many years of dedicated service, these incredibly effective canaries became obsolete. Technology replaced the singing saviours. Could the canary have done anything differently to keep its job? The short answer is no.

What about you? As a sales professional is there a chance you could become a canary and be replaced? It is still a stretch to suggest technology will replace the face-to-face selling environment. That said reflect on how far e-commerce has advanced in the past five years! What will the next five years bring?

I am a strong believer there will always be a place for proficient, well-qualified sales people. Any vibrant economy needs to have face-to-face selling for a variety of reasons, be they cultural preferences, complexity of information, or simply the consumer's desire for a relationship based experience. I emphasised proficient and well qualified for a reason. As I speak with many sales reps today, I find it alarming that many do little to maintain, upgrade and advance their selling skills. Don't go the way of the dodo bird - yes, there really was a dodo bird that became extinct but that's a different story.

As a professional in any career stream, one needs to stay current with new advances in their field, be they process related, technical in nature or staying abreast of the competition.

Would you want to deal with a physician who obtained their medical degree twenty years ago and has not kept current with medical advancements? I think not.

I run in to some sales reps that say "been there, done that, took the course, got the t-shirt." They feel they have done all they need to. Often these same people wonder why they haven't reached their full potential or are slipping gradually down the leader board.

I have worked with realtors who have been in the business 10, 15, 20 years and can't understand why they are not as successful as when they first got in the business. Some say competition has increased, demographic changes make negotiating commissions more difficult, what ever. When I ask them what they have done in recent years to hone their skills I often get a blank look. When I ask them what they did to be successful when they entered the business, they talk about the marketing, the networking, the door knocking, and following a specific sales routine. When asked if they still do all of this, they admit they no longer do all these activities. Hmmm.

If you consider yourself a sales professional, you have an obligation to invest in yourself. There are many excellent offerings in the market place to keep you on top of your game. If you don't want to go out and spend the bucks, take that program you went through five years ago and read it again. I'm positive you'll be reminded of some golden nuggets you had forgotten. Grab a partner and practice some of the exercises you did years before, you'll probably have fun at the same time.

It is no secret that professional athletes between games still go to events called practices. No matter how proficient one thinks they are there is still the old adage "practice makes perfect." They employ coaches to instruct on technical and psychological elements of the game. Who is your coach? Is it your sales manager, if so when was the last time you got together for a meaningful coaching session. Maybe you need to be direct and specific in which area your sales game needs help. I was always delighted when someone asked for help. It told me they wanted to do better. Fact is we had something in common, as their coach, I wanted them to do better as well.

In summary, stay current. Do it yourself, or work with others to stay on top of your game.

The canary could do little to ensure its continued utilization deep in the mines. You as a professional sales person can and should do what's necessary to avoid becoming redundant.