



Can You Hear Me Now?

If I mentioned the name Paul Marcarelli – would you have any idea who I am talking about? What if I said “Can you hear me now? Good.” You would likely say “Hey, it’s the Verizon guy...”. A ubiquitous tag line that we still remember from 20 years ago (yes, it was that long ago...). Paul Marcarelli was the Verizon Guy for 10 years, doing over 250 different versions of that commercial and my guess is right now you are thinking “so what?”

As we are nearing the end of our second pandemic year, one of the keys to our business survival is our ability to sell our products and ourselves. Since we are always looking for ways to increase our sales, let me offer one that is virtually foolproof: start listening to your clients. Based on feedback from financial industry clients I have spoken with recently; it sounds like listening is a rarity. A significant competitive edge can be yours if you make a habit of listening more.

Please don’t confuse the act of listening with the idea that it is easy. On the contrary, it is sometimes the hardest part of the communication process. Why? Too many other things get in our way. You know exactly what is best for your clients, don’t you? Sometimes you are actually right. Just being right does not mean you’ll get their business. Listening involves hearing what the clients’ needs and sometimes fears are and meeting those needs or addressing the fears. If you hammer away on your “better” solution to the exclusion of the clients’ actual needs, and more importantly their wants, do not be surprised when you don’t get their business.

You really don’t know what is best for them all the time. You can’t know. There are too many variables and factors that are invisible to us, things you are completely unaware of. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t help our clients do things better and more effectively. I try to do that with my own clients, but that happens only after we have managed to build and establish a relationship. When we are selling, our focus must be on determining what our clients want, and if it is possible for us to deliver, then we need to deliver it.

Unfortunately, we sometimes confuse our needs with their needs, especially at a time when we may be desperate to make that next sale. What we think should be important to our clients, often isn’t. The more we tell them what we believe is important, the more their eyes glaze over. In a time when most of these meetings are happening in a virtual window – the eye glaze is even more obvious. When that happens, you lose your opportunity. So, what is the goal with all this listening? Simply to close another deal. No. When we take the time to listen more, and worry less about closing the deal, something interesting happens. We make our clients feel heard, responded to, and more importantly, understood. It leaves them with the feeling that we care about doing the right thing for them - not for ourselves.

When you reach that level of understanding with your clients (and yes, it can happen with prospects as well), the sales will follow. In many ways, it is like playing catch with your client. Playing catch involves two people (or more...) tossing the conversational ball back and forth.

As financial professionals, we sometimes only want to “pitch” - talking about features, benefits, and how great it will be for our client - if they would only listen to us. It is only when we take the time to listen to them that we get the ball back.

Listen to what clients are saying, the last two years have been incredibly difficult for many of them. Look for the clues and pay close attention to what clients don't say as well. The things that can be the most important to our clients can be inconceivable to us. Avoiding preconceptions when we try to sell is hard; we always think we know what's best. It has been said many times that the best financial professionals ask the best questions, but that is only partly true. The best financial professionals ask the best questions, and then they take the time to listen to the answer. Real listening is a learned skill, but it always makes the selling easier. How? It lets you tell your clients what they want and need to hear. I'm not talking about misleading them, or promising things that you can't deliver. Take the time to emphasize how your products and services meet the needs they told you they had.

When you take the time to listen and then use the information you learned while you were listening, you will need to do less pitching. You will be able to play conversational catch. You will be able to focus

on what is important to them. When you pay attention, your clients will tell you what you need to say.

Is anything that I am saying new and ground-breaking? Not at all. I'm happy to give that credit to the Greek philosopher Epictetus who coined this phrase some 1900 years ago: “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak”. Can you hear me now? Good.



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Robert Gignac is the owner of “Rich is a State of Mind” providing keynote presentations, client seminars and workshops on personal financial development and motivation. He is the author of the Canadian best seller “Rich is a State of Mind” (19th printing) and the voice of the “Money, Motivation & More” podcast. To book Robert to speak at your next corporate or organization event – head over to: www.robertgignac.com



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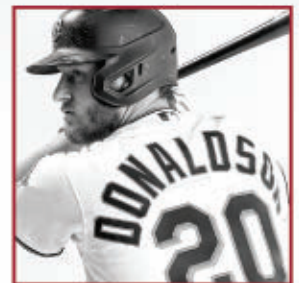
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