



SELLING WITH SUMO

Many people in the sales industry will testify to how a particular quote or phrase has made a difference to them. One of my personal favourites is 'there is no failure only feedback'. And I also smile when I hear 'success is a matter of luck - ask any failure!' I cannot take any credit for any of those myself, but here is one I did come up with:

“The most important person you will ever talk to isyourself”

Nothing too earth shattering in that, you may say, but how often do you reflect on how your internal conversations influence both your feelings and the actions you take? Let me put it another way. Do you think much about your thinking?

When you explore this subject you will find most sales trainers and speakers, will emphasise the importance of thinking positively and the dangers of negative thinking. However, is labelling your thinking as either negative or positive, perhaps a little too simplistic? I believe it is. But I have come to realise just how crucial your thinking is to your level of success or failure in life and how important it can be to learn to S.U.M.O. (Shut Up, Move On)

Let me begin with the downsides. In my study of the subject, I have identified four main types of 'faulty thinking'. They are as follows:

1. The Inner Critic. This is the voice inside your head, that highlights your weaknesses and undermines your confidence. It is a destructive voice that attacks you as a person rather than your performance. It is a voice which if replayed often enough, not only makes you extremely critical of yourself, but of others also.

2. The Broken Record. This occurs when you continually go on and on about your problems and fail to move on to either accepting or resolving the issue. However, let me make one thing clear. I believe it is both healthy and natural to talk about your problems and to be able to vent your feelings and concerns. Unfortunately, sometimes people are made to feel guilty for doing so and therefore suppress their true emotions in order to be seen as positive. However, if you are going to have a B.M.W. session (Bitch, Moan and Whinge), I think there are some ground rules you need to follow in order not to become 'stuck' on your problems. Firstly, it is important to decide who to have your B.M.W. session with. Managers should not inflict their moans on their staff. This undermines moral and is hardly inspiring for the rest of the team. Managers need to vent to either their boss, a peer or perhaps someone they respect outside of their industry.

Also, be aware that a problem shared is not always a problem halved. Some people have that unique ability to actually make you feel worse after you've spoken to them! Secondly, be careful how many people you share your issues with. The more you talk about a problem, the bigger it can appear. Finally, be careful how long you talk about your issues for. It's OK to vent, but set a time limit! Ultimately, there comes a point when you need to S.U.M.O.



3. The Martyr Syndrome. This happens when you decide to blame circumstances, clients, our boss, the traffic etc. for your problems. Some people can revel in moaning about their problems and yet refuse to accept advice or support when it is offered by others. In the 1980's, the pop group 'Frankie Goes To Hollywood' promoted the title of their song 'Relax' on T-shirts. Today, metaphorically speaking, people can be lured into wearing a T-shirt that reads 'Victim'. When wearing this T-shirt, people refuse to accept any responsibility for their current situation and as martyrs, use phrases such as 'nothing ever goes right for me', 'that's typical of my luck' or 'why do these things always happen to me?'

4. Trivial Pursuits. People can become quite skilled at making mountains out of mole hills. Sadly trivial pursuits is not simply played at Christmas, but throughout the year. Minor issues become major (in fact we can become a broken record about them!) When going through challenging times, it becomes easy to focus on trivial issues and ultimately, what you focus on magnifies. Due to a misdirected focus on less important issues, trivial pursuits can lead to stress, anxiety and a lack of enthusiasm to tackle the big issues in the workplace.

Having explored these four types of faulty thinking with several thousand people both in the UK and abroad, I have still to come across a single person who cannot personally identify with at least one of them. Often each type of faulty thinking is connected to another, for example, I become a martyr about trivial issues. Interestingly though, you can slip into unhelpful thinking unconsciously. It is only when I present these four labels, that people wake up to the fact that their thinking can affect their feelings, how they behave and ultimately their own success. For instance, it is very difficult to make a sale or win a new order when experiencing large doses of faulty thinking.

So how can you develop more constructive ways of thinking? Well, in order to remove faulty thinking, you need to replace it with something. You cannot decide to simply stop thinking in a particular way; you must replace it with an alternative. I have devised 7 questions to act as an antidote to these faulty thinking patterns. They are designed to channel your thoughts in a more positive and constructive way. I refer to them as '7 Questions To Help You S.U.M.O.' They are as follows:

- 1. Where is this issue on a scale of 1 - 10?**
- 2. How important will this be in six months time?**
- 3. Is my response appropriate and effective?**
- 4. How can I influence or improve the situation?**
- 5. What can I learn from this?**
- 6. What will I do differently next time?**
- 7. What can I find that's positive in this situation?**

So how do these questions work and when can you use them? If you lose a sale, or a client decides to take their business to a competitor, we always have a choice how we respond. We can either slip into 'faulty thinking' or refer to the 7 questions. Some questions are obviously more appropriate than others depending on the situation. A colleague who has suffered a bereavement is hardly likely to be helped by the question 'where is this issue on a scale of 1-10?' However, asking yourself the question 'how can I influence or improve the situation?' is more likely to achieve a positive outcome for you and your company than saying "that's another sale lost, pass me the victim T-shirt".



Let me give a personal example of how these questions have helped me in my own business. Recently, a potential new client contacted me via my web site, expressing interest in me working with their senior managers. I was excited for several reasons; particularly the opportunity to work with a high profile organisation, which would certainly enhance my own credibility. A date was agreed to do the work, fees were discussed and seemed to present no stumbling block. It was apparently all systems go, with just a few minor points to be tied up. Confirmation I was assured would be coming the following week. I waited. But no confirmation came. I e-mailed to check we were still going ahead as planned and then received a reply that 'due to circumstances' they were unable to progress with the project. But they thanked me for my interest in wanting to work with them! I was not a happy man! My initial reaction was to reply with a slightly sarcastic e-mail highlighting how they were in fact, the one's who had expressed an interest in working with me! Then I asked myself this question. 'Is my response appropriate and effective?' My initial response might make me feel good in the short term, but was this in any way helping me keep the door ajar for potential business in the future? It was obvious it wouldn't. I gave myself some thinking time and replied the next day. Focusing on the question 'how important will this be in 6 months time' had put the situation into perspective and by asking myself 'how can I influence or improve the situation' led to me putting forward an alternative proposal for them to consider in the future. In less than an hour, my prospective new client had responded.

They liked my new proposal and wanted to book me to speak! I learnt, two important lessons.

- 1.The door may be closed, but there's a difference between a closed door and a locked one.**
- 2.The quality of your life is related to the quality of your thinking and the actions you take as a result.**

So in future, rather than simply 'think positive' think S.U.M.O. and use the 7 questions to help you and your team to 'Shut Up, Move On'.

Paul McGee is an international speaker and author. He provides his audiences with memorable, motivational and 'moving on' insights to help them achieve and sustain success.