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Charisma

Contrary to what many believe, people are not born charismatic… charisma is a learned characteristic

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634 words | 4 pages

It seems like there is a lot of discussion about charisma these days. We discuss it with respect to entertainers and television personalities, and there has been a lot of talk about it recently in politics. In fact, charisma now plays a major role in American political races. If you think about charisma, some of the questions you might ask about it include:

"Who has charisma?"

"Who doesn't?"

"Are certain candidates born charismatic… or is it a *learned* characteristic?"

Since the topic of charisma is important to us as salespeople, we looked into the subject a bit more and came up with some surprising findings that you may find useful in your work.

> ***• Contrary to what many believe, people are not born charismatic… charisma is a learned characteristic.***

Yes, some people are more naturally inclined to be charismatic, but we can all develop certain traits that apply to so-called charismatic people.

> ***• The key to understanding and practicing charismatic behavior is***

> ***not so much about being personally charismatic yourself, as it is about making other people feel charismatic about themselves.***

Thus, inevitably, when you have encountered someone whom you might later say was charismatic, you may notice later how that person was able to touch you in a way that made you feel better, stronger, smarter and happier.

I remember a salesman, for example, who made a big deal about the size and value of the portfolio I was managing at the time. Since much of my day-to-day job consisted of budgets, forecasting and other somewhat mundane work, it was a real tonic to be reminded that my position was important and that other people recognized me for it.

According to our research, charismatic people also have a tendency to overlook or discount our weaknesses and, instead, identify and emphasize our strengths.

> ***They have a knack of intuitively understanding how we would like the world to perceive us, and they both draw that "best self" out of us, while helping us promote and celebrate our strongest self-image.***

Tests have shown that charismatic people do a lot of seemingly trivial things consistently. For example…

- They smile and laugh more than most people. (Smiling and laughing are absolutely contagious, and I have devoted separate columns to each of these powerful behaviors in the context of sales.)

- They listen more, and with greater interest and intensity, than most people.
- They are extremely passionate about their interests and beliefs. Also—and this is important—they usually focus their energy and passion on just a few key ideas, knowing that credibility and power are diluted when spread too thin. Conversely, passion, when focused on a specific topic, is nearly irresistible.

Finally, testing has also proven that employees who work for a charismatic person are more productive than those who work for a non-charismatic leader. Given the information above, it's easy to see why. Charismatic people bring out the best in us!

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Richard Abraham is an author, speaker and consultant widely sought after by many Fortune 500 companies. He specializes in the psychology of selling, relationship-selling techniques and how to optimize the sales encounter. Mr. Abraham's highly acclaimed book, *Mr. Shmooze: The Art and Science of Selling Through Relationships* presents a fun story with a serious message for salespeople.

The former CEO of Prime Group Realty Services, President and Co-founder of The John Buck Management Group and President of CB Commercial/Koll Management Services, Mr. Abraham has overseen more than $1 billion in sales transactions, from both sides of the deal.