

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

I'm going to stray a little bit from giving you marketing advice this month. Some of the calls I've been getting indicate that there is a more fundamental problem affecting some of our readers. Some of the people who've been calling me are seriously depressed with the state of business and the situation they find themselves and their companies in.

The calls remind me that the positive and optimistic people in this world look at a less-than-full glass of water and say that it's half-full. The negative and pessimistic people look at the same glass of water and say that it's half-empty. It's been proven that attitude has a lot to do with success, both for individuals and for entire companies. And perhaps it's the real-world truth that it's hard for many printers across the South to have a positive attitude about their businesses right now.

But if that's how you're feeling these days, I can suggest another way to look at the conditions you're facing, and more importantly, at the attitude you bring to work with you in these admittedly difficult times.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

I played for a basketball coach once who used to talk about "choke time." That was the time when the game was on the line, maybe hinging on a single possession of the ball. He used to tell us, "It's 'choke time' guys, and your backs are against the wall."

He wasn't much fun to play for, and I recall that we lost most of our close games. A self-fulfilling prophecy, perhaps?

I've read that Earvin "Magic" Johnson has a different name for "choke time." He calls it "winnin' time." I see a difference there, and I hope you will too.

See, no matter how tough the business situation in the printing industry, there are always companies that grow and prosper, just like Magic Johnson always seemed to win on the basketball court. They are the companies that keep their heads up, who know what it takes to win—*who will do what it takes to win!* And that can be you and your company, no matter how bleak things may look right now.

One Small Step

If you have that feeling that your back is against the wall, let me give you some advice...take one small step forward away from that mental wall and say to yourself, "All right, now I've given myself a little room to work with, a little room to *think!*"

If you can make that slight change in your attitude, you can then begin to think about what steps you can take to bring in some more of the business that's out there. And the business is out there! Maybe not enough to satisfy every printing company in the South right now, but certainly enough for, say, 70% of Southern printing companies to do just fine. The single most important challenge in front of you is to make your company one of the winners!

Short on ideas? Then look for help! Keep reading *Southern Graphics*. Check out the titles in SG's Printshop Library or the PIA Printer's Resource Catalog. Look to your trade associations for other educational and networking activities. Register for the next seminar that one of those organizations sponsors on a subject that's important to you.

I think it's very sad that many of the South's printing trade organizations have been cutting back on their seminars and educational programs. From a purely business perspective, they've been cutting back for a good reason. And it's a simple reason, too...printers haven't been attending the seminars they do schedule! Here's a situation where a pervasive negative attitude can lead directly to the self-fulfilling prophecy. If there are no seminars, you lose the opportunity to listen to people who *do* have some ideas for you, and then the opportunity to *act* on the best of those ideas!

Bottom Line

The business you need to make your company healthy and profitable is out there, and there are things you can do to win that business away from other printers. I'll get back to writing about some of those things next month. But I want you to understand the bottom line here. Somebody does lose at "winnin' time." You have it in your power to make it *the other guy!* Don't just sit back and let things happen to you and your company. Find a more positive attitude and start fighting your way back!