

Lessons From A Dead Language

One of the things I most enjoy about writing for Australian Printer is the challenge of writing in your language. We speak and write English over here in the US, of course, but it is a different English than yours. And the way I look at it, I'm the "seller" in this situation, trying to sell you on my ideas about sales and business. That connects to one of the fundamental sales concepts I teach: *It is never the buyer's responsibility to communicate with the seller. It is always the seller's responsibility to communicate with the buyer.*

That compound statement actually has a compound meaning. On one level, it is never their responsibility to stay in touch with you, it is always your responsibility to stay in touch with them. And on the second level, it is never their responsibility to understand what you are saying, it is always your responsibility to make sure that communication really happens.

Having said all of that, I want to switch from English to Latin for the rest of today's lesson. Latin was originally spoken in Italy, and through the influence of the Roman Empire became a dominant language. Some might argue that it is not a "dead" language, but it has been a long time since I heard anyone speak more than a phrase or two in Latin. Some of those phrases are important to selling, though.

Status Quo

I often ask printing salespeople to tell me what they compete with, and please note that I ask "what," not "who." It is true that you compete with other printers, but on the most fundamental level, you are in competition with the *status quo*, which is Latin for *the current state of affairs*. That may be the printer they currently buy from. It may also be the way they buy (online vs. local, for example) or even the way they use printed materials in their business. Whatever the status quo, the fact is that most people prefer stability to change.

Switching from language to science, this can also be explained by Newton's First Law of Motion, which states that an object in motion will stay in motion and an object at rest will stay at rest, unless acted on by an outside force. In the printing sales application, you are the outside force. Your selling strategy, at least when you are prospecting, must be about turning rest into motion, or turning motion in your direction. I am hoping that you often hear some variation on "I am happy with my current supplier." (If you are not hearing that regularly, you are probably not prospecting enough.) So how can you create some motion when people tell you that? How can you get them to at least talk to you about the possibility of buying from you?

Cui Bono

The answer to that question may be contained in another Latin phrase, *cui bono*, which translates to *who benefits?* Obviously you benefit if they talk to you and ultimately buy from you, but I want you to understand that selling is very rarely about what benefits you. It is almost always about when benefits them, right? So, as a buyer, how do I benefit by talking to you, the seller?

How about this: *"I have many years of experience in printing, both in getting the ink on the paper, and in making sure that the printed piece works as well as it could or should. I would like to think that my knowledge and experience represent value to you."* Or this: *"I am sure that you are dealing with a good printing company right now. I want to talk with you, though, to explore the possibility that we might be even better."*

Here is another very fundamental sales concept. The best way to get people to do what you want them to do is to position it as a benefit to them. If you can do that, and create even a little motion, you may get the opportunity to talk about the current state of affairs, and you may then be able to suggest something even better than the *status quo*.

Faciem Valorem

The last Latin phrase for today is *faciem valorum*, which translates to *face value*. And the fundamental concept that goes with it is this — the best selling usually happens face-to-face. When someone says *"I am happy with my current printer,"* I think you should translate that to: *"I do not feel the need to talk to you, because I believe I am well served by my status quo."* They are not saying they do not want to buy from you, they are saying that they do not see a need to talk to you.

So to tie all of this together, your challenge is to convince them that there is value in, and that they would benefit from, a conversation with you. Hopefully the result will be *lorem novus* — a new customer.