

## A Barman's Tale

In my last column, I wrote about upselling and cross-selling. Was it just a coincidence, then, that I found myself being upsold not very long afterward?

A little background may be in order. My wife and I like to sit at the bar when we go out to dinner. It has been our experience that we get better/more attentive service from bartenders than from waiters or waitresses. In fairness, bartenders rarely stray too far from the bar, while floor servers are back and forth to the bar and the kitchen, and usually have at least several tables to service. So it was that we sat down at the bar at a restaurant called Vidrio last Friday evening.

### What Can I Get You?

The barman smiled as we sat. "What can I get you?" he said. My wife asked for a wine list, and I asked for a gin and tonic.

"Any particular brand of gin?" he asked.

"I like Tanqueray," I answered.

"A very fine gin," he said, "but have you ever tried Cardinal? It's made near here, and I personally think it's the best gin in the world. It is more expensive – four more dollars – but I bet you'll like it at least four dollars more."

I laughed and asked, "Do you read Australian Printer?" He didn't seem to know what to make of that, so I explained about last month's column. "I used to be a salesman," he said. "I remember being taught about upselling and cross-selling. I guess I never thought that I was doing any of that 'salesy stuff' here."

### Knowledge and Passion

We spoke several more times during dinner, always about the dinner itself, but as he cleared our plates, the barman brought the conversation back to selling. "I had a bunch of different sales jobs," he said. "I sold cleaning supplies for a while, and then cleaning services. I never sold printing, but I sold advertising, so I was involved with graphics and design. Now that I'm thinking about it, I realize that I never had any passion for any of those things, but I really do have a passion for food and wine and gin and whiskey. I love to learn about all of it, and I guess I love to share my knowledge."

Knowledge and passion. That is a pretty strong combination, right? But here is an observation. In my experience, the "typical" printing salesperson might score 7 on a scale of 10 in terms of knowledge, and 5 on a scale of 10 in terms of passion.

Perhaps I should clarify the knowledge part of that statement. I have long believed that there are two kinds of product knowledge, technical knowledge and applications knowledge. Most printing salespeople know more about the technical aspects – ink, toner, paper, printing processes, etc. – than they do about applications, and how printing is best used to perform its desired purpose. Make no mistake, everything that gets printed is supposed to do something for its originator or purchaser. That might be marketing-related, or efficiency-related, or simply more cost-effective. Please believe that there is real value in printing that works better.

But I want to get back to passion. The barman's tale got me thinking, and I made calls to about a dozen salespeople I respect. "What is your passion?" I asked them. The answers were wide-ranging, but here are three that stood out.

"My passion is printing. Ink or toner, paper or any other substrate. I like to make the sale, but I love to see the finished product."

"My passion is marketing. I sell print as a tool to help my customers sell more of what they sell."

"My passion is this company. It's a family business and I'm part of the family. Plus, I think of all of our employees as family. I sell so we all can take care of our families!"

### Closing Thoughts

What is your passion? If you are on the low range of that scale of 10, I think you would be wise to find some. In the case of my barman, that drove him into a different profession, but I think he could have been happy and successful in sales if he had approached it differently.

By the way, if you ever find yourself in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, I highly recommend Vidrio. In fact, let me know that you're coming and I'll meet you there!