

ESBLN Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network
Putting Ability to Work

By Jackie Gast, Director

Salesperson. Just by reading the word, and depending upon your perspective, the word "salesperson" can have negative or positive effects on your psyche. To pick on stereo-types, car and insurance salespeople and telemarketers can have you saying, "Oh No" under your breath. However, if you own a company or are a VP/manager in charge of sales, salespeople are great. Also, as a business owner, if you have a need for the product you are buying, you may look forward to seeing your sales reps.

When I was fresh out of business school, my first job was as a salesperson for a large company that sent me away for three weeks to learn the business and sales techniques. When people learn I was in sales, a common response is, "Oh, I could never be a salesperson." But, really, we are all salespeople but we may not realize it. We sell our ideas, needs or passions daily. Selling is persuading others towards your point of view. For example, your car that your son has been driving needs cleaning. You persuade him to get it cleaned by either negotiating a monetary fee or reminding him of who owns the car. Negotiating time off or increased benefits or increased job duties or hiring people with disabilities are all examples of selling.

At the end of June, the ESBLN had a committee meeting that consisted of both business people and employment counselors for people with disabilities. One of the points reiterated was how important it is to develop a personal relationship with the employer. Even in this electronic age, nothing can replace the personal relationship between a salesperson and his customer. Most times, service providers are well trained on how to help the person with a disability but have typically not been trained on how to "sell" that person to an employer. The job candidate must be qualified and follow-up "after the sale" is equally important.

Another point in the meeting was that in order to be successful, a person must be passionate about his "product." Have you ever tried to sell an idea to your spouse, manager, or banker that you are not quite convinced of yourself? Selling something you believe in and knowing that it works makes persuading easy. Having that passionate person at the helm of a company is ideal but passion can flow upwards as well. Employing people with disabilities is our passion and fortunately there are many employers, locally and nationwide, that are committed to advancing that mission.

No matter what our job is, we are in the sales business. If you are an educator or social worker or human resource manager or engineer, learn sales techniques. They are universal skills. Remember too that the other side of selling is listening. Listening can change stereo-types. Maybe I will take that call from the insurance guy!

ESBLN: Business helping business discover the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.