

HR Heuristics



About Rashmi Datt: [Rashmi Datt](#) is an independent HR consultant and works regularly with companies such as ACC, Areva, Reliance Power etc in the area of individual and organisational development and is an acclaimed author. Her latest book is on Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and is titled 'And the Lion Smiled at the Rabbit.' Read on for take-aways on how to strengthen your own EQ which we hope will also strengthen your business.

Read her blogs at [Emotional Intelligence at Work Place](#).

The art of networking and selling

Many businessmen do good quality work but are hesitant or squeamish about selling their goods or services. I have met several who say 'I'm not good at it' or 'its demeaning to make business calls'. But the truth is that selling like any other work requires planning, persuading and perseverance.



Recently I was at a conference where senior business men from the same industry were meeting to discuss government policy and business trends, and I was intrigued to witness a 'strategy' adopted by a smart CEO. He came in early in the morning- a few minutes before starting time. The conference room was empty of organizers, the round tables had been arranged with attendees' name tents neatly placed on them. He surveyed the room, and then quietly and confidently changed his name plate (and a few others) to the table where prospective clients were sitting! He then went on to fully utilize the opportunity to chat and connect with these people who he had access to now. While he introduced himself, he was careful not to push his business. He concentrated on just building bridges to start with .

I was reminded of an anecdote narrated by David Ogilvy the famous advertising executive who was described by Time magazine as 'the most sought after wizard in today's advertising industry" . When

Ogilvy was once asked, 'what do you attribute your success to?' , he replied two things- hard work, and his ability to be a good salesman and smell prospective business.

When he started an advertising agency in New York, he joined a group called the Scottish Council. (Ogilvy's father was a Scotsman) They were about 10 senior Scottish business executives who met to have lunch together once every two months. "I smelled billing, and I joined it. We'd talk about business and getting this and that for Scotland and so on."

One of the members of the group was Max Burns, then the President of Shell. Ogilvy would at times gently maneuver the conversation during their lunch meetings to talk about advertising. But he didn't push the subject. He connected with Burns on the subject of development in Scotland, which was dear to the latter's heart.

One day Burns decided to fire his agency, J. Walter Thomson, who had worked for Shell for 30 years. Burns asked a committee to select the new agency from four candidates, amongst who Ogilvy and Mather was one.

The committee sent all the agencies a questionnaire with some 25 questions. "I never answered questionnaires, they irritated me. But this time I did." Recounted Ogilvy, who stayed up all night drafting answers. "My answers were more candid than is customary, but I thought they would make a favorable impression on Max Burns, if only they were passed up to him. The next morning I learned that he had gone to England."

Knowing that the real decision maker would be Max Burns and not the committee, Ogilvy flew to London from New York just to see Burns. He called Claridges where Burns was staying, and Burns didn't return the call for ten days. "I was pretty desperate. Finally, the day before he left, he called me back. I said, Max, I'm having lunch at the House of Commons today with the Secretary of State for Scotland. Would you like to join us?"

So Ogilvy and Burns met, and as they walked back to Ogilvy's hotel, it was pouring, and Ogilvy kept his lunch companion covered under his umbrella. In this walk, Ogilvy quickly briefed him of the key points he had made in responding to the questionnaire.

Ogilvy then went back to America, went on holiday, and forgot about it... then one day, the telephone rang, and it was Dr Monroe Spaght, (designated as the successor of Max Burns as President of Shell) to say that they had got the Shell account! Ogilvy was so stunned that all he could say was "God help me".

.....

Links to Rashmi's articles in previous issues:

http://www.fisme.org.in/newsletters/April1_2012/docs/HR_Heuristics_rashmi.pdf

http://www.fisme.org.in/newsletters/March15_2012/docs/article5.pdf

<http://www.fisme.org.in/Feb1&15-2012/docs/Rashmi%27s%20article-dc-%20interview.pdf>

<http://www.fisme.org.in/Jan15-2012/docs/HRHeuristics.pdf>

<http://www.fisme.org.in/Jan1-2012newsletter/docs/HRHeuristics.pdf>