



Edmonton Chapter Learns The Difference Between “Door Kickers” And “Maintainers”



DeWayne Fliss

The more than 20 attendees at an Edmonton, Alberta, MANA local chapter meeting earlier this year provided a receptive audience to learn whether they were individuals who were happy to be self-employed or if they possessed the attributes needed to become builders of businesses.

According to DeWayne Fliss, president, Concord Consulting Corp., Edmonton, Alberta, “An individual has choices to make regarding what roles he wants to occupy in his organization. He can:

- Be an employee.
- Be self-employed.
- Make the decision to build an organization.”

Each of these career paths was explored by Fliss.

Concord Consulting Corp. (www.concordconsulting.com) has more than 70 years of combined experience in the industrial and service sectors, offering consultative services for a wide variety of organizations. The

company works with entrepreneurs/owners, senior executives, line managers, sales managers, and human resource professionals. The majority of its clients are Canadian, although the company does work with several U.S.-based firms.

According to the consultant, just about everyone understands the intricacies of what it takes to be an employee. What he focused on during his presentation were the other two choices.

“I suggested to the audience that if your choice is to be self-employed,” he says, “then you probably are an individual who possesses a unique and exceptional capability in the areas of sales, marketing, or have some technical ability that would allow you to operate somewhat as an inventor. That person also is an individual who on their own is able to take their skill or ability out to the marketplace and find people who would be interested in conducting business with them.”

What It Takes to Be a Business Builder

Self-employed was an apt description of many of the individuals in the room, he explains, “but others were more attuned to building a business. I would define the ‘business builder’ as someone who possesses the ability to accumulate a group of people around them to build an infrastructure so they can make personal choices regarding how they want to conduct their lives. For instance, a typical business builder would be able to make the decision to pack up his family for four weeks and go to Australia — minus the cell phone and notebook computer. And, upon their return to business, they’ll find it better than they left it. You can’t just call yourself a ‘business builder,’ however. What you have to do is create that infrastructure that continually sells your product. Furthermore, if you aspire to build a business, change has to start with you. You have to make the decision to lead your life the way you want and still be certain business will go on without you.”

Fliss continues that a number of reps at that Edmonton meeting were intrigued with the dif-

ferences between being self-employed and building their own businesses. “Several admitted that they were strictly in the self-employed mode, and there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s simply a decision that they’ve made.”

The Types of Salespeople

Once he drew the distinction between self-employment and business building, Fliss explains that the second part of his presentation involved talking about the two types of salespeople that populate the world of manufacturers’ representatives. According to the consultant, those two types are:

- **Door kickers** — “These individuals are motivated by incentives and income. They generally are people who wake up in the morning with the idea that ‘The more I sell, the more I make.’ They will perform riskier tasks to satisfy that motivation. As a result, they will make more calls, pursue more cold-call opportunities and endure more rejection in order to reach their goal.”
- **Maintainers** — “These people seek security more than opportunity. Their motivation is to deal with people who offer them less

risk. That means they say ‘Give me customers who like me.’ They like warm leads or a route to service so they can build relationships over time and thereby increase their business. If the income you provided these people is half salary, half commission, they say ‘That’s too risky for me. I want more income and less incentive.’”

Fliss emphasizes that neither type of person is necessarily right or wrong for an organization. “If you’re just a two-person organization and the second person is a maintainer who won’t grow the business, that’s not ideal. You need someone who will build business and make cold calls. On the other hand, if you want to leave the business for a month and find things ran just as well — if not better — in your absence, perhaps the door kicker isn’t right for you.

“In addition, you’ve got to realize that if you’ve hired a maintainer and what you need is a door kicker, chances are you’ll fire him in a couple of months. On the other hand, if the situation is reversed and what you need is a maintainer, he’ll probably leave you in a few months.”

Among the major questions the audience of reps posed for the consultant was how do you tell the difference between the door kicker and the maintainer? In answer he described an assessment process that his organization provides clients that allows them to see the difference and be sure that they’ve hired the right person for the right spot in their organization.

“You can’t just call yourself a ‘business builder’ ... What you have to do is create that infrastructure that continually sells your product.”

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