The Catering Institute™

Managing Sales Visibility

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Restaurant organizations routinely hire field sales support staff to focus on catering sales development. As this position is relatively new and often times without the technology needed to support the sales professional through the tracking of sales activity, visibility is becoming more and more necessary for career advancement and longevity.

Natural self-promoters, like Anthony Robbins and Dennis Rodman, instinctively exploit opportunities to make themselves visible. For many, however, visibility management triggers an emotional struggle between the desire to make competence visible, and the reticence to appear too forward or immodest. Yet in today's hotly competitive catering sales environment, it's not enough to be good at what you do, earning what you're worth takes more.

It is important to practice "visibility management," letting your internal team know who you are and what you do well. Managing visibility is an integral component of modern career management.

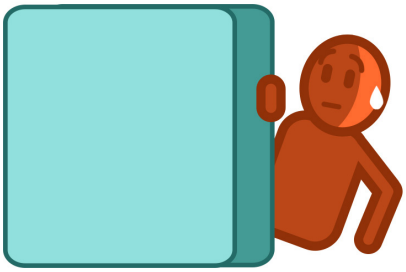
The conflict most people experience when they try to stand up, step out and make their contributions visible is not pleasant. In fact, to some, it's both gut wrenching and stressful. Left unattended in professions like catering sales, it's also career lethal.

> *"When the Fear of Self Promotion affects salespeople, it is called sales "call reluctance" because it places an artificially low ceiling on the number of first contacts, which can be initiated with prospective buyers on a consistent basis."*

In a Behavioral Sciences Research Press, INC. (BSRP) 30 year research project, involving more than 500,000 sales and non-salespeople, it was identified that there are common conflicts, hesitations and fears associated with making first contact for sales advancement.

BSRP statistically grouped all behaviors into an identifiable cluster, which they named "Inhibited Social Contact Initiation Syndrome."

When the Fear of Self Promotion affects salespeople, it is called sales "call reluctance" because it places an artificially low ceiling on the number of first contacts, which can be initiated with prospective buyers on a consistent basis. Some catering salespeople make only a fraction of the calls they could make. Others make even fewer. Some don't make any.



They can't. For them, prospecting for new business is emotionally out-of-bounds. Cut off from opportunities to sell, their sales careers sputter and gasp, until eventually they suffocate. Maybe you know a Catering Sales Manager like that. Maybe you manage one. Maybe you are one.

Early in the research, BSRP studied the expected statistical link between actual sales results and sales prospecting. As one goes up, the other goes up, too. Then, BSRP turned to the connection between sales prospecting and sales call reluctance and found them to be inversely related. That means, as sales call reluctance goes up, sales prospecting goes down. Again, that was expected.

What followed, however, was not.

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Looking for a non-selling group to contrast with salespeople, it was decided to study administrative management personnel in a large corporate office. Total salary increases and number of promotions received by each manager were studied in the sample over a five-year period. The results are not mere statistics. They're a wake-up call.

> *"Those who were promoted most often and given the biggest salary increases did not necessarily turn out to be those judged as the most technically competent. It was those who were most willing to make whatever level of competence they had visible."*

What Keeps Catering Salespeople from Prospecting?

Here are the top reasons Catering Sales Managers procrastinate when prospecting:

- Spend too much time getting ready
- Insist on projecting ultra-professional image
- Dread seminar selling
- Conflicted about being in sales
- Wait for just the "right" time
- Intimidated by up-market prospects
- Won't prospect or network friends
- Won't prospect or network relatives
- Uncomfortable asking for referrals
- Cringe at telephone prospecting
- Unable to accept management, advice, coaching or training

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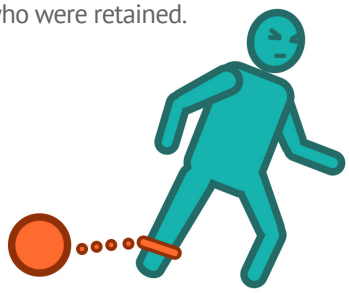
Ongoing studies provide still more proof. BSRP compared out-placed Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), in one study, to CPAs in the same organization who were not out-placed and found that the CPAs who lost their jobs were more reluctant to make their contributions known than those who were retained.



Two practical conclusions can be drawn from the body of applied and theoretical call reluctance research conducted:

- Like it or not, today everyone sells, not just professional salespeople
- The first telltale signs of sales call reluctance are not found in sweaty palms, rapid heartbeats, churning stomachs, or shallow breathing. Call reluctance is first felt in the wallet.

Visibility Management – A Modern Link to Success?

Visibility management consists of all the things you can do to make sure others know who you are and what you do well. It's the unseen mechanism at work in all modern definitions of success which include making money. You hear it at work in presentations given by success gurus at sales conventions; television evangelists pandering for money; authors pitching books on Oprah; scientists struggling to publish grant-seeking research; movie stars promoting their latest blockbuster film; and infomercial pitch people compelled to "give something back to society."

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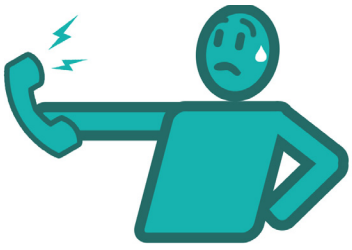
According to research, visibility management has become the eighth habit of highly successful people, which is why in 1996 it was tagged as such. When it comes to making money – and lots of it – it's also the most potent.

The 12 Types of Sales Call Reluctance

1. Doomsayer – wastes energy worrying about prospecting
2. Over Preparer – over analyzes, under acts, confuses knowing with doing
3. Hyper Professional – overly concerned with image, considers ordinary prospecting demeaning
4. Stage Fright – fears making presentations to groups (small, large or both)
5. Sales Role Rejection – conflicted or embarrassed to be in sales
6. Yielder – fears appearing too pushy or intrusive
7. Social Self-Consciousness – intimidated by up- market prospects
8. Separationist – uncomfortable networking through friends
9. Emotionally Un-Emancipated – uncomfortable networking through family
10. Referral Aversion – uncomfortable asking for referrals
11. Telephobia – uncomfortable prospecting on the telephone
12. Oppositional Reflex – resists anyone who tries to manage, coach, advise or train



Overcoming Visibility Fears

Whether you're an individual catering salesperson trying to grow your career, or a sales executive trying to manage a catering sales team, unless you learn to overcome your fear of self-promotion, your career may be subject to setbacks.

At the very least, you will deny yourself innumerable opportunities to excel, especially financially.
The following four steps provide a starting point for managing your visibility – and may help remove the hurdles that the Fear of Self Promotion places on your success:

- Know that the fear exists. Awareness is the most important first step. It exists whether you believe it or not and has measurable consequences.

- Admit that you have it. This is very difficult for some people because it requires the strength to acknowledge a weakness and the will to take responsibility for it.

- Assess it. Use appropriate methods to find out how reluctant you are to promote yourself. You can use special- purpose psychological tests like SPQ*-GOLD®, or simply ask colleagues and co-workers.

- Apply yourself. Rhetorical commitments are cheap. Do something that will positively change your lack of visibility. For example, map out a plan to tell others what you do well. Then, execute your plan. Or make your goal even simpler: Make one contact each day that you would otherwise have avoided making

Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Everybody lives by selling something." He was right. By taking your foot off the visibility management brake, you can begin to draw the attention you deserve to the most valuable product you offer: yourself. And that's one of the most important steps you can take on the way to earning what you're worth.

Let's talk catering!

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About The Catering Institute

The Catering Institute is a leading educator in takeout, delivery and catering, providing training, certification and consulting to restaurant operators and their teams.

The Catering Institute is a private, independent academic institution. Led by founder and CEO Erle Dardick, the faculty at the Catering Institute is passionate about helping brands excel at feeding their customers where they Live, Work & Play™.

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A Strategic Perspective for the Multi-Unit Restaurant Executive

By **Erle Dardick**

About Wayne Alexander

With 16 years of experience and a hands-on style founded in operations and servant leadership, Wayne has established catering as a sustained accelerated growth platform. Through sales force talent development, organizational alignment in the multi-unit franchised environment, centralized call center management, and program development, Wayne reaches catering decision makers at their time of need.

About Lisa DeFeo-Bass

Since 1990 Lisa DeFeo-Bass has worked for multi-unit restaurant operations such as Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's Italian Grill, and Boston Market, where her positions have included Regional Operations Manager, Senior Sales Consultant, and National Accounts Manager. Lisa acts as a consultant to restaurant companies developing a catering program or have one that could run more efficiently and profitably.

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