

Heard a good movie lately?

7/16/08

It seems like I have been getting a lot of windshield time lately. Long trips in the minivan with at least one child in the back seat. Fifteen or twenty years ago, long trips in the car with children meant playing audio tapes designed especially for children, playing the “abc game”, the guess how fast I am going game, and my personal favorite the quiet game. For those of you unfamiliar with the quiet game, it is a game where everyone in the car is quiet, and the first one to make a noise is the loser. Unfortunately it didn’t take long for my kids to figure out the real purpose their parents often suggested playing that game.

Now however things are different. My younger boys don’t know or even want to know how to play the abc game, and thanks to their older siblings are much too wise for the quiet game. What keeps them distracted on trips is the video player that we, along with a lot of others, have in our minivans. In addition to being able to watch DVD’s, they can also play video games. While not nearly as educational as the games we played fifteen years ago, the video player keeps the younger passengers distracted for much longer.

Whenever the kids have a movie playing in the DVD, I like to listen. It helps to pass the time driving on boring interstates. Over the past couple of years I have listened to dozens of movies. Some I have already seen, others I might be able to see sometime after the trip. If I have seen the movie before, I can usually visualize some of the scenes. When they play a movie that I haven’t seen before, I try to visualize the scenes.

I have learned the hard way that movies with a lot of dialogue are significantly better for driving and listening. Since our family likes sports, movies like “Coach Carter”, “Rudy”, “The Rookie”, “Hoosiers”, “The Sandlot” and “Remember the Titans” are all good bets for me. On a recent trip the boys watched “The Bourne Identity”, which I have only seen bits and pieces of. That was not a good movie to listen to.

Recently talking to a friend about this subject, he told me that he was so bored on a recent trip that he put “The Waterboy” into the DVD player and listened, even though he was the only one in the car! He said it helped him with the boredom of the drive home.

As small business owners and managers, sales are a big part of our business. Unless we sell something, we cannot make a profit. Everyone in our company has the responsibility to sell. Unfortunately not everyone in our companies likes to sell. Selling requires being able to tell a story, sometimes without the benefit of pictures or brochures. I have noticed that the really good sales people appeal to more than one of the senses. That way if a potential customer learns better via one of senses, we have a better chance of making the sale.

My question to you today is, how well is your sales staff communicating to customers and potential customers in multiple ways? Can they just listen to a story and figure out what is going on? If not, then your company has a great opportunity to improve communication and more importantly, sales.

When I look at my calendar I see several more trips coming this summer. Books on tape are good, and I have used them on other trips, unfortunately the movie bug is biting right now. If you have any suggestions for movies that would be good for me to listen to, please let me know.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, president of First National Bank, Ankeny.