

An Entrepreneur's Guide to Communication and Sales Success



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10 Communication Things Every Entrepreneur Must Know

It's been around 6,200 days of being self-employed. In April, 2000, I started my PR and communications company.

Several years ago, my accountant—who is also self-employed—shared his definition of an entrepreneur:

"I am a self-employed individual working for a lunatic."

As I mark this proud milestone, I have taken time to reflect on the entrepreneurial (roller coaster) experience.

Here are 10 communication tactics every small business owner must know:

1. You must know how to sell. Too many people decide to hang their shingle out only to learn they don't know much about [sales](#). Entrepreneurs must be diligent at developing the self-confidence, attitude, discipline and perseverance that's essential when asking prospects and customers to hand over their hard-earned money.

2. You must live the 'publish or perish' mentality. In my pre-blogging days, I wrote bylined articles for trade publications and membership newsletters. Early on, I landed a spot as a columnist for the *Princeton (NJ) Business Journal*. I generated content and built my credibility. My volunteer gig at the *Business Journal* lasted more than two years, plenty of time to ratchet up my credibility.

3. You must be willing to speak in public. If you're brave enough to launch a small business, there's no time to be shy or nervous about public speaking. Partner with a networking group to be the guest expert for their meeting, conference or webinar. You'll be front and center with dozens of potential prospects interested in [your topic](#). It beats cold calling.

4. You must be able to validate others. Validation is an acknowledgement that the other person (your prospect or client) is being heard. It's proof that you are listening. For example, if someone complains that their current coffee vendor is always late with deliveries, you reply: "I can imagine their late service is frustrating."

5. You must ask for what you need. No one expects you to know everything. That's why there are contact lists, databases, and rolodexes filled with names of people who can provide specialized products and service. Get rid of the self-induced pressure and be willing to ask for what you need. It's a sign of a [true leader](#).

6. You must be able to identify your ideal customers. Ask yourself a few questions: Who do I enjoy working with and why? What's my passion and niche? Who needs my expertise? Do these people have the budget or resources to pay me?

7. You must have thick skin. People can be awfully mean. They say things that aren't helpful or positive. Entrepreneurs are so fully vested in their own businesses that it's hard not to take things personally. Don't take the BS to heart.

8. You must communicate patience when educating people. Clients do business with you because you offer a valuable product or service that they want or need. You, on the other hand, are entrenched in your niche or business and will have to slow down to educate those who don't know all the ins and outs.

9. You must develop charisma. Charisma is that special charm or personality trait that draws people to you. Self-confidence—and a friendly, easy-going demeanor—will take you a long way in business.

10. You must be willing to reinvent yourself. Chances are you are planning to be self-employed for a long time. Businesses and people change. How can you [effectively adapt](#) your messages and direction, without alienating people?

Cheers to the brave small business owners around the world! What have you learned along the journey?

Are You Applying Agility in Sales?

Organizations—not people—have typically been recognized as agile, based on technology and business processes.

However, as entrepreneurs who market and sell, we must focus on human beings and the roles that people play within agile organizations.

At a recent [training program](#) I led for an inside sales team in the financial industry, we covered agility. How could the team improve collaboration and competency when working with their business-to-business clients and prospects?

On the Dime

When executives and analysts talk about agility in business, the word pivot is almost always in the conversation.

Being able to pivot means that you can strike a balance between what your plan is/was while still assessing new opportunities with a high level of flexibility.

Henry David Thoreau said, “Obey the spur of the moment.”

To apply agility to [your communication and sales](#), it’s imperative that you have a 360-degree view of your relationships, partnerships, prospects, clients, products, services and self.

It’s not a one-time analysis that’s done periodically.

Your 360-degree view is ongoing because change is constant. To keep up with the twists, turns and trends in your industry, you must always be reading, studying, learning. Above all, you must apply your newly acquired knowledge.

Intensity Counts

Agile professionals are thoughtful, deliberate and decisive. Their time zone is real-time, the differentiating factor between agile thinkers and the “as-soon-as-possible” laggards.

If you want to be the go-to person—the agile professional—you have to:

Immerse yourself in your industry. Your daily formula for success: Study. Simplify. Apply.

Help clients reduce inefficiencies.

Think from the customer’s perspective.

Pay attention in a way that is smart, creative, curious and proactive.

Contact clients and prospects to share new information, updates, and [relevant news](#). Translation: Don’t check in or follow-up. Bring value to every touch point.

Uncover problems BEFORE they occur. Don’t wait for customers to contact you when they have a difficulty or challenge. That’s too commonplace—and mediocre. Agile entrepreneurs reach out to their clients FIRST, explaining that a problem is looming and offering recommendations and insights.

Agile professionals solve problems before they arise, making consistent and invaluable contributions to their client’s success.

4 Communication Lessons We Can All Learn from ‘Shark Tank’

The popular TV reality competition show, “Shark Tank,” is packed with tips on how entrepreneurs can improve their communication skills. There are also plenty of lessons to learn about pitching stories to reporters and [self-confidence](#).

As you probably know, the premise of the program is that aspiring inventors and entrepreneurs give a 10-minute presentation to five self-made millionaires and billionaires. Among the Sharks: Real estate mogul [Barbara Corcoran](#) and the billionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks, Mark Cuban.

Each guest requests funding for their idea and offers a percentage of the business. One or more of the Sharks can suggest a modified plan for financing and the piece of the pie when—and if—the business is successful.

Make no mistake; the program is called “Shark Tank” for a reason. The investment tycoons considering the deals are superb professionals who have succeeded and struggled in numerous ventures.

I imagine it’s quite intimidating to stand before this esteemed group to pitch an idea.

Consider these four communication lessons we can all appreciate from “Shark Tank.” It seems a majority of the [budding entrepreneurs](#) share similar traits:

1. **They absolutely believe in themselves and their products.** From the elderly couple who designed a pair of underwear to capture the smell emitted from flatulence to the young political wonks in Washington, D.C. who, in their spare time, created a recipe for Barbecue Sauce and Rub, every person who has appeared on “Shark Tank” has had a true sense of themselves. Their willingness to be vulnerable to the barrage of questions and raw feedback on national TV is admirable.
2. **They embrace negotiation.** Often times, the projections and numbers are off, and the Sharks are fast to point out the mathematical errors. Fledgling entrepreneurs must think on their feet and throw out new and more accurate figures without compromising their [business plans and credibility](#).
3. **They control their emotions.** A certain blend of heart, enthusiasm and humility is a significant part of a successful pitch. Yes, most guests leave the show disappointed that none of the Sharks

invested in their idea. But it's valuable for people watching the show to see guests draw the emotional line and keep their composure, something that requires a great deal of inner strength.

4. **They know how to appeal to the senses.** The inventors and creators who are on "Shark Tank" know how to engage the Sharks with visuals, tastes, smells and sounds. The gym trainer who created special bras for women athletes brought along several women who were wearing different styles of the undergarment. When pitching food or drinks, guests arrive with impressive packages containing samples for each of the Sharks.

If entrepreneurs focus on these four skills and attributes—belief in themselves and products, negotiation, control of emotions and sensory experiences—I'm guessing all businesses would be thriving.

Susan Young—CEO of Get in Front Communications, Inc.—is an award-winning news reporter, PR entrepreneur, online editor and speaker.

She works with entrepreneurs who want a step-by-step process to create compelling content and PR that increases visibility, credibility and revenues.

During her career, Susan has written and edited some 20,000 news stories, blog posts and articles. Susan's latest achievement: Being named one of the 'Top 75 Badass Women on Twitter.'