

CHAPTER ONE

The Mental Profile of a Sales Champion

“One cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts and indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.”

James Allen

ATTITUDE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Congratulations for embarking on this learning experience. You have demonstrated that you have an attitude that is receptive to the improvement process, and that’s huge—you are in the minority! We all experience a nice bump in self-esteem when we learn new skills that work. A person with high self-esteem naturally seeks the inspi-

ration that comes with learning and growing through such skills as Selling Value, Goal Setting, and the many others we'll cover. I'm convinced this book will help you stretch, grow, and earn more, and I am delighted you have joined us in this experience. My promise is, if you immerse yourself in this content, and learn the skills, more success and prosperity are on the way.

The premise of this chapter is relatively simple but profoundly important. Important enough that it is often the difference between success and failure, or even modest success as compared to magnificent success. Here it is: The attitude you project to others during the sales process influences the response you get, and that attitude is your responsibility, your challenge and your choice. I want you to see this as an opportunity to be seized, not just a task to be accomplished.

The first principle I would ask you to buy into is that attitude is a decision you make many times a day – it is entirely up to you how you handle it. It can be your biggest burden or your greatest opportunity! Every day our attitude is based on the mental programming we individually subscribe to. It is our job to present ourselves in the best way possible.

WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, the late author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, told me over dinner one night years ago in Calgary: “Don, I have spent half my life trying to convince people that if they will just think positively and

nurture positive expectations that they WILL get more positive results!” He was totally convincing, and his life’s work validated his philosophy.

In sales and in life, there is an axiom known as “The Law of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.” One application of it might well have been on the first page of the first sales book you ever read which goes like this: “Whether you think you are going to make a sale or you think you’re not, you are usually right!” Is the power of our own expectations that critical to our success? I’m convinced the answer is an unequivocal yes.

Your attitude will normally be perceived in one of three ways: positive, negative, or apathetic. Great salespeople display an optimistic, hopeful, positive attitude about life and the solutions they are presenting. If you don’t believe in your products and solutions, believe me, your prospect won’t either.

Do you know what causes salespeople to fail? I spear-headed a survey for Sales and Marketing Executives International, while on their board of directors, in an effort to find out what caused salespeople to fail. The first two items on the list that we learned from our exhaustive search for the answers were very illuminating: The number one failure factor of salespeople was that they failed to properly organize their time and/or their efforts – more on that in a later chapter. It’s the second factor that got my attention: The number two failure factor of salespeople is that they negatively, unjustifiably, prejudge the quality of a prospect or the outcome of a sales call. The implication is that many

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of us shoot ourselves in the foot with a weak attitude or negative expectations, then limp in to make the half-hearted sales call. Let's be sure we NEVER negatively prejudge—give it your best shot every time.

Success in selling is dependent upon having several different critical skill sets, but the foundation of a successful sales career begins with an optimistic attitude. With it, you have a great shot at success; without it you are trying to build a career on an unstable foundation. Remember, it's rare to see whiners winning, or winners whining, in sales organizations today. This is the reason the “Head Game” is so critical to our success.

Greet others with a positive opening. Focus on possibilities and the potential of your business relationship with them as your foundation for success. It was once said that success can only occur when opportunity and preparation meet. I concur. And part of our preparation for achieving great success in selling is to create a mental framework that will position each of us for exceptional results. Without a strong “head game”, we are building our career on a shaky foundation.

THE ADVANTAGES OF OPTIMISM

It is my hope that you have now accepted the fact that you make your own decision on the attitudes you possess. Study the subject and make conscious decisions that are in your own enlightened self-interest, and you will be positioning yourself for a life of higher achievement. Much research has indicated that optimistic thinkers achieve

more, do better in school, and enjoy more career-related successes than their pessimistic counterparts. Pessimists tend to display a shallower belief in themselves, with lower levels of confidence, and tend to get depressed more often.

In his excellent book *The Optimism Advantage*, Dr. Terry Paulson talks about the practicality of turning your attitudes and actions into positive results. He says that a decision to be an optimist results in you being your own best supporter, while pessimism will result in you being your own worst enemy.

It is really easy to adopt the victim mentality today. Things go wrong many times a day and the easiest thing to do is blame others, get defensive, and go into “poor me” mode. A disciplined optimist refuses to succumb to the temptation to go negative. They know that the positive thinkers tend to get more positive results and they persist in making possibilities become realities. Paulson says the choice is yours. You can trade in your victim mentality and learned helplessness for the optimistic attitudes and actions that will help you develop your own brand of resilience and resourcefulness.

Dr. Martin Seligman, the former president of the American Psychological Association, has challenged psychologists to focus more on positive psychology. In his best-selling book *Learned Optimism*, he asserts that, “Pessimists believe that all misfortunes are their fault, are enduring, and will undermine everything they do.” That kind of thinking would do anyone in. The way we think about things can actually diminish or enlarge controls and

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outcomes. I've never seen a great sales professional who was a devout pessimist. The greats have made the choice for a positive mindset and are largely busy enjoying the fruits of their decision.

Seligman further suggests that, "Our workplace and schools operate on the conventional assumption that success results from a combination of talent and desire. When failure occurs, it is because either talent or desire is missing." His thesis is that when you factor in optimism, better outcomes are on the way.

The famous trial lawyer Edward Bennett Williams was once asked by an interviewer, "Are you a pessimist?" He said, "Of course I'm a pessimist; I'm smart."

I don't buy the assumption that smart people are necessarily negative thinkers. If anything, I believe the reverse is true. Smart individuals have the capacity to consider positive outcomes and possibilities, and strategies to make good things happen. If someone chooses to be a pessimist, it is his own sad fault.

The premise I subscribe to is that attitude is a personal decision that we must make several times a day, and that attitudes do indeed determine outcomes. Remember the words of *Good to Great* author Jim Collins, "You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties—and at the same time, have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever it might be."

NICE RIDE!

Don't ever negatively prejudge the result of a sales encounter. On a Saturday morning in Indianapolis, two Rolls-Royce salespeople were standing on the showroom floor talking. An old fellow walked in wearing dirty coveralls with a couple of holes in the knees. He walked over and looked at the Rolls Royce in the showroom, and the salesperson who was up to talk to the next customer thought, what a waste of time, so he blew him off.

So the other salesperson walked over and welcomed him to the dealership. He was courteous and accommodating to him. He subscribed to the philosophy of never, ever prejudging anybody. You don't prejudge them by how they dress; you don't prejudge them by your initial impression. It worked out for this salesman because Mr. Lilly of Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals bought two Rolls-Royces that morning. One was for himself and one was for his wife. He then went back home and finished his yard work. Don't ever negatively prejudge. If you are going to do any prejudging, positively prejudge.

Is the projection of a balanced, positive demeanor something others have learned to expect of you? If so, that's good. It demonstrates that you have cultivated a very positive habit. Confucius said, "He who cannot smile should not keep shop." I say, "He who does not smile often does not sell often." In selling any product, service, or idea, your disposition will have an impact on the response to your proposition.

REFLEXIVE RESPONSES

When someone asks you, “How are you?” or “How’s it going?” what do you say? Most people never stop to think about the impact their answer to that simple question will have. An optimistic answer, accompanied by a pleasant smile, not only helps you build rapport quicker, it also makes you more of a pleasure to do talk to. No one wants to have to carry a pessimistic burden on their shoulders. Be a carrier of sunshine, not sadness.

The mental attitude you display to others becomes much like an invisible magnet which sets the stage for your interaction. It can pull you up to the heights of high achievers who expect good things from life, or it can pull you down among the groveling pessimists.

If we’re to get positive results, we must say and do things that contribute to the kind of positive environment that is conducive to successful selling. Another vital reason for a positive response to this simple question is that you are not only setting the stage for the interaction, you are participating in positive self-talk that can intensify your conviction.

THREE CATEGORIES OF MENTAL PROFILE

Let’s take a look at three basic categories of mental profile and see if you recognize yourself among them.

In the first category, we find the blind optimist. You’ve met the blind optimist before. That’s the salesperson who is so high and ebullient that you wonder when and if they will

ever come in for a landing. This individual is so overwhelmingly optimistic that he or she has difficulty handling problems and routine negative events when they occur.

Don't get me wrong. I really appreciate an individual with a wholesome attitude and an optimistic demeanor. The problem with blind optimists is that their brand of optimism is loud and shallow. When the blind optimist meets with rejection, very often they don't just come in for a landing—they crash!

In earlier years, I was a blind optimist in some ways. For 10 years, I pursued the fun and rewarding hobby of collecting classic and antique cars. I secured some from other collections, but I often purchased these collectibles at classic car auctions throughout the United States. During this chapter in my life, I made an amusing discovery: A blindly optimistic participant in a classic car auction can get his financial knees knocked out from under him in short order. I learned the hard way the subtle and discreet clues to look for in evaluating a car. What you see is not always what you get. I paid handsomely for this learning experience.

While high-performance salespeople project a positive demeanor, they aren't blind optimists. Top pros know that no matter how hard they try and how well prepared they are, they are not going to make a sale every time. This fact is simply a reality of the marketplace. Top pros seem to be mentally prepared for any eventuality.

The high performer may miss one sale, but then he goes on and makes three more sales that day to make up for the one that got away. The blind optimist may be so overwhelmed

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by one “No” that he or she simply can’t get going again. This is non-productive, peak-and-valley behavior. Don’t allow yourself to be so optimistic that you are emotionally ill-equipped to deal with reality, which invariably deals us rejection, periodic discontent and unavoidable problems along with the joy we are entitled to.

In the second category of mental profiles we find the reality optimist. This is the category in which most high performance sales professionals are found.

Reality optimists think rationally when they go out into the marketplace. They say to themselves, “My conversion rate has been X lately. Now I’m going to try to reach 100 percent, but after I’ve given it my best shot, if I don’t make a sale, I’m not going to let that ruin my day.”

As a salesperson, you can listen to CDs, watch DVDs and instructional videos, you can read books, you can pick the brains of your sales manager—all these things are good and can help you improve your conversion rate. While these factors can have an impact on it, you can never control the behavior of your prospective clients. When a client declines to buy, the reality optimist says to himself, “Okay, I’ll get the sale next time!” and then goes right on to the next client. You may not be in control of a client’s decision, but you can be in control of how you will let rejection affect your attitude.

I have never met a high performance professional who did not have belief and optimism. These individuals are well balanced and organized, so that when they do experience rejection, it’s like water off a duck’s back. The blind opti-

mist, by contrast, sets himself or herself up for failure due to an inability to handle negative events of the marketplace.

In the third category of mental profile we find the pessimist. This is the person who cheers everyone up when he leaves the room.

Once a salesman and sales manager were making calls. The manager said, “Hey, that looks like a great prospect over there! We’ve never called on that company. Let’s make a cold call on them right now.”

The pessimistic salesman said, “Might as well skip it. They’re lousy prospects. I haven’t called on them, but I’ve heard about them. They’re not going to buy anything from us.”

The sales manager came unglued. He said, “What kind of attitude is that? If you’re going to be successful in the profession of selling, you’ve got to be positive!”

The salesman replied, “OK boss, I’m positive they ain’t gonna buy anything from us!”

Given the choice, I can’t imagine why anyone would prefer to think negatively, but many do. Negative thinking is usually a carelessly acquired bad habit rather than a well-thought-out decision. Instead, vigorously nurture the habit of reality optimism.

The pessimist stacks the cards against himself. The reality optimist not only stacks the cards in his favor; some would say he controls the game.

OUTLOOK AFFECTS OUTCOMES

Our thinking processes control much of our life, and the image we have of ourselves certainly affects our sales performance. My favorite author and literary mentor Orison Swett Marden said, “A one-talent person with an overmastering self-faith often accomplishes infinitely more than a ten-talent person who does not believe in himself.”

A study conducted several years ago by the University of Chicago supports the theory that your outlook can actually affect your life. The study even revealed that people who are ill but don’t think of themselves as sick often enjoy a better healthier life than people who are not sick but believe they are.

What causes people to be negative and pessimistic anyway? Pessimistic people experience what they perceive as a negative event or situation and they choose to become depressed. Perhaps it’s a subconscious choice, but that’s the result—depression. We are born to win but sometimes self-conditioned to lose.

We also attract what we think. Negative thoughts produce negative results. On the other hand, positive thoughts are the basis for successful attitudes and successful habits, habits that lead directly to positive results in everything we do.

High performance salespeople realize the importance of keeping a positive, realistic, wholesome frame of reference. They know that positive expectations lead to positive results.

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The image and attitude you project are largely developed by habit. If you have the habit of projecting negative thoughts and feelings, reevaluate your behavior and make a conscious effort to change. The payoff could be great.

Remember that fear, doubt, and continuous procrastination are symptoms of the disease called lack of confidence, and lack of confidence is nurtured by negative thinking and the absence of an action plan. In the words of the philosopher William James, “It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult undertaking which, more than anything else, will determine its successful outcome.”

The pessimist sees the problems in each opportunity, while the optimist sees the opportunities in each problem. High performance salespeople see themselves as professional problem-solvers. They capitalize on each opportunity with a positive belief in the results they can gain and the people they can help.

If you want to succeed in selling, choose to vigorously nurture the habit of reality optimism. That choice will be a big step in the direction of higher sales performance and greater prosperity.

My friend Randy Jones, the former president of a medical firm, shared this interesting story with me.

Shortly after acquiring Deseret Medical, our sales management team at Warner Lambert Corporation was faced with a dangerous morale slump. Old-line salespeople began grumbling about having been “taken over” by a large corporation and having lost

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the free-spirited, entrepreneurial atmosphere that had made their company a sales-driven success in the past. They were afraid that their skills and individuality would be buried in the quagmire of corporate structure.

I was president of the management unit for sales and was faced with the task of keeping our sales force positive in the midst of the massive changes that they considered threatening. Complaints ran a wide gamut, from new report forms and procedures to different designs for business cards. The declining situation boiled over when another new policy mandating smaller company cars was introduced, driving the field sales force into a frenzy. Our management staff listened closely to the sales representatives, then devised a program that we hoped would turn negatives into positives. We felt we had come up with a winner.

We introduced a special six-month sales contest in which each of the top 10 sales achievers in our 96-person sales team would receive a Mercedes Benz on a two-year lease as their company car. Result? An immediate turnaround in morale and a 15 percent increase in average per-person sales productivity! We no longer heard complaints about company cars, since such comments would naturally yield a discussion on performance—i.e., get into the top 10 and earn yourself a real prestige company car!

Everyone had a shot at this great incentive program, and it worked. We simply impacted a negative situation with a positive program. The sales force recognized

that management was neither too stilted nor too stuffy to have a little fun and that maybe things could actually get better than during “the good old days”.

THREE WAYS TO DISPLAY A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

Henry David Thoreau once said, “If one advances confidently in the direction of his own dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” Our self-image accompanied by positive expectations can take us to new levels.

First let’s define the term “present self-image.” Your present self-image is your perception of your strengths and your weaknesses at this time. It is a snapshot of yourself in the here and now.

The most powerful force you possess is what you say to yourself and truly believe. Positive self-talk not only enhances your present self-image. I’m convinced it also expands your productive capacity. It programs you for more action and results.

I hope your present self-image is always improving, because it’s consistent with the growth process. The image you have had of yourself in the past has delivered you to where you are today, and your self-image each day in the future will take you to where you are going to be.

Charisma transplants and success implants still aren’t available, so we must look for other avenues to enhance our self-image and how we display it to others. Here are three excellent ways you can help yourself build a strong self-image:

ONE: WRITE DOWN YOUR PERSONAL POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Examples of career-related positive affirmations for professional sales-people might be “I am performing my needs analysis better each time I do it” or “I am eagerly and successfully focusing on customer needs better than ever.” For best results, keep them in the present tense.

Positive affirmations help you feel better about yourself at present, and they pave the way for growth and progress in the future. Frequently reviewed positive affirmations, whether personal or professional, tend to enhance what you expect and get from yourself. Remember this maxim: “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”

TWO: CONSTANTLY ANALYZE AND ADDRESS YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Self-assessment is extremely valuable, especially when we also get input from others whose opinions we respect. Successful people identify their human strengths and build on those strengths as their foundation for success. Simultaneously, they identify their personal weaknesses, eliminating as many weaknesses as they can and at least managing those weaknesses that can't be easily eliminated.

Your plan of action for a better life should be built on the foundation of your strengths. Remember, however, that you should never make someone else's opinion of you more important than your opinion of yourself.

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During a recent National Speakers Association address, motivational speaker Les Brown said, “If greatness is possible, then good intentions, good follow-through, even periodic excellence are insufficient. Be a no-limit thinker! When we don’t know what the limits are, we assume we don’t have any, and that increases the chance that we will perform with greatness.”

We must diligently and constantly pursue personal excellence. Sometimes significant behavior changes are in order, but in many instances if you feel good about yourself, only minor changes may be needed to get you to where you truly want to be.

What level of success do you currently see for yourself? I once heard a successful general agent of one of the major life insurance companies tell his agents this: “The income level you expect to enjoy should be reflected by the income level of the clients you comfortably converse with.” I guess that was his way of asking, “Are you a \$40,000 salesperson talking to \$40,000 clients, or are you a \$200,000 salesperson talking to \$200,000 clients?”

Your self-image will determine your level of expectations. Mutt Easley, a buddy in high school, told me he was sure he’d never get married. When I asked why, he said, “Because any woman who would marry me isn’t good enough for me.” The guy needed to work on his self-image.

Walt Disney said, “The more you are like yourself, the less you are like anyone else, thus approaching uniqueness.” Embrace your own individuality. Be yourself, be proud of who and what you are, but never usurp your opportunities to grow.

THREE: HAVE A STRONG VISION TO REACH TOWARD

What is the rest of your life going to be like? Do you believe you are either destined to succeed or destined to fail in your life? What you visualize is what you will attract.

I submit that your future will be more of a decision than a destiny. Your present thoughts and plans will largely determine your future. And since you control your thoughts and your plans, you control your own future.

“Projected self-image” is the phrase I use to refer to your vision of yourself in the future. Your projected self-image is comprised of your strengths, your weaknesses, your levels of success and attainment as you imagine them to be at some future point. Intense, detailed visualization is required to program the subconscious mind for a better life and higher sales production.

The power of the human visualization process is truly awesome. Once you program your conscious mind with definitive data from that powerful imagination, your subconscious mind goes to work to make it happen.

Just remember, though, that if the conscious mind never gets the data, it cannot be passed along to the subconscious mind for action. Let’s return to my premise that your future as a high performance salesperson is more of a decision than a simple destiny. What can you do to make the right decisions that will result in the vision, then the reality, of high performance? Set your thermostat!

It may sound like an over-simplification, but programming your subconscious mind is almost as simple as setting the thermostat in your home. You can turn it up or turn it down, but don't ever fool yourself into thinking that you haven't set it. Most people have their thermostats set far too low. They may have let the negative influence of other people psyche them out. Many will go to their graves with their music still in them because they never turned up their expectation and achievement thermostat.

One of my most gratifying moments as a speaker came when I was addressing Healthco International. Following my three-hour sales and personal development seminar, Regional Manager Gerry Mundy got up and said to his sales force, "After hearing this program, I'm convinced our \$93 million annual goal is too low. Should we go for \$100 million?" The salespeople cheered and responded resoundingly, so they raised their goal. I learned later that they hit it. What would you attempt if you were confident you couldn't miss your goal?

THE BIRD'S-EYE VIEW: DREAMS ABOUNDING

Don't have a bug's eye view of the future. Have a bird's eye view. See the bigger picture. Think of the people you can help, the lives you can positively touch, the joys you can share with others. What potential do we have when we envision possibilities? Those with the bugs-eye view have very limited visibility – those piles of carpet the bug crawls through are thick! The people with the birds-eye view have few limits!

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A well-considered projected self-image will be the thermostat by which you set your achievement level and ultimately your lifestyle. Too many people allow others to set their thermostats. Don't do it. This is no dress rehearsal. Today is the real deal.

Life itself is usually a self-fulfilling prophecy. You can make it work to your benefit rather than to your detriment. I agree with Gregory Baum who said, "Every person is called upon to create his future." Unleash your imagination, focus on a noble vision, and go for it!

Most failures use up as much energy failing as successful people do succeeding. Plan your success with a vengeance. Remember, you are probably not as good today as you are going to be someday. Accelerate your achievement rate now. There is no reason to wait!

MOTIVATION TO THE MAX!

High performers are motivated and ready to make great things happen! If they get some motivation from their boss or significant other, or another source, that's fine, but they understand that their PRIMARY source of motivation comes from within. Yes, in its purest form, all motivation is self-motivation. Someone cannot be motivated who mentally refuses to be motivated, unless it is through basic fear for their life or safety, and we don't see that customarily in the workplace. Let's work to understand the definition and philosophy of motivation for salespeople, but also the applications we need to have in place to excel.

The model that has worked well for us in our training activities assumes there are two dimensions to the motivational process. One is direction, which will be either positive or negative, depending on what one says and does. The other is intensity, which will be either high, with positive energy to achieve, or low, with deficient energy to do well.

This will give us four potential variables: First is positive direction and high intensity, which is where we want to be. It means you will be saying and doing the right things, and doing a lot of it! Secondly, we have positive direction but low intensity, which means results will be compromised somewhat; third, we have negative direction and low intensity which means we are doing the wrong things and not even doing much of that. And last we have negative direction and high intensity—which is really scary. We are doing the wrong things, and doing lots of it. Immediate behavior modification is in order in that case. So let's do our best on every aspect of our sales career—think quality and quantity.

Zig Ziglar had a great quote: “You can get anything you want in life if you just help enough other people get what they want!” Yes, sales success is the humility to help others, not just the ego to win. As we are motivated to zero in on each prospective customer's specific needs and an understanding of what they value, we are positioning ourselves to be of great value to them.

BE A CHAMPION OF CHANGE

I'll bet you have heard the cliché that “If you keep on doing what you have been doing, you will keep on getting

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what you have always gotten!” I believe that axiom used to be true, but not anymore. Things are changing too rapidly.

The “bar of excellence” is moving up on every one of us every day. Competition is getting keener. Buyers are smarter and more demanding. And we won’t be able to take allegiance for granted. In today’s marketplace we need to be able to turn-on-a-dime to please customers. And that means we can’t be married to the processes and habits of the past.

The experts on change today are saying that the knowledge mass of the human race is now doubling approximately every four years. So, yes, the one constant we can be assured of is CHANGE. What is your change quotient? Do you have a good spirit about change and find ways to make change work for you, or do you feel threatened by change and the new requirements thrust upon you to excel in an ever challenging environment?

My colleague and friend, industrial psychologist Dr. Paul Green, says one key metric people consider today in hiring new talent is their “tolerance for ambiguity.” How do you deal with the unexpected? It has been said that most people change when the pain NOT to change exceeds the pain to change! I suggest you broaden your perspective, see the big picture when talking with prospects, and be willing to change and adapt to succeed.

We might as well decide right now to be optimistic and find ways to buy-in to the changes that come our way, unless, of course, we can impact the precipitating event to make it work better for us or others. Most changes are beyond our control, so I vote for finding the possibilities within them.

Legendary business consultant Dr. Peter Drucker once said that “one sign of incompetence and resulting ineffectiveness is when one constantly focuses on their successes of the past.” Did you ever know anyone who always talked about “the good old days” as if they were the only days to talk about? These people need to get in the present and engage with today’s reality.

High performers identify problems of clients, often before the client even articulates them. They envision solutions for a client before anyone has thought of it. They develop the attitude and capability to ‘turn on a dime’ to help a client solve a problem.

