

The Producer Paradox: Part Two

By
Dan Romain

Disclaimer: *The opinions of the author may not reflect those of Broker's Path, its employees and/or owners unless later to be found relevant and/or accurate. In which case, they do.*

Huh?

Anyway, where was I?

Ahh yes, The Producer Paradox Part Two!

1. It's a Knowledge Sale, Stupid!

It's written somewhere that new Producers make their bones quoting hairball accounts. The power bait preferred by most pro tour new producers (and Cabo beach peddlers) is called: "Almost free". Some Producers spend their entire "professional" careers pitching the *almost free* brand. Some make a living at it too!

My labs fetch things. It's not what they do. It's what they are. So it is, with new Producers. They fetch by quoting. They'll fetch most anything. They're just happy to fetch. They aim to please, so they aim to fetch; believing, correctly, you're just pleased to see them fetch something.

Enough already!

Stop with the tennis-ball praise every time a new Producer thunders back from the brush with a freshly fetched account.

Value behavior, that builds relationships.

I know. It sounds lame and it would be if you stopped there, so don't. Pick-up the phone and call Scott Addis at Beyondinsurance.com (610-945-1019). Scott is the only guy you should ever let near your impressionable Producers. (Chubb feels the same way by the way. He re-designed their school.) Scott will be on our partner's link page very soon.

I have never given a promo before. Scott is the first. If you had picked "Sales Schools for Dummies", you would have read an excoriating condemnation of most sales schools. I mean, I just blister most of those Xerox replicas who believe they can teach! Scott's program is different, because Scott is different. Scott is teaching things I believe in and, in my own amateur hour way, built a highly successful Brokerage (or two) with. Oh, by the way, Scott built a massive, high growth, Brokerage by perfecting his approach and then teaching it to his Producers. Scott's accomplishments are "beyond insurance".

Insurance is a "confidence game" of sorts. Knowledge instills confidence. Nothing else does. To prove it, watch a young Producer scurry-out to deliver a quote that is 50% less than, expiring, and vastly superior coverage. The prospect doesn't like that outcome at all. It makes him nervous...about everything, past, present, and future. Eventually, he gets so mad at his old Agent, he will distrust every Agent including your Producer. If he fires his old Broker and hires the young lad, it's because the client found some confidence in you...as in your firm, your reputation...your "oversight", as it were.

We wanted (needed), rapid organic growth, and this approach is the worst way to go about it, so we didn't.

Instead, we helped Producers become de facto MBA's, in whatever industry they wanted to specialize in, and bubba you should see those guys today! If you wait until the young lady/lad has 10 accounts to force an industry specialty, it's too late. (This may also be a clue on how to *hire* Producers...those connected to a promising industry!)

You need to sell knowledge, because no one thinks Agents are cool.

Insurance is just about the most lethargic topic any one at any time can think of...so they don't. But, walk into a contractor's office and show-him how to trim *all costs*, skin projects, avoid landmines, assess talent, evaluate his CPA (and very few CPA's get construction right!), re-craft his contracts, spot trouble, steer clear of certain public jobs designed to lose money and; oh by the way, drive his claims down, his comp retro adjustments down, his down-time down, his exposure down and...yes...his premiums down, and you'll have a client for life! If you help him maintain his strong Surety line, your kids will handle his kid's affairs in the next generation.

Guys/Gals who "get it" are rainmakers. Take Rob Bothwell at Beecher Carlson in their Red Sox office. He knows more about energy turbines than the nerds at GE, who built the contraptions, and can predicatively model when they might just go boom! Do you think he's, sort' of, in demand now that we're going to re-build our energy grid?! He's gone global! I can name dozens of guys like him, in dozens of industry specialties, all across the country, because they stick-out! (So, I chose Red Sox Nation!)

Teach your youth to know more about the industry that they've targeted, than any other Broker, and they will outperform everyone in their age group and then some. You should see a young Producer, hop around the office, the first time a trade group or association publishes one of his articles!

Finding the prospects is easy once an owner tells his buddies, "You gotta meet this guy!" Senior, sophisticated, Producers who mentor the youth, on all the ins-and-outs of our business, and then help them become valued experts in the client's business, can make this happen. "It's a knowledge sale" means knowing more about coverage and nuance than any other Broker and then applying that knowledge to a specific, narrow industry that suffers pain and is looking for solutions.

Note to self: You're not in the Risk Management business. You're in the Solution business! Some of those solutions are insurance solutions, but usually those come last.

2. Car Allowances and other God-given Rights:

From time to time we/I have had to merge cultures. On one such occasion "their" CFO told me, "Mr. Big hates car allowances. We don't *do* car allowances. Even Mr. Big pays for his own car. We reimburse mileage per the IRS published rate, but we don't offer car allowances".

Things that make you go *huumm?*

Big-time Producers, in the middle market, drive nice cars - period. SUV's... probably, as long as they don't go off road. BMW's... naturally. Benz...sure, even the kind that break all the time. But, a Ford Focus? Are you kidding me!? A crafty, old Producer in a Prius? Even in Vermont, San Francisco, and Seattle; Producers don't drive a Prius! How many Producers do you know who sold their Escalades when gas passed \$4 a gallon? Of course, there are exceptions and "hats off" to the guy with 250,000 miles on his diesel Jetta. He's smart. He just happens to prove the rule.

Funneling money, distributions, dividends, compensation, you name it to a successful Producer, so that they can essentially have their cars paid for, is a God-given right; and to all of you who don't see it that way, then you're treating blood-thirsty meat eaters like vegans. That or you only write large National Accounts, in which case you're cool. You don't need a car. You need a plane... ***which got me to thinking...***

"So tell me Biff... about those car allowances you guys don't use..."

"Yes" he said.

"How many days a week does one of your Producers order an 'adult' movie in a nice hotel along with the room-service and unlabeled wine? Do you itemize the mini-bar tab or just toss it all-in under lodging? How many times a week, on average, do your Producers get in a plane, only to pay a taxi \$70 bucks one way, to that hotel? How many times does that same taxi service take him/her to various appointments, the next day, only to take them back from an expensive, \$175 per head, dinner to the airport... where, upon returning home, that exhausted Producer pays well-over \$100 to get his car out of the parking garage?"



Biff got the point. In spite of having 20-times more clients (smaller accounts), the Middle Market *cost of sales*, including car allowances, are a bargain and it isn't even close!

Middle Market Producers have a God-given right to car allowances; just the same as National Account Producers have a right to "first class" and the "adult channel". Period! Middle Market car allowances should be obscenely lucrative on an ascending scale, the larger the Producer's book becomes! Ask your CPA how high "obscenely lucrative" actually is, so that the IRS doesn't reclassify it as "excessive", because they will and your CPA will have to re-jigger the P&L, so do it right.

Which of course leads to the age-old question, "Is the allowance a pass-thru or is it taxed?" Sorry folks. I have a definite opinion on this and you'll get more consensus on "Ginger-vs.-Marianne" than you will on that one. Do what your CPA tells you; but, *Just Do It!*

Mileage reimbursements are better you say?

I don't think so!

When gas was \$4.18 per gallon you sat there, stuck with .011 cents per foot (58.5 cents per mile). So, some... (Ahem, maybe more) Producers actually drove less miles, but somehow the miles driven actually went up! Now, you might be wondering how that could be true, but there are a lot of weird car things like that. Can you explain, for example, how the wheels of a car appear to be going backwards, when filmed on the freeway? (I didn't think so Einstein!). But, there it is - video proof! I suppose the Producer actually owes you money, because his odometer is going backwards!

Mileage reimbursements aren't better. I've read a thousand P&L's! They're easier for Buckwheat, in the accounting department, and they are simply wonderful for the CEO, who's not forced to show incremental favoritism for incremental performance, but they're not "better" They are simpler!

Once you get away from corporately owned vehicles, then car allowances for Producers and mileage reimbursement for the analytical, precise, paper and pencil, accurate recordkeeping crowd, who service the Producer's accounts, is *the only way to go!* It's redistribution of income baby! That's all the rage these days. The savings from the service folks offsets the largess of the Producer allowances. Ok, it's not how some are redistributing wealth, but I like this direction way-more-better! So will the hunters who bring in the pelts!

The road to-and-from is never a straight line and even if it were, the number you get each month is an estimate and it suffers from grade inflation. You know it. I know it. They know it. I'd like to think that this phenomenon only applies to "some". I'd also like to flap my arms and fly. Besides, if you're not paying big-time car allowances in accordance with Scripture, who are you to judge the Producer? You need to bone-up on the Beatitudes dude!

There are 27 Amendments to the US Constitution and the first 10, known as *The Bill of Rights*, read:

1. Expense reimbursement includes those costs that the Producer was thinking about incurring.
2. Producers have inalienable rights to car allowances.
3. Agencies will pay 100% of Producer expenses, in one way or another.
4. Agencies will pay 100% of Producer lunches Monday thru Friday, in one way or another.
5. Agencies will pay 100% of Producer cell phones, PDA's, Blackberries, 'roaming and overage' charges, as well as music and pod-cast downloads, in one way or another.
6. No law shall limit the maximum allowable "tip" a Producer may pay at his favorite restaurant nor shall any law abridge, limit or interfere with the frequency of those visits.
7. Expense Account reimbursements must be paid within 16 hours of submission. They are to be checked for math errors only. "Aged" Expense Accounts are valid until the end of time.
8. Carrier trips inure to the Producers. The President may, from time to time, be afforded the privilege of attending those trips, but such grants in no way diminish or amend the inalienable rights retained by the Producers, to those trips.
9. Bad Debt, Producer E&O's, Receivables, and "over-drawing" are sounds that only dogs and Comptrollers can hear. They are inaudible to Producers.
10. Producer income shall never be reduced.

Producers protect your Second Amendment Rights (See #2 above). Join the NRA (National Rights to Allowances) today, before this sacred heritage is gone forever!

{Paid for by the National Rights to Allowances and with support from the American Association of Retired Producers: AARP}

3. "I lost it on price"

No Biff. No, you didn't.

If it "came down to price", then you lost it when the client took his account out for a spin, but you didn't lose it on price. OK... maybe; if AIG quoted it for the other guy, in the past 90-days, you lost it on price, but other than that...You "lost it on price" the day Mastodons wait for the "walk" sign, before crossing the street, in front of your office.

At one of our sales meetings, I entitled the New Business Log power-point slide as "Accounts lost on Price". A Producer quickly interrupted me, directing my attention to the error.

"No...no that's correct", I smiled. "Every one of those accounts we wrote was actually lost on price. You guys were cheaper than Brand X on this account and blew the doors off Brand Y's cost of risk on this one. Every one of these was written, because you won it on price. There's a zero sum gain in the cosmos. If you lose every account on price, then so does the other guy".

Did I forget to mention that I showed this slide *after* I showed the Lost Business slide, which contained the Producer's brief comments? For all those accounts that didn't; go bankrupt, leave the country, get non-renewed by the Carrier; or were upset due to an uncovered claim (which *totally should have been paid!*); the remainder of our lost accounts, that month, were not surprisingly, lost on "price".

It proved to be one of our better Sales meetings.

I've lost accounts, because of price...after I failed to speak to the client all year, mailed-out the renewal, never got involved in a sticky claim, or threw-up my hands when I catered and serviced the account to the far reaches of "spectacular"; only to be shopped every year, year-in, year-out, regardless, so I stopped playing the price game. I'd like to think that, over 28 years, I never lost an account because of personal failures, but I did.

Small accounts deserve what you used to give them too. Cede the accounts by making a deal with ownership, or use an Account Manager or rookie Producer to cover for you, but don't let them linger until they fire the agency on price.

As excuses go, there is one and only one reason that everyone will accept as the Gods-honest-truth:

"I lost it because Personal Lines screwed-up his account."

If a CEO runs the agency so that this never happens and the Producers actually cross-sell the accounts, without fear..., then that CEO and not TurboTax Tim should be running the Federal Treasury!

4. Judge Judy Episode: "That's my Prospect"

(Judge Judy presiding)

"Well Judge", Producer X begins, "I've been close to that account for years! I've been in his home! I carried him out of a rice-paddy in Viet Nam! I gave his wife one of my kidneys last March! I found his runaway Lab when his invisible dog fence shorted-out for Christsakes! **"That's my prospect!"**

Judge Judy: "Producer Y..."

"Well Judge, I called on the prospect and he said, "Sure, come' on over and let's talk", so I did. That's when he gave me all the information to work on his account".

Judge Judy: "Producer X, the Court would like to thank you for your service to this country in Viet Nam. This is not your prospect. Case closed!" (Gavel whack!)



BROKER'S P A T H

PERPETUATION PLANNING • OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE • MOVING THE NEEDLE

Every firm has Producer X. They send an article or Christmas card to a prospect and think they own them. In every firm, in every industry there's always one. Now I'm "down" with making certain that five different Producers aren't calling on the same prospect. (Though, I admit, that would be a nice problem to have) but typing-in the company's name into Act, Gold Mine, AMS, Applied...whatever, does not a prospect in perpetuity make.

"But, I set' em up! I did all the branding and solicitation work and this guy just swoops-in; and that's not right!"

Yes, it is.

The client chose. It is fair to say, almost required to say to this Producer, "Either the prospect has Alzheimer's and forgot all your contacts or knowing this, the prospect consciously chose someone other than you. That client has a reason and, frankly, I don't care what it is. Then say:

Kinder Gentler Version (always preferred):

"Look, years of doing this leads me to believe the prospect values you as a friend or confidant and doesn't want to be in a position of someday firing you, if things don't work-out. It's personal, but it's more of a compliment than anything. My experience tells me the young lad who got the specs won't write it. The prospect didn't want you to waste your time. Let it go. You're better off. If, by some fluke, he actually writes the account, then good for all of us who own stock, right? Com'on, let's grab a bite."

Dan's Version:

"Biff, the last time we had something like this come-up, you contacted the prospect and we didn't look so good. Don't make the same mistake twice. If you do, then make no mistake that I will personally dip your butt in brown sauce and barbeque you at the next sales meeting."

The odds are better than 50/50 that Producer X, the one who made such a fuss, will call anyway. The odds of that call go up considerably, if Producer X is an only child.

5. The Final Plateau

"For mercurial speed, airy nimbleness, and explosive violence in one package of undistilled evil, there is no other like Mr. Jim Brown." wrote Pulitzer Prize winning sports columnist Red Smith.

"5.2 yards per carry, never missed a game, won the rushing title 8 out of 9 seasons, scored five touchdowns once and four touchdowns four times, the first player to rush for

over a mile...all of this in 12 game seasons at a time when teams defended against the run first. Jim Brown was the greatest running back in history."—Bob Costas

Jim Brown left at the apex of his career. He is the only person in any endeavor, I can think of, who did that. Basketball's greatest player of all time, MJ (Jordan) retired three times and almost came back for a fourth. If you count Bret Favre's retirement, mid-season last year (as Jet fans do), then he's done it three times after his arm fell-off on the 30 yard line. Does the Rocky ring a bell (Ding Ding)?

Producers, CEO's, it doesn't matter. No one retires at their peak. Brokers don't and unfortunately, neither do neurosurgeons.

You'd be certifiably nuts to retire after you've built a mondo book that pays \$400k-large (with ownership compensation *and a car allowance!*). That's because Producers never know when they've tapped-out at the apex of Hubert's curve (a mathematical model of resources {oil} that predicts a decline in output). Producers believe in Moore's Law, the one where computer chips double in power and shrink in size every 18 months. It's what makes Producers resilient!

Therein lies the reason most Producers (and CEO's for that matter) don't retire without a mess. There is absolutely no advice I can give you to fix that other than to say, "*Don't try!*" Instead, try to get that Producer to focus on mentoring the youth. Mentoring the youth will enable you to get something Productive out of him/her for a few more years.

If you know of a 73 year old Broker (come February 17th) who wrote a pile of new business, on top of managing a massive book, who abruptly retired, in the picture of good-health and happiness, then maybe you've discovered the Jim Brown Insurance Agency and that would explain what he's been up to since his Raquel Welch days.

Lighten-up already on the senior guys!

No one got into this business to be pistol-whipped in their late 50's/early 60's for new business by some 40-something Sales Manager. Stop pushing the string. Make the Producer a living example of how good it is to achieve a certain level, once you're certain they've past prime. Stroke his/her ego. Make him Mike (Jordan). Everyone wants to be like Mike! Use his sedated effort as *proof* that there is a rainbow. Deep down, every Producer wants to have those four or five years of collecting distributions and renewing accounts; knowing that you will never shoot a 60-something Producer who is headed for retirement! Let the culture see "that's OK!" Better yet, make it known you want it that way!

Don't! I repeat DON'T see the final plateau as a problem! See it as a huge opportunity to inculcate your culture. If you don't take this advice and you mess around with that kind of Producer, you're in for real trouble! You might get away with it, but *everyone* will know that you are *never to be trusted!*

6. Great Producers have warts

<p>"The need to succeed drives all Great Producers"</p> <p>"Great Producers are driven by passion and commitment."</p> <p>"Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser."</p> <p>"He's one competitive SOB, on and off the course!"</p> <p>"I hate to lose. I never give up."</p> <p>"It's all about me."</p> <p>"Producers have warts"</p>	<p>—————→</p>	<p>OK</p> <p>Yep, probably true.</p> <p>Embroidered on his pillow.</p> <p>Translation: "He's an SOB."</p> <p>Means: you lost it, not him!</p> <p>Goes without saying.</p> <p>Huh? Where? No I don't!</p>
---	---------------	--

After hearing Pat Riley's epic phrase on the essence of winning an NBA championship, "No Rebounds, No Rings", I searched for years for my own Yoda-like phrase that described the inexplicable genome present in all Great Producers. Finally, it occurred to me:

"Producers need Demons"

Show me a guy with a warm personality, an even keel with a firm handle on the tiller of life and I'll show you a fantastic Account Manager! He works for a Great Producer. Every single client in *The Great One's* book of business knows he needs that Account Manager too. It's why clients draw so close to the AM. They want to.

Get used to it. Embrace it. Thank the Heavens above or the god of dysfunctions that Señor Psychopath has so many warts on his personality! Go down the list of every Producer who is constantly happy and always has time to listen to Harriet re-tell her missing cat story, in the lunchroom, and I'll show you a list of Producers who aren't great. Great Producers are cordial to Harriet and pretend to listen but, after 4-seconds of the cat chronicles, they're thinking about a way to sell a blue suit to Santa.

There was this guy. He was smart, handsome, knew coverage back-n-forth, made prospects laugh, and had a huge hit ratio whenever he got to second base. Getting him there was the hitch. Finally, after trying everything, we could think of, we just gave him a book of business, that we knew he'd retain until the earth cooled, and gave-up on trying to figure-out why things never took off.

We did that, once we realized that he had no Demons.

He was totally put together. Every synapse in his psyche fired in perfect harmony and every human being loved him. The Sales Aptitude test evaluator wanted to marry him. He was as close to a Black Lab as a human can be. There wasn't one flaw, one hick-up...one wart.

Eventually I learned (the hard way) that you can't give Producers demons. They grow their own.

Try to find out what a Great Producer's dominant strength is and look for it to be the source of trouble when it flares-up. Remember: "Our greatest strengths become our greatest

weaknesses, at times". Understanding this will help you find ways to elongate the periods between wart flare-ups. Humor works. Crown-on-the-rocks works better. But, being worthy of *The Great One's* trust, works the best. The truly *Great Ones* don't hit their "receive buttons" as often as they hit "send". Once a wart breaks-out, the *Great Ones* will find their receive button and listen to someone they trust. Hopefully, it's you.

Don't try to exorcize the demons. You need them right where they are.

7. Why Producers leave

Very, very rarely do true "Producers" leave. Gravity is less grounding to your office than his/her book of business. There's only one reason a true Producer surprises you one morning.

Forget about the "Posers" or the high-ground wounded ones who fabricate some reason to leave, thinking they were compelled, mumbling "commission splits" as they leave. Let'em go to find a new home where they are more comfortable. Let the bullies leave to brow-beat the competitor's staff. Fine! Good riddens! The longer they are in your midst, the longer it will be before the truly great Producers ask you to meet them for lunch across town, in a sheepish café off the beaten path. (That call invariably comes after the bully leaves or gets the whammy, because no good Producer is interested in you as long as that guy/gal was around.)

True Producers...as in ethical, honest, engaging, driven, competent and highly successful Practitioners leave for one reason and one reason only.

YOU.

8. The 60-days a year Producers self destruct

I get a lot of curious looks with this one, but invariably I hear, "You might be right."

The 60-days a year a Producer goes postal occurs 30-days prior to and 30-days following the summer solstice. It has nothing to do with a Mayan prophecy or sun spots. It's a natural condition.

Think about it.

I believe in using integrated telemarketing to gather information. Every mid-June it happened. Like clock-work, my callers would begin to complain about not reaching prospects and the total lack of activity. We designed Intel-gathering projects for them during this time. It's more acute in the northern latitudes, but it applies in San Diego too!

There's a blur after Labor Day, because every prospect or client returns on Tuesday wanting things done because, like you, they haven't done much for a while. The sixty days after Labor Day goes by in a blink of the eye. Producers are hard-charging and schedules are packed! They couldn't be happier.

The week before Thanksgiving thru New Year's Day is a blur as well. It really should be one month. Renewals, Holidays, kids on break, skis to wax, yearend salary reviews, the weather, what to buy? Clients are scarce, schedules are packed, and prospects get shoe-horned into Outlook on a "that's the only time we can meet" basis. Producers love and hate these 45-days. They hyperventilate twice a day. It's the same in West Palm Beach as it is in the Windy City. It's a blur. Its business, as it should be.

After the Holidays, Producers work their plans; the ones they scribbled on a lodge napkin while the kids skied or while they tanned at the beach. They go hucklety-buck hither and yon all in the sake of capitalism in January and February. A Holiday let down? Are you serious? No sooner does the Holiday re-gifting temptation subside then there's Valentine's Day, just after President's Day. There's 7 Jewish days of observance and five Catholic, not to mention March Madness and then the kids go on break, and the CPA files the extension. Before you know it, budda-bing budda-boom, the President is laying a wreath in Arlington Cemetery on Memorial Day.

Sound familiar?

And that's when it begins to happen.

All great predators sense it. Their prey, their game, their very survival begins to migrate with the onset of long summer days. Those glorious nights become the cruelest of times, as the haunts of "no new prospects in the near future", pound on the fragile Producer psyche, like an Edgar Allen Poe novel beneath the floor, over and over. Images of unanswered emails flicker past the thousand-mile gaze that's stared across his lifeless, silent office. Everybody is gone! Vacations, golf outings, went-home early, "I'll get back you" answers...pounding, pounding away.

Most don't know this; but, the Solstice actually occurs between June 20th and 23rd, depending upon the astrophysics of that year, but let's just go with June 21st (the first day of summer). The kids are bored after being out of school for only ten days and the family is a little frazzled. That's when it hits. "Honey" your life companion begins, "We should go someplace..." The pulse quickens. You can't buy a new business appointment, your customers are all gone and your spouse thinks *now is the time to spend money on a vacation!!??* You've got nothing in the pipeline! My God! Has the world gone mad?

By July 5th, you can barely make it out of bed before 10:00 a.m. You're found sitting on the back deck as the "tick-tick-tick" sounds of Rainbird sprinklers mark the cadence to your empty, prospect-less soul. And, you're in deep doo-doo with the boss, over the way you've been treating the staff ". Is it too late to get my teaching degree?" you wonder.

Then, as sudden as summer rain, it's gone! August brings you out of it, as the kids buy school clothes and your handicap has taken a nose dive, because you've finally given-up. "What the hell, why not golf more", you decide. The trip to the cabin wasn't nearly long enough and you're

ping for lost time, a summer that went-by too fast. Deep down, you really know what's going-on, in your sick twisted soul, as the dog days of summer approach.

You can feel it. It's almost Labor Day. The Prey is returning.

9. Why all good Producers stay after the agency has sold: Top 10

1. Because they owned stock and they have skin in the game after the sale.
2. The new owners treat them like gods.
3. The new owners actually run the place like a business.
4. "Wait and See" becomes a habit after awhile; long past the guaranteed employment contract expires.
5. There's a new Sheriff in town and Producers love to watch their old bosses squirm.
6. Their team isn't going anywhere unless they all go together and that almost never happens without a law-school student loan getting paid-off.
7. They over-sold, "this will be great" to their clients when breaking the news of the sale
8. With all the new resources and all the stud-Producers in the acquiring firm, his/her income stands a real good chance of going north!
9. At the end of the day, the clients don't care as long as their "team" is happy.
10. Buyers heed General Colin Powell's warning, "You break it. You own it". The Producer has more clout and more of everything, than ever before. Pro Forma EBITDA becomes real EBITDA, as long as the good Producers are happy.

And the final question is...

20. Why the best and brightest hit a funk they sometimes never survive

HR specialists say that people seldom quit the company. They almost always quit their bosses and I think they're right.

"The best and the brightest lose their way sometimes, because they lose their dreams or they are in search of new ones that won't come true with you. Once lost, dreams can only be re-grown in the fertile grounds of "someplace else".

Dreams are lofty of things.

Dreams are never measured by the W-2, the SUV, the house, or the flat abs. Dreams are measured in distance, "Someday" and "When", are the stuff dreams are made of. Producers call upon their inner demons (and saints) to motivate their behavior. These actions shape the Producer's future. If a solid citizen has gone dark, he/she is doing it on purpose. "Dependency" issues aside, Producer's who get this way, predominantly became this way, because you (CEO/President) enabled them.

Leaders need examples. Leaders use examples. Nothing exemplifies where the President wants to take the culture than; a successful, engaging, role-model, Producer. Everyone notices you



clowning-around with that Producer. Everyone sees the energy between you; your bias and approval of that person is transparent to all. That's how you want it. That's how you need it. "Be like this guy/gal and you'll be loved too", is a powerful cultural catalyst.

And there's the rub.

Along the way you've crossed the line. You didn't mean to cross it. You don't even know where or what the line actually is but, in the mind of that person, you've crossed it. You've done this by sharing your most inner secrets, your desires, your thoughts and strategies, and you plans. You've enlisted the Producer's help with all of that too. "Say Bob...why don't you take Biff out to lunch next week and get inside his head for me. Tell him....blah, blah, blah". You do it, because Biff knows. Biff is fully aware that the conversation with Bob will be replayed, in your office, over a 10-year old Merlot, that very night.

And good for you. That works. It works in unbelievably effective ways; not the least of which is, you're training Bob to be a future Leader. But, there's also a problem with this. When I say "a Leader"; Bob, being a perfect Producer, hears "THE LEADER". He's developing a new set of dreams. He's setting a new goal, envisioning "what it will be like"; and the line you crossed has long since vanished in the rear-view mirror.

Bob may not even aspire to the corner office. He just wants to be in the inner circle, and for all practical purposes he is. But, he may not be there officially, which is why I draw your attention to the Sales Manager segment in Part One (Produce or Perish), as an alternative "next step" for Bob.

Most of the time, these things sort of work themselves out. Bob's life becomes more complicated, as the kids begin High school and his book demands his undivided attention. The firm becomes more complex to run, and invariably, you cross-back over the line, as those moments with Bob grow less frequent. By the time Bob hits his mid 40's, his dreams concern him less than the five things he has to accomplish this weekend.

But once in a while, usually when a Producer is in their late 30's and early 40's, and the sun and the stars align, Bob begins to wonder if "someday" will ever come. He begins to question how things will play-out, if not doubt that they ever will. Good communication can solve this, but I've seen it, all too often, that the President just wants Bob to keep-on producing. The President attempts to let-down Bob's expectations or at the very least manage them in some sort of sequence. Maybe that works and maybe it doesn't, but there's no question who's to blame if it doesn't.

You.

Usually I end it there; but, having been in your shoes, I won't. You get a pass on this one. If it happens more than once, you should be knocked around; but, if you found yourself in this situation, trying to lift-up the organization, I'm not going to fault you. Warning you is about all I will do. It will keep you closer to the line; if/once you cross it.



BROKER'S
P A T H

PERPETUATION PLANNING • OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE • MOVING THE NEEDLE

If the sole measure of Bob's world stays "net book growth", you're going to lose him/her, and the funk is your clue; it's beginning. Your non-piracy agreement may be the only thing preventing the explosion from occurring.

If you are convinced Bob is going to eventually leave, after you've bought him the T-bone, then sit back and let things play out. Don't rush it. If Bob walked into your office without notice on top of his game and quit, the culture would blame you and you might just never recover. It would be a disaster for you. Bob's funk will take some of the pressure off of you if he leaves. I'm not saying I like any part of this paragraph, but it's an important part to think about.

Dan Romain
Broker's Path
Brokerspath.com
503-577-3866