



Scott Anderson

Co-author, 'Reignite: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Selling'

“Oh, I Lied”

Posted: 5/26/2016 3:18 pm

"I'm not upset that you lied to me; I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you." – Friedrich Nietzsche

Recently I had two experiences that will leave a lasting impression. They speak to both human nature and business ethics.

Last summer my family moved from Minneapolis to Dallas, an experience I wish not to repeat, and unless Dallas starts getting snow November through April, I won't have to repeat it.

We worked with a top Realtor in the Dallas area to find our home, which we purchased prior to selling our Minneapolis house. It was a great experience.

Selling our Minneapolis home was not the same experience. The real estate agent we chose (based on our friendship) posted the most awful, amateurish photos of our house online along with numerous wrong details on the house. Having just purchased the house in Dallas, we understood the importance of showcasing our property with good pictures. We immediately voiced our concern, but our real estate agent took no action.

A few months into our listing contract, the same amateurish pictures were still online, and we were not getting any bites. We instructed the agent to reduce the price on the Minneapolis house to get traction for the fall market. I monitored the MLS listings and was shocked when no action was taken on the price reduction. On a Saturday evening two weeks after we requested the reduction, I emailed our agent asking why the reduction had not taken place. The following Sunday morning the price magically changed.

The agent then sent an email back to me on Sunday claiming she had actually changed the price earlier and that I could not be monitoring the MLS because only Realtors have access to it. Essentially, she lied to me about changing the price. I then reached out to other real estate agents to confirm that the price had indeed changed that Sunday morning, and not when I requested. From my perspective, that was the end of our professional relationship.

Like all of us, the agent was busy. Maybe she missed changing the price in a timely manner. I can forgive that. Just be forthright and tell me the truth.

A few weeks later, when our agent held an open house, someone asked about the shape of our wood roof shingles. Our agent told the prospect that we had the roof power washed every other year. When I heard that, I told her that we have never had the roof power washed! Her response, "Oh, I lied."

The outcome was that we had to part ways with the agent as it was too difficult to decipher the truth from the lies. The integrity of the relationship was gone. I can forgive incompetence but not untruthfulness.

A second experience with the move was just as enlightening—a call to my telephone/internet company in July to cancel my service. It began with me on hold for 45 minutes while a recording telling me how much they value my business. When I finally spoke to someone "live" (after being transferred numerous times), I cancelled the service and received my cancellation confirmation number. But throughout the summer, I continued to receive invoices from this company.

In September, I called again. After another 45-minute wait and providing my cancellation number, the sales associate told me that the line had not been cancelled. Instead, it had been moved to a different level of service (my house was empty). I cancelled again and again received my cancellation number. Still, I received an invoice in October. On the third call, I had the same wait time, but finally got to speak to someone who was credible. This sales associate immediately provided her employee number and revealed that it was standard practice for some associates to provide fake cancellation numbers as it would hurt their incentives if they allowed customers to cancel. Essentially, the cancellation department was encouraging its team members to frustrate and lie to the customer so they personally wouldn't be penalized! Why would I ever do business with company again? I deplore even the sound of their name.

Customers are constantly asking: "How can I trust this salesperson?" or "Can I trust this company?" Integrity is a part of brand loyalty. Once you lose the customer's trust based on your own poor behavior, you can't get it back. I want to work with people and companies that I can believe what they say, when they say it.

Question: What are you doing to build trusting relationships?

Scott Anderson is a founding principal at Diamond Performance Solutions LLC and RevenueForce LLC. He is co-author of the book Reignite: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Selling. Scott spent his entire career-more than twenty-five years selling, managing salespeople, and providing sales consulting, training, and coaching to some of the biggest and best sales organizations in the world. He has worked with leading organizations including 3M, IBM, Cargill, UnitedHealth Group, Carlson Companies, Andersen Windows, Wells Fargo and The Hartford. He has authored numerous articles on sales effectiveness. He resides in Dallas, Texas. He can be reached at 612-961-1778 or email: sanderson@revenueforce.com.