

T.I.M.E – Using your time to Positively Impact Career Transition (A Philosophy for Authentic Sales Behavior)

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Are you “in a career transition” or do you know someone who is? Undoubtedly, you know someone who is unprepared or uncomfortable with this new phase in life. Professionals in transition understand that they will need to be prepared to present their background, strengths, examples of success and future goals. Networking, asking for feedback, discussing potential options, and sharing the present situation may seem like a position of “weakness;” however, asking for help is one of the most advantageous activities someone can do in this situation. Professionals in transition are concerned that they now have to “sell” themselves, making an emotional time even more challenging.

Lack of comfort with networking often pulls accomplished professionals out of an effective and active job search. This concerns me because the benefits of reaching out and asking for meetings, which results in gathering important insight and information, are lost to the person who has so much to offer, because they view these necessary steps as “sales” behavior – “ugh!”

As a successful account executive in business development who has coached countless professionals during this phase of their lives, I am sharing what I consider to be critical aspects of my philosophy and personal approach to consultative/solution selling. It has helped many in career transition understand that the personal sales process does not begin with talking about yourself, is not about boasting, and is not a one-sided interaction. It is about being authentic, direct and honest, while taking the time to prepare, listen and get involved. The **T.I.M.E.** model outlines the basic tenants which I believe are the foundation of authentic sales behavior. I am confident that this will be a respected approach and will help you, or a friend, become more successful and confident during transition.

T is for building TRUST

- Approach all interactions with the question in mind – “What can I do to offer value?” (Perhaps it’s something business or non-business related you’ve learned or someone you know who could be a resource.)
- Be respectful, honest, and by all means, authentic (“I’d welcome a few minutes to learn about your role/company as I am exploring some new options in my career.”)
- It is **not** all about your agenda
- Do what you say you are going to do

I is for INVESTMENT of Time

- Clearly communicate what you are exploring by taking time to give thoughtful review of your career history and ask for feedback from colleagues you’ve worked with. (“I’d welcome your thoughts on how you viewed the role I played at XYZ, or when we worked together.”)

- Take initiative & get involved
 - Natural assertiveness can be an advantage - consider taking a class or reading up on what true assertive behavior is
 - Reach out, ask for brief meetings, join and become active in professional and not-for-profit associations. Volunteers are welcome and you have so much to offer! (Ask colleagues and friends about organizations/associations, particularly in areas that interest you.)
- Stay current – regularly read the local business journal, WSJ, industry publications, participate in webinars, etc.
- Prepare for meetings by researching, reading, Googling, using LinkedIn, and reviewing the company website of everyone you are planning to chat with – this is a MUST!

M is for MEET their Needs by LISTENING

- Are you Listening?
 - Ask questions! What is important to the person you are speaking with?
 - What have they accomplished that they are proud of?
 - What do they love about their job?
 - What is important to them?
 - Ask about an organization’s business objectives and culture
 - Learn how you might help the person and firm meet their goals
 - Ask, pause, probe, reflect and confirm

E is for Energy

- It takes energy to approach this new phase in your life, so do things that make you feel good about yourself, which include reviewing your kudos and accomplishments
- Talk with people who know how you have made an impact to bolster your confidence
- Volunteering will not only help others, but should provide you with renewed energy
- When you find yourself discussing past accomplishments with passion take note - this is an indication that you are on the right path, which will translate into energy that people respond to positively

In summary:

When you are in a transition period in your career or view yourself in a “sales” position, keep in mind that the most successful sales professionals, before even considering discussing themselves, invest the time to know their value, learn about others, and get involved. They are sincere and authentic, and are excellent listeners who are truly interested in what is important to others before talking about themselves. **Use the T.I.M.E. model** to help stay focused on a process that should contribute to a successful job search. Conduct yourself with these principles in mind and get out there and “sell!”

Shelley Potente is the Senior Vice President and Managing Director for *The Leader’s Edge/Leaders By Design*, a firm that is fully focused upon leadership development, with a special focus upon supporting the advancement of women in the top tiers of organizations. Please don’t hesitate to contact Shelley if you would like to discuss the T.I.M.E approach – spotente@the-leaders-edge.com