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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians-Time: Your Best Friend or Your Worst Enemy

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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians — Time: Your Best Friend or Your Worst Enemy

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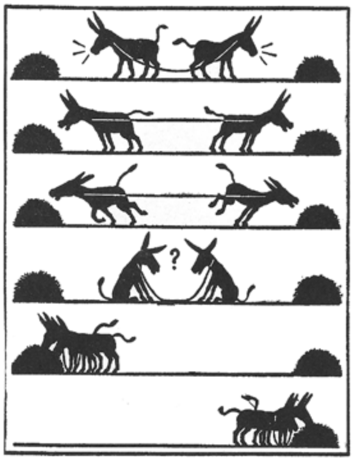
I once worked for a company that produced country risk reports. These were insightful and timely reports written by brilliant people. Moreover, those gems were produced on a daily basis so as to keep the readership abreast of the latest political and monetary developments being played out on the world's stage.



In presenting the product to prospects, the concept of being the "latest and most complete analysis" went hand-in-hand in describing the incredible worth of the content itself. To underscore the importance of timeliness, my sales pitch involved asking the prospect what, in their opinion, was the difference between news gathering and reporting today as opposed to that same process 100 years ago. The obvious answers about today's methods were centered on the Internet and its ability to deliver relevant, competent and hopefully accurate information in seconds.

The follow-up question that I always asked was, "what in news gathering remains the same today as it was 100 years ago?" That was usually met with blank stares. The answer quite simply is that today, like 100 years, there are still only 24 hours in the day. And if you use those hours effectively, your chances for success are greatly enhanced. However, if that time is spent in an unproductive manner, then the chances of success are greatly diminished.

My first boss used to say that *time* for a salesperson can be a best friend or worst enemy. Time which is wasted today will never be redeemed or come back tomorrow. The best information industry salespeople that I had the pleasure to manage were those who were ever mindful of the clock and never wasted their time on extraneous matters outside of their selling responsibilities during the selling day.

In the world of buying and selling information, the productive use of time is at the cornerstone of success for both the information professional and the vendor. Each has specific goals and objectives which can be easily derailed if attention is not paid to the basics of time management.

Sales reps in our industry are given a specific geographical territory to manage. As part of their daily activities they need to stay in contact with current customers, prospect for possible new ones follow-up on the month's outstanding renewals, resolve any outstanding customer issues and at the same time, visit key accounts, as well. It takes a pretty talented person to juggle all these balls in the air. That's why time management for a sales rep is critical to their success. Whatever the methodology to accomplish these tasks, the ultimate measure of success is whether the salesperson has met their monthly sales goals. Sales reps are judged almost entirely by their sales results. In spite of individual personalities, I always preferred to manage a salesperson who was able to meet and exceed their $ sales goals every month.

Effective time management is not only important as an integral part of the sales rep's office tasks, but even more important when the meetings in the field with the information professional take place. On a face-to-face appointment, both parties need to be clear as to why the meeting is taking place, what are the meeting's goals and objectives and who from both parties will be in attendance. Moreover, active participation at the meeting by both parties is essential. For a meeting to be deemed productive, both parties need to be engaged in the conversation. Time management is even more important for the meeting itself.

Unless both parties are involved in a crucial part of a delicate negotiation, most sales meetings should be no longer than 45 minutes to an hour. An agenda sent in advance to both parties and agreed to will lay out the objectives, participants and issues to be discussed. Time management is essential for both parties to succeed in their individual goals because we have little time for extraneous conversations. After all, time is money, so they say.

For the information professional, the following guidelines will help in keeping the salesperson and yourself on track:

- Devise a schedule each month that allows for time to meet and/or have phone conversations with salespeople. A sales rep's job is to present and ultimately sell you their products. They will call you with the intent to meet. Let them know, for example that you set aside Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 PM-5:00 PM to meet with vendors. Make yourself available to fit your schedule.
- Once the date and time of the meeting is set, require an agenda to be sent in to you 1 or 2 weeks in advance to review so you can make comments and revise as you see fit. The agenda should include topics intending to be discussed, participants and goals & objectives of the meeting. You need to edit that document and then send it back to the salesperson with *your* additions and deletions. It's your meeting. You need to take ownership.
- Schedule the meeting in a room that has privacy. Meeting at the reference desk is not advisable.
- If the salesperson is not answering your questions satisfactorily, ask for clarification. When the meeting is over you need to be clear on the attributes of the product, pricing, "to do" items, etc.
- If a salesperson calls and requests a meeting to go over a new product and you do not have the budget to even consider the offering, make that clear to the sales rep. Given costs involved in travelling to your library, the rep needs to visit bona fide prospects that have the budget to make a buying decision. If you don't have the money, make it clear. You'll save yourself and the rep a considerable amount of time and money.
- And if you cannot meet the rep for whatever reason, let them know that. Silence and avoidance is unacceptable. Faithfully return their phone calls.
- Prepare a list of questions that you need to know about the product including price, technical compatibility, accuracy of data, etc.

For the salesperson in the information industry, the management of time is crucial. Effective use of the phone is part and parcel of that effectiveness. Given the length and breadth of the assigned territory, the effective use of the phone to speak and connect to clients/prospects is essential.

The salesperson by virtue of the fact that they have reached out to the library to gauge interest in the company's offerings has seemingly done a significant amount of homework in determining that there may be a fit between the library and the proposed product. Assuming that this work has been done, for the sales rep to continue and arrange to meet in person, the following must be done:

- After the initial phone conversation that signifies that there is an interest by the information professional in

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exploring more about your product, propose a follow-up on-site meeting. Send an email with a proposed agenda with possible dates and times as well and be sure to include who from your company plans to attend.

- Once the proposed agenda is approved by the librarian, and then gather only the relevant information needed for that meeting. If the library contact has specifically said what they want to discuss, don't introduce other products that will only muddy the waters.
- At the meeting, come prepared with a number of questions to further ascertain if, in fact the proposed product ultimately makes sense for the library to consider purchasing. Take nothing for granted!
- Once those questions and the librarian's questions are answered, summarize the points and reinforce the fact that there is an agreement on all issues. Jointly decide what the next steps are.
- Follow the guidelines to keep the meeting length to less than 1 hour. Your time and their time are valuable. Extraneous conversations unnecessarily lengthen the meeting.

By both parties understanding and respecting each other's time, a swift conclusion to the meeting will occur with both sides coming away with what they want followed by a plan to finalize the decision.

"**Time Has Come Today**" was a hit single by the **Chambers Brothers**, written by **Willie & Joe Chambers**. The song was recorded in 1966, released on the album *The Time Has Come* in November 1967, and as a single in December 1967. The theme of time management resonates through this song.

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Collection Management Matters — Time is Filled with Swift Transitions

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This year two of my colleagues that formerly attended the **Charleston Conference** with me in the **Lightsey Center** back in the 1990s retired, while three more had retired earlier. Of the group of us that use to sit together and hang out, only **Joyce Durant**, Dean of the Library at **Francis Marion University**, and **Linda Rousseau**, Assistant Director at **Charleston Southern**, are still unretired. Two librarians at my current institution retired this month as well, with one going home to baby sit her granddaughter and the other moving to Oregon and starting a new life with her son.

When peers retire, you miss having someone to bounce ideas off and compare procedures, strategies or management issues. You also miss having someone who is in your same position around to commiserate with. While they are delving in to their home renovations and traveling, you are in the same grind of managing staff, learning new technologies, going to meetings, etc. You can still keep in touch via email, but you know that you will never run into them at another library conference or cross paths with them in in Exhibit Hall at **ALA**.

When the older librarians leave the scene, new librarians come with different ideas and ways of doing their work. They have to be trained to be library liaisons and how to manage their allocations. If they are not coming from a similar institutions, webinars and other training opportunities need to be provided. This can sometimes be repetitious, because replacements are hired at different intervals during the year. I just picked up **Rittenhouse** as vendor last year and arranged training for both liaisons. One liaison retired without letting anybody know her intentions until the very end of the school year. After she left, I had to arrange for another training for her replacement. I meet with each new library faculty hire one on one to orientate them to their responsibilities. I did two this year and have one coming at the beginning of 2018.

When dealing with new library faculty, its best to show some respect for the experiences that they bring to the job, and show flexibility. They approach their jobs with new perspectives and I think it's important that they be allowed to try out their ideas and see how they work. Our previous Government Documents Librarian refused to discard anything. When we hired her replacement, her first order of business was to do a massive weeding project — documents left the area in bins. When she asked my opinion, I was fine with whatever she wanted to accomplish. With younger librarians, especially those new to the profession, I try to take on a mentoring role.

Early in my career, I resolved not to be one of those folks who believe in preserving the status quo and keeping things the way they have always been. As I watched older colleagues who refused to adjust to change and always hearken back to the familiar, I decided that when I became senior, I would remain open to new methods and always try to adapt. For the most part, I have kept that promise to myself, although I must confess that I recently told the Library Dean that I did not want to go through another ILS migration. I would rather leave that adventure to my successor!

As I start toward the twilight of my own career in a couple of years, I keep my unknown successor in mind and wonder what kind of legacy will that librarian inherit from me. For one thing, I intend to leave a collection that is weeded and updated, as well as accurately inventoried. For another, I want to clean out my office and not leave a colossal amount of paperwork that needs to be shredded or old manuals that should have been discarded long ago. Another item on my agenda is to leave an updated Procedures Manual with the responsibilities of each staff member. Most of all, I want to leave a legacy that the collection and the library itself is more effective and viable because of my service.

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of Science Fiction & Fantasy, and **Sara Karloff**, the daughter of **Boris Karloff**. Recognized as one of the world's pre-eminent exhibitions of antiquarian books. "The 2017 edition of the **Book Fair** will have an especially strong international flavor as many of the foreign dealers assembled for the **ILAB Congress** in Pasadena the preceding week will stay on to exhibit," said **Book Fair** Co-Chair **Jennifer Johnson**. "We

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