

## TURN TO THE MASTERS FOR YOUR SALES PRINCIPLES

### Jeffrey Gitomer

I began this year by reading a 50-year-old book on the masters of selling. The book, titled America's Twelve Master Salesmen, was written and published by B.C. Forbes & Sons in 1953.

The book was based on the fact that each of these master salesmen had one extremely powerful overriding principle or philosophy upon which his or her success was based.

Not that it was the masters' only principle, but rather were the words they stood for. When you think of Martin Luther King Jr., you think: "I have a dream." He stood for those words. When you think of Patrick Henry, you think: "Give me liberty or give me death." When you think of Richard Nixon, you think, "I'm not a crook" (and you'd be thinking wrong).

It is amazing how truths become self-evident after 30 or 40 years of exposure — one way or the other.

Back to the book. Suppose you could adopt (or adapt) all of these masters' single best characteristics into your own set of capabilities. That would be power.

And so, to challenge you in 2003, here are the masters' philosophies from 1953. I have added my own to the list, even though in 1953 I was a mere babe.

1. James A. Farley (corporate executive). Principle: Idlers do not last long. Starting as a door-to-door salesman, rising to vice president of sales for Universal Gypsum and ultimately becoming a director for several large companies including Coca-Cola, Farley believed that doing several things at once was the key to accomplishment. His secret was doing new things at the same time he was following up and building relationships. Often sending 100 letters a day, he was renowned for making and keeping friends.
2. Max Hess Jr. (retail store chain owner). Principle: Strive for a specific goal. Hess' father believed in the stimulating power of keeping Hess Brothers stores forever exciting — not only for the people who shop there but also for those who work in the store. Hess made a business plan full of goals. And in a small-town environment, he achieved big-city results by working his plan every day and having a happy army of people (his employees) helping him every step of the way.
3. Conrad N. Hilton (hotel owner). Principle: Make them want to come back. "It is our theory that when a hotel is in the top-glamour category... you just can't make it too luxurious. You heap it on. You never stop pondering the question, 'What aren't guests getting that they might be getting in the way of elegance and personal attention?'" Hilton knew that one hotel is like any other hotel. The difference is in how you treat

the guests. All he asked of his employees was to be nice to people so they will want to come back. They have been coming back for nearly 100 years.

4. Alex M. Lewyt (manufacturer of the Lewyt vacuum cleaner). Principle: Believe in your product and love it. So will the world! He was an engineer who was convinced he had built the world's best vacuum cleaner. He advertised it before production was finished and created a demand in the market with no product (a market vacuum, if you will pardon the pun). When the cleaner finally emerged on the market, it was swept up (sorry again). Four million sales in four years. Lewyt said that having the best product is not enough. You must believe it's the best and share your passion through every marketing and advertising means.

5. Alfred E. Lyon (street salesman in Manhattan and later corporate executive). Principle: Sell yourself first. "Remember, your customers don't buy your product. They buy you. If they buy you, they will sell your product for you." His approach -- "I treat my potential customers as I would treat a stranger whom I wanted to be my friend" — was a benchmark for his success. He realized that people buy from people they like. And all he did was to get people liking him, and the rest was easy.

6. Mary Margaret McBride (radio broadcaster and columnist; influencer of millions). Principle: Honesty is the best policy. "If I am convinced in my heart and mind that I'm speaking the truth, I approach the job as I would a sale — with zest and interest. And in my heart I know that I am actually performing a service on behalf of my listener — who is in reality, my customer. Honesty breeds loyal customers." Her values made her a fortune.

Gitomer note on honesty: When you hear a corporate message such as, "To serve you better..." or an employee says, "We're doing the best we can...," no matter how you want to defend those words, they're lies.

The Orison Swett Marden quote, "No substitute has yet been found for honesty," is a benchmark that everyone will read and agree with — yet very few will follow.

OK. There's six of them. Pretty cool so far, huh? Next week in part two, more of the master salespeople of their time, including Red Motley and Elmer Letterman, will reveal sales insights that will take you to the next level.