

Joe Sweeney

— 3 SECRETS TO —

**NEVER BE
FORGOTTEN**
BY A PROSPECT

Introduction

Do you know that by employing three simple tactics you can transform your business relationships and leave memorable, lasting impressions on prospects?

As owner of four manufacturing companies, founder of the Sports Marketing Group, co-owner and managing director of Corporate Financial Advisors and contributor to more than 28 boards of directors, I've had to establish exercises and practices that get results for sales and business executives – from junior account managers to CEOs.

One of the most important lessons in my life, both in business and personally:

Preparedness is the key to everything.

It's obvious, yes. This concept is applicable to every aspect of your life, but in business, this concept is critical: the more you know about prospects, the better you can help them solve their problems. Being prepared means you never make a cold call or walk into a meeting cold. You want to learn as much as you can about whom you're dealing with and the company they're with before you tap out phone numbers.

Simply being prepared, however, is not the only answer to your challenges with building lasting relationships with prospects.

To leave a lasting impression, you need to understand three simple secrets: do the little things, do something memorable and end with the wow factor.

Let's review these tried and tested tactics in detail.

Secret 1:

Do the Little Things

Experts say the little things don't mean a lot in business, that it's more important to think big-picture stuff, but that sort of thinking is flat-out wrong. The little things mean everything. They're how you differentiate yourself.

So I have a few questions for you:

- Do you return phone calls, texts, or e-mails in a timely manner?
- Do you follow through when you say you're going to do something?
- Are you on time for meetings, or, if you're going to be late, call to explain your tardiness?

Paying attention to the little details and following through with touch points and regular communication will go a long way to impress prospects and make them feel like they are important.

Never forget that when you're conducting business with another party, those on the other side of the table are consciously or subconsciously asking themselves three questions:

- Do you really care for me, or are you trying to peddle a product?
- Can you and your company really help me? Are you competent in what you're doing?
- Can I trust you? Are the claims you're making reliable and reasonable?

You have to be prepared to answer these three questions, whether they are verbalized or not. You have to impress your prospects and deliver on your promises. How can you do this? Simple. Read on.



“ A BRAND IS NO LONGER WHAT WE
TELL CONSUMERS IT IS — IT IS WHAT
CONSUMERS TELL EACH OTHER IT IS. ”

– Intuit Founder Scott Cook

Takeaway: Provide potential buyers with a stellar first impression, an impression they will share with others.

Secret 2:

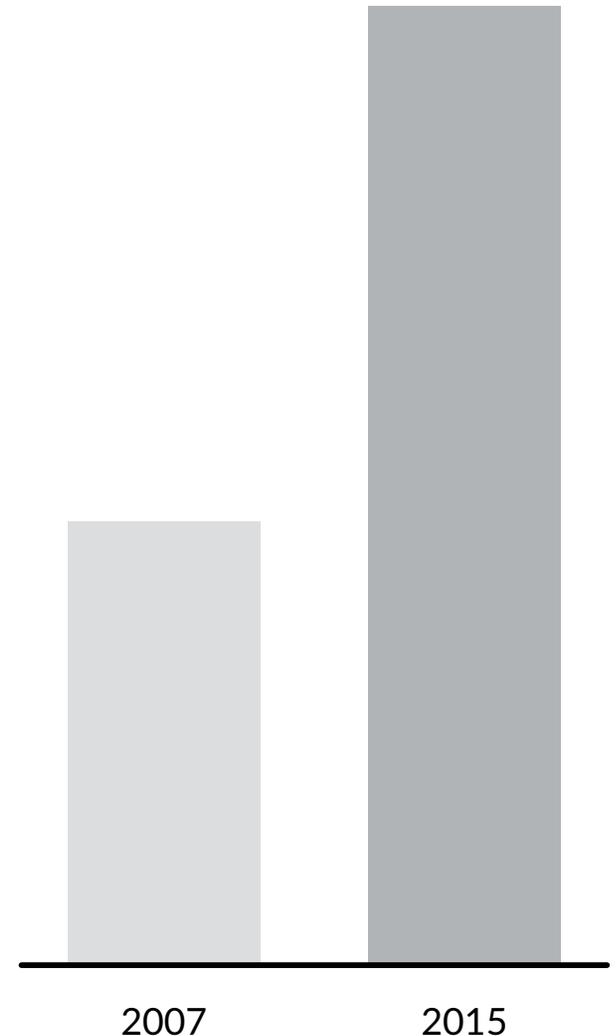
Find Something Personal, Do Something Memorable: When you do the little things, you will leave a lasting impression.

I'm always looking to find something personable and do something memorable with companies and individuals— from the CEOs to the junior account managers. That is one way you can differentiate yourself.

IN 2007 IT TOOK AN AVERAGE OF **3.68**
COLD CALL ATTEMPTS TO REACH A PROSPECT.
TODAY IT TAKES **MORE THAN 8 ATTEMPTS.**

Takeaway: Cold calling is dead, so don't do it.

TeleNet and Ovation Sales Group



Let me give you a prime example.

During a recent trip to South America, I was asked to speak to 400 leaders at General Electric's (GE) Experienced Commercial Leadership Program (ECLP) world leadership conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During my talk, I mentioned that you should never make a cold call, never walk into a meeting cold. You want to know who's there and know something about the people in the room.

I saw some eyes roll and a few people shift in their seats.

Pretending that I didn't notice, I continued: "I know what you're probably thinking: You don't know our business, Sweeney. Because we make cold sales calls all the time. I'm here to transform that type of thinking. Is Tom Smith here?"

Halfway toward the back of the auditorium, Tom Smith — I'm using a pseudonym — gingerly raised his hand.

"Would you mind coming to the front, Tom?"

Tom glanced at several hundred of his peers. I knew he was wondering what he was getting into. Nonetheless, he worked his way to the center aisle and made his way to the stage.

"Tom, you and I have never met, have we?"

"No, we haven't."

I turned to the audience. "You could go to GE's website and find out that Tom Smith graduated from Harvard Business School and works in GE Health Care.

"But let me tell you some things about Tom Smith that you don't know. He was born on May 18, 1979. He's one of four boys. His brothers' names are Mitch, Bill, and Sam. His father was a construction worker in upstate New York; his mother was a schoolteacher. His most memorable childhood experience happened when he was 13 and his brother Mitch sliced off three fingers at the wood factory. Tom went on to Princeton undergrad and Harvard for his MBA. At Princeton, he was a walk-on for the basketball team."

"Tom's favorite drink is a cosmopolitan. His favorite football player is Tom Brady of the New England Patriots. His nickname on the basketball court is LeBron because he's always talking trash when he plays in pickup games on Tuesday nights."

I hesitated for a moment to see how this was playing among Tom's peers, but they were hanging on every word. Also, Tom was beaming. By now, he was rather proud for being singled out.

I turned away from Tom and faced the audience. "You see where I'm going with this?" I continued. "So what did I just say about Tom? If I want to get close to Tom, I should know about his family and what his interests are. I should do my best to discover his background and who he is. The more you know about someone, the better you can serve his or her needs. As long as you're not overly intrusive — and I'll admit it's a fine line — people appreciate that you put the effort in to get know them better. Oh, yeah, what did I say about his favorite drink? I said he loves cosmopolitan martinis."

I reached underneath the lectern and handed him a bottle of Grey Goose vodka. The audience howled, and Tom's face broke out into a smile. "And what did I say about his favorite athlete? Here's an autographed football signed by Tom Brady."

I handed him an official NFL pigskin with Brady's autograph written large in black Sharpie ink.

Here's how I ended our interaction: "I know Tom loves reading great inspirational business books, and I just happen to have one of my favorites." I handed him a signed copy of my book, *Networking Is a Contact Sport*.

"Everyone, give Tom a round of applause," I said as I watched him carry off his loot.

As expected, the first question I fielded in my question-and-answer session was this: "Joe, how did you find out all that information on Tom Smith?"

What I did that morning in Buenos Aires was demonstrate how — by employing the Sweeney 22, which means asking 22 interesting questions about a person that go beyond the surface of the individual — you can get to know an individual and serve him beyond the surface of the individual — you can get to know an individual and serve him or her better. It's not prying into private details but seeking out behind-the-scenes information that reveals something interesting or unique about the individual.

This usually means talking and e-mailing with an associate or fellow executive. Every time I've explained what I'm trying to do — create an experience and honor that person — people have enjoyed the exposure. I never reveal anything inappropriate. It's always a hit, and people comment on how helpful this exercise is.

Yes, the Sweeney 22 involves legwork as well as an inquisitive mind and a willingness to scratch beneath the surface. But working through the 22 questions, which I share shortly, will likely net you the information you need. When you put that information to good use, you can make people feel special.

What I did in South America can be summed up in this statement, when you find out something personal and do something memorable, then you will make a lasting impression. The quality of your personal and professional life is based upon the quality of your relationships, and the quality of those relationships is based upon the quality of your network, and your network is based upon your ability to connect with others.

The Sweeney 22 is a great way to make an impression on others. In my 16-Week Winning Game Plan for business and personal development, I list 22 areas that can be mined for details. You can feel free to add or substitute other background material, but the point is that it's critical to have information about those you're doing business with.

Finding out more about a person's interests gives you a chance to make an impression in a creative way. If you discover that a client or customer is a deer hunter or takes his or her family to the beaches in South Carolina every summer, then you might purchase a \$ 12.95 subscription to Field & Stream or Coastal Living for that person. He or she is going to think of you the 12 times the magazine arrives that year.

One of the questions people often ask about the Sweeney 22 is this: Joe, isn't this sort of creepy? Aren't you stalking?

I don't think so. People reveal more information on Facebook. The more you know about a person, the better. If your job is to work on business opportunities that are beneficial to both sides, then information is a good thing. Showing more interest than simply asking, "How are the wife and kids?" conveys that you're willing to make the extra effort.

91% OF CUSTOMERS SAY THEY'D
GIVE REFERRALS. ONLY 11% OF
SALESPEOPLE ASK FOR REFERRALS.

– Dale Carnegie

Takeaway: Create a referral-generating system that kicks in every time your work leads to a satisfied customer.

Secret 3:

Think About the Wow Factor

You can take the concept of finding something personal and doing something memorable to the next level by implementing the wow factor. The wow factor is something that elicits astonishment and wonder, or something that shows others that you're aware of the interests or difficulties they are experiencing. A wow factor can even be coming up with problem-solving ideas. If any of those ideas is well received and works, then you know you have had an impact on that person.

Here are three questions to ask yourself when it comes to the wow factor:

- Do you remember the last time you were wowed?
- How did it make you feel? Explain what that moment meant to you.
- When was the last time you wowed someone else?

If all of us can remember how great it felt to be wowed, why don't we make it a habit to do it more often for others? People remember you when you wow them, so to differentiate yourself with your clients and customers, think of doing something that would make them remember you.



People like to be remembered, and people liked to be wowed— or at least surprised by your business acumen. Here's an example of how the latter works.

I worked with a large law firm with 26 offices around the world in regard to its business development. This law firm asked me to help its members network better and improve their business development efforts as they were putting together a presentation that touted their attributes and ability to represent companies in corporate matters.

In the course of a conversation with one of the attorneys, he identified a \$40 billion company they were seeking as a top client. As he continued speaking about this large company and how they'd love to engage it, I remembered seeing a news story in the morning paper in which the CEO of the \$40 billion company stated that his

number one challenge was growing his company's business from \$40 billion to \$60 billion in markets that it currently was not serving.

I mentioned that story to the attorney, which set a plan in motion to help their client grow his company to \$60 billion by acquiring companies within markets it currently did not serve.

Sometimes the best way to create a wow factor can be something as simple as staying informed about big trends or stories in your industry. The key is listening and reading carefully— in this case, the law firm was answering the challenge of the company before the company ever shared its challenges.

So, be thinking of doing something memorable and creating a wow factor. Even a small gesture— such as tucking a \$10 gift card into a birthday card, a note on a family member's accomplishment, or a congratulatory note on a promotion— will make a lasting impression. Just the fact that you did something makes you stand out.

Conclusion

If you are serious about finding success in the areas that matter most in your life, you need a different approach. I hope my three tactics will help you leave a lasting impression on your prospect list.

As a bonus, turn the page for a free printable Sweeney 22 worksheet!

- Joe Sweeney

P.S. - Beyond making a memorable impression, what if I told you that by investing just a few hours of work each week towards personal development and training, you could take substantial steps toward professional success?

The Sweeney 22 to learn more about a person

1. Birthdate and location

2. Parents' names and occupations

3. Number of siblings

4. Names, sex, and order of siblings

5. Any nicknames of siblings

6. Memorable childhood experience

7. High school attended

8. Extracurricular activities in high school

9. College attended/graduate degrees/majors

10. Extracurricular activities in college/grad school

11. Career timeline

12. Marital status

13. Kids' names and ages

14. Spouse's name and occupation

15. Spouse/kids' hobbies/passions

16. His or her hobbies/passions

17. Most memorable adulthood experience

18. Favorite drink

19. Favorite food

20. Life's philosophy/mantra

21. Greatest life-changing moment

22. Any other unique information
