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Great Minds Think Alike

Dear Roxanne,

One aspect of my work that I enjoy tremendously is networking with people. My way of doing this is to share ideas on a regular basis. This is also my way of showing you that I appreciate you as a client. I would like to send you some success strategies that have helped me and my clients become more productive and prosperous. These ideas have been collected from some of the sharpest minds in business. I am sure you will enjoy them and find them immediately useful. I'd like to begin by passing along some pearls of wisdom about success and persistence.

"The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly. That is dedication."

—Cecil B. De Mille (1955)

"The key to success isn't much good until one discovers the right lock to insert it in."

—Chinese Proverb

"Patience and diligence, like faith, remove mountains."

—William Penn (1693)

"Whoever has no patience has no wisdom."

—Sa'di (1258)

"Most men that do thrive in the world do forget to take pleasure during the time that they are getting their estate, but reserve that till they have got one, and then it is too late for them to enjoy it."

—Samuel Pepys (1666)

Sometimes we need reminders of ideas we already know, but from a different perspective. You might want to enlarge and post these messages in a conspicuous spot in the office. I look forward to sending you more useful pieces in the coming weeks.

Toward A Mutual Win!

Anthony S. Mills

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Write Effective Sales Letters, Part I

Dear Roxanne,

Writing is for writers, right? No, it is for everyone in business. Part of our jobs is to communicate effectively. You may be prospecting, following-up, information-gathering, keeping in touch, or trying to sell. You may write letters yourself or delegate the task. In either case, the following guide (presented in three installments) will help you or your assistant create effective letters, step-by-step. Not every letter will incorporate all the elements that follow, so pick and choose, as appropriate.

Make it personal. Your letterhead should appear at the top for immediate identification. It is important to use your prospect's or client's name in the salutation. Form letters always end up in the garbage.

Focus on one idea. Sell only one thing at a time-you, your company, a home, or a service. Effective letters are focused and simple. For every letter you write, answer this question: The purpose of my letter is: _____

Sell benefits, not features. Remember, you are a problem-solver, not an educator. Do not try to overwhelm people with facts. Just write about two or three of the most relevant benefits. Answer this question: The three benefits I will discuss in my letter are:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Write for Readability. Letters should be no longer than one page, and broken up into four or five paragraphs that are easy to read. Bullets, numbers, and bold sub-headings help break up the text and draw in the reader's eye.

Enthusiastically,

Anthony S. Mills

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Write Effective Sales Letters, Part II

Dear Roxanne,

As a supplement to my last letter, here are four more tips for making your business letters shine:

Write with a logical flow. Take the time to write the answers to the questions that will inevitably flow into your reader's mind. The following generic questions would relate to any product or service or to real estate:

- ◆ What is it? (Simple description)
- ◆ Where is it?
- ◆ How does it meet my needs?
- ◆ Why would I want it?
- ◆ What risks are involved for me?
- ◆ How can it be financed?
- ◆ What factors remove some risk for me?
- ◆ How much does it cost?
- ◆ How can I be sure this is a good deal?
- ◆ When can I see it?

Make a claim. There should be something different and better about you, your company, your services, or a home you are trying to sell. Brag. Tell your prospect what it is.

Give examples. Examples speak louder than descriptions and claims. Tell a brief success story. Use statistics and dollar amounts if you can.

Use testimonials. Direct mail letters are usually read with some skepticism. Testimonials will add credibility, especially if they are from referral sources.

Next week I will complete this three-part series on effective sales letters. Until then...

To Your Success!

Anthony S. Mills

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Write Effective Sales Letters, Part III

Dear Roxanne,

I hope you have found my last two letters helpful. Here are the remainder of the tips on letter-writing:

Guarantee your claim. Money-back guarantees are powerful motivators in other industries, but Realtors do not have that luxury. If you can, offer some sort of guarantee regarding your services and watch your response rate soar! Your guarantee will be:

Include a call for action. At the end of your letter, give your prospects a nudge to get them to call or write. Your call for action will be:

Make it easy to respond. Toll-free numbers make responding effortless. Self-addressed stamped envelopes are recommended if you are requesting materials. The promise of a follow-up call by you is also desirable, but be sure to call within 48 hours. You will ask your prospects to respond by:

I highly recommend the book, *Words That Sell* by Richard Bayan (Caddylak Publishing, 1984) to help you find the most cogent, persuasive words for your letters.

Sincerely,

Anthony S. Mills

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Build Your Emotional Bank Accounts

Dear Roxanne,

In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey discussed an interesting concept called "The Emotional Bank Account." An emotional bank account is a metaphor that describes the amount of trust that has been built up in a relationship. It is the feeling of safety you have with someone or that someone has with you.

Every time I make deposits into an emotional bank account with you—in terms of courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments—I build up a reserve. Your trust increases and I can draw on it when needed. If I make a mistake; your trust will compensate for it; e.g., if my communication is unclear, you will understand anyway.

The emotional bank account serves as a metaphor for our business and personal lives. We must invest regularly in our emotional bank accounts because, paradoxically, our most constant relationships—such as marriage—require the greatest number of deposits.

The same principle applies to business relationships. You know that you must first establish trust and credibility with a FSBO before you can expect a listing. In some cases, the emotional deposits may have to be numerous and take place over a long time-frame.

Keep these areas of emotional deposits in mind. I believe they are self-explanatory:

- Understanding, compassion, and empathy
- Kindness, courtesy, thoughtfulness, and generosity
- Keeping commitments, being reliable and responsive
- Clarifying expectations, avoiding misunderstandings, striving to communicate well
- Personal integrity and honesty
- Apologizing sincerely when you make an emotional withdrawal

I like this metaphor. It reminds us to pay attention to relationships. I hope you agree.

To Your Success!

Anthony S. Mills

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Counseling Is Part of Good Management

Dear Roxanne,

When you hire an assistant or supervise people, you deal with a new realm—management. You are no longer responsible just for your productivity, but the productivity of others. Assistants help your production increase incrementally, so the added responsibility is worth it. Of the three functions inherent in any management position—training, coaching, and counseling—counseling is the most difficult. Auren Uris, author of *101 of the Greatest Ideas in Management*, suggested some guidelines for counseling:

The Need: Counseling—the one-to-one conversation in which a manager tries to help an employee cope with upsetting problems—is needed when there are changes in an employee's attitude, behavior, or job performance.

The Symptoms: After you know an employee for a while, you can easily spot deviations from their "normal" behavior. Some of the reasons to counsel people include: mood change, performance sag, irritability, fatigue, becoming accident-prone, over-sensitivity, or trouble-making.

The Solution: Have a conversation in private in which you show concern and render assistance if possible. Keep these tips in mind:

- Show courtesy, attention, patience, compassion, and sincerity.
- Promise confidentiality and maintain it.
- Let the other person set the pace, but ask questions that are necessary for clarification.
- Try to pinpoint the real problem. Probe tactfully, but stop if resistance is strong.
- Be honest about the consequences of the problem if it is not resolved in a timely way.
- Don't give advice, especially medical, financial, or legal advice.
- Provide options without making recommendations. Be a resource-provider.
- Don't offer opinions or make judgments. Often, being a good listener is enough.

I think you will agree that managing people is rarely a simple matter; it takes insight.

Toward A Mutual Win!

Anthony S. Mills

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A Very Different Look At Time Management, Part I

Dear Roxanne,

In his best-selling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven R. Covey made a reference to an essay by E. M. Gray entitled, "The Common Denominator of Success." Gray spent his life searching for the common thread among successful people. Gray wrote "The successful person has the habit of doing the things that failures don't like to do. They [successful people] don't like doing them either necessarily, but their disliking is ubordinated to the strength of their purpose."

Covey sums up three generations of expert time-management theory in a single phrase: *Organize and execute around priorities*. He posed the question: "If you were to fault yourself in one of three areas, which would it be:

1. The inability to prioritize;
2. The inability or lack of desire to organize around your priorities; or
3. The lack of discipline to execute around them, i.e., to stay with your priorities and organization?" Most people say they lack discipline. Covey believes, however, that most people have not deeply internalized their priorities.

Long and short-range goals, projects, To-Do lists, and daily activities must have priorities and a recognized correlation to deep, personal values. This, he believes, is the *fourth* generation of time management. It places activities in the context of your personal mission, roles, and goals. Fourth generation time management creates tremendous empowerment.

I hope I have stimulated your interest. Next week I will provide you with more information on Steven R. Covey's concept of time management.

Toward A Mutual Win!

Anthony S. Mills

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A Very Different Look At Time Management, Part II

Dear Roxanne,

Last week I shared some fascinating and philosophical ideas from Steven Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey believes that the tool you use for personal management (a.k.a. time management) should meet six important criteria:

- **Coherence.** There should be harmony, unity, and integrity between your vision and mission, your roles and goals, your priorities and plans, and your desires and discipline. You should be able to refer to your personal mission statement daily. There should be a place for your roles (parent, Realtor, spouse, etc.), values, and long- and short-term goals.
- **Balance.** Your planning tool should help you maintain balance in your life so you do not neglect your health, family, personal or professional development, spiritual growth, financial goals, and so on.
- **Focus On Planning.** The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities, so plan in weekly increments, not daily increments. Planning ahead will enable you to prevent crises rather than prioritize them. Organize on a weekly basis for greater balance in your life.
- **A "People" Dimension.** Your planning tool should allow you to deal with people, not just tasks and schedules. Try to think in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. There are times when people must take priority over schedules. People are as wise an investment as tasks.
- **Flexibility.** Your planning tool should be your servant, not your master. It does not matter what you use—a computer, a day-planner, or post-it notes pasted to your forehead—as long as it fits your style and makes you more effective and efficient.
- **Portability.** Carry your planning tool with you so you can instantly review your personal mission statement or re-assess a commitment in light of a new opportunity.

I was inspired and motivated by Covey's insight and suggestions. I hope you agree.

Enthusiastically!

Anthony S. Mills

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Six Tips For Maximizing Your Team

Dear Roxanne,

In his book, *101 of the Greatest Ideas In Management*, Auren Uris suggested some ways to enhance the effectiveness of your working relationship with your assistant. This is a valuable lesson. Peter Drucker once said, "Executives are only as good as their assistants help them be." There is no question that assistants multiply a Realtor's effectiveness. So...

Determine the level of responsibility. Some people want assistants who follow orders well. Others want an assistant who takes the initiative. You are better off giving up some control and having someone who takes initiative. That way you are not tied to the office, which is precisely why you hired an assistant.

Keep communication open. Remember, an assistant's training never stops, so a steady flow of information, questions, and answers is a must.

Adjust to each other's style. Expect an adjustment period during which you learn each other's style and areas in which you complement each other.

Value the personal relationship. Former Vice President Walter Mondale once wrote this about the affinity between boss and assistant: "The relationship is intensely personal. It is founded on professional need, but it thrives on personal respect."

Foster commitment. Loyalty is an indispensable quality in an assistant*and in a boss. Find or create common goals. Keep your assistant happy with challenges and just rewards.

Encourage advancement. If your assistant aspires to bigger and better career positions, encourage that growth and become a catalyst for it. You will benefit in the long run.

One of my goals is to show you that we are all part of a winning team.

Toward A Mutual Win!

Anthony S. Mills

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Begin With The End In Mind

Dear Roxanne,

Steven R. Covey, in his best-selling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, began his second chapter with a quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

So much success is within our grasp if it is first within our minds. One of the 7 habits that Covey discussed was the harnessing of the power of the mind to conceive and help us achieve. But before conceiving greater success and working to achieve, Covey recommends that people look within to discover what is truly important. Goals that stem from your values will enrich your life far greater than "superficial" goals.

All Things Are Created Twice. Begin with the end in mind is based on the principle that all things are created twice. First there is the mental creation, then there is the physical reality. Carpenters know that you "measure twice and cut once." You create a blueprint, then work on a daily basis to construct your design. Without a blueprint, you are just improvising; and without daily references to your blueprint, you are creating from memory, which is too risky. When you set your goals (short & long-term), make them so clear, measurable, and attainable that they suggest actions for their accomplishment.

You will gain insight and focus every day if you look at whether you are acting on your goals and conducting the activities needed to accomplish them or reacting to 1) someone else's agenda, 2) external circumstances, or 3) past habits.

Imagination + Self-Awareness = Directed Action. Your creation of a vision plus a vigilance to your focus will support behaviors that culminate in success. Each day you will chip away at your most profound goals and accomplish what truly makes you happy.

I hope my success strategies have been interesting, inspiring, motivating, and entertaining. I will be in touch soon.

To Your Success!

Anthony S. Mills