

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts ***Disasters: Are you ready?***

The Selling of Emergency Management

We all have job titles and most have job descriptions. Some even have name placards outside their offices with their job title on it. More than job titles, I wonder what words you would use for what it is that you do. Does Director, King County Officer of Emergency Management describe what I do?

Well, I'll tell you what I do, and that is, "I sell emergency management, in all its forms." That's right, I'm a sales person, I'm in marketing and definitely into business development. I also think that many of you who listen to these Podcasts are also in sales, so I'd thought I share a few sales tips with you.

I once worked for Marshall Fields in the Chicago area selling women's shoes. That experience taught me that "The customer and their satisfaction" is what counts. The old saying is that the "Customer is always right." Which we know isn't true, but if you do focus on the customer, all the other pieces of your selling will fall into place.

The trap that sales people many times fall into is trying to sell the features of the product. For instance it could be the air conditioning for a car, or an all leather shoe. But it is not about the features. What the customer wants is the benefits that come from the features. For the car it is the comfort of being personally cool while driving on a hot day, for a leather shoe, its ability to breathe keep to keep you and your feet cool. Even high priced merchandise can appeal to people due to its exclusivity. "No one else will have one of these!" The sales person selling exclusivity doesn't start out with, "Look how much one of these costs."

I have said previously that "Selling individual disaster preparedness is like selling life insurance to a 17 year old, they don't think they need it." This then is generally the challenge we have in getting people to invest time, energy, and yes—even money into disaster mitigation,

preparedness, response and recovery measures. They have gotten along without it for years, and have not felt the ill effects of not being prepared. So, how do you convince them to invest today?

In many respects I do believe in using the windows of opportunity that disasters bring. Either right after an event that they personally experienced, or that they have observed elsewhere. This will then cause them to stop and think about their own fate, and what if this had happened to them.

Many times it is the elected official, council, chairman, board of directors, etc. who following a major disaster that has occurred, especially if it happened here in the United States, will ask the question, "How prepared are we? What are we not doing that we need to be doing? This then is your opportunity and the teachable moment.

They have walked into your store with money, and a desire to become better prepared. You should not squander this moment. What is it that they are they looking for? Do they want more personnel, new technology, or a better more modern facility? No, I think they want confidence that when presented with a disaster that their government or business can respond appropriately to protect employees, citizens and the value of the company. The additions of new positions, buildings and technology are only sidebars to them. Achieving some confidence in the future of their organization before, during, and after a disaster is what they want.

OK, the doors will open soon and we want to increase our preparedness levels 10% over last year. So, get ready, get set, start selling!