You Talk Too Much
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by Dan Solin

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You talk too much, you worry me to death
You talk too much, you even worry my pet
You just talk, you talk too much

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If you believe that everyone desperately wants to hear what you have to say, you’re wrong.

You talk too much.

That’s the observation of Dr. Moira Somers, Neuropsychologist, Author of Advice that Sticks: How to give financial advice that people will follow. Here’s what she said in a recent interview with the journalist Robin Powell:

The chief problem is that advisers talk far too much – they hog the airtime that should be given over to clients. Research shows that client satisfaction is directly related to how many minutes the client spends talking in a meeting. But all too often advisers feel that they have got to impress or win over the client (especially in the initial meetings), and unfortunately they just don’t shut up long enough to get to know the client’s real concerns in reaching out to them.

She’s right. Here’s why.

It feels good

Remember your college days? The professor giving the lecture was animated and fully engaged. The students? Not so much.

We love to talk because it feels good. Who doesn’t want to educate and dispense advice?

When we’re talking, our brain has no bandwidth to consider anything other than what we’re saying. It’s all about us.

That’s the problem.

We have an agenda

When we interact with others a business, social or personal setting, it’s impossible not to have an agenda. Maybe we want to make a good impression, demonstrate our expertise or be charming and engaging.

We believe the best way to achieve our goal is to talk. That’s why it’s so difficult for most of us to listen. Instead of really hearing what the other person is saying, we’re busy formulating our response.

Switch roles

Let’s agree that talking feels good.

Think about that.
Presumably, you want your prospect and your clients to “feel good.”

Instead of having them sit passively while you discuss what’s on your mind (in furtherance of your agenda), switch roles. Get them to talk. Find out what’s on their mind. Elicit their agenda.

**A trap for the unwary**

Because we so enjoy talking, it’s easy for us to grasp the first opportunity to take control of the conversation. Just because you are asked a question, it doesn’t mean you must provide an extensive response.

Here’s an example.

You start a meeting with a prospect by asking this question: “Tell me about yourself?” They do so and then ask you this question: “How long have you been a financial advisor?”

The direct answer to that question is something like: “10 years,” but no one can stop there.

Don’t be fooled. Others have a very modest interest in what we have to say, even when they ask us a question. Instead of carrying on about your background and qualifications, do what I call the “Solin pivot.” Quickly turn the conversation back to the prospect, by asking a question like this (assuming the prospect is a lawyer): “How long have you been a lawyer?”

You’ll be amazed how easy it is to transition back to getting the other person to speak.

No one has ever been accused of listening too much.

That’s the advisor I want you to be.

*Dan Solin is a New York Times best-selling author of the Smartest series of books. His latest book is** The Smartest Sales Book You’ll Ever Read. His sales coaching practice includes helping advisors convert prospects into clients and generating leads through videos and other elements of marketing. Dan is not affiliated with any advisory firm.

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