

February 4, 2009

## **The President of the United States Has a "Tell"**

**If you didn't know about this from his senate seat website... During a scheduled, but unannounced visit to a local Washington D.C. charter school the president let slip a seemingly innocent answer to an innocent question that tells the world exactly how he sees himself, his management style, and how others can successfully relate to him.**

Hello Sales and Business Hero,

When you're done reading this you will know what I mean and how to use it to your advantage.

On February 3, 2009 a seven year-old boy asked the president who his favorite superhero is.

The president told him Spiderman and Batman. Hmm...

In the winter of 2007 the teacher of a project management PMBOK test preparation class I took started the session with three items of information for everyone to share with the class: Name, Favorite Color, Favorite Cartoon Character.

It was a classic example of an ice-breaker (a deeper dive lesson to be covered later).

Starting, from the teacher's viewpoint, at the front right corner of the classroom, a graying gentleman in his mid-forties, wearing fashionably rimmed glasses stood up and said, "My name is Jim. My favorite color is blue, not navy blue, more of a royal blue. And my favorite cartoon character is Bugs Bunny. "

"Hello, Jim. Nice to meet you. Royal blue is a great color. It's big, like the sky. The color of opportunity, non-threatening. I LOVE Bugs Bunny. He always gets the best of Elmer Fudd and Yosemite Sam and that little guy from Mars, what's his name... Marvin. Marvin the Marvin. Why did you choose Bugs Bunny?"

I don't remember how Jim responded, but did you see the lesson there? We just learned a ton about Jim. He believes he is likeable. Jim is quick-witted, fast-talking big picture guy who's going to win at the other person's expense- meaning Jim'll always be right and the other guy will always be wrong.

Sure, to a degree it's a generalization. But just to a degree.

During the next 8 two-hour classes you could almost see Jim growing long gray ears and a fluffy white cotton ball tail, chomping away at a carrot while cracking wise.

To be fair, I remember answering that my favorite color was black- I was wearing a black leather overcoat that chilly night- and my favorite character was Batman. The lecturer pointed out that black is an absolute- it is or it isn't. I replied that I like black because it is classic, is inclusive of all colors and goes with everything.

And that I chose Batman because he's human. He figures out how to get things done and gets it done on his own, without the aid of mutant genes. He's careful about who he associates with and who he lets in to his inner circle.

## **How to talk to a hero.**

Superheroes are archetypal. They are ingrained in us. And they are everywhere and every-when. Think Hercules, Sampson, for example.

Batman is a good-looking, non-superpower wielding hero relying on his skill, brains and gadgets. And whether because of, or in spite of his tragic past, he has elected to do something to correct the evils of society. He is a leader and a loner, deciding and acting alone except in rare instances where he places his trust in proven partners to perform specific roles and tasks.

Spiderman is a deeply conflicted younger man- do I do good? Or have a good time? Grown out of similar tragedy, Spidey is also a loner. However, he likes to make friends with other superheroes and appears to be more comfortable as a team player than leader... to a point. Lucky for everyone, the need to do good wins out.

Where Batman is wealthy, Spiderman struggles to pay the rent.  
Where Batman is experienced, Spiderman almost always seems to be learning.  
Where Batman is humorless, Spiderman is glib.  
Where Batman has no superpowers, Spiderman picked up a few from a bug bite.

What they have in common is each puts others before himself.  
Each uses planning and his intellect to win as much as his powers or gadgets.  
Each works alone but makes exceptions to partner with others to achieve a goal.  
Each guards the secrets of his non-public life closely.

Whether you want to talk with or work for the president, or sell a product to someone-- knowing this kind of thing is HUGE.

These are the qualities of doers. These are the qualities of someone who will assess a situation and make their own decision- they will not be told what they can and can't do; who they can and can't call friend; who they must or must not speak with.

## **So what do we know now?**

**Be prepared**-- Know your topic well and don't fake it when you don't.

**Appeal to intellect**-- Don't be clever, or funny. Be smart. Let him be funny.

**Stay on subject**-- Don't talk about the weather unless it's critical to your point.

**Have recommendations**-- Be ready with actions supported by facts and reason.

**Give credit**-- Let him have credit for the idea. Don't overdo it. He'll see right through you.

And, of course, that is what effective marketing and selling is about. Whether you are marketing yourself, or selling a product, you are doing your research to present your case in such a way that leads the customer down the path of making the decision you want, on his own.

We'll talk more about colors in another article.

Be The Hero,  
Mark

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