

You, Inc. – The Art of Selling Yourself



Harry Beckwith & Christine Clifford Beckwith

By Jack Lott

On a daily basis, the methods in which we interact with others determine our future professional and personal direction in life. But in order to know how to relate to others, you really need to get a lot closer to the one person who can help you the most – that person is you. In a world where many are looking for something different in life on the job or in your personal life, relationship building is a requirement to assure a more positive potential.

All of us would like our fair share of contentment, happiness, confidence and a general feeling of accomplishment. Harry Beckwith and Christine Clifford Beckwith have put together an interesting book called *You, Inc.*, which outlines the very basic requirements that often get pushed aside but are required to build a meaningful life, whether on the job or at home.

These two media and marketing mavens developed Beckwith Partners (www.beckwithpartners.com) in 1988 to help clients with their branding initiatives, marketing campaigns, as well as to create successful sales tactics. For eight years, the retail services industry's top salesperson, Christine, directed accounts that included Target, Toys R' Us, Wal-Mart, Mattel Toys and Revlon. She led her company to more than \$54 million in annual sales and signed the industry's record account with Procter & Gamble. Harry has written four worldwide best-sellers on sales and marketing and specializes in branding, naming and marketing strategy.

Both Harry and Christine believe that most of us are dealing with the misconception that those around us control and direct our destiny. In fact, they believe that not only are we personally in control, but each one of us is more responsible for the tempo of our daily routine than we think. Harry explained, "I believe you create your own destiny, and if you find the work that you love, work that you're passionate about, it will never be a job. It's more about fulfillment in your life."

"I believe you create your own destiny, and if you find the work that you love, work that you're passionate about, it will never be a job. It's more about fulfillment in your life."

He said one of his key lessons in life fortunately came relatively early in his career. "Support is ultimately important in order to move forward. I am a recovering attorney, and I had a very supportive partner. I made the decision to enter the legal profession because

I thought I was a good communicator, and it sounded like it might be something interesting. I also chose that direction, frankly, because I thought it would be a financially rewarding profession. While considering the financial side of the business, I neglected to consider the fact that we also have an emotional and a spiritual side. I don't know if there's a way to go to a job every day unless you really love the work itself. I always tell my kids to first, find what you love. If you love it, you will tend to be good at it. If you're good at what you do in life you'll probably find some way to make it financially rewarding."

Christine said that in order to put yourself in a prosperous and personally significant situation, you also have to follow your heart. She continued, "We have five sons and one

daughter. One of our sons was doing what we wanted him to do, which was to go to college. But he told us he really wanted to become a golf course architect. He took the last year off to live his dream working in Oregon, and this year he will be going to Ireland to work at Royal County

“I think they are afraid of what people will think about them. We write that life isn’t like college, it’s like high school. Most of us still have the fear of what others think about what we say or do.”

Down. He, out of all of our kids, is walking two feet off the ground because he’s doing what he loves. He has become so passionate about his work.”

Life is Like High School – Not College

Communications is ultimately important in order to move positively ahead in life, but that seems to be one of the toughest hurdles people must maneuver around. Christine told me that she believes people still, no matter what their age, deal with peer pressure that stops them from really telling others what they are feeling. “I think they are afraid of what people will think about them. We write that life isn’t like college, it’s like high school. Most of us still have the fear of what others think about what we say or do.”

While some of us don’t communicate enough, others have a tendency to become verbose, which causes another



blockage to our inter-personal communications. Christine said even they have an inclination to overexplain an issue. She explained, “Harry is constantly correcting my sentences

where I may have used three too many words. But he’s right. People respond to the clearest and most concise communications. When we add unnecessary adverbs and adjectives or superfluous claims that are unsubstantiated, it just confuses the issue and we don’t communicate effectively. Simplification is definitely the right answer.”

Harry agreed, “If people have to sift through unnecessary information in your presentation, they will begin to tune out and your most important points will be missed. I love Elmore Leonard’s quote about writing books. He was asked why

people were so engaged by his books and he said, ‘I think it’s simple. I leave out the parts that readers skip.’ We can all learn from that and begin to use our words economically and focus on what’s most important to the topic.”

Living Your Destiny

Passion in what we do is what makes the action worthwhile; in hobbies, finances, on the job and in our personal life. But often our passions seem to be directed to the wrong things. Christine explained, “I think we set our expectations much too high and can lose sight of what’s really important. I was a senior executive for an international marketing company, and my passion as a speaker and an author became so strong that I took a leap of faith and quit my ‘real’ job; a job with benefits, salaries, commissions and bonuses. At that point, I had no real job, but I was living a dream that I had. I wanted to do something to help cancer patients because I’m a 12-year cancer survivor. The minute I made that decision, I felt like the weight of the world had been taken off my shoulders because I knew I was finally doing what I was meant to do. I also knew that I was coming to a point where I would begin living my destiny.”

The Travails of Technology

Many of us use today’s technology to increase our effectiveness in life; gadgets like cell phones, laptop computers and Blackberry devices keep us connected to the job every moment of every day. Christine told me that even though these tools can help, we must always remember that there’s nothing like an old-fashion, person-to-person relationship. “I worked in marketing for 15 years, and anytime I was going

to make a sales call, I either got in the car or on an airplane and traveled to make a face-to-face call. I always felt 100 percent confident that if that person could meet me, I would

close the sale. Today, people are trying to sell people things over the phone or the Internet. It's gotten so impersonal that people don't take the time to build those personal relationships."

Harry believes it goes even deeper than that. He said, "Our educational system reinforces this situation by teaching us everything except the ability to relate. You can actually go through school and decide it's more important to remember the capitals of the 50 states than it is to hold a simple conversation to engage a person and win their respect. When I look back on my education, there was never anyone suggesting that I needed to learn any of that; I was just told that I should learn reading, writing and arithmetic. I went to law school to learn how to practice law, nothing more. Education, as it relates to relationship skills, are not just de-

emphasized, they are scarcely mentioned. So, in today's job market all I need to do is be very competent at my job and I'll be successful. This is a problem. People go out and master all the required technical skills and wonder why they aren't successful in a social environment; they stare at the tops of their shoes rather than looking the other person in the eye. The more I deal with people, the more I find they are not very confident with themselves. They're worried about the way they look, the way they dress, but their self-image is not very confident."

They both believe that this attitude can be overcome through education. Christine continued, "Today, there are impression-management courses. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. There are people who teach these skills, so I do think they are learnable."

But in order to activate the thought process, Harry said people must practice these skills. "The assumption that you can just start to have a better representation of your self-image isn't realistic. That's not to say it comes more naturally to some than others, but all these skills are practiced. Although You, Inc. is a self-help book, it is a bit unconventional. We don't believe there are shortcuts; you will have to work quite a bit to perfect these skills through daily devotion and practice."

You, Selling You

Christine expressed something extremely important, "It all

comes down to simply doing the right thing. Selling yourself is something that is very important on a global basis and is



an art that is tied to what's happening in the world today. We have lost sight of who we are individually and globally. The problem is that people don't like to think that they have to sell themselves. The concept of selling yourself sounds like you are selling a product or a service. How do I go about marketing or selling myself without 'tooting my own horn?' The hardest thing for people to do is to praise and present themselves in such a way that people will want to buy or invest in them. It's very difficult for people to do that. That's why you see people hiring publicists and public relations people to help them because they are afraid or reticent to do it themselves. They believe they will come across as self-promoting. But we must all remember that nobody can sell

"We don't believe there are shortcuts; you will have to work quite a bit to perfect [your self-image] through daily devotion and practice."

you better than you. You need to find a way to do so in a manner that is mindful and graceful and that people will embrace. Go out there with 'unbridled enthusiasm' and get people so pumped up about what it is that you're doing, what you're selling or servicing. Explain your cause with passion so that people can't help but want to get involved."

Harry said promoting yourself to others is, in fact, a very cut and dry task. He explained, "In order to 'sell yourself' you simply must develop yourself as a human being so that your inner self, your 'human' self, does the selling. People

buy integrity, compassion, empathy; all these are valuable human traits. So, developing and cultivating those traits creates the foundation of selling yourself to others. It really doesn't require overt acts, clever wordplay or knowing how to close the deal. It just requires you to be yourself, from the inside out."

Create a Life of Valor

There are times in every life when things get tough, and Harry told me that he believes what's important is finding the necessary courage to guide us through these personal ordeals. "Most of the major decisions we make in our lives really require a great deal of courage. There are times when you have to be willing to jump into the unknown. If you always go for the sure thing, you might have a life that is a bit less rocky than it normally would have been, but I think in the end it would just have a feeling of dullness about it. I have really come to the conclusion that courage, above all, is the most important virtue of all in life. Sometimes you just have to make that jump of faith."

Christine continued, "I concur with Harry about the need for courage. And, even though I agree, I believe that courage leads to taking risks and that's what, ultimately, people are afraid of; it takes us down a path that confuses the issue. We get confused about what is really important in our lives because most of us are scared to take the risks to make changes in life. But, if we do make these essential changes, we can then actually focus on what's important. If you take a risk, you just might succeed. If you don't take the risk, you never will."

There is no overnight fix to developing the proper attitude of selling yourself in this highly competitive world. In the end, even Harry and Christine search for inspiration and share the desire to press on every day in a never-ending search for achievement. They tell us to "assume each day there is more you can do to grow, and reap the rewards. We think of the words of a certain poet, which we often speak to ourselves in paraphrase: 'Live the problems, and do not worry when they persist. Live the problem, and one day you will live yourself into the solution.'"

And they conclude with one word – Go. ■



From the Bestselling Author of *Selling the Invisible*

You, Inc.

*The Art of
Selling
Yourself*

The
Definitive Guide
to Career
and Personal
Success

**HARRY BECKWITH
CHRISTINE CLIFFORD BECKWITH**