

The Mind Can Make a Heaven Out of Hell or a Hell Out of Heaven

I recently attended a sales management seminar in Orlando Florida with some of the brightest sales and marketing minds in the country. As I took notes in the class I randomly thought to myself about pertinent topics that I should write about in my next newsletter. Little did I know, what happened **outside** of the seminar would be the most pertinent topic of all.

I wasn't able to get a room at the hotel where the seminar was held so I took up residence about a mile and a half away. It turned out the hotel where I stayed was less expensive, even with a \$10 cab ride each way. I stopped in the lobby of the hotel on my first morning and asked for a cab; to my surprise, there was a driver waiting. It was here I met Wilson Vargas- Tour Guide and Luxury Transportation.

Wilson was very courteous answering my questions with, "yes sir" or "no sir." He put me into his Lincoln Town Car and off we went to the seminar. We had a very brief conversation and just before he dropped me off he asked, "Sir, what time does your seminar end today?" I told him 5:00 and he informed me he wouldn't be able to pick me up but asked what time I started tomorrow. "8:00," I said to which he replied, "I will pick you up at the hotel lobby." After handing me his card he said, "If there is anywhere else you would like to go, please call me." I thanked him and didn't really think much of it and went off to my seminar.

At the end of the first day, I took another cab back to my hotel where the driver didn't say two words to me. Prior to getting in the cab, I noticed a line of about seven to eight cars deep of cabs waiting at this particular hotel. This was June and I assume the "market" for seminar business is pretty slow this time of year.

Our schedule changed slightly the second day and I didn't have to leave until 8:30 that morning. I briefly thought of Wilson picking me up at 8:00 but thought to myself, "he won't show up." So, I packed up my computer and books and headed to the lobby to get another cab. As I approached the lobby, there was Wilson with a big smile on his face. He acknowledged me and ran out the door to get his car. I couldn't believe he showed up let alone waited 30 minutes for me. As he brought the car around he proceeded to park it and get back out to open my door and close it for me. I thought to myself again, "he did this yesterday too."

On the ride over we had another small conversation and he once again asked when I was done with the seminar. I told him to come at 5:30 and today he could make it.

It turns out the seminar ended a little early so I called Wilson to see if he could come early to get me. He promptly answered his phone and was not in the area but could get there in 20 minutes. I glanced out the window of the lobby and noticed seven to eight cabs waiting for passengers and then replied to Wilson, "Ok. I'll be in the lobby." Keep in mind; I was in the middle of a huge market study that was taking every minute of my day and night when I wasn't at the seminar. Every minute counted but I wanted to give Wilson my business.

Exactly 20 minutes later Wilson came to pick me up, opened and closed the door for me and off we went again. I was really intrigued by how his business worked and asked him a few questions. I found out he is an independent contractor that has a relationship with a company that is licensed to provide cab service to the hotels. He owns the car, which had nearly 200,000 miles on it but could have passed for brand new, and gets some leads from this service. He asked me again what time the seminar started tomorrow and I told him I was leaving for the airport and I asked him, "Can you take me there?" His reply, "yes sir!" We set a time to pick me up in the morning.

The next morning Wilson showed up right on time again, helped me with my luggage and door. We had more time to talk so I found out quite a bit more about him. He was originally from Columbia and came to the US about 6 years ago. His English was very good and I commented he must have learned it while in Columbia. "No sir," he explained. "I didn't speak a word when I came here." "Did you take a class or listen to tapes?" I inquired. "I took some classes but now I like to practice with my passengers," he replied.

I then inquired about the long line of cabs at the hotel and then asked him about the "market". "It is very bad right now, very slow. I am more fortunate than others because I am pretty busy," he said. It turns out he also gives Spanish speaking tours for some of the local attractions for additional business. I wanted to ask him more but his cell phone rang. Another customer was calling Wilson for a pick up that morning.

We arrived at the airport, Wilson again helped me with my luggage and handed me another card to call him the next time I was coming into town. I gave him

a big tip and wished him the best. On the plane ride back I thought of the analogies of a new home salesperson and Wilson:

1. Wilson closed on me the first time I was in his cab. I rode with two other cabs and neither of them asked for my business. As new home salespeople, we must ask for the business from every customer. We may not get the “ride to the airport” at the first meeting but we can get an appointment or permission to follow up at a later date.
2. Wilson went the extra mile. He showed up and waited 30 minutes for me the second morning. He always was getting my door for me and his car was impeccable. As new home salespeople, what are we willing to do to get the business? How many of us give up after calling someone back once or twice and not getting a response (research shows 96% of new home salespeople give up after the 4th call. Try being one of the 4% that calls the 5th time.) How clean is your model office? Do you practice your presentation so your prospects have the best possible experience?
3. Wilson diversified his business by also giving tours and through self promotion. As new home salespeople, are we diversifying how we get our leads? We have come out of a market where walk-in traffic was all we needed to make the sales. In a “normal” market, only 1/3 of our business will come from walk-in traffic. We must diversify into Realtor outreach programs (personal not corporate) and referral business. Two-thirds of your leads will be generated by you, not your builder. There is an old saying in our business, “Waiting for walk-in traffic is like being on welfare.”
4. Quit focusing on the market. Ask yourself this: What can I do, personally, to go out and change the market? The answer of course is nothing! If you focus on the market, you will be the market. Look at it this way; if you think the market is keeping you from selling homes, you are saying all of your previous success was due to the market! Things don’t get better, we get better. Things don’t change, we change.
5. What you *can* change is your process. What will you change about the way you sell and market new homes? Do you really think you can sell homes today the same way you did a year ago? Builders, what will you change about your plan designs to add value and show something new and different? Why would a family living in their home for five years

move into the same old plan that has been around for 10-20 years?
Developers, what will you change about your neighborhoods to make them attractive to today's consumer that has so many choices? Do you really think a conventional subdivision will get the job done? If you do, you need a good dose of market research and reality.

Wilson knew he was in a slow market but he changed his process. He self-prospected and diversified his lead generation. I as the consumer picked him amongst all the competition. Why would I wait 20 minutes when I could have picked another cab instantly? The same reasons a home buyer will pick a good salesperson over a bad one. It happens every day.

Today, the test is the same only the answers are different. Your single most important daily choice is your attitude. When I first entered the real estate business I was told a story of a door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman. Brand new to the business, he had the unfortunate luck of starting December 1st, the worst month of the year to sell vacuums. Only none of the other salespeople told him this, they just laughed and mocked him behind his back. By the end of the month, this "unlucky" rookie sold more vacuums in December than any of the other "experienced" salespeople in any of the previous months. He didn't know December was a bad month.

How many of us have heard this same argument about new home sales in July and August? I can personally attest to having fantastic summer months while selling new homes. Many times they were better than March and April. If you think you will be slow and not sell homes, guess what, you will be. Act busy and you will be busy. Adversity will reveal your genius. Go out and change your process and we will see you on game day!