



Three Words to Live By

My Top 10 for Research Professionals

It's time to channel my inner guru, look at the receding hair line, and begin to divulge some parting thoughts to live by. As a fan of "top 10 lists," and a reluctant believer that society prefers sound bytes, I've followed the lead of friend and board confidante Merrill Dubrow, who posted a blog about a year ago, eliciting "three words to live by." Here is my expanded list:

10. Just Show Up: It never ceases to amaze me how few people really allow themselves to be prepared or focused in business situations. People often fail to take the time to analyze a prospective client's needs or are just so anxious to get through a task that they leave so much opportunity on the table.

9. Know Your Customer: Part of "showing up" means taking the time to assess things from the other party's perspective. When I was an End User, the firms that I did business with took the time to build a relationship. They knew my likes, dislikes, needs and non-starters. The successful cold callers had visited our Web site, read an article that I had written or inquired about us through a friend or acquaintance before calling on me. Those who "didn't show up" probably wasted more time in vain pursuit than it would have taken to do a little homework.

8. You Aren't Them: One of the big mistakes that researchers and marketers often make is to assume that they and their social networks are the perfect surrogates for the customers that they are trying to reach. One of the great joys about being involved with marketing research is that it opens a window of reality to those willing to let that sunlight come in.

7. Make a List: I am always working off a one-page list that follows me EVERYWHERE that I go. I list everything

that I need to or want to accomplish and assign it an "A", "B" or "C" importance grade, followed by a priority number.

While I don't force myself to complete the list, or even all of the "A" tasks every day, I do make sure that I check in on each of these. The list not only keeps me organized, but allows me to let it go, and get absorbed in the moment of whatever I then need to do. I know that the list will always be there when I finish.

6. Learn Something Everyday: Part of what makes life meaningful is the ability to observe and process new things. It keeps us fresh and gives us more to strive for. I've always been one who enjoyed learning for its own sake. That may be another trait that led me to marketing research, because the world is dynamic.

5. Act Like Consultants: Simply put, our profession's positive future resides in allowing the data and information that we process to become true insights that guide decisions. Part of knowing the customer and showing up, is using that knowledge and your own self confidence as a researcher, to make recommendations and engage the client in meaningful conversation.

4. People Get Theirs: I believe in luck to some extent, and I certainly know that some folks are dealt a better hand than others. But while those inequities of life can't always be changed, I do take solace in the three words above. While I don't consider myself to be vindictive, I do still have a pretty good memory. That has enabled me to observe that more times than not, those who are unethical or treat people poorly, generally get their own comeuppance at some point. Be assured that what comes around often goes around. As longtime New York sportscaster Len Berman said, after being dismissed, last month, "Not many get to write their own endings."

3. Energy is Infectious: Part of "showing up" means evoking a passion for what you do. I've found it amazing to see how that often carries over to others who you come in contact with. It's human nature that people generally want to find connections with each other. If you don't believe me, try this experiment. Pre-arrange with a friend that he will laugh at a non-funny joke you are about to tell in front of a third person. Five bucks says, the third guy will laugh along when the two of you go hysterical.

2. Follow Your Dream: This one may sound trite, but it's one of the most important truths. I always wanted to run my own company and literally had to fight through millions of reasons not to do it. One thing that I know for sure is that wherever this ultimately leads me, I am more fulfilled to have made the effort.

1. Never Give Up: Every year it's inevitable that one of my little league baseball teams falls behind in a game, and it evokes the following amazing but true story: At age 10 I was on a baseball team that was behind by 17 runs in the last inning. Yes, we won. But more importantly, I was the only guy in the dugout who was trying to fire up my teammates. Sometimes, when I get pessimistic about something today, I think back on that game. My first thought, is, geez I was an idealistic and silly little kid...this situation is different. Then I stop feeling sorry for myself and do something. We all can.



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