

34. Bump: You don't want to sell my stuff anymore?



Fishtip™: Continually find new sales opportunities.

Lots of stores were doing well selling our *Scream* products: something striking to bring people into the store, good profit margin, repeat orders. Then, after a number of years, some stores decided they didn't want to carry *Scream* stuff any more.

"What? You don't want to sell our *Screams* any more?"

"No, we think it's about time to stop."

"Why?" I asked, almost in a panic, "Aren't they selling?"

"Yeah, they still sell, but we just think it's time for a change."

They're going to stop selling our great-selling product because "it's time for a change?" WTF? How dare they?

Reality check: it's likely not personal, it's business*. There can be so many reasons why a store stops carrying a product or even an entire line. Maybe they just want a different look in their store. Maybe they want the space for something with a smaller **footprint** or higher profit margin. Maybe staff doesn't want to look at inflatables screaming in anguish any more. Maybe a customer said the *Screams* were downers. Maybe the store got some defective product.

**Then again, maybe it is personal! Maybe the store had a bad experience with your sales rep or delivery driver or – could it be? – you.*

What can you do? Be a problem-solver. Ask the store's specific reasons, and be understanding of their situation. Maybe you can keep your product in that store after all. If not, what you learn can only help as you serve other clients. See this as an opportunity to explore possible new products, or new clients, or even a new client category. Could your product be educational?

Could your product be a give-away **premium or promotional item**? Could it be an added-value addition to someone else's product or service? We sold *Scream* inflatables to a financial services company that used them to comically calm down their clients

during a market crisis. Be proactive.

Offer your retreating client a better deal. If you have other products, see if the store wants to sell them. For sure, ask if you can contact the store in a year to see if they want to pick it up again. Ask them for suggestions on what you could make; maybe they already have something percolating in their mind that they'd love to see. You could even suggest someone else's product line. If you do, that client will remember you as The Problem Solver, and eventually, it will come back to you in a positive way.

Just don't burn your bridges. Word spreads fast and you want to "all ways and always" maintain a good reputation. If a client is no fun to deal with, or difficult, or even awful, just say your most pleasant "Thanks" and don't do business with them again. Other potential clients are just waiting for you to help them grow their own businesses. Be their solution.

Take Action!

- ▶ Reintroduce your products to old clients that don't use them anymore. How can you make your stuff seem fresh again?
- ▶ Ask your clients for suggestions on who you could approach for sales.
- ▶ Invite some creative people over for lunch. Explain ahead of time that you want everybody to brainstorm crazy ways you could position your *crazy idea* so that it will be attractive to new client types. Offer the participants an honorarium for their help.

"We are always saying to ourself...we have to innovate. We've got to come up with breakthroughs. In fact, the way software works.. so long as you are using your existing software.. you don't pay us anything at all. So we're only paid for breakthroughs."

Bill Gates
Founder of Microsoft

"...now that I'm selling spaghetti sauce (with Newman's Own), I begin to understand the romance of business.. the allure of being the biggest fish in the pond and the juice you get from beating out your competitors."

Paul Newman
Actor and entrepreneur