



Passion...Your Most Precious Emotion to Separate You from your Competition

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Industry consultants spend a lot of time trying to understand agent and broker performance. This includes, but is not limited to, an analysis of prospecting, sales skills, customer relationship management and differentiated business development initiatives. The consultant's performance indicators focus upon a host of quantifiable measures including the number of prospect calls, proposals, new business hit ratios and retention.

Producer performance can be enhanced through the strategies, activities and the measures listed above. There is no question that a strategic business development plan which incorporates a differentiated sales process is essential. However, what is often overlooked is a producer's Emotional Energy – his or her Passion for the business.

In *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, John Maxwell states "if you look at the lives of effective leaders, you will find that they often don't fit the stereotypical mold. For example, more than 50% of all CEO's of Fortune 500 companies had a "C" or "C-" average in college. Nearly

75% of all U.S. Presidents were at the bottom half of their school classes. And more than 50% of all millionaire entrepreneurs never finished college. What makes it possible for people who might seem ordinary to achieve great things? The answer is passion. “

Passion is derived from the Latin word *passio* and the Greek *pathos*, which denotes deep emotion. Throughout history, passion contained the notion of suffering and endurance. Very broadly, passion is defined as “a strong or intense feeling or emotion.” Passion creates powerful energy. Typically, passion begins as a focused desire but eventually swallows all of the emotions it engenders.

The concept of releasing emotions in business has been around since the beginning of modern time. To our detriment, we chose to suppress it. Traditional business conduct had no place for emotions. Expressing passion in the business setting was considered unprofessional. There was a belief that the release of emotion in business deals made the engagement less effective and less productive. Times have changed. In fact, many of today’s notable business leaders are very emotional people – Jack Welsh, Michael Dell and Mark Cuban, to name a few.

Passion in business is loving what you do. No business professional should feel guilty of sharing emotions. After all, humans are emotional creatures. The key lies in learning how to harness and direct your passion so that it serves you in positive ways. Research now substantiates that consumers make buying decisions based, in large part, on emotion. In fact, leading marketers use emotion to create enduring psychological bonds to link the customer to a product or service. Brand consultants often refer to passionately strong brands of companies like Urban Outfitters, Harley Davidson, Starbucks, Chick-fil-a , BMW and Ritz Carleton.

Passion is a key differentiator for insurance agents and brokers. Passion comes across in verbal energy and body language. Unfortunately, passion cannot be trained. However, it can be drawn out. It comes from a love of business and a belief in one’s unique process and package.

Let’s study the career paths of Bruce and John, senior producers for the Discovery Point Insurance Agency. Bruce and John were boyhood friends who grew up in the same neighborhood, attended the same schools and participated on an undefeated football team. Bruce was the star quarterback, John was the fleet footed, energized wide receiver.

While they attended different colleges, they both returned to their home town to start their business careers. Bruce in commercial real estate. John as an insurance agent. At the age of 30, Bruce left a successful real estate career to join John as an insurance producer at Discovery Point. At the time Bruce joined the firm, John had a book of business of \$200,000 of revenue. Bruce was an “average performer.”

Seven years later, John’s book had grown moderately from \$200,000 to \$400,000. In contrast, Bruce’s career skyrocketed from the moment he joined Discovery Point. His book is now in excess of \$1,200,000 of revenue. Although Bruce has seven years less tenure than John, his results are three times that of his best friend.

What is most interesting about the comparison of Bruce and John is the following:

- Both individuals have the same Sales Coach
- Bruce and John both use the same business development prospecting system and sales process.
- They work similar hours.
- Both individuals use the same center of influence network.
- They make the same number of prospect calls.

However, the results differ dramatically from this point forward. What makes John “average”? What makes Bruce a “super star”?

At a recent sales meeting, John stated “I don’t get it! Bruce and I do everything the same way. We have the same work ethic, network and business model. Why is my best friend so much more successful than me?”

The answer is passion. Bruce is passionate about everything he does. It was evident in the classroom and on the football field years before. Today, one is able to hear, see and feel the passion in Bruce’s voice and body language. You can even see passion in his eyes. His passion comes through as a result of the following:

- Purpose and belief in what he is doing – his love of the business
- Confidence in his unique business model
- The emotion he puts behind each component of his deliverables

John Maxwell teaches us the four truths about passion:

- Passion is a first step to achievement
- Passion increases one’s willpower
- Passion changes you
- Passion makes the impossible possible

Think of passion as the thermostat which measures the intensity of your emotions. The fuel for passion is your purpose. You cannot have passion without a clear understanding of your purpose in the business. A passionate and focused insurance agent or broker knows that his or her role is every bit as important as a CPA, attorney, investment advisor or banker. Passion is the fuel for your fire. It is the fire in your heart and soul. It impacts your life and those around you. “A leader with great passion and few skills always out performs a leader with great skills and no passion,” states Maxwell.

What is your Passion Index? Ask yourself the following three questions:

1. How long has it been since I could not sleep because I was so excited about a new business system, strategy or tool?
2. I find myself getting excited when I share my unique “business model”?

3. My energy is contagious?

If you answered yes to all three questions, you have a high Passion Index. Congratulations! If not, do not despair. While there is no magic pill for passion, it can be drawn out of you with a clear understanding of, and appreciation for, your business purpose. “What makes it possible for people who might seem ordinary to achieve great things?” The answer is passion. The answer is you!

About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* “Entrepreneur of the Year” award as well as one of the “25 Most Innovative Agents in America.” Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.