

A Tailor-Made Plan of Motivation

Brining Out the Best In People: How to Enjoy Helping Others Excel
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Thomas Aquinas, who knew a great deal about education and motivation, once said that when you want to convert a man to your view, you go over to where he is standing, take him by the hand and guide him. You don't stand across the room and shout at him; you don't call him a dummy; you don't order him to come over to

where you are. You start where he is and work from that position. That's the only way to get him to budge.

This principle can be seen at work in the remarkable success of life insurance salesman Frank Bettger. He was a professional baseball player with a glass arm who had to change careers, so he decided to try selling life insurance. It did not go well, and at 29 he was a miserable, debt-ridden failure. Then, improbable as it sounds, he became so successful in the field that he was in a position to retire at age 41. Bettger attributes this turnaround to a change in his selling approach, due in large part to a talk he heard at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. The speaker was one of America's top salesmen, J. Elliott Hall. Hall told how he also had failed as a salesman and was about to give up when he discovered the reason why he was failing. He said he had been making

“too many positive statements.” “That sounded silly,” says Bettger, “but it caused me to sit up and listen.” Hall explained that his mistake had been to spend too much time trying to extol the product and too little time asking questions of the prospective customer. “Hall's questions had only one purpose,” says Bettger, “to help the other people recognize what they want, then help them decide how to get it.” That idea revolutionized Bettger's attitude toward selling. “Before this,” he said, “I had largely thought of selling as just a way of making a living for myself. I had dreaded going to see people, for fear I was making a nuisance of myself. But now, I was Inspired! I resolved right then to dedicate the rest of my selling career to this principle: finding out what people want, and helping them get it.”

