

Excerpts from “**The Restoration Book,**” and “197 Ways to Persuade Adjusters, Agents, Building Managers (and Others) to Give You The Job!”

We thought you might enjoy a few glimpses into the powerhouse strategies and tactics that we gathered over the past 7 years!

This first one is from Chapter 1 of “The Restoration Book: Over 200 Marketing and Sales Techniques, Tactics and Strategies for Restoration Companies.”

Adjusters used to ask, “How fast can you get the job done?” and “How cheaply can you get it done?”

Now they ask, “Can you get the job done quickly? Can you get the job done cheaply? (and) Can you get the job done -- period?”

With the advent of “contents professionals,” the insurance companies came to realize that a lot of companies had gotten used to “total lossing” or “cashing out” and just throwing tons of materials away – but the contents teams started saving them massive sums on most jobs, so now they want to know, “Can you restore that? How much can you save me? How about the soft contents?”

But even then, they did not tell the contractors what they *really* wanted. All this pressure they were putting on the contractors wasn’t coming from the adjusters – it was coming from their bosses!

So, here is one excellent way to help them to help you! One company that used it called to say, “You’re talking as if the adjusters are our friends! We usually have to kick them in the @#%&# to get them to do their jobs right – we have never had a good relationship with them. Are you sure this will work?”

Read on and decide for yourself!

Oh, and by the way, in the original ad for these books, we mentioned a company that had used a “new” strategy to get more jobs – and grossed over \$18 million this year alone. Their “secret?” They became “first responders.” Some people call them “fire chasers.”

Because so many contractors have a bad feeling about fire-chasers, I normally don’t mention them in my classes, but when I do mention them, I ask, “Well, if the bad

guys are getting to the owner's burning home and you aren't even bothering to go – which would you rather have if the owner were a friend or relative of yours, you or the sneaky guys who are taking advantage of them?”

I would much rather you decent contractors showed up and put the bad guys out of business. But I know the crooks have made the practice of showing up at a burning home into a model of infamy – and I honor those who won't participate in that sort of thing.

I guarantee that adjusters who know you and fire-fighters who recognize your good reputation would rather see you on site than the bad guys.

And, it could be a risk to your reputation, but you might be surprised at how many of the largest companies are now sending some of their best representatives to just such events. And your good reputation might be welcome at such emotional moments.

Either way, don't worry – that strategy is not in either of my books. I just offer it as a consideration, or at the worst, just an interesting story.

Excerpt From “The Restoration Book,” Chapter 1...

...This strategy is for adjusters... we have to ask ourselves, “Who do they care about?” (We know that the agents care about customers and getting renewed policies. But what about adjusters? Who do they care about? What do they care about?)

What would have to happen in order for them to get raises, promotions and the special “trips to exotic lands,” that the top adjusters might receive for saving the insurance companies serious money?

We've heard the adjusters' bosses referred to as “Head Examiners,” (with the attendant joke that they should have their heads examined), “Claims Examiners,” “Managers,” or just plain, “Supervisors.”

To create a strong strategy for adjusters we have to ask ourselves three questions. “What do they want? What do they absolutely *not* want to happen to them?” and “What do they expect on any given job?”

What they want is to have a job go smoothly, save the insurance company as much money as they can and to be praised for their efforts by their bosses.

What do they expect? Well, they expect some resistance from a typical homeowner who wants all new things and a pristine home, when their policy doesn't necessarily cover such "champagne dreams."

They expect that they will have to cut back some things on the contractor's estimate so they are seen to be doing their jobs and to justify their continued employment.

What do they absolutely *not* want to happen to them? They don't want what Kent Riddle refers to as, "The Call." They don't want their supervisor calling them and saying something like, "Harry, I can't believe what you let that contractor get away with. Look at all these unnecessary billings," etc.

He (she) wants to be respected, not disciplined. He wants to be a shining star in the insurance industry and to receive raises, promotions, etc.

And how can a contractor make that happen? Brace yourself, this one is huge!

On virtually every job (especially if your company is accepting contents work), you save money for the insurance company by restoring instead of replacing.

In John Otero's article (mentioned above), he shares an example in which \$10,000 worth of cabinetry was saved by a special drying process.

We recently heard the case of an adjuster, who was about to "total loss" several boxes of fire and smoke damaged figurines that had been valued at \$35,000. A savvy contractor stopped him, cleaned up the figurines and returned them to pre-loss condition.

Last month I created a publicity piece for a company that on one job, restored over 600 computers, which were clogged with water and soot. They washed them out, dried them and got them all working again.

Along with everything else they restored, an official estimated that they had saved over four million dollars worth of valuables.

Okay, you may never save that much on a single job (or even a hundred jobs) but you do save the insurance company money. The challenge is that many contractors just assume that the adjuster and his (her) boss will figure that out for themselves.

If you have been shopping recently, at a local Wal-Mart store, you may have noticed that many of the cashiers are now taking a pen (after they have added up your purchases) and circling numbers at the bottom of your receipt, saying something like, “And you have saved \$10.92 on your purchases today.”

What we recommend is that you finish up your estimate and final bill by adding an extra line (maybe highlighted in yellow?) that says, “You saved (insert amount) by restoring instead of replacing the insured’s valuables.”

Or, “We saved you (insert amount here) on this job.”

Or, “You saved (insert amount here) on this job.”

Something along those lines. The adjuster may think it is some sort of joke the first time he sees it – right up until you explain that the figures are real and that it is a method for him to show that little, positive, extra thing to his boss.

As an after-effect, it also makes you look good to the supervisor as well – maybe not the first time or even the second, but when a “boss” can lay out your last four or five billings, with the amount you saved the insurance company spread before him like a deck of cards, it won’t take long before he begins to realize that you are special, different and of greater value to him than your competitors.

But, the “adjuster strategy” does not end there. The next phase happens when you have finished a job and are now doing a final walkthrough with the owner or building manager.

All through the job your manager (or other crew member) has spoken to the owner in glowing terms about the adjuster (catch the adjuster doing “something right” or of benefit to the homeowner, and praise it to the owner.)

It may be nothing more than, “That guy is really fast. I suspect we will finish this job ahead of schedule.” Or, “I think you have a very good insurance adjuster. I have rarely seen them come by to check up on things the way yours has – he really wants this job to go well.”

And when you have finished the walkthrough and asked for your testimonial, be sure to suggest to the homeowner something like, “Mrs. Carstaris, I really appreciate all the kind things you are writing down about us – do you think you could say just one

positive thing about the adjuster on this job? He really put forth a supreme effort and hardly anyone ever thinks to give a testimonial for those fellows.”

And here is the biggest testimonial you can get for the adjuster – this one is your ultimate goal if you can reach it -- find out if the owner is planning on renewing his (her) policy with the insurance company because you and the adjuster took such good care of him.

If you get a response like “Absolutely!” then explain that for an adjuster that is the highest praise they will ever receive and if she would mention that she is renewing in part because of the fair and prompt service of the adjuster, it would be numbered among his most precious testimonials ever received.

It will be too! Because adjusters don’t get a lot of testimonials, and until now, almost none of them said that the owner was going to renew the policy because of him.

And what does the insurance company care about most? Making money and not losing any -- paying as little as possible, getting new policies and **getting policies renewed.**

You may be sure that the adjuster will be looking for the company that got a testimonial sent to his boss with the words, “I am so happy with the work the adjuster performed that I am definitely renewing my policy when the time comes.””

Another part of your job will be to make sure the owner isn’t too effusive in his praise – the last thing an adjuster wants his boss to see is a statement like, “He gave us everything we wanted. We weren’t sure our policy cover the back porch, but he gave it to us anyway.”

Keep the praise to something more like, “He was tough but fair.”

Now you have given the adjuster two powerful tools – one is a bill that shows him saving money for the insurance company. Two is a written statement that he is bringing renewed policies to the table.

The word will spread about this new style of contractor and what he (she) is doing for the adjusters – after that, all you have to do is to make sure that the adjusters know that it is you they are talking about!

In the book, “197 Ways to Persuade Adjusters, Agents, Building Managers (and others) To Give You the Job,” we had seven years to interview some of the most important names in restoration. We started off with material we did not use in the 2006 book, “Insiders Secrets for a Successful Restoration Business.” For that original book we found that sometimes the multi-millionaires, with whom we spoke, were reluctant to part with their secrets of success.

I recall a conversation with Mike O’Reilly in New York (he had been one of the major contractors involved in the aftermath of 9-11.

When we asked Mike for some tips to help those in the carpet cleaning industry break into restoration contracting, he said, “I’m not going to tell you my secrets! You’re asking me to tell my competitors how to compete with me!”

And we responded, “We quite understand, Mike. It is just that John Smith (not the real name) just told us that _____ (we told him some of what this successful restoration pro had told us) and we wanted to see if they matched yours.”

Mike said, “Smith! That amateur! Let me tell you how to really do it!” And we were off and running. But with 38 authors in that book, it became huge and unwieldy, so we ended up with a lot of material that had to be cut.

The “golden nuggets” that did not make it into the first book, became our foundation for the second and third. What follows are excerpts from the “Mother Lode” that we discovered as more and more contractors were forthcoming with their insiders secrets.

These, of course, are just flashes of the avalanche of great ideas they shared, but I think they are a good representation of the treasures found in “197 Ways To Persuade Adjusters (and Others) to Give you The Job!”

Persuading and Influencing Your Staff – and Getting them to Influence the Consumer (and themselves) Covert Persuasion Strategies

53. When speaking with an adjuster become the “reasonable man (woman).” Become extraordinarily flexible. I once spoke with a teacher for U.S. war colleges. He said, “Fighting China is like punching Jell-O® – you can’t hurt it, all you can do is rearrange it a little.”

If the adjuster comes up with a new point to make his case, acknowledge it, rearrange and move on. Don’t bother fighting it, arguing or gathering data to make your case against it.

Instead, agree and deflect. For example, an adjuster tells you to change your schedule and focus on some other part of the building from where you are now. Your response is calculated to bring information, not to disagree.

So it sounds like, “Okay, you want us to move to the Bradly condo – shall we take all the blowers out of the Mason’s apartment?”

If he has made a mistake and realizes that you will be “pulling the plug” on another job, he will say something like, “No! Finish the Mason job, but bring in some more men and machines so you can get the Bradly condo done by Friday.”

Which is music to your ears.

The idea though, is to be sure you don’t say, “Pull my machines? I’m halfway through on the Mason apartment; you want me to just drop it and move on down to the next condo? Isn’t that counterproductive?”

One way gets you more business, the other lets you put an adjuster in his place...which do you think will make you more money?

5. There is a restoration company in the upper mid-west that has three people assigned, on any given job, to make sure the agent looks good, the adjuster is fully informed every day of what is going on, and the owner of the home or office building is given chances to say good things to the agent and put in a good word on the daily reports.

I asked the owner if he was making any money with so much extra effort. He said, “Well, I only made \$4 million last year – I would have made five, but I made a couple of mistakes – it’s okay though because I learned a lot with those mistakes and I’m going to make more this year.

Be transparent, be supportive of the agents and adjusters and they will say of you, "That was easy, fast and efficient – no hassles, at a fair price." That is all that they need to be thinking when the next job rolls around.

6. Jean Walker is the first woman president of the successful Crystal Restoration Services, (one of the largest independently owned restoration companies in the U.S. – 40 years in business). The way she influences adjusters is to focus on the agents.

In a book called, "Insider Secrets for a Successful Restoration Business," she is quoted as saying, "One of our most successful marketing programs is continuing education classes for insurance agents. What better way to explain how important a restoration company is than to have 25 agents in a classroom for 7 hours? And unlike continuing education classes for adjusters, the agents know nothing about mold, water damage, fire or puffbacks. Agents make a great audience. The secret is to not get too technical (or you will see a lot of sleeping). Just make it informative and entertaining. We have a reputation for the best classes and there is always a waiting list. It's little things like great food (I'm serious)."

When a job comes in, the agent hears about it before the adjuster. If he says, "Hey Bill, this would be a good job for Crystal – they just gave us a lecture about this very thing – Jean Walker is the expert who taught us," we suspect that has some decided impact on the adjuster's decision as to who gets that job.

7. To be hired, you must be seen. It is the simplest, easiest, most natural thing in the world, to hire someone who is familiar to you. The contractor on Long Island who got over 300 sewage remediation jobs from one county employee had been playing basketball with him a few days earlier. The company that got the job was much smaller than other restoration companies in the area, but when the county official called the owner and asked, "Can you handle it?" the owner said, "Yes!"

When a big hotel in Las Vegas had a million dollar fire damage job, companies from all over sent their best negotiators in to land it. But the fellow who got the job for Belfor, was much younger, less experienced (at the time) and had played handball a couple of days earlier with the adjuster in charge of the case.

Jean Walker of Crystal Restoration used to tell how one of her best ways to get lots of jobs for her company was to get herself invited to weddings, baptisms and other celebrations for the families of adjusters and agents – they saw her as a welcome friend.

8. There is a caveat to “being seen.” If there is something **good** going on (a party, celebration, promotion, etc.), be there (if you are invited). If the company is delivering **bad** news, (a bad fiscal report, discussion of a case where the insurance company had to pay out more than it wanted to, lay offs, or any form of negative interaction) avoid it like the plague.

There is a social psychological concept called, “The Law of Association.” You want to be associated with good times, success, and “positivity.” You do not want to be unconsciously associated with any form of negativity – even if it has nothing to do with you.

9. There is a caveat to the above caveat. If there is some sort of negative situation and you can *offer a workable solution* – step up and hit a home run! Frank Pedeflous of Omegasonics® ultrasonics told me that when an adjuster was about to “total loss” an assortment of delicate figurines that had been assessed at \$35,000, Doug Blount of Paul Davis in Stockbridge, Georgia was able to save them all and restore them to pre-loss condition. We are guessing that Doug became that adjuster’s new best friend!

12. If the adjusters aren’t returning your calls, won’t let you get an appointment to see them, it is your fault – not theirs.

They won’t talk to you because you have not given them a compelling reason to do so. Until you find a reason for him (her) to see you, that really “turns him on,” you will get exactly the same result you already have.

Do you have a way for him to look good in the eyes of his boss? Do you have a way for him to save massive money (hopefully without cutting your profits)? Do you have a way for him to accomplish a task much easier, faster, less expensively than he is at present?

Are all his associates telling him he needs to get you on board?

Why should he talk to you at all? The answer to that will get you in the door.

13. If you want to make a friend out of an enemy, let *him* do *you* a favor. When Ben Franklin wanted to influence an avowed enemy of his to support him in congress, he wrote to the guy and asked to borrow a book, explaining that he (Ben) was preparing a presentation and had heard that the guy had a terrific library in which such a book might be found...it worked.

If you want to get an adjuster (he doesn't have to be an enemy) to remember you in a positive way, get him to do a small, not difficult or expensive, favor.

Why does that work? Well ask yourself – how do you feel about someone who owes you and acknowledges the fact? He is less likely to take advantage of you, he is likely to support you, not cheat you, help you not hinder you – he owes you, so chances are he will give you advantages, not disadvantages.

Brilliant huh?

15. Make sure that every member of your staff is trained to sell. Emphasize to your workers that from the first moment they meet the owner, adjuster, agent, building manager, etc., they are selling.

When the workers first arrive at the damaged home, have one (only one) approach the door, step one step back, greet the homeowner with a smile and a "Good morning Mrs. Smith, I'm Dan Jones with Acme and I'll be your project manager. Anything you need, any concerns you have, I will be your go to guy.

"My assistant is Jane Doe over there by the truck (wave to Jane, she waves back). If ever I'm not around, she will take over for me.

"Before we begin, are there any questions or concerns you have?"

If an adjuster shows up while they are working, your guy (gal) makes sure he is greeted and welcomed. "Hello Mr. Adjuster, you're just in time. We've just brewed up some fresh coffee; may I offer you a cup?"

Make sure the adjuster gets daily reports from your project manager, so the adjuster is informed and gets to know the manager on site – pretty soon he gets to know him (her) as a person as well as an efficient worker.

Sell, sell, sell – if a neighbor comes over to commiserate with the owner, meet the neighbor. If the owner’s agent swings by, speak with him in front of the owner, tell how well things are going, pepper the language with positive thoughts such as, “Mrs. Smith was concerned about the safety of her baby after everything is done, so we have added in our “baby proof” package at no extra charge – I now exactly how she feels.”

What is the “baby proof” package? Something that might be *good* for the baby, and that you do anyway, but are now emphasizing its benefits.

16. Create a chain of command.

If you want to maintain a flow of successful energy in your company, the last thing you want is to have secretaries, receptionists or other office workers, haranguing an executive for some real or imagined transgression or to have them communicating some sort of proprietary information with an owner or adjuster.

The first time they “decide to be helpful” and assign some of your resources to a project, when you had already promised those same resources to another project they haven’t even heard of, you will lose prestige, good will or business.

The first time they take on the authority of any person in the company who is above them, that is the moment when a fuse has been lit.

No matter how long workers have been with a company, no matter how knowledgeable they are about the workings of the company, decisions are *made* at the top and *implemented* by those who are not at the top. The reason is simple – the higher you are on the “totem” the more you can see of the overall workings and purpose of the company. At the lower levels you can see the *everyday* mechanics of the company, but you don’t know what is going on behind the scenes.

If you are wondering what this concept is doing in a book about persuasion, picture a company where you have a person with *no responsibility* making decisions without *knowledge*. That is a company in which persuasion and influence are virtually useless.

If a new office worker is related to the boss and just runs to him to make things work for her/him (without going through the chain of command), the chain of command no longer exists and you will find that everyone will be "ruling by manipulation."

They will all be trying to find out how much leverage they can get by currying favor with the relative or looking for ways to get around him (her) or make him look bad, etc.

People talk and when your company appears to be making internal mistakes – others know about it. When an undereducated office worker usurps any form of power, the company will suffer. And even a rumor of disarray in your company can sabotage your chances at the next job – adjusters are persuaded by bad rumors as well as good press.

Wives, daughters, girl friends, boy friends, friends, can all still be just that – and with a solid chain of command you won't lose any business because their social status does not affect the smooth running of the company.

We hope you have enjoyed this preview of the over 400 tactics, strategies, tips and techniques in "The Restoration Book," and "197 Ways to Persuade Adjusters, Agents, (and Others) to Give You The Job."

There are almost 400 more methods to quickly and easily bring even greater accomplishments to your company and to give you a competitive edge without having to invest huge sums of money. If you agree that our low cost/no cost approaches can help bring more profit, more opportunities and more satisfaction to your business, please order these two ebooks at your earliest convenience – we think you will agree that there simply aren't any others like them in the restoration field.