

WHAT CANDOR CAN DO FOR YOU

By John Costigan

Webster's definition of Candor is defined as the state or quality of being frank, open, and sincere in speech or expression. In Jack Welch's book "Winning" he explains the significance of how it helps companies cut costs and speed up decisions. In this article, we will explain how candor will:

1. Help you win business
2. Set you apart from the competition
3. Allow you to make *significantly* more money.

THE KAREN STORY

Dateline: Q/4, 2010

Location: Redwood Shores, California

Customer: Oracle

Department: Oracle Direct / Inside Sales

In the fourth quarter of 2010, we conducted a sales training class for approximately 50 inside sales people where the focus was on prospecting and cold calling. Upon completion of that class, we split off with the sales people individually to observe their performance in real life settings at their desks. This reinforcement program is called "Candor in the Cube" where honest feedback, good or bad, is conveyed to the sales representative and their managers to help change behaviors for the long term. One such sales person named Karen was in a difficult predicament. Reason being, there was an opening in the schedule and her boss wanted us to take advantage of the gap in the schedule and review her phone skills. There was just one problem: She hadn't attended our training class! To say she would have been flying blind would

have been an understatement. Here is a salesperson who has been with the company for roughly 90 days, hardly knows where the rest rooms are located let alone any breath to the company's products and she is being asked to call into the CIO of a Fortune 1000 company.

Karen's attitude was great and even though she was nervous, she forged ahead to give it a shot. Our goal on this particular call was to expand the business of an existing customer. As instructed, she started with the main 800 number and went right to the President's office and read the script provided to her perfectly, which started with, "I need some help..." In a moments notice, we were being transferred to the CIO's office where she left a perfect voice mail message there as well.

What's amazing is Karen was shaking when she hung up. She was telling us, "Oh My God, there is no way he is going to call me back. He probably gets these messages every day, and if he does call back, I don't know what I am going to say. What if he ..." Ring, Ring. Just 2 minutes after the voice mail was left, the CIO was calling her back. She looked at us and said, "Now what? I didn't expect him to call back." Our answer was simple. Apply candor and simply tell the truth. That's it, be courageous enough to tell the truth and watch what happens.

"This is Bob Smith. Is this Karen? (Obviously not a warm and friendly start.) Karen said, "Hi Bob. I'm so glad you called back. The reason for my slightly cryptic voice mail was most messages ramble on and on and result in little or no response. Secondly, I'm new and need some help. We wanted to say thank you for the

current business you have with us and we wanted ask you from a 1-10, with 10 being perfect, how are we doing?” His next statement was classic, “Let me get this straight, you are calling me to say thank you for the business? Now that’s a phone call I like taking.” And with that, the conversation went on for 15 minutes until Karen hung up the phone and everyone around her desk applauded. (FYI – The account enjoyed her so much over the next couple of months, they flew her to NY to discuss additional opportunities to help the client.)

The lessons learned:

1. **“Can you help me?”** It’s the number one sales line of all time. Use it early and often. She used it with every one she spoke with.
2. **Tell the truth.** Be completely honest and sincere. She was honest on the voice mail, and honest when he returned the call back.
3. Never say “Thank you” when they call back. You’re a peer! You’re not beneath these people. They need you just as bad as you need them. Say, **“Glad you called back”** as opposed to Thank you.
4. **Quit sounding like everyone else.** When you are genuine, honest and sincere, it’s different from most sales people.
5. **Have Courage:** She virtually had no product knowledge (they have 9000 products and she’d been there for only 90 days, and hadn’t even had our training class yet!) and she had the courage to pick up the phone and ask for help.
6. **Positive attitude.** She was scared, yes. But her attitude wouldn’t let that deter her. She pressed forward and truly saw the fruits of her effort..
7. She was **smiling** the whole time. (We put a

mirror in front of her and told her “When you’re smiling, they hear it on the other end.)

There are a variety of lessons in that one story, but candor is the leading factor in this and so many other scenarios. For example, when we perform our Costigan LIVE Prospecting calls to demonstrate the power of candor, we may say something like, , “Bill, we could go into a bunch of features and benefits about how we’ve helped others, and to be honest, it sounds like everyone else. I figured I’d ask you a simple question. How the heck does someone break into your account?” Rarely do you hear a representative use this type of technique. Why? It takes courage! Jack Welch said in his book, *Winning*, “Candor in business -- or in any kind of organization -- is a rare and wondrous thing. It is rare because, as we have discovered over the past seven years, so few companies have it. Wondrous because when they do, everything just operates faster and better.”

Google produces 2,600,000 results in 0.18 seconds when ‘Best traits of a professional sales person’ is searched. There were lists that covered endless qualities; Prompt, Professional, Knowledgeable, Articulate, Creative, Hardworking, Sincere, Organized, Resourceful, Focused, Positive, Self Confident,all good qualities, correct? Not one article said, “Trustworthy.” NOT ONE!

Question: If the customer doesn’t trust you, but you perform those other qualities well, do you think you have dramatically limited your ability to get a sale? You’re darn right. Trust is everything!

We ask thousands of people a year, “Have you ever had anyone like you, like you a lot, and still not buy from you?” Every hand goes up. Lesson learned: They can like you and still not buy from

you. Liking me is an add-on. Trusting me leads to \$\$.

Think about going into surgery. Sure liking the Doctor is important, but trusting him? That's everything! No one wants to hear "whoops" in surgery. Nor do your customers when you are delivering the solution.

The obvious next question, , "How can you gain trust quicker in a day and age where it's more difficult to attain?" Stephen R. Covey's *The Speed of Trust*, confirms just that. "Americans only trust 34% of the people they know and in the last 4 decades, In Great Britain, it dropped from 60% to 29%."

The answer? Tell the truth. Let me say that again. TELL THE TRUTH! Look at the two words. TRUST / TRUTH. There is a reason why they are so close in spelling; You need to have one to get the other.

For example, if a customer asks, "Why are you so expensive?" Of course we have usually been programmed to tell the customer "Because we're the best in service and support andyada-yada -yada." And usually that answer won't get you too far. How about telling the truth. "Mr. Customer, there are so many reasons why we have priced our products accordingly, and when it gets right down to it, in my heart, I don't know. It's what the company has felt is a fair price for this service. But can I ask you a question? You must have asked me that for a reason. Why do you ask? See, THAT'S the truth. Did your company consult with you on the pricing of the products? Probably not. Did they run it by you on why they need to price things they way they do? Probably not. So, in actuality, you really DON'T know the REAL reason. (Tip: When a customer asks you that question, find out why they asked you. That's way more

important than you giving your answer validating your price.)

Here's another one, "We're already happy. Just send me some information." The truthful answer: "Mr. Customer, I completely believe you are happy. I really do. But my biggest fear is we may have an opportunity to make you happier but you're telling me you are happy because you want to get me off the phone. And if I were you, I'd probably say the same thing. Can you help me?" See, truth again and it's different. Different is good as long as it's genuine and sincere.

What about the prospect who wants to run you around like crazy grabbing resources, pricing quotes, webinars, etc.. And without any commitment what-so-ever. (We call that being stuck in Hope Alley) The truthful answer: "Mr. Customer, I have no problem gathering resources to get the answers for you. My biggest fear is we do all that and nothing happens. What are your thoughts?" Again, the truth, and in this case, if you get to the truth quicker, a "no" early on is way better than a "no" 6 months from now. We have heard answers from prospects that would astonish you. From "I don't know what happens?" to "We're not going to buy from you, but we just wanted to get pricing so we can keep our current vendor honest." (Think about that. Would you actually run around getting prices to a prospect who already said they wouldn't use you? A lot of reps do because they get confused with effort and results. They think just working hard will get them there. I'd take smart over working hard any day of the week!)

So in summary, will the truth help you win business? Absolutely! Why?

- **Truth gets you trust.**
- **Truth saves you time.**

- **Truth builds long lasting relationships**
- **Truth makes you money.**

Finally, the truth separates you from the competition? Why? As Jack Welch says, “it’s rare, very rare.” And being rare and different is a good thing!

I just wish someone would have taught it to me sooner.

John Costigan is the President and Founder of John Costigan Companies. Prior to founding his own company, John was a top sales representative and account executive for leading software and Internet companies. He created a unique sales training program in which he demonstrates the effectiveness of his proven techniques by making impromptu calls to prospects that are provided to him by the client. John holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Northern Illinois University. For more information, please visit www.JohnCostiganCompanies.com