Turning Setbacks into Success

By Jill Konrath

The other day I was at the Olive Garden talking to a prospective client over lunch. He was telling me about all the challenges his sales organization was facing.

Setting up appointments with new prospects was a nightmare. Decisions were taking longer and longer to make. Competition was everywhere, undercutting their proposals.

His reps were frustrated, discouraged.

“If only they could all be like Paula,” he said, shaking his head in frustration. “Can you clone her?

I laughed, but my curiosity was piqued. “Tell me more,” I said.

It seems that Paula was having a really good year, despite everything that was going on. She cracked into a few big accounts that she'd targeted at the beginning of the year. Despite losing some business to competitors, she'd won more than her share without major discounting.

Even the numerous obstacles that seemed to totally derail the other sales reps, only set her back temporarily.

“Let me guess,” I interrupted. “Those setbacks almost seem to energize her. Right?”

My client, who was about to take a bite of fettucini, set down his fork. Looking at me quizzically, he said almost in a whisper, “How did you know? That's exactly what happens.”

I smiled slowly, but couldn't keep the twinkle out of my eyes. I leaned forward and whispered, “Paula kisses the frogs.”

My client burst out laughing. It certainly wasn't the answer he expected. But, it was the truth.

Over the years I've met other Paulas and they're usually top performers. What differentiates them from other sellers is their approach to the setbacks (or ugly frogs) they invariably encounter in selling.

When faced with tough times, frog kissers like Paula reframe those obstacles into personal challenges. Rather than getting discouraged or blaming others, they ask:

- How can I tackle this new situation?
- What other options can I try?

- What can I learn by kissing this frog?

With their creative energies ignited, new options and alternatives emerge. Limitations become possibilities. They experiment with different approaches, willing to grow in the process. As a result, frog kissers are often able to transform their setbacks into successes.

So here's my challenge to you. In the next month you're likely to run into a few sales problems such as disinterested prospects, angry customers, delayed decisions, or cut-throat competitors. This time, instead of getting upset, go kiss the frogs.

That's right. Kiss the frogs. Embrace them. Figure out what they're there to teach you.

I guarantee you that princely pay-offs are hidden inside.

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Jill Konrath, author of Selling to Big Companies, is a recognized sales strategist in the highly competitive business-to-business market. A popular speaker at sales meetings, she helps her clients crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and generate demand for their offering..

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