

Perception is Reality ~ By Wendy Weiss

I was never supposed to be a speaker, author and sales trainer. I was supposed to be a ballerina.

I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My mother has told me that when I was a small child, I would constantly turn on the radio and dance. I had no sense of rhythm, so she enrolled me in ballet class. That was the beginning of a first career and a great passion.

As a child I danced with Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and was always one of the child guests in Act I of Nutcracker. As I grew older, it was the Corps de Ballet, Snowflake and Waltz of the Flowers. I was even the Sugar Plum Fairy a few times!

At 17 I moved to New York City to dance; like every artist in the city, I needed a day job. At first I waited on tables. Then I found something more lucrative and more fun: telemarketing.

An ad in *Backstage*, the trade publication we would read to look for auditions, caught my attention. It was an ad for a telemarketing company. They would hire actors because actors can read scripts. (Hiring tip: If you are looking for a part time telemarketer, hire an actor.) The job involved calling high-level executives and setting new business appointments. I got the job and was really good at it. (Who knew? Ballet dancers don't even talk.)

Eventually the telemarketing company started to give me all the "hard leads" – the presidents, the CEOs, the people who "didn't take cold calls." I'd call them up, get them on the line, have a great conversation and set up the meeting. It was fun and it was easy.

Years later, when I started my training and coaching business, I thought that all that would be necessary would be to show clients a system and help them write a good script: do that, and we'd be done. Imagine my surprise when I discovered all the human and psychological barriers people face when prospecting by telephone!

That sent me back to the basics, not only to look again at my system and scripts, but also to examine the thought process and mindset involved.

And I found something fascinating.

At the time of that initial telemarketing job, I was 19, rather naive and inexperienced in the ways of the world. I lived in a small apartment with four other dancers. I made very little money. Yet, when I would pick up the telephone to call that CEO or president, believe it or not, I felt that I was superior. I may have been calling someone who made 100 times more money than I did, someone who lived in a wonderful house or apartment, someone whom everyone would consider to be the epitome of success, yet I felt superior because I was an artist.

My belief system at the time was simply that artists are superior in every respect. It never occurred to me that prospects would be anything but delighted to speak with me. Ah, the hubris of youth.

My mindset and beliefs about the business and corporate world, my place in it and my "superiority" have changed drastically over the years, but that belief system was what enabled me to successfully pick up the telephone and speak easily with high-level executives. Perception is reality. Although my life circumstances at the time were far from ideal, I didn't view it that way.

The thoughts and beliefs you have about yourself have a direct impact on your ability to perform and be successful. It certainly isn't necessary that you believe yourself to be superior, but it is imperative that you see yourself and your prospects as peers and equals.

If you don't, it's time to change your thought patterns.

Instead of thinking about how important your prospect is, think about all of the ways that your prospects and customers need you. Think about how you help. Think about the benefits you bring. Start to see yourself as an equal, with something of value to offer. Determine that your prospects will be happy to speak and work with you. Perception becomes reality.

As Henry Ford said, in my all-time favorite quote:

"Whether you think you can ~ or whether you think you can't ~ you're right."