

----- Original Message -----

From: Jan Forster

To: Slade Smith

Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2004 12:54 AM

Subject: Re: I couldn't resist ! (from your SOT post)

OK, this story is kinda long, but will put it all in perspective for you.

When I sold real estate at the coast, my sales mgr came in one day all excited because he heard of a fellow who was holding sales seminars around the South and he was *supposed* to be THE BEST. He sent for a video and asked that we all make plans NOW to attend this thing. I wasn't happy. We sold resort property and I had worked very hard to make sure I had appts for that particular weekend.

The video arrived. I was appalled. Here was a man in his mid-fifties (oh please don't let me be describing you or anyone you know :o) with a huge medallion necklace and a shirt unbuttoned halfway to his navel, poor grammar, and the funkiest haircut you have ever seen. Perhaps premature, but I decided right then and there that this man had nothing to teach me about professionalism. He was a ball of fire; a combination of used car salesman and bad preacher and both of them with bad hair. His theme was *RACE TO SUCCESS !* and was written in italics everywhere he could put it. He never actually shared any topics about this seminar, just a lot of hype about how wonderful it was and how we'd miss the boat if we weren't there.

My broker was a fine man but was excitable and fell for this guy hook, line, and sinker. When he turned the lights up he and the rest of the marketing staff were wide-eyed and I personally felt like the only one who could see the emperor was naked. They couldn't pay their money fast enough but I was a hard sell until Brian, my broker, pouted and told me I wasn't being a team player and it was "being held at Hilton Head, for heaven's sake!". WJ, the developer, agreed to pay all expenses less \$600 if we'd all go so finally there was no choice but to do it. WJ was a multi-millionaire who preferred to work the land in his overalls and leave the development business to Brian and others. There were a lot of people who would lay down and die for that sweet little old man and I was one of them, so I went.

The day arrived and we all headed off to Hilton Head and I stopped just short of the island and bought several books so the weekend wouldn't be an entire waste. When I walked into the hotel I couldn't believe my eyes. Slade, this was one of the nicest places I have ever stayed in but somehow the *Race To Success!* goomer had turned it into a joke. The reception area had checkered flags randomly scotch-taped to the bare walls and a large table was set up with the itinerary and in the center was - you'll love this part - a punchbowl full of M&Ms and cellophane bags of popcorn tied at the top with a ribbon like you'd see at a child's party. Classy. I grabbed a bag of popcorn and headed to my room to start a book.

The next morning, realizing Brian would ask questions when we got back, I decided to go to at least one of these meetings and the greeting session and it was something to see. This guy was wearing a racing suit - unzipped to his navel of course with the same bad medallion swinging - and had the shell of a race car on stage with him and boy he was working the crowd. I looked around and here were some of the most professional and successful people in coastal real estate being led in cheers and loving it. When we broke up, we were instructed to go to any of the rooms marked for classes and just have a seat, the topic would be on the door. If the room was filled, we were to go to another room and pick that one up later. I chose one that had a few empty chairs and sat down. In walked the kindest, most humble little lady you have ever seen who was genuinely concerned with our sales future and she offered some of the best ideas I have ever heard. Afterward, I thanked her and asked if she would give me one of her cards and her fees for speaking, since the rest of my group may not get into her class and I was sure Brian would like to have her speak to all back at the office. I'll never forget what she told me: "Oh Honey, I don't charge for this. He (navel boy) just called and said he heard I was the best in my area and offered me and my husband a weekend here and I was just so flattered to be asked!"

It was all coming together.

That evening we all met by the pool for a bbq and I cornered the guy and sweetly asked what his background was.

He squirmed. I asked where he had gone to school. He hadn't. And it wasn't long til he saw someone he had to speak to and did I mind? that was simply a lovely dress I was wearing. And he was gone.

When we got back WJ grinned and asked me if I felt any better about it once I got there and I had to admit the speakers were fantastic. But, I added, "WJ that was the dumbest son of a gun you've ever seen" and proceeded to tell him what the guy had done. He pulled a calculator out of his pocket and said, "No Honey, he was the *smartest, uneducated* son of a gun you've ever seen" and showed me the figures:

600 people x \$2250 = \$1,350,000 for two days - M&Ms, popcorn and a little ground round for the bbq on Saturday night. The speakers were free and he had to pay for our rooms but even in Hilton Head I'm sure he blocked and got a bargain.

That weekend taught me a lot about judging people and also that come hard times, I, too, may turn to umm, "motivational speaking".

I have often looked at you guys up there (wherever you are) and thought of how you could utilize this plan. Choose a destination that people not only want to get away to for a weekend but also want to tell people they got away to. That's key. Then flatter the best of the best and offer to pay for an exclusive weekend for them and their spouse. If you need start up money then offer booths for a fee to E&O reps or docupen or Quickbooks salespeople or whoever. They'll have a captive audience during breaks and there isn't another place on earth they'll get that many title professionals together under one roof. Choose class topics like "It Could Happen To You!" to add a little fear and mystery and "Seven Title Secrets!" to cash in on the competitiveness of title searchers and of course, italicize it all. :o) If it goes well, move on to the next state and do it again. After all, you don't have to be a professional at any of the topics, you just have to find a few. Although, I'm thinking a swinging medallion wouldn't hurt. (wink)

Jan